Building e-resilience: Helping individuals and organisations manage technology in a healthy and sustainable way

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What is e-working?

- Information communication technology (ICT) allows people to work remotely

- Terms: teleworking; telecommuting, flexiplace; e-working

- The act or practice of working at home (or elsewhere) while being electronically linked to one’s place of employment (or network)
Some facts and figures: 1

- Since 2005, the number of regular e-workers in the UK increased from 3.4M to 4.2M
- Many more work during evenings/weekends/holidays facilitated by technology
- 50% of work is now compatible with e-working
  - Least common in retail
  - Most common in information and communications
- >60% of e-workers are men, reflecting higher status
- 1/5 managers e-work but only 1/15 low-skilled staff

Sources: GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com; ONS, 2015
Some facts and figures - 2

- Many benefits of e-working
- Popular with employees
  - 80%-90% would like to e-work (at least part-time)
  - More family-centred
- Popular with organisations
  - Increased efficiency/satisfaction, lower costs
- The optimum arrangement is 2/3 days a week
  - balancing concentrative work (remotely) with collaborative work (at the office)

Sources: Forgacs, 2010; GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com; Kinman & McDowall, 2016; ONS, 2015
Enabling e-working

- The cloud for multi-locational storing, enabling sharing and editing of information
- Skype and other tools for global communications
- Webinars to disseminate information/develop skills
- Apps to manage our time and wellbeing
- Technology to aid fitness and productivity (eg FitBit)
Working Any time, Anywhere
Count the times you answer ‘yes’

- I get anxious when away from my ICT device
- I frequently find myself multi-tasking using technology
- I check my phone last thing at night and first thing in the morning
- I read and send emails during evenings, weekends and holidays
- Checking emails has become a habit
- My personal life suffers because of my technology use
- I hide my technology use from others
ICT: flexible friend or digital leash?

- Enables flexibility
- Accommodates preferences for working hours/locations
- Can juggle work/personal demands
- Speedy access to information/facilitates communication
- Reduces costs of commuting and capital expenditure
- Improves productivity

- Email overload/digital burnout
- Increases time/strain WLC
- Raises expectations of availability
- Reduces recovery opportunities
- Limits sustaining relationships
- Switching costs of multi-tasking,
  Impairs productivity

### Findings: perceived effects of technology

#### Positive

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships at work</td>
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<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well Being</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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#### Negative

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<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6%</td>
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Kinman, McDowall et al. 2016
Findings: guidance and responsibility for ICT use

- 57% of organisations provide no guidance on how to switch off

- Individuals expected to ‘self-manage’ ICT use

- Whose responsibility is it to help?
  - 40% - the employer
  - 10% - the employee
  - 50% - a shared responsibility

- IT function most commonly seen as responsible (32%), then line managers (23%) – what about HR?

Kinman, McDowall et al. 2016
What do organisations offer?

- Focus mainly on ergonomic/health and safety issues
- Providing separate phone for work
- Encouraging shortest messages to fewest people
- Allowing ‘calm’ inboxes
- Restricting e-mail use time-wise and location-wise
- Erasing emails during holiday periods
- Providing filtering/blocking tools
- Shifting communications to different media
- Introducing legislation to ‘protect’ employees
The need for 'e-resilience'

• An evolving concept ..... 

• “The characteristics of individuals and organisations that help them engage with technology in a healthy, efficient and sustainable way” (Kinman et al. 2016)

• A systemic approach is required, where the employee and organisation has a dual responsibility
Our aims:

• To consider how ICT influences working practices and well-being from an individual and company perspective

• To revisit the meaning of ‘work-life balance’ in the changing landscape of ICT use

• To identify the factors underpinning e-resilient individuals and organisations

• To consider how the concept of e-resilience can help build healthy ICT policies and practices
e-resilient organisations

- Take a systemic approach to managing ICT
- Be aware of the drawbacks of ICT as well as the benefits
- Consider your email challenge – how could it be reduced?
- Assess your email culture - is it healthy and sustainable?
- Identify your e-mail norms - do you set out expectations clearly?
- Establish role models for e-resilience – what strategies do they use?
e-resilient organisations

- Assess/monitor practices and competences
- Identify training needs - offer mentoring and coaching
- Encourage e-courtesy, empathy and respect
- Welcome flexible working – provide trust, feedback, support
- Be aware of individual differences and key risk factors
- Resist ‘fads’ and one-size-fits-all – no single solution can help
- Evaluate changes introduced
e-resilient individuals

- Take control – manage technology (not vice versa)
- Reflect on your behaviour - track your usage
- Identify your flex-style and your personal preferences for ICT use
- To what extent are they congruent with your co-workers?
- Reflect on your emotional responses to emails – can enhance e-empathy
- Respect boundaries (your own and others)
- Consider what actions you can take – small changes first
- Do something different e.g. mindfulness/relaxation
Digital detoxes

- Study of 2,025 UK adults – more than a third (15M) had taken a digital detox

- 25% for a half to a full day; 20% for up to a week

- Reasons: to do other things; spend quality time with family and friends; to prove you can live without ICT

- Easier to switch off on holidays; no WiFi destinations are increasingly popular

- 33% felt more productive; 25% enjoyed life more

OFCOM (2016)
Moving forward

- Raise awareness of the costs of a lack of e-resilience – now and in the future
- More research needed: applied and experimental
- A multidisciplinary and creative approach is vital
- How can we use theory (e.g. PE fit) to frame interventions?
- How can we help organisations anticipate the challenges posed by rapid technological change?
- How can we build e-courtesy?
- How can we raise awareness of the risks of multi-tasking?
- How can we develop a competency framework to identify KSAs for ICT use?
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https://alwaysontulture.wordpress.com/