

Study Finds The Impact Of Technology At The Modern Workplace

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Is technology helping or distracting the modern day workforce? According to Profesor Gloria Mark from the Department of Informatics at the University of California, the present day workforce is finding it increasingly challenging to focus on their work tasks. Her team has been following information workers in the United States with stopwatches to time their actions for more than a decade. Back in 2004, the workers switched their attention to another task every three minutes on an average. By 2012, this number had plummeted to one minute and 15 seconds. By the time summer arrived last year, this was already down to 59.5 seconds.

The use of multiple devices like computers, smartphones and tablets along with the proliferation of social media has made the modern worker extremely susceptible to attention deficit. But does this mean technology is all bane and brings no benefit to the workplace? Dell and Intel recently got together to interview close to 4750 workers across 12 countries and spread across small, medium and large industries. The objective of this study was to look into the various ways technology has impacted the lives of these employees as well as to understand its impact on their personal and professional lives.

Here is a brief snapshot of the various points highlighted in the study.

Device Preference Attributed To Performance And Location

It is extremely common for workers to make use of more than one device for work purposes. This preference is driven by two factors : their ability to perform better, and location of work. For instance, workers in financial services and government preferred desktop computers while those checking in from home preferred laptops.

Workplace is a minefield for distractions

While the office remains the primary work location for most of the workers interviewed, an increasing number of people interviewed cited distraction as a major reason for concern. Nearly 48% of the interviewed workers admitted to feeling interrupted at work, and nearly 20% of them wore headphones or ear-buds in order to focus better.

Perception of remote workers improving

There used to be a time when people checking in from home were viewed less dedicated as compared to those working from office. The Dell and Intel study shows that this perception is changing with nearly 52% of those interviewed believing that remote workers were as productive as those working from offices. The study points out to the use of online collaboration tools (like ClickMeeting, Trello and Wrike) that help with easier collaboration as one of the major reasons for this shift. Having said that the study also points out that people still prefer personal interaction at an office over online collaboration.

Employees demand more technology for productivity improvements

Nearly 25% of those interviewed for the research demanded the use of productivity enhancing technology tools at the workplace. In fact, people interviewed at media and entertainment sectors were more likely to quit over poor technology. While the study is vague on what it considers to productivity enhancing technology, we may consider project management tools like Basecamp and time tracking services like Due as examples for productivity enhancers.

Automation is not the future

While the use of technology is perennially on the rise, a majority of the workers (66%) do not expect their jobs to be completely automated any time soon. However, an overwhelming majority of the workers predict the use of voice recognition, hand gestures to become pervasive in future. A majority of these respondents also think the use of mouse, keyboards and laptops will become obsolete at the workplace in a few years' time.

There is no doubt that technology has made people less focused. But there are also an increasing number of technology tools that have made workers more productive. In the end, it is this bunch of pros that outweigh the cons to make technology at the workplace a welcoming trend.