

## Mobile Email: Business Essential or Modern Menace?

The rise in the use of mobile email-enabled devices has been hard to miss over recent years. If you're in a business where the use of Blackberrys and similar email-enabled devices is the norm, you'll be only too aware of just how they can help you be more effective and allow you to address email traffic at a time that's either more immediate or more convenient. So, are mobile email devices the essential business tools of the age or are they fast becoming a 21st century modern menace?

A survey for the UK Premier Inn hotel chain in November 2010 highlighted that the average worker's weekend is now as little as 27 hours long due to the time taken to extract themselves and switch off from the previous week's work combined with the time spent gearing up and preparing for the following week's activities. Over the last few years there have been a number of surveys, polls and reports suggesting that mobile email access is a significant contributing factor in this pincer-movement squeeze on workers' relaxation time. More and more people admit to checking emails continuously over most weekends, leaving little time for families and real, effective leisure time.

The impact of mobile email alone on the modern trend for less downtime should not be underestimated. A healthy work-life balance is difficult enough to achieve in modern life and being continually connected and accessible is making the situation even harder to manage for many. As people capitulate and give more of their own time over to the company, so expectations rise of what can be expected and wrung out of the average employee in terms of hours, output and responsiveness.

Another UK survey for the recruitment firm Office Angels in 2008, found that 7% of workers questioned felt under pressure and suffocated by their continual connection to work brought about directly as a result of having mobile email access at all times. This can lead to stress and anger at an apparent inability to switch off from work but does somewhere, need to be balanced out by the benefits in flexible working that such technology can bring.

It's clear that the problem lies not with the technology but with how the technology is used and viewed. Far too often, workers feel that the technology dictates their availability but in truth, a measure of discipline on the part of the user would allow this to be controlled. To back this up, a survey highlighted by [zdnet.co.uk](http://zdnet.co.uk) as far back as 2007, showed that, at that time, the average Blackberry user was converting one hour of downtime to productive time every day and that their efficiency increased by as much as 38%. Since the business benefit of this is rarely ignored, the effect on work-life balance should also be acknowledged.

Studies and behaviours show that modern email-enabled devices do have the potential to be a menace to society if users fail to exercise discipline in the way that they use them. Ultimately, the management of work-life balance and the level of intrusion into non-work time can be managed by the individual should they choose to do so. What's clear from the surveys though, is that people are not always inclined to do so.

## About the Author

Source: <http://intellectualize.org>