'Always-On' Culture

- The expectation that employees are always available and responsive to work demands, even outside traditional 9-5 work hours.
  - Although not exclusively a work problem

- Brought on by increasingly common instant communication methods and somewhat exacerbated by the pandemic

- Enabled by work from home but work from home doesn't necessitate 'Always-On' Culture

Personal Problems Caused By 'Always-On' Culture

- Research demonstrating that spousal resentment and work-family conflict increased the more often employees checked smart devices during family time.

- It fragments your time, leading to poorer time management skills.

- Constant anticipation of work creates an unbreakable cycle of stress even when there might not be work to act on. Anticipation of the work alone creates an inability to detach from work-life.
  - 27% of all respondents said they were unable to unplug from work because of an inability to take time off, or a lack of clear boundaries between the workplace and home.

How 'Always-On' Culture affects relationship with work

- 'Always-On' culture can lead to increased stress/anxiety/pressure at job as well as contribute to feelings of burnout and negative feelings towards their work
  - According to a survey conducted by jobs' site Indeed, over 67% of workers reported experiencing more burnout than ever before over the course of the pandemic.

- Constant connectivity can interrupt deep work and focus as well as cause employees to feel compelled to constantly check their emails and messages, which can distract them from their work.

- The pressure to be always available can result in subpar work quality.
  - A study by Stanford University showed that productivity falls sharply after 50 hours worked in a week
  - Research published in the Harvard Business Review highlighted that managers were unable to tell the difference between employees who claimed to work 80 hour weeks, and those who actually did.

Negative Effects of 'Always-On' Culture on Companies

- 'Always-On' culture can lead to lower productivity, increased absenteeism or presenteeism, and staff turnover.

- Risks of employees working at a decreased capacity from stress, burnout, or sleep deprivation in areas of high importance

- Relying too much on employees who make themselves constantly available.

Setting Boundaries to Combat 'Always-On' Culture

- Establishing work hours and logging out of work spaces outside of those hours

- Altering settings of emails, Slack, and other programs to set 'away' or 'busy' status

- Scheduling emails so that they are sent during work hours

- Clarifying with employees what counts as urgent or important messages and what can wait

References

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