

Staffing Decisions™

Mansfield, OH
419.522.2895



Wooster, OH
330.262.2662

www.staffingpartnersoh.com

Marion, OH
740.751.4997

Are There More Distractions at Work Today?

Distractions in the workplace have always been an issue. Add personal email, online shopping, social media and web surfing, and you've added a whole new digital dimension to the problem.

Or so the story goes. But is it true?

Maybe not. According to a recent study by BambooHR, an HR software company in Lindon, UT, traditional distractions remain much bigger time-wasters: time spent in the office kitchen or break room, at the water cooler, and making small talk with co-workers.

Another interesting finding from the study: Upper-management employees spend more distracted time each day than those lower down the corporate totem pole. High-level execs are 10% more likely to spend 30 minutes or more making trips to the water cooler or break room, 7% more likely to spend 30 minutes or more taking bathroom breaks and 7% more likely to spend 30 minutes or more talking to friends.

Are Distractions Really Wasteful?

Workplace distractions, of course, have always been an issue. However, this study also points out that many employees believe that some of the so-called distractions actually enhance performance, such as:

- Breaks from their desks throughout the day;
- Dedicated lunch breaks away from their desks;
- Small talk and gossip with coworkers;
- Listening to music.

Multitasking Is Overrated

Is it possible that online activity is just a form of multitasking and, therefore, not really a distraction? Perhaps, but recent research has called into question the widely-accepted notion that multitasking is a good thing. Instead, research shows that focusing on one task at a time – *monotasking* – may be more productive.

A 2016 study at University of California-Irvine, for instance, indicated that those who work online may switch between tasks more than 400 times a day, reducing efficiency dramatically. "Monotasking, not multitasking, should be the goal," says Verena von Pfetten, author of

a *New York Times* article on the topic.

How do you convince a generation weaned on staying digitally connected that being plugged in constantly isn't a good thing? Some suggestions:

- Reconsider statements in job descriptions suggesting that being a "multi-tasker" is a desired characteristic.
- Suggest that employees take time during the day to unplug – if only for 10-15 minutes.
- Consider making meetings and other gatherings "tech-free zones" to help staff focus on each other rather than their devices.
- Encourage management staff to set a good example – for everyone, not just new employees.

Finally, given the management-level staff propensity to leave their desks to visit the water cooler, restroom and colleagues during the day, and employees' own beliefs that this type of activity can provide a much-needed break, consider allowing time for casual interactions. That kind of impromptu interaction can often lead to productive collaboration and team-building. ▲



For More Information:

CIO: "How workplace distractions can actually boost productivity."

<http://www.cio.com/article/3019110/careers-staffing/how-workplace-distractions-can-actually-boost-productivity.html>

Fast Company: "What Multitasking Does To Your Brain"

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3019659/leadership-now/what-multitasking-does-to->

Hot on the Inside

When There's a Shooter 2

The time to plan a policy is now, not when the shooting starts.

Retirees as Mentors 3

The pros and cons of using your retirees as coaches and mentors for their replacements.

Makerspaces for Creativity . . . 4

It's a new concept that provides an opportunity for employees to interact with the latest technology to create solutions to their problems.

A Shooter's On Your Doorstep—What Do You Do?

It's every employer's worst nightmare—an active shooter in your workplace. Rare as these incidents are, the results of not being ready could be tragic. What emergency-action plans should you have in place? What kind of training and preparation should you do? What kind of follow-up action is needed?

Organizations are expected to provide their employees with a safe work environment, to prepare for such events as active shooters or natural disasters. You need to have effective plans in place to react in a timely and appropriate manner.

While active-shooter incidents are rare, there are steps companies should take to train employees on what to do if such an event occurs, says Har-



old Grimsley, president of Grimsley Strategies, in Buena Vista, GA, a

violence-prevention expert for 25 years.

“When faced with an active shooter, the employees should run, hide, or, as an absolute last resort, fight,” says Grimsley. “They should think about their surroundings, review the escape plan they would



follow should an incident occur, and discover hiding places they can go if they are unable to vacate the property. Employees should be reminded strongly that fighting back is only a last resort.”

Grimsley recommends the implementation of a violence-prevention program with industry-standard elements. These elements include:

- A policy on how the company will respond to threats of violence;

- Policy details outlining how employees should report any employee safety concerns or threats;
- A Threat Assessment Team to review and investigate any reported threats or potential violence reported by employees, customers and others. This team generally includes members from HR, legal, security, operations, risk, safety and facilities.

