THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

By

LAURETTE SYLVAIN

Integrated Studies Project

submitted to Dr. Paul Kellogg

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

August 2011
Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of technology such as personal computers, blackberries, and other aspects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on employees’ and leaders’ work expectations and how these impact on work-life balance, specifically within the Department of Health and Social Services, Government of Yukon. Despite the employer introducing flexible work arrangements, an increase in workload demands with little or no additional financial or human resources presents a challenge to addressing work-life balance issues. Advancements in technology can therefore both help and hinder attempts to provide employees with the support they need in ensuring a healthy work environment. The raised expectations for both employees and employers in achieving goals and objectives and meeting often unreasonable deadlines may result in increased pressure on other employees within the organization. This may have an effect on employees’ health, resulting in higher absenteeism, lower productivity, and higher turnover rates.

In order to explore the impacts technology might have on work-life balance, the author interviewed an executive management team with the Department of Health and Social Services, Government of Yukon. Interview responses consisting of both quantitative and qualitative data were compiled and analyzed. The author tried to capture and project a real account of the comments and real challenges technology brings to the participants.

The review also gave consideration to extenuating factors such as workload issues which could reasonably be thought of as contributing to increased pressures. It became apparent that the volume of correspondence which often included a requirement to review and comment on large documents or reports in short time frames was more easily dispersed due to the advancement in new technology. Both positive and negative impacts on work demands and stress were shared. Recommendations from the respondents for improving work-life balance are incorporated into this report and these will be brought forward for suggested implementation.
Dedication

This research study is dedicated to the Executive Management Committee members of Health and Social Services, Government of Yukon, who participated in the research study. My gratitude goes to these participants for their willingness to openly share their experiences and offer recommendations to improve work-life balance. Despite their heavy workloads, these employees dedicate their time with the goal of improving the health and well-being of all Yukon people.
Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the support throughout my research. Dr. Paul Kellogg, my research supervisor, offered advice and guidance through his expertise and genuine interest in this research project, and gently nudged me to its final completion. Lastly, I wish to thank my husband, daughter, family and friends for their encouragement throughout this journey of learning.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... i  
Dedication ....................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... iii  
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... iv  

| Purpose and Objectives | 1 |
| Hypothesis | 1 |
| Review of Related Literature | 2 |
| Definition of Work-Life Balance | 2 |
| Scope and Limitations | 3 |
| Department Profile | 4 |
| **A Snapshot of Work-Life (Im)Balance** | 4 |
| Type of Research | 4 |
| Respondents | 5 |
| Structure of Interviews | 5 |
| Questionnaire | 5 |

| Studying the Snapshot: The Impact of Technology on Work-life Balance | 9 |
| Benefits of the New Technology | 13 |
| Impact of New Technology on the Quality of Communication | 14 |
| Impact Instant communication has on Work Demands | 17 |
| Link Between Work Demands and Levels of Stress | 18 |
| Effects on Mental and Physical Health | 19 |
| Boundaries between Work and Home | 23 |
| Addressing Technological Challenges to Ensure a More Engaged Workforce | 23 |

| Recommendations | 25 |
| Training | 25 |
| Communication | 30 |
| Future Research | 32 |
| Conclusion | 33 |
| Appendices | 36 |
| Appendix A: Consent Form | 36 |
| Appendix B: Questionnaire | 37 |
| Appendix C: Definition of Terms | 38 |
| Bibliography | 41 |
Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the study is to examine the following:

- Impact of new technology on work-life balance;
- Impact of instant communication on work demands;
- Link between work demands and levels of stress; and
- Boundaries between work and home;

While much research has been completed on identifying that technology can be beneficial in increasing efficiencies, it is important to also recognize that the flow of work assignments shifting from a stack of paperwork and hidden in computers and other devices can go unnoticed but can cause much stress and anxiety. It is anticipated that the responses to the interview questions will provide information as to how much time employees spend outside of their regular hours of work, the reasons for doing so, and whether they impact on other employees’ work time in order to meet their own deadlines. It may provide insight into whether the employees feel they have control over their work schedules. Furthermore, it may reveal how much control employees have over setting priorities and responding to increased work demands, especially when working in a healthcare environment. The interviewee responses may provide some insight in providing a better understanding of who has the control and how the use of technology has impacted on their work and personal lives.

Hypothesis

I am anticipating that most members of the senior management team work many additional hours beyond their regular hours of work, that there is a higher level of expectations placed upon them to continue to meet quick turnaround times, and boundaries get blurred with the increased access to technological equipment.

