

Digital Addiction Wreaks Havoc on Business Innovation

Your success or failure is created by what you focus on. What you focused on five years, five months or five days ago is what you have in your life today. What you focus on today is what you will reap in the future.

Dementia usually describes deterioration in cognitive abilities that are commonly seen in people who have suffered a head injury or psychiatric illness. Digital Dementia, a term coined in South Korea, is used to describe a deterioration of cognitive abilities resulting from over-use of computers, smart phones, gaming consoles and the Internet in general.

Dr. Byun Gi-won of the Balance Brain Centre in Seoul, Korea, said “Over-use of smartphones and game devices hampers the balanced development of the brain...heavy users are likely to develop the left side of their brains, leaving the right side untapped or underdeveloped.” It is the right side of the brain that is linked with concentration, creativity, innovation and emotional development. Digital dementia includes other side effects such as problems with attention, organization, orientation, problem solving, social communications and reasoning.

With Digital Dementia on the rise, does the overuse of digital gadgets and electronic media foreshadow eminent decline of business innovation?

The Digital Dilemma

Today’s technological society has been raising and embracing two generations of employees or potential employees that are so digitally focused with brains not fully developed that they can no longer remember even the simplest of things such as a phone number. This will have great impact on the business community in the areas of productivity, efficiency, communications, social interaction and employee/employer connection. With impaired concentration and memory spans how do employers cope with employees that lack innovative, critical or creative thinking?

Additional research shows that more than 60 percent of employees studied, between the ages of 20 and 30, suffer from memory loss and forgetfulness blaming an environment overwhelmed by digital devices.

Dealing with a Digital Tsunami

Even if you are not currently dealing with the digital dementia problem, you will be – and soon. You will find it creeping into and lowering your productivity and performance

levels, causing communication and harmony issues and multi-generational workforces will be further segregated, setting up connection and blame-game failures.

Recognize the digital tsunami before it arrives. By being forewarned you can be prepared – it will save you hundreds of work hours trying to figure out how to correct the avalanche of problems after they've happened and are entrenched in your workforce. Create a checklist of behavioral issues symptomatic of digital dementia that are already problematic and getting worse. Recognizing that there are social and memory-based issues caused by the advancement of technology is the first step in dealing with it.

Go on the offense. Create a plan to either prevent or deal with the deficiencies of digital dementia so it doesn't cripple the productivity and profitability of your business. Consider the following:

- Build a team to deal with this impending digital tsunami - include a person from every level of your organization
- Make them aware of the current research and the long-term effects of digital dementia on your organization and their personal lives – this tsunami will flood into every crevice of your organization and the devastation will move quickly like wildfire
- Create a plan that involves all employees interacting on an in-person level – not just digital face time
- Limit the use of digital devices in the workplace when and where possible
- Change the environment by painting walls colors more conducive to interpersonal relations such as a pastel terra cotta or a light green with a touch of blue
- Meet with employees at their work stations instead of emailing or texting them – even a telephone call is better than a text or email
- Require that everyone memorizes certain things like your company vision or safety rules to help build up concentration and boost memory
- Hold regular innovation and creativity meetings as a group to engage everyone in the process of developing the right side of the brain to compensate for the digitally over-controlled left side

This list just scratches the surface of some of the steps you can take today to overcome the digital dementia that is facing your business. Your workforce is always focused on something – it is important that they are focused on what your business needs to thrive and grow – not just digital technology that usurps their time and attention.

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