**The Digital Workplace - Worksheet**

**Steps to follow:**

1/ Do the listening & reading tasks on the website <http://certiflangues.univ-littoral.fr/>

2/ Work on the written task

a/ Collect arguments

b/ Draw the outline *(= le plan)*

c/ Write the report – check spelling and register of language! Debrief in class with students and teacher.

d/ Study the example and work on transition sentences and link words

3/ Prepare for the spoken interaction

a/ Select the arguments relevant to the roles, using the table from step 2a/

b/ Practise useful expressions for debating

c/ Play your role

d/ debrief

**Step 2: work on the written task**

“Write a 250-300-word report for your line manager on the impact of workplace technologies on the following aspects of working life: work-life balance, productivity, workplace relationships and communication.”

**a/ Go through the dossier to collect the arguments that will help you fill in the table below**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Positive | Negative | Solutions |
| Characteristics of the digital workplace | No borders: it’s the space around us (not a physical place) – we can communicate more easily. Ex: sitting in a café in Brazil and having a conference call with someone in India, through a laptop. | High purchasing, maintenance and operational costs of the technology associated to the digital workplace (computers, server rooms, smartphones, software and applications) |  |
| Work-life balance | Smartphones make it possible to spent more free time at home or with friends and family, outside the office, for example to attend children’s sporting events | Bad use of technology: check the smartphone on a constant basis at the expense of spending time with family or friends / checking office emails late in bed = unhealthy |  |
| Communication | Improves communication: share it quickly and easily with colleagues – emails, video-conferencing, texting, etc. – one can be reached at any time  Improves customer service and customer satisfaction  Enhanced decision-making through quicker and easier communication | Constant communication means no limit outside business hours – anywhere, anytime |  |
| Productivity | - Better productivity thanks to less employee stress – fewer stress-induced errors  - Improved human resources management, through a quicker hiring process  - Employees boost their creativity through social networks like Yammer | Loss of productivity:  - distraction, caused by social media (FB, YouTube, Twitter)  - automation makes the job less challenging  - Email flooding / overload / clutter: attention switch | Corporate actions / programmes to block access to certain websites (FB, YouTube, …)  Corporate programmes of good practices to stop email cluttering  Personal initiative to stop CC-ing (copying) too many recipients to cover one’s back + to stop checking the mailbox compulsively |
| Work-relationships |  | Digital technology reduces face to face interaction  Employees become self-centred and buried in their work |  |
| Data security |  | Difficult to monitor the usage and privacy of the business information that is shared digitally => risk of employees using the information for their own profit  Risk that sensitive business information is hacked / is stolen / leaks |  |
| Health |  | => no real break from work, which then becomes intrusive  => consequences on the health: insomnia, burn-out, depression  Excessive use of a smartphone can lead to brain damage |  |

**b/ Draw the outline.**

**c/ Write the full report. Pay attention to transition phases and link words – these greatly help the reader identify the different parts of the report.**

**d/ Study the example below:**

1. Read the report and try to reconstitute the outline.

2. Write the missing transition sentences.

3. Write link words (you can reorganise the introductory sentence of the paragraph if necessary).

Going to work used to mean going to a physical place. Now, as digital workplaces are being built, work can be thought of as the whole space around us. The digital workplace would be one to which people might never actually go, because through digital technology, it is now possible to communicate with colleagues and/or customers instantly, and without boundaries: imagine walking around a factory in India, while sitting in a café in Brazil! The emergence of a digital workplace through technology, though, definitely causes profound changes in the way people live, behave and work. This report will present the impacts of workplace technologies on different aspects of workers’ lives.

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\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, smartphones such as iPhones or Blackberries have revolutionized work-life balance: workers used to have to use their office phones during business hours. Now, however, they can make or receive phone calls anytime and at any place, enabling them to spend more time outside the office or to enjoy more free time, as they can check their mobile devices from anywhere. For example, this technology can allow parents to attend their children’s sporting events while remaining reachable via their smartphones. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, as the Internet and digital technology have eliminated space and time boundaries, employees can now work from anywhere and at any time, which makes them feel more in control of their work and enables them to balance work and life at home more easily.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, communication has also been greatly enhanced through digital technology: employees can now share information more quickly and instantly with colleagues through text messaging or video-conferencing. These tools not only support efficient decision-making, but they also improve customer service and as a result, customer satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, digital technology has had a positive impact on staff productivity. It can alleviate employees’ stress in many ways: it reduces human errors and can even bring some fun into the workplace, and it also automates various tasks, making the job less tedious, increasing productivity and therefore, job satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, social networks like Yammer.com also encourage innovation and creativity that will promote business, resulting in productive brainstorming sessions and information exchanges. According to McKinsey, large organisations have found improvements in market share, operating margins and market leadership through the use of social networks.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, human resources managers use the Internet to make the recruitment process quicker and easier through online advertising for job openings. They use tracking tools too, to monitor performance and productivity.

