

Has the World Cup Stolen Your Employees' Time?



Whenever major events occur, such as the World Cup or the Olympics, we find our employees spending an awful lot of time on social networks. We have observed some of our employees sharing comments about the games on Facebook during work time. It does not end there. Many of our employees are using their own personal devices so we cannot easily stop them. How can we better control our employee's time so they are focused on work during work?

Employee Time Theft and World Events

During the World Cup Twitter activity jumped to 388,985 tweets per minute. Over on Facebook 200 million users have engaged in over a billion World Cup related likes, posts and comments. There is a lot of distraction on social networks.

In the past when employees wanted to find information on the 'game' during working hours they would have to sneak away from work. It required effort and stealth. As a result it was generally obvious the employee was stealing time. The challenge today is that employees may not feel they are doing anything wrong when they take a few seconds to check in on their social network. The actions of checking your social network and dropping a comment are becoming part of everyone's daily routines. The millennial generation in particular has mastered the art of rapid attention shifting so much that it is simply how they operate.

Two Types Of Problem Social Network Users In The Workplace

Stats tell us that the majority of Canadians are social connected; over 19 million log into Facebook at least once per month and over 10 million are mobile Facebook users; 7 million on LinkedIn; 5.5 million on Twitter.

In the workplace there are generally two types of problem social network users.

1. Incidental time thieves: users who believes their social networking time is minimal or 'not a big deal' when in fact it is a distraction.
2. Intentional time thieves: social networkers who do not want to work and feel entitled to spend time socially networking.

The same approach will not work with everyone but the same groundwork is important for everyone.

1. Create a brief policy that clearly communicates workplace time use expectations to help with education and enforcement.
2. Remind employees that during breaks they are welcome to surf their social networks but during work they should focus on work and turn their apps off.
3. Post friendly reminders including on your company social networks and switch them up with different words that reminds employees their activities are noticed
4. Provide your employees with a means of obtaining the information they want. Monitor and update scores and put the games on a centralized location employees can drop by when they have a few minutes.

One of the questions organizations need to ask themselves is if there is really a problem or if there is only the perception of a problem. In the past employees stole time by knitting, reading books, completing crossword puzzles and engaged in other distractions, in many ways social networking is no different. The question to ask is whether or not social networking activity is disruptive and impacting productivity.

Sometimes an employee just needs a heads up and reminder to put down their devices. Other times there are bigger issues at play. If you feel an employee is abusing your time at the expense of productivity this becomes a workplace performance issue and should be addressed as such.

The habit of constantly checking smartphones for messages is growing. To counteract it stay on top of employee social networking activity use during the workplace and speak to your employees about it, although perhaps not during the final game of the world cup.