The survey findings should also reveal how technology impacts on the decisions we make, and the effects of communication methods used. In a department such as Health and Social Services, the goal of improved health and wellness for all Yukoners puts a lot of pressure on
senior management and in fact, all levels of workers, to meet client demands and offer quality health care and social services.

Review of Related Literature

In 2009, Cropley and Milward published an article on “how workers recover and unwind from work during leisure, as poor unwinding had been associated with negative health.”¹ The research explored the recovery process to gain a greater understanding of how individuals switch-off from work-related thoughts post work.² They interviewed workers who habitually found it difficult to switch-off from work (i.e. high ruminators), and workers who found it easy to switch-off from work (i.e. low ruminators).³ The research results highlighted the need for organizations to develop positive work-life balance initiatives for their employees in order to prevent them becoming fatigued and burnt out.”⁴ The research undertaken in this study, explores specifically the impact of technology on mental and physical health. Other research studies reviewed here may be similar but do not address how technology impacts members at a senior managerial level, nor are recommendations/initiatives brought forward.

Definition of Work-Life Balance

Work Life Balance is a person’s control over the responsibilities between her/his workplace, family, friends and self.⁵ It is recognized that technology has an impact on the control an employee may or may not have with such responsibilities. Not all employees use the same technology nor do they all possess blackberries or their equivalent. On the other hand, all members of the Executive Management Team (EMT) studied here, are expected to have their blackberries available and all have the same software available to them such as Outlook, Microsoft Office, and Portals. In trying to select a group of interviewees with fewer variables and

---

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
more similar constants, it was determined that the EMT would be the target audience for this research study. Definition of terms used throughout this paper are outlined in appendix C below.

**Scope and Limitations**

The scope of the project was limited to the executive management team members of the department of Health and Social Services. This population was sampled with a response rate of 100%, although the sampling size of nineteen participants was small. Nevertheless, data and anecdotal information have provided important insights on how each are affected by technology. The services which our department provides have a direct impact on clients’ health and well-being. Unlike other departments which may deal with natural resources, environmental issues, technical resources, our employees directly influence and can shape the lives of its citizens.

Limitations in the project included variances such as employees’ perception of work responsibilities, fluctuation of duties, and other influences. The data captured was only as accurate as the employees’ account of them as the author relied solely on self-reporting measures. In doing qualitative research, participants’ perception of time spent at work may be slightly different than the actual amount, especially if they are able to flex their hours of work. It is important to note that some may have found it difficult to separate work responsibilities with their own interest and desire to learn when providing information on extra hours worked. An example would be an employee taking his/her own initiative in reading or researching reports which may only indirectly relate to their particular position. Depending on the time of year, data may have been inflated. For example, some data was collected during the financial year-end review by the Auditor General, therefore it may not have been a true bi-weekly average of hours worked. Influences may have consisted of feeling overwhelmed at the time of the interview or the interviewee/interviewer relationship. Employees may feel somewhat apprehensive in sharing factual information for fear of divulging exactly how much time they spend on work-related issues, therefore the data can be either over-inflated or under-inflated. Lastly, the author tried to remove any of her own potential biases, and tried to maintain an objective approach and capture the thoughts and feelings of the participants as accurately as possible.
Department Profile

Health and Social Services is the largest and most diverse Yukon Government department with nearly 1200 employees representing over 65 distinct occupations. These employees range from frontline workers (e.g. social workers, nurses, therapists, etc.) and support staff (e.g. administrative, policy, communication, technical, etc.) and other professionals, such as counsellors, analysts and program staff. Many of the employees work in facilities or program areas which are accessible 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Staffing shortages mean that we must do as much as we can to support and retain current health care employees by offering attractive work environments and job satisfaction. Through our employee engagement survey, there are a range of factors known as drivers which are thought to increase overall engagement. By managing the drivers, an organization can effectively manage the engagement levels of its employees. Drivers such as communication, performance clarity and feedback, organizational culture, rewards and recognition, relationships with managers and peers, career development opportunities and knowledge of the organization's goals and vision are some of the factors that facilitate employee engagement. These drivers are reliant on the support we can provide employees in the area of work-life balance. What we offer to increase employee engagement can be limited when employees do not work regular hours, but instead are required to work varied shifts and different hours of work. If such services were reduced, it would ultimately have a direct negative impact on our clients' well-being.

A SNAPSHOT OF WORK-LIFE (IM)BALANCE

Type of Research

This study was primarily a qualitative research study with the exception of three questions which were quantitative. Qualitative Methods Interviews were conducted with the Executive
Management Team members which consisted primarily of Directors, Assistant Deputy Ministers and the Deputy Minister. Interviews began with closed questions mainly to gather data to place some context on the employee’s workforce profile and followed with open-ended questions.

