



**Blurring boundaries: the disappearing gap between work  
and home life  
January 2010  
Report 2 in a series of 3**

## Overview

Call it multi-tasking, life-splicing or bleisure but increasingly, fuelled by advances in technology, employees are blurring the boundaries between home and work. 'Generation Standby' employees, never truly 'switched off' and always ready to be called upon, are now enjoying, and expecting, greater levels of flexibility and mobility than ever before. At the same time, Web 2.0 tools are entering the workplace, providing untold benefits but also further eroding the distinction between social and working life: 47% of employees believe that web collaboration and social media are changing the way that people in businesses work.

This cultural shift, however, raises new questions about trust in the workplace, the balance of power in the employer / employee relationship and levels of control over people and content.

## Working from home

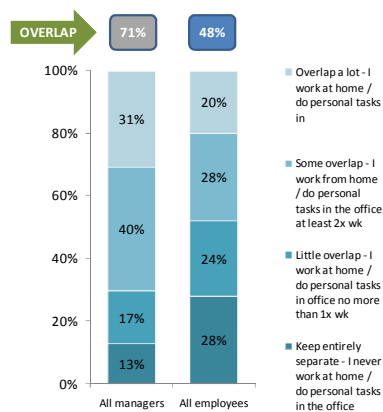


Figure 1 Overlap between home and work lives

The traditional image of an office worker clocking off at 5pm, heading home after a hard day and putting all thoughts of work to bed until 9am no longer applies for the majority of today's Generation Standby employees. Boundaries between work and home lives are blurring, with 48% of office workers and 71% of managers saying tasks overlap at least twice a week (fig.1).

The sheer quantity and sophistication in mobile technology now available has served to further intensify the blurring between home and life, making it easier than ever to work on the move and to transfer content between devices. 63% of workers use a work laptop, but an almost equivalent 57% use their home laptop for work (fig. 2). 37% use a smart-phone – effectively an 'always on' link to their office lives and there is a clear appetite for the newer breed of cloud based services.

Recessionary times mean that 56% of office workers believe they have to work harder this year than last year and 44% have to work longer hours. There is no doubt that Generation Standby workers are contributing to the business, with 57% now willing to be flexible about working longer or different hours as the business demands. However, in return for this seepage of work life into 'home time', workers are becoming more demanding, expecting something back in return for their increased commitment.

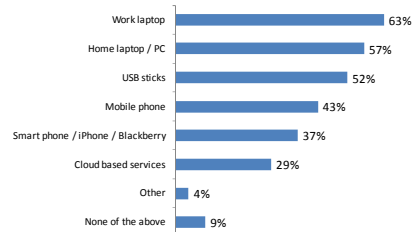


Figure 2 Devices used for work

## Home-ing from work

In return for their increased contributions to work outside traditional hours, employees expect to be given the freedom to manage their time during their contracted hours.

Trust is key to job satisfaction for the current generation of employees: aside from salary, more people (67%) rate 'being trusted to manage own time' than any other benefit (fig. 4). This is closely linked to having 'flexibility to work where / when I want' (45%), 'access to technologies' (36%) and freedom to use social networking sites at my discretion' (12%) and

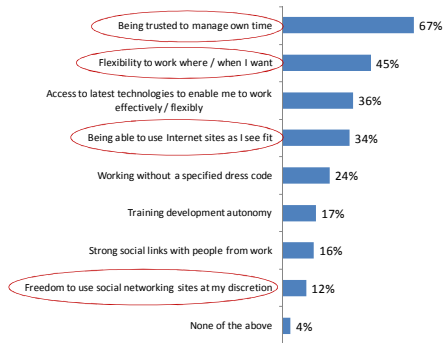


Figure 4 Over and above job role and pay, which of the following aspects of a job are most important to you? Select maximum of three

suggests that employees are increasingly demanding to be treated as mature adults taking responsibility for their own time at work.

62% of office workers believe that employees at their place of work should be ENTITLED to access to web and social networking content from their work computer for personal reasons and even more interestingly for employers, one fifth (21%) of employees would turn down a job that did not allow them to access social networking sites or personal email during work time.

Most employers no longer see these demands as outlandish, instead increasingly accepting them as the norm. 51% of managers agree that employees should be able to access the internet and social networking content from their work computer for personal reasons, and 60% trust their employees to use the internet and social networking sites responsibly.

