

# ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

## How embracing March Madness can help your biz (Print)

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March Madness starts next week, and your college basketball-obsessed employees probably will watch some of the games on their computers, smartphones or computer tablets during office hours.

But that doesn't mean businesses can't find a way to turn that obsession to their advantage.

Earlier this week online, *Orlando Business Journal* took a look at the business impact of March Madness: Businesses could lose close to \$200 million in productivity due to employees streaming college basketball games on computers or checking scores on phones, according to studies.

However, businesses can embrace the games and potentially turn them into a team-building, productivity-boosting activity.

"March Madness is an inevitable thing," said Bill Pepler, managing partner at Kavaliro Staffing Services, an Orlando-based staffing firm. "Companies can try to set rules or block Internet access, but workers will find a way to check the scores via longer lunch breaks or phones."

Pepler's own office saw the distraction March Madness caused, but decided to embrace it.

This year, he expects to have his employees form in-office teams named after colleges. Those teams will set sales goals and compete with each other for incentives like half-days off or being able to leave work early on Fridays.



PHOTO | JIM CARCHIDI

**Kavaliro Managing Partner Bill Pepler**

And Kavaliro encourages workers to bring different foods from their teams' hometowns — such as New Orleans gumbo — and allows all workers to take part in the March Madness festivities.

Businesses should try to be flexible and create a work environment that doesn't push back on media channels like Twitter, Facebook and mobile devices that can stream video, said Farnaz Hedayati, an expert with Center for Work Life, an Orlando-based business consulting firm.

"Productivity doesn't need to be affected. It all depends on the right balance stricken by the companies," she said.

However, she warns, "Sometimes trying to tamper with a work environment to fit in this strategy could cause more chaos than benefits."