Respondents
An e-mail was sent on March 27, 2011 to the members of the Executive Management Committee which comprised of nineteen (19) employees, excluding the executive assistant and the administrative assistant. It was felt that the scope of the study should target employees at the senior managerial level who had access to blackberries and/or cell phones for work purposes. All 19 participants agreed to be a part of this study. Of the 19 participants, there were three who were in acting managerial assignments in excess of a six-month period. Those three employees’ substantive positions were part of the bargaining unit.

Structure of Interviews
Participants were given the option of taking part in a face-to-face, over the telephone, or telehealth interview of approximately 20 to 30 minutes in duration. All interviews were conducted in person, with the exception of one which was conducted over the telephone. The first interview took place on April 7, 2011 and the last one on May 19, 2011. Each participant was asked to review and sign a written consent form at the interview (see appendix A). Each interview was recorded and notes were taken during the interview. Following each interview, a transcript of the information was typed out and printed off for future reference and analysis.

Questionnaire
The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions (see appendix B). The first question asked was whether they were on a compressed work week. This was asked to capture more accurate data in relation to actual hours of work. Of the 19 participants, two were on a compressed work week, although one commented that it was difficult to take the extra day off, therefore it was very unusual to be able to put it into practice. "Where operationally feasible, and with agreement of the supervisor, work arrangements that allow for flexible daily/weekly/monthly hours of work
schedules and days of work may be entered into between a manager and his/her supervisor." While there is an opportunity for managers to have flexible work arrangements such as flextime, averaging of hours, compressed work week, many find the demands too unpredictable to allow for such arrangements.

From the above chart, there were two employees who were on a formal compressed work week. Since there were employees who were on this compressed work week, it was important to ask how many hours they worked in excess of their bi-weekly as opposed to in excess of their daily hours of work. Comparisons could then be better made against those scheduled to work 7.5 hours per day.

The second question revealed their length of service, comparing departmental tenure with length of service with other governmental organizations. There were a total of six employees who had worked over 16 years with the Department of Health and Social Services and seven with less than five years of departmental experience.

---

Three employees were bargaining unit members. Bargaining unit members are entitled to claim for overtime pay which would be additional daily hours of work over and above their regular hours and any hours worked on Saturday or Sunday, whereas managerial staff are granted two weeks of additional vacation leave to cover their excess overtime.

![No. of Excess Hours by Respondents](image)

Five of the above worked 30 or more bi-weekly hours.

When asked whether they had ever checked a message either on their blackberry or home work e-mail after 5 p.m., there were 18 who had and one who had not. When asked whether they had ever checked a message either on their blackberry or home or work e-mail before the start of their workday, 15 had, one did so sometimes, and three had not. Out of the 16 who had, all checked it daily with the exception of one checking it twice per week and another two checking more than twice per week.

When asked if they had ever sent an e-mail to a non-management employee after their regular working day, either someone they supervised directly or another staff member in the department, there were sixteen who had and three who had not. Of the sixteen (16) who e-mailed non-management employees, none expected a response.
When asked whether they sometimes received e-mails with large attachments and were expected to review and respond within a certain timeframe, all responded in the affirmative. Many noted that receiving e-mail attachments such as documents or files on blackberries was rather difficult to read. Most people preferred to access those on their home or work computers. The follow-up question asked was how often they received these e-mails (see chart below).

When asked whether they felt their mental or physical health had been affected by the use of technology, eleven (11) felt their mental health had been affected; eight did not. As for whether their physical health was affected, eleven (11) felt it had been with one of those stating that they were affected in a positive way. Seven were not affected while one was unsure.
STUDYING THE SNAPSHOT: THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Some respondents felt that they had no boundaries with work-life balance. The blackberries and emails were checked all the time. Some would spend time cleaning up their in-box of e-mails including junk mail which would occupy much of their day if they had to do this during their work time. “I am constantly thinking about work because it’s the nature of my job” said another. After interviewing these senior managerial staff, I presume this statement would resonate with many of them. “My family would say I am addicted to it” was another comment made, and yet these same individuals feel they just want to stay connected and on top of the issues. While excessive use of ICTs may be viewed by family members and others as an addiction, yet the employees themselves commented that it is not stressful. One could argue that based on family members’ comments, the employee is having a work-life balance issue even though s/he assert the contrary. You could also presume that there is a sense of requirement “to get things done” as a result of workload issues.

