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JUN 25, 2016 @ 02:27 AM 162,947 VIEWS

# Ten Policies You'll Find In Every Toxic Workplace

**Liz Ryan, CONTRIBUTOR***I write about bringing life to work and bringing work to life. [FULL BIO](#) ✓*

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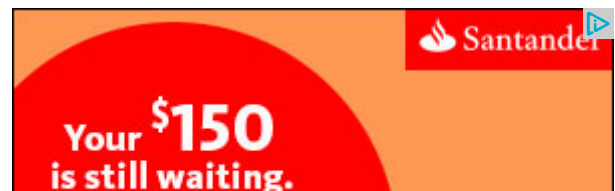
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## Stitch-Level Dress Code

Assuming that a company hires only adults, they can trust their employees to dress themselves. If your prospective new employer's handbook includes a painfully-detailed dress code policy, it's not a place that can grow your flame. Trust-based cultures don't treat their employees like children, and children with poor judgment, at that!

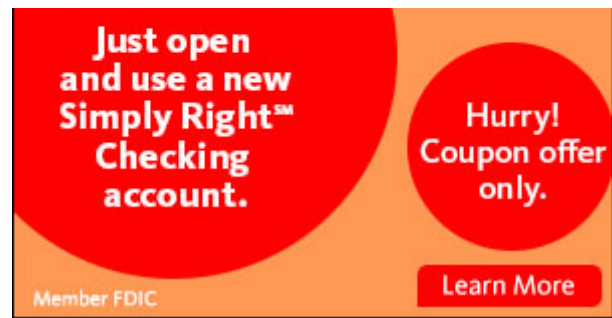
## We Own Your Ideas

It is reasonable for an employer to make it clear to employees that ideas that you have and bring out on the job belong to the employer rather than to you personally. It is not reasonable for an employer's policy



to say that any idea you have while you are working for the company, even at home and off hours, also belongs to them, but that is what some company policies say.

Check this part of the handbook carefully before you take the job!



## Attendance Weenietude

In the U.S. it is important for non-exempt employees to track their hours because the law requires them to be paid overtime once they pass a certain number of hours in the day or the week. Salaried employees are not covered by those laws and it is ridiculous for employers to make a big deal out of arrival and departure times for people who are paid a salary. If your possible next employer has a strict attendance policy, they don't deserve your talents!

## Bell-Curve Performance Reviews

Bell-curve performance reviews are testaments to managerial fear, because they forbid a department head from giving more than just a few people "excellent" marks on a performance review. A good rule of thumb when it comes to performance reviews systems is that the more formal the performance appraisal process is, the lousier an employer you are dealing with.

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Performance reviews will disappear altogether in all but the most hidebound and out-of-it employers before long. Don't go to work for people who are behind the curve!

## Infractions Policy

Some old-school employers count and will ding you for tiny "infractions," sometimes called "incidents," and they'll do it by creating an Infraction Record or Incident Report that will require you to go talk to someone about why you goofed up when you did, for instance by transferring a customer call to the wrong person or forgetting a step in a process. You are not in prison – you are at work. The more a company runs its workplace like a prison, the longer and more detailed its Employee Handbook will be!

## Stealing Miles

If you travel for work, you should be able to keep your frequent flyer miles, period. Business travel is hard on the brain and the body. Even more importantly, any company that chooses such a skeezy way to save money is not a company where you'll be happy working.

## Funeral Leave

**S** Some terrible employers require their employees to bring in a funeral notice

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when a family member dies. Maybe at some point in history an employee invented a family death and now all the rest of you have to pay for that mistake. This policy is an abomination and a loud statement about the organization’s concern for its employees in their lives outside of work.

**Managers Decide Who Transfers**

It is downright stupid for employers to limit their employees’ movements from one department to another, because their competitors for talent won’t put up any barriers to smart people who want to advance in their careers. If your possible next employer has a policy that requires managers to sign off on employee transfers, don’t take the job! You can’t afford to put your career in the hands of unintelligent people.

*Liz Ryan is the CEO and founder of Human Workplace. Follow her on [Twitter](#) and read the rest of her [Forbes.com columns here](#).*

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