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\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, as Randall Craig, author of the book *Personal Balance Sheet*, explains, mobile devices are tools that can help or hurt work-life balance. According to him, a winning use of mobile technology would be to leave work early to go home and leave the Blackberry on to check a couple of calls, whereas a bad use of mobile technology would be to leave work early and check the Blackberry all the time at the expense of spending time with friends or family. Checking office emails in bed at night for hours cannot be healthy either.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the use of technology can have detrimental effects on employees’ productivity, as they are distracted from their tasks, resulting from constant access to social media websites like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. Technology may also hinder their creativity and general skills in some cases, when the automation or computerisation of tasks make jobs less challenging. Email overload and clutter are other distractors for employees: looking at one’s emails dozens of times a day requires an “attention switch” which leads to inefficiency and loss of productivity. Very often, emails are sent to a lot of people who do not really need to read the message: for example, sales staff keep CC-ing their manager every time just to cover their backs or just to make sure the manager knows what they are doing.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, interpersonal communications prove important in building workplace relationships, and face to face meetings encourage bonding and socialising. There is a risk that digital technology will destroy this type of interaction, making employees more reserved and self-centred, buried in their work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, it can be very difficult to monitor the usage and the privacy of the information shared digitally, as well as to guarantee that sensitive business information will not be hacked and fall into the wrong hands.

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Grexit, a blog about email, collaboration and productivity, examines the question of news feeds as a possible alternative to emails. The result, however, is that even if news feeds indeed offer information that is relevant to the reader who has signed up to receive them, they actually distract the worker as much as emails, because they also provide constant refreshing of information and require a lot of scrolling to read everything.

According to the blog, what needs fixing is how people use emails; but changing employees’ habits is a hard job because it does not solely depend on individual practices. For example, CC-ing many colleagues is a defensive tactic that is inherent to the dynamics of the functioning of a company. This problem could most likely be solved by establishing good practices guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, digital technology has brought many positive changes to the way we work: improved work-life balance and better and quicker communication with colleagues and employees, as well as increased productivity. Those changes, however, have their disadvantages: the unhealthy constant checking of emails at home and at work or the constant distraction associated with social networks. Sometimes technology simply highlights problems that already existed because they are inherent to the company, sometimes it is indeed at the origin of those issues. Solutions can be found both at the individual level and at the corporate level.

**Step 3: spoken interaction**

*Situation: with the other intern, you must present your findings to management and are debating what should be included in the presentation.*

*Role A: you believe that the positive effects of workplace technologies far outweigh any disadvantages and that no changes need to be made in the way in which they are used.*

*Role B: you are sceptical about the positive impact of workplace technologies, and believe steps should be taken to ensure that they are not over-used.*

*In a 10-minute debate, work towards a compromise presentation and final recommendations.*

**a/ Select the arguments relevant to the roles, using the table from step 2a/.**

Arguments role A:

Arguments role B:

**b/ Study and practise useful expressions for debating.**

**c/ Work in a group of 3 students. One student is the judge, the other two students are debaters. Take turns to play all the roles: debaters and judge.**

The judge will:

- make notes of the arguments used by each speaker (keywords only)

- make notes of the debate-specific language used by each speaker: agreeing and disagreeing, introducing ideas, concluding, etc.

- make notes of how well the speakers perform the task: introducing themselves and their roles, exchanging ideas and arguments, maintaining the interaction, finding a compromise

- time the debate: 10 minutes!

The debaters will speak using notes only.

**d/ Debrief with students and teacher.**

**Judge’s notecard** *– Total duration of the debate: \_\_\_\_\_ min*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Items to note down** | **Student A** | **Student B** |
| Introducing oneself and the role () |  |  |
| Maintaining the interaction () |  |  |
| Finding a compromise () |  |  |
| Arguments used (keywords) |  |  |
| Debate-specific language (keywords) |  |  |

**Judge’s notecard** *– Total duration of the debate: \_\_\_\_\_ min*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Items to note down** | **Student A** | **Student B** |
| Introducing oneself and the role () |  |  |
| Maintaining the interaction () |  |  |
| Finding a compromise () |  |  |
| Arguments used (keywords) |  |  |
| Debate-specific language (keywords) |  |  |

**Judge’s notecard** *– Total duration of the debate: \_\_\_\_\_ min*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Items to note down** | **Student A** | **Student B** |
| Introducing oneself and the role () |  |  |
| Maintaining the interaction () |  |  |
| Finding a compromise () |  |  |
| Arguments used (keywords) |  |  |
| Debate-specific language (keywords) |  |  |