Training is Key

“All employees need to be trained on the policy and the procedures they should follow to report a concern,” says Grimsley. “Employees should be trained on the warning signs for workplace violence. There are industry-accepted indicators that could mean violence is imminent. It is critical employees be trained in these signs.”

Becky Blanton, associate editor of *Airstream Life*, and a former police officer, says there are resources that employers can turn to. The Department of Homeland Security offers a free PDF guideline (https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf) that shows employers how to respond to an active-shooter situation. In addition, she says, many law enforcement agencies provide free training on such situations.

Grimsley recommends having floor plans available for law enforcement to help them maneuver through the building to search for a shooter.

It's a Crime Scene

If the worst does happen, your workplace will quickly turn into a crime scene, complete with yellow tape restricting access, perhaps for days. Have a business-continuity plan in place that permits using another location.

The mental state of your employees in the aftermath of a shooter incident will be a concern. Make sure employees share any concerns or fears they may have, and consider providing counselors.

How likely is it that you'll face such a situation? Not very. An FBI study of active shooters from 2000-2013 indicated an average of 11.4 incidents annually, increasing from 6.4 per year during the first seven years of the study to 16.4 per year during the last seven years. Seventy percent of the incidents occurred at a commercial business or educational institution.

But “not very likely” doesn't mean never. And the time to start planning is before you hear the pop of gunfire. ▲

Temps = key element

More and more surveys indicate that forward-thinking companies see temporary help as a key element of their work force strategy. More companies are relying on a blended mix of their core staff and temporary help to achieve their strategic priorities.

Employers, both large and small, now use temporary workers to find specialized skill sets quickly, to audition candidates prior to hiring them, to relieve higher paid staff of routine tasks that are better done by temps, and to enhance overall long-term workforce flexibility.

Businesses are also starting to realize the importance of truly engaging temporary help by integrating them into the team. In addition, an engaged employee—whether staff or temp—is a productive employee.

So the value proposition is simple. Firms that work strategically with a staffing service to develop a flexible approach to their talent needs will win; those that don't, won't. Think about that, and ask us how we can help you plan for the future. We're real people here, and we're here to help.

For More Information:

Domestic Security Alliance Counsel: “Active Shooter Resources”

<https://www.dsac.gov/topics/active-shooter-resources>

SHRM: “Over 80% of Active Shooter Incidents Occur at Work”

<https://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/safetysecurity/articles/pages/fbi-active-shooter-work.aspx>

With aging baby boomers poised to exit the workplace, many companies are faced with concerns about bench strength to fill their soon-to-be-empty positions. But these prospective retirees who will create the vacancies also hold the potential to help solve the problem, as mentors to their replacements.

There are obvious benefits here in terms of retaining institutional know-how, but there are some potential drawbacks as well.

One potential problem, says Janie Omadeke, founder of The Mentor Method, an online mentor matching service for millennial women in Washington, D.C., is that retirees quickly lose touch with fast-changing working conditions.

While some retirees may be up-to-date on the latest technology, she says, the cultural differences from the workplace of today and the retirees' workplace of yesterday may pose a challenge. Cultural shifts such as casual dress code, flex schedules and younger leadership may be complicated for a retiree to understand since this was not the situation when they were building their careers. Still, these potential hurdles can often be overcome with training, and benefits can far outweigh potential drawbacks.

Institutional Wisdom

Retirees have a wealth of knowledge about the companies they worked for, their customers and unique aspects of their business. Their perspectives and institutional knowledge can help current staff members recognize and identify potential challenges so they can avoid repeating past mistakes.

Nancy S. Ahlrichs is business development consultant for FlashPoint, a global talent development firm in Indianapolis, and the author of *Igniting Gen B and Gen V: The New Rules of Engagement for Boomers, Veterans and Other Long-*



termers on the Job. Ahlrichs notes that there are a number of things that HR can do to pave the way for returning retiree-mentors:

- Keep a skills database of “A” Retirees, especially those with specialized skills, knowledge and abilities.
- Select, interview and orient potential mentors prior to their retirement, but don’t fail to reach out to current retirees whose names keep popping up. (“Sally Jones always knew how to deal with these situations.”)
- Plan to conduct training for retiree mentors before they assume their new role.
- Conduct re-training if a retiree mentor is not utilized after original training for 5-6 months.
- Consider retirees as mentors or co-mentors for groups, either teaming two retirees or one retiree and one current employee.
- Survey employees who receive mentoring to obtain feedback about their experiences. Use the feedback to tighten up processes, and to further develop your retirees’ skills.