Another employee felt that it was the workload, and not the technology, which impacted on work-life balance. According to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, “faculty concern about time and workload found that it was reported in fall 1998, that full-time faculty and staff who used either e-mail or course specific websites worked more hours per week on average (55) compared to those who did not use email (50 h) or course-specific websites (52 h) (Warburton et al. 2002).”

Technology is here to stay. It is a permanent structure in our lives. It will continue to evolve. Continual technological change has become a constant. The only way some manage the volume is by carrying their blackberries around with them and reviewing, deleting and sorting through the

---

information, and dealing with spam, when they have the opportunity. It is a time consuming process having to perform the daily task of determining whether to forward to others, immediately respond, deleting the item, or moving them to certain folders, which many do not have time to do during their workday. One individual claimed they were receiving a minimum of 100 emails per day. Despite the maximum storage capacity on their system, if not managed on a regular basis, the system can reach a breaking point and crash due to insufficient storage space.

Since Health & Social Services have facilities open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, some respondents felt that they were continually on-call. It was said: “We don’t manage the technology; it kind of manages us.” Since technology provides much easier access, some employees contact managers and directors on their off-time, even though they can likely make the decision themselves or wait until the next day. When they get calls on their blackberries, it should be for emergencies as this would allow for them to enjoy their leisure time off. There are times that calls are even received while they are on statutory holidays or on vacation. To avoid this, one respondent commented: “I sometimes go where there is no cell reception.”

Having to carry a blackberry gives you the feeling that, as someone commented, “you are a slave to it.” Then there is the guilt when you forget to take it with you, or the stress it creates when it runs out of power.

Another commented “I think blackberries are the worst invention in the world. It has invaded our lives.” Despite perhaps not receiving calls on their blackberries, some monitor them until they go to bed at night. So it definitely makes for longer days. “It hasn’t just impacted on our work-life balance. It’s impacted the way we work.” In a hurry to respond quickly, the information provided is not well-thought out. They have not really analyzed it prior to replying.

For some, if they have it on the counter at home and walk by, they will flick it to check it; others will go as far as checking it if it buzzes while they are reading a book.
A comment was made that if an individual has always placed work ahead of pleasure, this will continue to be a pattern despite the introduction of new technology. Some recognized that they have never had an equal balance between work and home, and that the difference is that they now do not stay at work until 9 p.m. but continue working at home. This same individual commented that they enjoy working. It gets annoying when others expect a response all the time, especially when such requests satisfy the others’ work requirements as opposed to their own. Their lack of planning should not become your emergencies.

The negative part is that there is information overload. Often a person should choose to contact an individual directly as opposed to e-mailing them for the information. Some questioned whether it has actually decreased workload or increased it. It can become addictive if you are not disciplined. You have to be disciplined in order to ensure a work-life balance. Sometimes structure in your day helps to achieve this.

Many respondents admitted to working through their coffee and lunch breaks. One commented that the Internet has supported a wave of work that did not exist 20 years ago. Much of the correspondence back and forth is not as effective. Rather than meeting face-to-face and dealing with issues, staff are often commenting in isolation which may not be the most productive method. There is a far greater expectation placed on employees to contribute to planning and providing feedback on documents which are not necessarily in their area of expertise. Technology allows for immediate and broader distribution of material for review which may not have been required in the past. Our audience must be taken into consideration.

When internal or external staff realize you have a blackberry, and that you are responding to their requests after hours, it creates an expectation that you will be available. This pattern becomes difficult to break. Some parents felt that because they could not get all tasks completed during their workday, they could do it “from the comfort of their own home.” This often meant putting kids to bed and completing tasks after their bedtime, which did not leave them with any personal
leisure time. Their career was important to them and while working at home, they were able to stay on top of workload. High external workload is accompanied by higher levels of stress and less job satisfaction.\textsuperscript{8} Often supervisors are not aware of the amount of time their staff spend working after hours. Some do not want them to know in fear that they could be seen as being incompetent or unable to keep up with the demands.

It is a double-edged sword. Keeping one connected to work can have both positive and negative impacts. Keeping up-to-date on issues while away from the office can also be positive and negative because it can either decrease or increase pressure depending on what the issues are. Reviewing e-mails from a distance allows you to manage the information overload and to determine when it is absolutely necessary to be present or when you can flex your time.

For others, technology is a matter of convenience. It had more of a positive impact as opposed to a negative one. When you have children, for instance, you could work at home if you needed to. It allowed parents to stay home with their children when they were sick and still accomplish tasks from home. If you have deadlines, you can still meet those. Technology allows parents to attend school activities or celebrations and flex their hours of work so that they can work at home in the evenings, without having to drive back to the office. It was said that, when employees send emails after hours, it should not be assumed that they are working more than their regular hours.

