

**Op-Ed*****Siwei Wang*****Publication:** *Fortune.com***Editor's name:** *Barb Darrow*

**Topic:** Oracle's new edict on employee vacation. It forces all its employees to take a four-day vacation between Christmas and New Year's and pay for the time off with their paid vacation time.

**Making the Most of the Holiday Season: Oracle's New Vacation Policy and the Work-Life Balance**

Three weeks ago, Oracle made an internal policy change: it will close its U.S. offices for the week between the Christmas and New Year holidays. During this time, employees will be asked to use paid vacation time to cover the holiday. Oracle is not alone when it comes to its new vacation policy. It's not the first to do it. Other major tech companies also use this policy, including Cisco according to [glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com).

In the technology business, where accrued vacation time is one of the most coveted perks by employees, we at Oracle understand the policy change has caused a stir. Our employees are right to ask why they are being asked to take a vacation and why their personal vacation days are being used. Even worse, rumors stirred up by the website Business Insider have alleged that employees who have not accrued enough vacation time could end up "owing" Oracle.

As the head of human resources at Oracle allow me to clear up some issues.

First, one of the intentions of the policy was to ensure all of our employees could enjoy a long vacation at a time of the year when most people want the time off anyway. Secondly, the U.S. closure also benefits the company. Expenses can be reduced by shutting offices and by wiping accrued vacation time off the books. We feel this move accomplishes two things simultaneously: our 122,000 employees get a deserved holiday break; and the company is strengthened financially.

As for “owing” the company, that simply will not be the case. Oracle allows employees to accumulate unused vacation up to 180 hours or 22.5 days in one year. That vacation time can be rolled over to the following year. Oracle is not stingy with employee vacation time, and it is just asking that four days of it be used between Christmas and the New Year. Any worker who does not have enough vacation days this year can borrow from next year’s quota in advance to cover the four days this holiday season. Also, sick days and any other paid leave are unaffected by the new policy.

It has also come to our attention that some of our employees who are not Christian feel that Oracle is making them take vacation for the Christmas holiday. We are not. This particular holiday is one of the most common in the United States. We know that given U.S. school holidays this is the best chance for our employees to spend meaningful time with their families and children. We remain generous in giving our employees paid days off on religious holidays. We are just asking them to take this vacation time along with everyone else.

Another intention of our policy change is to clear up any vagueness about vacation time. Many companies boast that they allow their employees “unlimited”

vacation. In reality, those employees often fear they will not be seen as good workers if they take too much time off. Many end up not using what they are allowed. At Oracle, we don't want that. We want our employees to be clear about how much vacation time they get and to feel good about using it.

Recently, New York-based Kickstarter, which has 100 employees, changed its vacation policy to give its employees clearer guidance about vacation time. It went from offering employees unlimited vacation days to a set 25. Kickstarter says the change has brought clarity to its workforce and a better work-life balance.

"It's always been important to us to ensure that our team is able to enjoy a quality work-life balance," a Kickstarter spokesperson told BuzzFeed News. "What we found was that by setting specific parameters around the number of days, there was no question about how much time was appropriate to take from work to engage in personal, creative, and family activities."

Rather than competing with other companies in the perks race and making it harder to take time off because of peer competitiveness, why not give employees some must-take vacation days to let them truly enjoy their time off? Without the worry of having to keep one foot at work and one foot in their personal lives, employees can really enjoy their down time and, afterwards, they will be more excited to get back to work.

In 2015, according to a survey conducted by Glassdoor, Oracle scored four out of five points in an employee satisfaction review. It was also cited as one of the 18 technology companies in the U.S. offering the best benefits package to their

employees. Our package includes a generous stock purchase plan, health and dental care, mental health and vision.

In a demanding industry prone to rapid and continuous change, all our employees deserve real fringe benefits that provide a work-life balance and true happiness. We feel that a holiday season that our employees can truly enjoy is just one more thing to love about life at Oracle.

###

(Word count: 821)