

Executive Summary 1

The following piece reports on the Pew Research Report on the topic “Nearly half of U.S. workers who get paid time off don’t take all the time off their employer offers.” The target audience for the piece is US workers, ie. the general public. As a result, it was prepared for the New York Times using the New York Times Manual of Style and Usage. I decided to approach this report by focusing on the main reason that workers were not using all their PTO: because they don’t feel the need to.” I chose to explore the theory of remote and hybrid work being a contributing factor to workers not feeling like they need to take time off work.

For my rhetorical strategy, I used the classic rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos to help with the persuasiveness of the piece. By including facts and figures from studies done by the Pew Research Center, Forbes, Robert Half, and HR experts, I was able to establish credibility with the audience from the beginning of the piece and maintained their trust throughout the piece through my supporting evidence from the studies. The information hierarchy and organizational structure of the piece lend well to its persuasive appeal. This includes headings and single-purpose paragraphs. It also includes the use of cause/effect, reasons/examples, and recommendations/argument/persuasion content schemes, which helps the overall cohesiveness of the piece. The pathos of the piece is illustrated through the appeal to potential. Namely, highlighting the potential consequences of not taking time off (eg. “The flip side is that these work models can often blur the boundaries between work and personal life, making it harder to disconnect from work”).

Specific elements from the New York Times Manual of Style and Usage that are incorporated in the piece include all font being Georgia; and applying credits to images using the guidelines from the manual. Additionally, I used the custom colors and format suggested for text and links. Further, I limited my use of em dashes in place of commas as the manual warns against overuse (eg. “While remote and hybrid work models have existed long before the pandemic, offering employees a flexible and autonomous work schedule that promotes work-life balance, these work models...”); the paragraph and line spacing was done to match the style of New York Times articles; I included periods in abbreviations (eg. U.S. and P.T.O.); mentioned the full phrase before using its abbreviated form (eg. “paid time off (P.T.O.”); and cited references through the use of links.

The Influence of Post-Pandemic Work Models on PTO Reluctance

Why workers across the US don't feel the need to take PTO.



Getty Images

A [2023 study by the Pew Research Center](#) revealed that 46% of U.S. workers take less time off than their employer offers. The findings suggest that the majority of the reasons that workers are reluctant to take paid time off (P.T.O.), are related to the employer, and their attitudes toward P.T.O. Workers report not wanting to take their P.T.O. because they're afraid that they will fall behind at work, they feel bad for their coworkers who have to take on their work, they believe it hurts their chances for promotion, risks their job security, and they feel discouraged by their managers or supervisors to take P.T.O.

However, 52% of workers reported that they don't use all their P.T.O. because they "don't feel the need to more time off." This trend can be attributed to the rise of remote and hybrid work since the onset of the pandemic. While remote and hybrid work models have existed long before the pandemic, offering employees a flexible and autonomous work schedule that promotes work-life balance, these work models have been on the rise as we navigate a post-pandemic world.

Employees who work remotely or on a hybrid schedule already have a sense of work-life balance that reduces their desire or need for time off work. For example, employees working remotely have the autonomy to choose where they work from. They may choose to work from their homes, from the park, at a cafe, or even a relative's home—and in some cases—another state or country. In most cases, these workers are also [able to set their own schedules](#) which grants them the ability to manage their workloads according to their personal lives, allowing more time to connect with their families. This flexibility greatly reduces the risk of burnout and results in employees being motivated and recharged without having to take time off from work.

The flip side is that these work models can often blur the boundaries between work and personal life, making it harder to disconnect from work. A survey by Robert Half, an Los Angelos-based staffing firm, revealed that [46% of employees who work remotely work more hours daily](#) than compared to working onsite. Due to the pressures of having to keep up with workloads, as well as the feeling that because they work on a remote or hybrid schedule, they are not entitled to use all their P.T.O., this leads to a deepening of employees' reluctance to use their P.T.O.

Workers must manage their workloads to include P.T.O. days. Whether working onsite, remotely, or on a hybrid schedule, it is important for all employees to take advantage of their P.T.O. to avoid long-term burnout.