Some employees appreciated the freedom and flexibility to choose when to work. They felt that if they had the desire to work at 10:00 at night, they would. Furthermore, not having to commute back and forth to the office allowed for this type of working arrangement. As an example, they could leave work anytime between 5:00 and 6:00, go home for dinner, and then continue working after that.

It has been positive in the way that allows staff to make their day work around their schedules and be able to respond to e-mails after work. When walking a dog, you can deal with low level requests so certain people take advantage of being able to get some exercise while working. You do not have to be attached to your computer to respond.

**Benefits of the New Technology**

Much of the preceding narrative explored the negative impact of ICTs. But throughout the study, it was clear that there are also benefits. It offers more flexibility with employees being able to work at home. A good use of blackberries is to keep you informed and in the loop, which is one of the reasons many take it with them while they go away on holidays so that they can avoid having to “come back to 600 e-mails”. Without blackberries, they used to work many extra hours per day before leaving on holidays and many more upon their return, just to get caught up.

For those who are analytical, they find it useful to check messages in the morning, have time to reflect, process the information, and make better decisions because of it. For most, it is their way of keeping up with what is going on.

Without this type of technology, in the past, employees would often work past their dinner hour which would affect their eating habits. They would not prepare healthy meals but rather eat fast foods or junk food.

When you are receiving texts or emails from provinces and/or territories with a time difference, the likelihood of reaching one another by phone is increased; for example, a three-hour difference between Yukon and Ontario might normally mean having to commute to work to communicate with a counterpart at 7 a.m. Yukon time, 10 a.m. Ontario time if that was the only time available to contact one another. The downside is that it becomes more difficult to set boundaries while trying to be flexible in relation to other people’s schedules.
Technology such as videoconferencing and skyping will prove to be more cost-effective. There will be less travel required to the communities and outside the Yukon to attend meetings and conferences. This will also reduce non-productive hours or idle time at airports or on the road.

Texting and e-mailing as opposed to phoning reduces environmental noises and there is less distraction from and for other co-workers. When employees are assisting clients and/or residents, this can also be less disruptive. In order not to interrupt people’s thinking and reduce noise created through conversations in the office, some people choose to send messages electronically, but this does not allow for explanations and being able to elaborate on the issue.

Specifically with the usage of the program "Outlook", it is more efficient to set up meetings with a number of different people by using the calendar. When you have face-to-face communication, it allows for a dialogue to discuss and brainstorm options, pros and cons and solutions to problems. This can also result in better and quicker decisions as opposed to asking everyone’s input via e-mail and not knowing if all agree to changes and proposals.

Impact of New Technology on the Quality of Communication

One big issue has to do with the impact of ICTs on the quality of communication. It could be argued that the art of communication has been lost. People read tones into the e-mails which may not have been intended and working relationships can be affected because of it. Everyone has different interpretations of written messages, especially if these are sent in a hurry. There often is not enough time to put into the message the careful thought which it deserves.

Once it is sent and read, there is no turning back. It often gets forwarded to other staff, who in turn interpret it through their own lenses. In the governmental system, messages are considered records for the purposes of ATIPP (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act). There are times when requests are made to view messages from a particular individual during a specific
period of time to determine whether there was harassment or discrimination. Again, without the benefit of “tone,” this can be very subjective.

Technology has reduced the amount of face-to-face contact even to the point where staff send e-mails to a co-worker sitting in the next office. “Employees now spend more and more time communicating online and less and less time actually interacting and talking with colleagues. They are communicating either via e-mail, on work Facebook pages, cellphones, blackberries, skype, etc. With these types of instant communication, there comes an expectation that responses will be addressed quickly and that employees can do more with less.” While e-mails may be a faster method of communication, it may have an impact on relationships. Verbal communication enhances professional relationships, and face-to-face (when possible) enhances it that much more.

Informal communication should be face-to-face to avoid misinterpretation of messages such as sarcasm. Visual cues and body posture can improve our understanding of spoken words to ensure communication. Being able to identify various types of nonverbal communication is important so that you can read the cues your listener is giving you. Being able to provide immediate clarification can reduce conflicts. It is important to know whether others are disagreeing or feeling emotional by your messaging.

When the staff attend meetings, some actually place their device on the table. It exacerbates a sense that the technologically transmitted communication supersedes meetings. It also detracts from the conversation and does not demonstrate full participation and active listening. When

---

people are constantly checking for, and responding to messages during meetings, it is also considered rude by many.