Employees are reacting in kind, with a majority (62%) accessing personal email accounts from work most days (fig. 5). 42% are accessing social networking sites from work most days, and personal internet usage goes beyond simply staying in touch: 29% access video sites such as YouTube most days, and 27% shop online. These trends are even stronger, unsurprisingly, among younger respondents: 55% of under 35s use social networking sites most days, and 38% shop online.

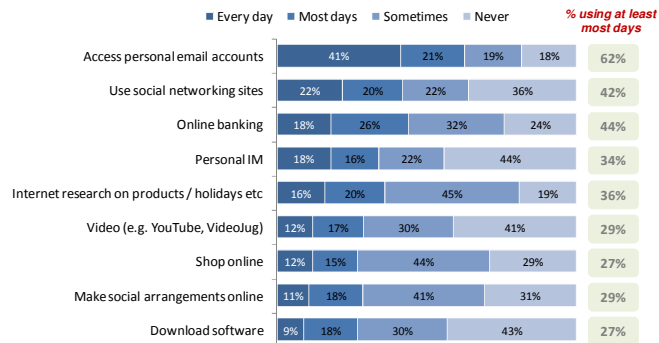


Figure 5 How often employees conduct internet activities during work hours

While 65% of office workers believe that use of email and social networking at work can be distracting, perhaps employers are right to give employees the trust they crave: 66% of all employees say they make up the time they spend using the internet for personal reasons by working later or through lunch.

## Risky business

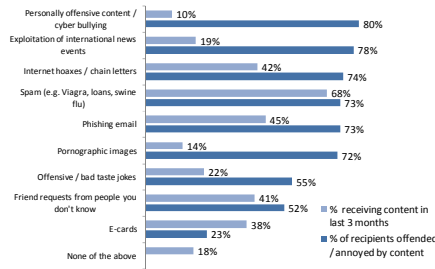


Figure 6 Types of unsolicited content received and offence caused

Spam (68%) and phishing emails (45%) are the most commonly received unsolicited content although personally offensive content / cyber bullying (80%) and exploitation of international news events (78%) cause the most upset and irritation. Internet hoaxes /chain letters provide an interesting case, being relatively high on both the frequency and upset scale.

Beyond the impact of productivity and the personal irritation factor, unsolicited content has the potential to cause major security issues in a workplace that isn't prepared. 47% of workplaces have had at least one security incident as a result of internet usage. Security (61%), in fact, is a bigger concern for employers than productivity (39%) when it comes to web collaboration for employers (fig. 7)

There are also other security issues at play, with information security potentially just as big a concern for businesses. 44% of employees are happy to discuss work-related issues on social networking sites, and 25% have sent content via email or social networking sites that they wish they hadn't, leaving the door open for leaks of potentially sensitive or damaging information.

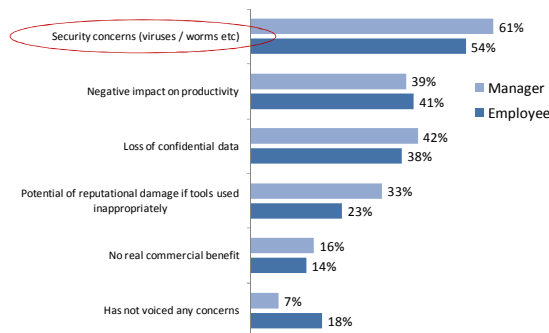


Figure 7 Concerns raised by company about Web 2.0 tools

Despite the mutual benefits created for employers and their staff by social media tools, there is clearly a need to take a step forward in order to shore up defences while not losing the benefits of the current situation. 68% of managers agree that maintaining a balance between policing and empowering usage in order to benefit the organisation is key to future success.

## Conclusion

The blurring boundary between work and home life is creating a new office environment that has innumerable benefits to business, but also inevitable drawbacks. The advantages of employees engaging with social media are clear, with obvious benefits to both their own morale and their ability to contribute knowledge that feeds into external business activity.

Employers are enthusiastically embracing these new tools and are willing to trust their staff to behave responsibly. Largely a win-win situation for both employers and employees, adjustments to this delicate balance must not be undertaken lightly. However, security risks must be kept in check if the use of social media in the workplace is to continue to be a benefit rather than a liability.

## Methodology

Approximately 250 online interviews with office workers and 150 with managers were conducted in each of the UK, the US, Australia and Germany during January 2010. The survey was conducted by Loudhouse Research, an independent market research consultancy based in the UK, on behalf of Clearswift.