



## Swearing, Social Media and Salary Talk: Top Taboos for US Job Seekers

### Employees Also Find It Challenging Knowing When and Where to Be Honest

OKLAHOMA CITY, Nov. 26, 2024 — Fifty-seven percent of U.S. job seekers say employees at their company are clueless about when and where it's appropriate to be honest in the workplace. This lack of understanding about workplace decorum — including honesty dos and don'ts — is echoed by nearly half of U.S. hiring decision-makers (47%), who say employees at their company struggle with knowing when to speak up.

This is according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

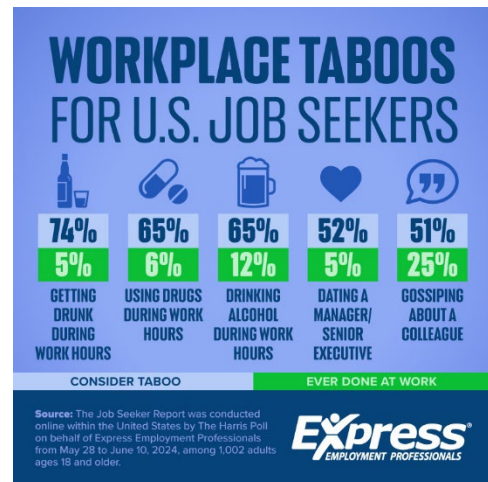
The stakes are particularly high for younger workers with most U.S. hiring managers (91%) believing it's crucial for younger generations to learn the nuances of honesty in the workplace. Forty-eight percent strongly agree with this sentiment.

But honesty isn't the only area where employees falter as many job seekers identify specific ways colleagues can be "too honest" at work. Sharing personal information (65%) — whether their own (53%) or a colleague's (49%) — gossiping (54%), criticizing colleagues or the company (53%) and venting about work issues (52%) are all seen as pitfalls of excessive honesty. These behaviors can harm reputations and workplace harmony, highlighting the need for better guidance and resources.

#### Taboo Confessions

Beyond honesty, job seekers hold onto taboos that are more about irresponsible actions than dishonesty. The top taboos include getting drunk during work hours (74%), having an alcoholic beverage at work (65%), using recreational drugs during work hours (65%), gossiping about colleagues (51%), gossiping about managers (51%) and dating a manager or senior executive (52%).

Generational divides also play a role in how these taboos are perceived. Gen X and boomer job seekers are more likely than their Gen Z and millennial counterparts to view certain behaviors



as taboo, such as getting drunk during work hours (82% and 88% vs. 69% and 68%, respectively), using recreational drugs during work hours (76% and 81% vs. 63% and 57%) and gossiping about colleagues (60% and 61% vs. 45% and 47%).

Interestingly, the most common taboos U.S. job seekers admit to are surprisingly mundane. Swearing at work (45%), making personal calls or using social media during work hours (42%), discussing salary/wages (33%) and crying at work (29%) are the top confessions, painting a picture of everyday challenges in the workplace.

“While workplaces have become more casual and honesty is highly valued, maintaining a level of professionalism is still essential,” said Bill Stoller, Express Employment International CEO. “It’s about striking a balance where openness and respect coexist, ensuring a comfortable and respectful environment for everyone.”

### **Survey Methodology**

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between May 16 and June 3, 2024, among 1,003 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 28 to June 10, 2024, among 1,002 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact [Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com](mailto:Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com), Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

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### **About Bill Stoller**

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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