One person felt that it was inappropriate to forward someone else’s e-mail to another person without their approval, or at least their knowledge. Even when they were copied on the note, they questioned the purpose of it being sent on. It raises some doubts as to why it was sent to others. Furthermore, the danger with e-mails is that you can forward another person’s e-mail and cut and paste the content to alter its meaning.

There are those who simply want to transfer the task from their in-box to yours. They give a quick response but not a thorough one, especially with short deadlines. They are trying to multi-task. Performing several tasks at once can be counter-productive. Productivity declines when we rapidly shift from one task to another, interrupt ourselves, or allow others to distract us. We lose time in the process because we then have to spend time re-focussing.

Arguably, the quality of written communication has diminished. Many examples of this were provided. Some felt there was no e-mail courtesy. Exchanges often do not address the person which can result in recipients considering the e-mail abrupt and terse. Further to that, there is no e-mail etiquette. Staff should take the time to ensure their communication is professional, similar to the way formal letters were issued in the past.

There are often many spelling errors. Some people do not take the time to do a spell check and there are often typos. When using spell check, it sometimes puts in a word you do not want to use and that can also cause problems. Some confidential information should never be put in writing because you could get “ATIPP’d”. An example would be an employee ranting about another employee to one or more individuals.
Texting lowers the quality of the message because people often use short forms such as btw, lol, etc. words which form part of a whole new language which not everyone understands. This type of communication is also less formal and can appear abrupt. The usage of symbols, acronyms and abbreviations does affect literacy levels. Texting does not always follow the standard rules of English grammar, nor usual word spellings which may affect literacy levels. Unlike universal language, these short forms are not understood by all those reading them.

The impact of ICTs on the quality of communication is, however, not entirely negative. The quality of communication increases when you can access information with the click of a button. You gain knowledge by researching websites on the internet and developing networks with counterparts in other jurisdictions. The quality of communication has improved since the information is shared much more rapidly.

Accessing huge libraries of research closes the distance between the Yukon and other provinces and territories. Using telehealth and skype allows many people to have group face-to-face interaction about policy issues and share information across jurisdictions. We can immediately connect with health experts from outside the territory. As there is no university in Whitehorse, employees can acquire knowledge through the internet by accessing websites or library databases, such as clinical databases which ultimately enhances client service delivery.

**Impact Instant Communication has on Work Demands**

Instant communication has increased the sense of urgency. Prior to this new technology, staff would normally expect a response in a week or two, and that was acceptable. Employees are expecting an instant response, therefore senders are trying to meet those work demands and in doing so, the quality of the response can be diminished.

Some put much effort and many hours into preparing responses to Ministerial requests and wonder if they even have time to review it to the depth that is required, in order to make informed
decisions. At all levels, these types of thorough responses may get cursory reviews or get lost amongst many other e-mails, and requests may subsequently be made on the same issue.

The volume of email can be excessive, especially when some branches have to access two different systems: e-mail through Outlook and e-mail through the Gold Care system and the electronic chart system which is part of the Gold Care system. Scanning through e-mails to determine their importance can place higher demands on a person.

Many people sending e-mails flag them as urgent when they might not be. Others impose unrealistic deadlines for response time. This makes it difficult to determine what the priorities are and who is ultimately responsible in providing the response or making the decision. When so many people are copied on an e-mail, responsibility and risk seems to be shared.

**Link Between Work Demands and Levels of Stress**

Increasing workload has been reported to be a major factor in stress (Boyd and Wylie 1994) with poor recognition of the effort put in. This was found to be demotivating and to impact negatively on work performance (Winter and Sarros 2002). One referred the blackberry as a crackberry. When you view the blackberry on week-ends and you come across a disturbing email, it can ruin your week-end. It can affect you emotionally because you are now upset. Despite this, that particular individual continues to carry the “crackberry”. It is felt that there is almost an expectation to do so. More and more e-mails are flagged as urgent when they might not be considered urgent by others. It is the immediacy and volume of it that is stressful. There is an expectation that the staff are always checking their e-mails which is not always possible.

---


11 Ibid.
Many share with others that they are feeling tired and overwhelmed. When this continues for an extended period of time and there is no reprieve, productivity diminishes. It can be stressful to be proactive in trying to achieve positive outcomes for clients’ well-being. Interventions should be targeted at eliminating, reducing or changing the perceived stressors which staff experience. These could include facilitating positive work relationships, job redesign to ensure that staff has manageable workloads, delegation of authority, and providing adequate resources.