Executive Summary 2

The following piece reports on the Pew Research Report on the topic “Nearly half of U.S. workers who get paid time off don’t take all the time off their employer offers.” The target audience for the piece are employers in the US. As a result, it was prepared for Forbes using the Forbes Style Guide. I decided to approach this report by giving a voice to the message coming out of the findings. That message was that employers' attitudes to PTO are the underlying cause behind employees using less PTO than offered. Hence, getting them to take advantage of their PTO would require a change on the employer’s part.

In terms of rhetorical strategy, I ensured that the piece contained the classic rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos to help with the persuasiveness of the piece. By including facts and figures from studies done by the Pew Research Center and Forbes, I was able to establish credibility with the audience from the beginning of the piece and maintain their trust throughout the piece through my supporting evidence from the studies. The information hierarchy and organizational structure of the piece lend well to its persuasive appeal. This includes headings and subheadings, single-purpose paragraphs, and bulleted lists. It also includes the use of problem/solution, and recommendations/argument/persuasion content schemes, which helps the overall cohesiveness of the piece. The emotional appeal of the piece is that it places fault on the target audience, and emphasizes that without their efforts, their employees and by extension, workers in the US, will continue to overwork themselves. Hence, never achieving work-life balance, and reflecting poorly on the company culture.

Specific elements from the Forbes Style Guide that are incorporated in the piece include headings being in the *Merriweather Bold* font; credits and categories being in Work Sans font (eg. the “Getty” credit), and the body of the text being in Georgia. Additionally, I used the custom colors suggested for text and links. Further, the use of em dashes in place of commas (eg. “The main reason—based on the study by the Pew Research Center—is that...”); the paragraph and line spacing; the use of bullet points for lists; omitting periods in abbreviations (eg. “46% of US workers take less time off than their employer offers.”); mentioning a full phrase before using its abbreviated form (eg. “paid time off (PTO)’’); and citing references through the use of links.

Why Workers Aren't Taking PTO And What Your Company Can Do To Encourage Them



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Work-life balance has always been a priority for workers everywhere, and with the rise of remote and hybrid work—as a result of the pandemic—the issue has gained more prominence among the workforce. Although most companies provide paid time off (PTO) which helps to facilitate work-life balance, [a 2023 study by the Pew Research Center](#) revealed that 46% of US workers take less time off than their employer offers. Further, [52% of US workers report working even while on PTO](#).

If work-life balance is such a priority for workers, why do they avoid using all the PTO offered by their employer? The main reason—based on the study by the Pew Research Center—is that they don't find it necessary to use all of their PTO. However, the other reasons are a bit more enlightening. The findings suggest that workers don't use all their PTO because:

- They are worried about falling behind at work
- They feel bad for coworkers who have to take on their work
- They believe that it can hurt their chances of a promotion
- They believe that it will put their jobs at risk

- Their manager/supervisor discourages them from taking it.

What these findings illustrate is that the majority of reasons that workers avoid taking all their PTO are related to their employers. Therefore, companies should assume responsibility for not only providing PTO to employees but also for encouraging them to use it. Employers need to take actionable measures to encourage their employees to take full advantage of their PTO.

Lead by example

It is a common trend for high-level business executives to avoid using PTO. The Pew Research Center found that [54% of managers take less PTO than offered](#). What this behavior communicates to employees is that the company culture rewards workers for overworking themselves and that being in an executive position requires workers to sacrifice their PTO and work-life balance. If employees are to be encouraged to take their PTO, executives must first lead by example by using their own. This will help to debunk workers' beliefs that taking PTO hurts their chances for promotion.

Create a culture that supports work-life balance

Company culture sets the tone for the way workers behave and interact in the workplace. Thus, a company culture that speaks negatively of issues regarding PTO, or barely mentions it at all, can discourage employees from taking PTO that they've earned. Employers need to create a culture that supports work-life balance by offering unlimited PTO, implementing company holidays, encouraging breaks during the workday, and most importantly, openly and frequently communicating with employees about PTO.

Establish a clear PTO policy

Too often employers create PTO policies that are vague and difficult for employees to understand, which risks misinterpretation by employees. It is best practice for employers to develop PTO policies that are clear, and thorough. It should be clearly stated how the company calculates PTO, whether or not there is a timeframe to use it, the process for requesting to use PTO, and above all, that employees will not be reprimanded or penalized for using their PTO.

These strategies will not only help you to better support your employee's goals of achieving work-life balance, but they will also help to change your company culture and work environment for the better.