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Why a 72-Hour Work Week Is the New Normal



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By BETH BRAVERMAN, The Fiscal Times

September 23, 2013

The biggest enemy of work-life balance may be sitting in your pocket.

A new study, [Always on Never Done](#), by the Center for Creative Leadership finds that workers who use a smartphone for work are connected to the office an

average 13.5 to 18.5 hours per day, while those who don't use a smartphone for work are connected to the office an average of 8 to 10 hours per day. Smartphone-equipped workers interact with their office a whopping 72 hours per week (including weekends).



"In today's world, the expectation is that when a question comes up, you'll answer it within 30 minutes, whether it's 8:00 at night, or 6 a.m.," says organizational consultant Ed Muzio, author of *Make Work Great*. "The expectation is that if you're awake, you're going to be checking in."

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The biggest driver of the constantly connected office culture is the proliferation of the technology that makes it possible such as smartphones and teleconferencing. But it also reflects lingering effects of the recession that has left fewer employees handling larger workloads. Such changes allowed companies to expand productivity and cut their expenses, fueling a surge in corporate profits. Globalization also plays a role, as more workers are interacting with colleagues across the world on what has become a 24-hour business cycle.

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Experts say that workers generally accept 24-7 connectivity as the norm in today's workplace—it's rare to



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find a good-paying, full-time job that only requires a 40-hour workweek - but they warn that companies that take

advantage of such policies generally have more turnover and lower job satisfaction rates.

DIMINISHING RETURNS

“Some workers just feel like there never is an end to the day,” says Peggy Klaus, author of *Soft Skills: Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They’d Learned Sooner*. “In addition to the stress and burnout from work, they feel like they don’t have any down time with their friends or family, and they start to resent their employer.”

A separate [study by the American Psychological Association](#) found that more than a third of workers said communication technology increases their workload, and makes it more difficult to stop thinking about work or take a break from work.

While smartphones and other technology are meant to increase our productivity, and experts admit that in many ways they enhance work-life balance – allowing a parent to duck out early to attend a school play, or to check on a big deal that’s closing during a scheduled vacation. But when used regularly around the clock, such technology can lead to diminishing returns in worker output. “There’s a fall off in productivity after a full day of work,” Muzio says. “After a certain point, you’re just not as effective.”

The CCL report found that connected workers generally had just three hours per day in which they weren’t sleeping, working, or checking in with the office. (And sleep may not actually offer an escape – [more than half of consumers](#) say they check their phone while lying in bed, before they go to sleep, after they wake up, and even in the middle of the night.

HIGHER STRESS AT HOME

“This isn’t just about work” says report author Jennifer Deal. “This is about our lives, and it affects the people with interact with and the people we care about.”

Twelve percent of executives regularly step away from dinner and other family gatherings to deal with business calls and other work issues, and 41 percent of executives do so occasionally, according to a study released last year by [Forbes Insights](#).

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What's This?



Many workers think that they're multi-tasking when they're checking work emails while eating dinner or spending time with their family, but, in reality, they're not giving full attention to both activities, says Larry Rosen, author of *iDisorder: Understanding our Obsession with Technology and Overcoming its Hold on Us*.

Constantly checking a smartphone actually causes neurological changes. Once your brain is in the habit of looking at a small screen for updates every few minutes, when it's unable to do so, it begins to activate neurotransmitters associated with anxiety and stress, Rosen says.

Indeed, a [study last December in Britain](#) last December found that higher levels of stress correlated to how often people checked their smartphones, with the most stressed individuals actually experiencing 'phantom vibrations' when there were no new alerts.

"For your own health, you need to set up boundaries and limits," Rosen says. "The more you check, you're just digging a hole for yourself. You're modeling the behavior up to your boss and down to your kids, and setting yourself up for a lifetime of anxiety."

Rosen recommends scheduling a certain time to check your phone, after dinner perhaps, and to plug it in—out of sight—at least an hour before you go to bed.

Still worried about missing an important email from the boss? Add an "out of office" alert and have a great weekend.

Smartphones

PHONE	SMART RATING ▲	PRICE (WITHOUT CONTRACT)	PRICE (WITH CONTRACT)	SCREEN SIZE	TALK TIME	REAR CAMERA QUALITY
 <p>Samsung Galaxy Note III</p>	98	AS LOW AS \$680 See Prices	\$299	5.7 INCH	25 HOURS	13 MEGAPIXEL
 <p>Apple iPhone 5S</p>	96	AS LOW AS \$735 See Prices	\$199	4 INCH	10 HOURS	8 MEGAPIXEL
 <p>Samsung Galaxy S4</p>	96	AS LOW AS \$560 See Prices	\$199	4.99 INCH	14 HOURS	13 MEGAPIXEL
 <p>Apple iPhone 5</p>	96	AS LOW AS \$550 See Prices	\$199	4 INCH	8 HOURS	8 MEGAPIXEL

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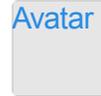


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Mike Conrad · 18 days ago

This article is more than a little utopian. People working in competitive fields of putting up "out of office" alerts and skipping out for dinners out, school play Sure it might be nice, but only people like journalists and academics imagine

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