When there is so much stimulation at work and sporadically after hours, some want to go places where they are not accessible by cell phone. They prefer to stay home as they feel that they do not have enough energy to go shopping or exercising.

On the positive side, some felt that it reduced stress as it allowed them to “keep in constant touch”, get advanced warning of potential issues, and being able to deal with those without having to be physically at the office.

Effects on Mental Health

With so many e-mails, there is information overload. It becomes difficult to be able to stay focussed and get certain tasks done. There is a lot more multi-tasking and juggling of priorities. It is mentally exhausting when there is no break from the start of your day to the end. The intensity seems to progress throughout the day. It is not a relaxed environment.

There is so much information that many staff ask for additional electronic storage space because they cannot keep up with the task of filtering their in-boxes. It gets to the point where they no longer can send, forward, or reply to e-mails.

The choices available can also become overwhelming. An example is when you are accessing the Internet to book hotels or rent vehicles.
When you go home, you are constantly thinking about work and “it never shuts off”. There is mental stress when there is an unwritten expectation that people are “on-call”. Once the staff are seen as responding on the off-hours, others then expect that they are reading e-mails every few minutes, even on week-ends and after-hours. It gives you a sense of immediacy to respond. If you are constantly thinking about work, it could affect your immune system and overall health.

When it is too hectic, it can increase your blood pressure when you are faced with conflicting deadlines and everything is a priority. Because of the massive number of e-mails we do receive, many often worry that they may have missed responding or missed a deadline. One respondent shared that, even when you rely on an administrative assistant to flag them or filter through the urgent ones, they are also often inundated with e-mails and therefore some continue to be missed.

Staff have shared that they experience lack of sleep when receiving e-mails late at night. Some e-mails can be quite upsetting due to the tone and language used. There are times when you open a message at home or while on holiday, and it is upsetting, therefore it ruins the purpose of time off to rejuvenate and relax. There is a higher level of anxiety which can affect sleep patterns. Lack of sleep leads to staff being tired the following day.

Technology not only affects sleep pattern but also eating patterns. Some have more sedentary screen time, both at home and work and either eat more or eat less. It also disrupts quality time with the family.

People actually feel guilty when they are not carrying the blackberry nor checking it. Others feel a void or a little out of control when they are on holidays and not having to check for messages as often. When returning from a holiday, you are faced with a massive amount of e-mails if you have not taken the time while on holidays to clean those up. During periods of power outages,
there is a sense of helplessness, a complete loss as to what to do as most of the information is not accessible.

When employees cannot keep up with filtering and sorting through e-mails, it gets frustrating, especially when the mailboxes get too full and it no longer allows you to send e-mails. Some prepare draft notes and sometimes forget to check their draft folders and the e-mails do not get sent out.

Working relationships are affected when folks are checking their blackberries while you are in the middle of a discussion. This sends a message that someone is more important than you are. There can be heightened anxiety when there is already a sour working relationship and you are afraid to open their e-mail. When unsure as to another’s reaction to an e-mail sent, or when you do not know whether they will forward it on and to whom, it also creates anxiety.

On the positive side, researching topics to develop policies is much quicker and you can gain satisfaction in knowing that tasks can be performed quicker electronically. In addition, many connections can be made with other professionals, researchers, academics, other colleagues that expand your intellectual and psychological well-being. This often bridges the isolation felt by northerners, especially when using Skype, Telehealth or Illuminate.

By being able to check e-mails in the morning, it prepares you to deal with upcoming urgent requests such as Ministerial notes. It can allow you to have more control over your schedule and make adjustments as needed. This can reduce stress.

Some have mentioned that they are not mentally affected because there is a sense of constant pressure and they have learned to adapt to this new culture and environment. Yet another stated that it was not the technology that attributed to their mental and physical well-being but rather the workload.
Effects on Physical Health

People tend to phone, e-mail or text as opposed to leaving the office to talk to somebody, even when the other person is just around the corner. If you sit for too long, it begins to affect your neck, shoulders and/or back. As a result, there are a number of employees who have to go for regular massages. When you have a day with more screen time than meeting time, your neck is sore and your eyes are tired. Without proper ergonomics, some worry about the negative long term effects to their posture and vision.

Heavy use of ICTs can mean reduced physical activity and possible weight gain because of being more sedentary, not only at work but also at home, especially if you are also using a computer at home for personal reasons such as checking the internet, watching a movie, or taking a distance learning class. For some, it meant not having the energy to exercise.

A few respondents raised concerns of increased likelihood of injury. One had actually witnessed an injury when another was checking for e-mails on their cell phone or blackberry, and felt there was a potential risk of injury due to tripping, falling, or walking into other people.

