

Interruption Overload in an Office Environment: Hungarian Survey Focusing on the Factors that Affect Job Satisfaction and Work Efficiency

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Abstract : On the one hand, new technologies and communication tools improve employee productivity and accelerate information and knowledge transfer, while on the other hand, information overload and continuous interruptions make it even harder to concentrate at work. It is a great challenge for companies to find the right balance, while there is also an ongoing demand to recruit and retain the talented employees who are able to adopt the modern work style and effectively use modern communication tools. For this reason, this research does not focus on the objective measures of office interruptions, but aims to find those disruption factors which influence the comfort and job satisfaction of employees, and the way how they feel generally at work. The focus of this research is on how employees feel about the different types of interruptions, which are those they themselves identify as hindering factors, and those they feel as stress factors. By identifying and then reducing these destructive factors, job satisfaction can reach a higher level and employee turnover can be reduced. During the research, we collected information from depth interviews and questionnaires asking about work environment, communication channels used in the workplace, individual communication preferences, factors considered as disruptions, and individual steps taken to avoid interruptions. The questionnaire was completed by 141 office workers from several types of workplaces based in Hungary. Even though 66 respondents are working at Hungarian offices of multinational companies, the research is about the characteristics of the Hungarian labor force. The most important result of the research shows that while more than one third of the respondents consider office noise as a disturbing factor, personal inquiries are welcome and considered useful, even if in such cases the work environment will not be convenient to solve tasks requiring concentration. Analyzing the sizes of the offices, in an open-space environment, the rate of those who consider office noise as a disturbing factor is surprisingly lower than in smaller office rooms. Opinions are more diverse regarding information communication technologies. In addition to the interruption factors affecting the employees' job satisfaction, the research also focuses on the role of the offices in the 21st century.

Keywords : information overload, interruption, job satisfaction, office environment, work efficiency

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