- Find ways to recognize your retiree mentors among their peers as well as to the overall employee population.

But, she says, employers and their HR departments shouldn’t overlook the need to re-onboard these retirees. Returning retirees, she says, can disappoint if interviews and orientation are skipped, if relationships between retirees and their new manager are disregarded and if parties don’t understand the potential impacts of a retiree’s return on their retirement plan. “This is a new role for the retiree and will involve a new reporting relationship, new expectations, a different schedule and new relationships with past coworkers,” she says.

Staying close with their retirees can benefit companies in other ways, says Omadeke. “When you work long enough to retire, your professional network is extensive. Maintaining a positive relationship with a retiree gives you access to their network which also has extensive knowledge that can be valuable to your company’s success,” she says.

While not all retirees may be suitable – or interested – in return engagements, Ahlrichs says that, “top-performing retirees represent a growing resource for employers of all types. Smart employers are looking at their retirees as the resource they need.” ▲

Staffing Decisions is sent to you for your information and enjoyment. Neither *Staffing Decisions* nor the sponsoring institution is providing financial or legal advice. In making judgments related to editorial material in *Staffing Decisions*, always consult your own financial and legal advisers.

Questions regarding editorial material in *Staffing Decisions* may be directed to the sponsoring company whose address appears on the last page, or to Merlin Associates, Inc., 260 Madison Avenue, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10016.

E-mail: merlin@merlinassociatesny.com
©2016 Merlin Associates, Inc.

For More Information:

Monster.com: “Return to Work After Retirement”

<http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/return-to-work-after-retirement>

NextAvenue: “The New Boomerang Workers: Rehired Retirees”

<http://www.nextavenue.org/new-boomerang-workers-rehired-retirees/>

The Fiscal Times: “30% of ‘Retirees’ Would Return to the Labor Force”

<http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2014/08/21/30-Percent-Retirees-Would-Return-Labor-Force>

Makerspaces: Hot Trend for Spurring Innovation

Technology drives innovation and productivity in every industry, with rapid changes making it challenging to stay on top of all of the possibilities. Even recent graduates may not come to the workplace with technology skills that are up-to-date enough to stay on top of rapidly emerging trends. How can you help ensure that your staff has both the information and confidence they need?

Makerspaces may be an option. Makerspaces provide an opportunity for employees to come together to make things—from interactive videos, to product prototypes, to custom bandages, to robots—that normally they wouldn't have the time or the tools to make.

Makerspaces don't have to be focused on technology, but often are. The idea is to get a group of people together in a casual environment where they can utilize time and tools to create things that improve their jobs.

The concept of makerspaces—also called *hackerspaces*—originated in 2005 in the San Francisco bay area with the launch of *MAKE Magazine*, and the first

Maker Faire, held in 2006. The idea has since been adopted by school systems and libraries around the country. It's gaining some traction with industries such as healthcare, where members bring together clinicians and staff members to engage with new technology and each other. In late 2015, for example, the University of Texas Medical Branch introduced a makerspace for its health care providers. Public libraries around the country are also embracing the concept, making these spaces open to the public.

How could makerspaces be used to spur innovation among your employees? In any number of ways. Startup organizations are one example of how innovators can be brought together in a relaxed environment to experiment and “play” with technology, but larger organizations can also benefit. For example:

- Bringing marketing employees together to experiment with analytics technology to gain insights into how their online digital marketing efforts are doing.
- Bringing manufacturing employees together to experiment with 3D tech-

nology to see what new possibilities might exist for their organizations.

- Bringing experienced workers together to engage with unfamiliar new software in a casual environment.

While many makerfaires and makerspaces are high tech events, they don't have to be. The concept, at its core, is simply providing a nurturing environment where people can take advantage of new technology to help them do their jobs better. ▲



For More Information:

Brookings: “Disrupting manufacturing: Innovation and the future of skilled labor.”

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brown-center-chalkboard/posts/2016/05/06-disrupting-manufacturing-innovation-skilled-labor-araya-sulavik>

Makerspace.com: “What’s a Makerspace?”

<http://spaces.makerspace.com/>

Tech&Learning: “Making the Grade: How Schools are Creating and Using Makerspaces”

<http://www.techlearning.com/resources/0003/making-the-grade-how-schools-are-creating-and-using-makerspaces/69967>