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## Mandate March Madness?

### **ENGAGING WORKERS WITH MARCH MADNESS WORTH THE \$16.3 BILLION PRICE TAG**

**CHICAGO, March 14, 2022** –With employment and wages rebounding and companies’ ongoing difficulty hiring and retaining workers, March Madness could be the perfect tool to engage and motivate workers, despite the ballooning productivity cost, according to one workplace authority.

“Millions of workers have found new employment over the last six months, while employers have been actively hiring and attempting to retain their workers. Creating spaces for employees to celebrate together is more important than ever to build morale and camaraderie,” said Andrew Challenger, workplace expert and Senior VP of global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

According to the latest employment information released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 157,772,000 Americans were employed in February, up 7.4 million from the same month last year.

According to a recent Challenger survey among 150 companies nationwide conducted January and February, 82% of companies are concerned about an exodus of talent. That is compared to 68% of companies who reported this concern in a similar survey the firm conducted in July.

Meanwhile, in February, 13% of the workforce worked remotely specifically due to COVID, according to the BLS. In Challenger’s survey, 73% of companies were offering remote work options to attract and retain workers.

“Remote and hybrid work are increasingly becoming the norm, and March Madness is the perfect way to engage remote workers. Employers could host a stream and invite workers to meet for a watch party during Thursday’s and Friday’s games. Workers could

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wear jerseys or have Zoom backgrounds depicting their favorite NCAA teams,” said Challenger.

“Likewise, March Madness is great for in-person workers. Employers could designate a workstation to streaming games or give workers time to watch in the break room with colleagues,” he added.

“Short of mandating participation, employers should actively encourage engagement in the games. It’s an easy and fun way to connect colleagues. Likely, workers are already interested in the games anyway,” said Challenger.

The games offer employers myriad opportunities to garner participation from their workforces, according to Challenger. One unique option is to offer a charitable donation for each employee who fills out a March Madness bracket and increase the amount if a large percentage of the company participates. Workers could vote on the charity.

In addition to individual prizes for top brackets, like gift cards, lunches, coffees, or even PTO, employers could also have each department fill out a bracket with the winners receiving a team prize or recognition.

### **About the Estimate**

According to Challenger, this year’s tournament could cost employers \$16.3 billion. The firm’s estimate is based on the number of working Americans who are likely to be caught up in March Madness, the estimated time spent filling out brackets and streaming games, and average hourly earnings, which, in February, stood at \$31.58, according to the BLS.

A 2018 survey conducted by TSheets by QuickBooks found 48% of workers work on their brackets at work. That would mean 75,730,560 workers are participating in March Madness activities while at work. Using this figure multiplied by the average hourly wage, the games could cost employers \$2.39 billion per hour.

A 2019 survey by OfficeTeam found workers spend 25.5 minutes per workday on March Madness-related activities during the tournament. If that holds true this year, across the 16 workdays between selection Sunday on March 12 and the championship game on Monday, April 4, workers would spend 408 minutes, or 6.8 hours, on March Madness-related activities at work. That would mean the tournament could cost employers \$16,262,683,376.64.

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## KEY MARCH MADNESS STATS

### POSSIBLE IMPACT

**\$2.39 billion** Lost wages resulting from the possibility of 48% of all workers, or 75,730,560 people, spending at least one hour of one workday on March Madness activities ( $[157,772,000 \times .48] \times \$31.58$ )

**\$16.3 billion** Cost of lost productivity from the entire tournament

### EMPLOYMENT/WAGE STATS

**157,772,000** Preliminary total of nonfarm payroll employment in February (BLS), up 7.5M from February 2021.

**Average hourly earnings: \$31.58**

According to February 2022 preliminary data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.