On the positive side, one respondent claimed that their physical health had improved since they could now incorporate physical exercise within their day. E-mails could be checked on the blackberry which allowed them to stay on top of things without having to be tied to their desk.

Some attributed having a sore back to the new technology, but later commented that it could be due to having to sit in a sedentary position for long periods of time, therefore it would occur regardless. Others recognized the importance of getting up and moving around.

It is interesting to note that symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome because of texting or keyboarding were not brought up. Carpal tunnel syndrome is common in people who perform
repetitive motions of the hand and wrist. Typing on a computer keyboard is probably the most common cause of carpal tunnel.

**Boundaries between Work and Home**

Rather than employees taking personal needs leave or special leave for purposes such as caring for their sick children or accompanying them to dental or medical appointments, many choose to flex their hours and work at home. While some may view this as a balanced approach, some might question the impact of having to care for children while thinking of work duties, or the impact it has on employees having to accomplish tasks late in the evening, or not using leave entitlements when the sole purpose they were created was to allow for this.

**Addressing Technological Challenges to Ensure a More Engaged Workforce**

Recognizing the differences in generational cultures and trying to meet their specific needs will keep staff engaged and improve current retention rates. Offering options such as flex time and telecommuting to address different needs will need to be supported as much as possible. The shift will be in trying to focus more on outcome than on hours of work.

The “Echo Generation” may not be as willing as their predecessors, to work extra hours without being compensated. Even when working from home, they may expect the overtime. They will be able to make demands because of the upcoming surge of retirements and knowing that they are needed. Managers and supervisors will have a more difficult time with certain requests such as time off. It is going to force us to rethink priorities. The expectations of instant replies is not going to last.

---


To keep those of the younger generation engaged, different remuneration plans will have to be offered. The expectation for increased productivity without compensation will become an issue of the past. Baby boomers often work extra hours but do not claim it. It varies but many non-management employees claim their time, even if it is only an additional 15 minutes. While some may respond to e-mails or phone calls after hours, they claim their extra hours.

While the younger generation will be well-versed in new technology, they will have boundaries in order to balance their work-life and ensure there is time for travel and leisure activities. The next generation of health care professionals will have the upper hand when it comes to negotiating terms and conditions of employment. “There seems to be a growing interest in quality-of-life issues. Young people are still willing to work hard, but many of them have learned not to "sell their soul to the company." This shift in attitude is something that seems to be growing. Many people of all ages are asking serious questions about work life and are preparing themselves for a new economic reality.”

To keep younger staff engaged, they expect to be able to have access to technology at their fingertips, even in 24-hour facilities. The younger people want to stay connected on twitter and facebook and organizations are really promoting that to enhance engagement.

They carry their phones to work and take photos from their IPhones during work. This could be an issue when providing care to clients, in terms of potential breach of confidentiality and privacy issues, but also when not giving their utmost attention to the clients when there are such distractions. It could become a safety issue similar to driving while using cell phones.

Our current leaders are engaged because they are finding the work interesting and feel satisfaction and passionate about the work they do. People follow what their leaders do, not what

they say. If they work long hours, others may think they expect the same of them, but there may be a false expectation. Different generations have different work ethics and with the upcoming generation, we may begin to see a shift in thinking and work priorities. While demanding a more balanced work-life, the pendulum may shift from many who currently “work to live” to those who “live to work.” “There are tensions between the generations over how balance in their lives can be achieved, thanks to the growing role that technology is playing…”

To keep current staff and newly hired staff engaged, training needs to be offered when introducing any new technology. For example, it will be important to train staff in the facilities when they introduce Outlook. Giving them access to outlook, and not just GoldCare, will also keep them engaged. Another example might be when trying to attract retired workers back into the workforce. If they have not had much exposure to the new technology, it could pose technical difficulties and they would likely only stay if they were provided with the training.

When introducing new technology, everyone is at different stages of learning so it is important to be aware of any resistance, hear their concerns, and instil confidence at every stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Training:

Specific to the new technology, training on the usage of blackberries or other smart phones and cell phones should be provided. Part of that training includes educating staff on security issues. Devices should be password-protected as there are many files and documents stored in that one small apparatus. Similarly, memory sticks should be well marked, password protected, and if used at home, kept in a secure and safe location. In a department such as ours, there is a considerable amount of client-related information which must be kept confidential.

A café style discussion could be held to discuss the impact technology has on staff members. Everyone views it differently. These discussions could be led by members of the Health & Social Services wellness committee during lunch hours. There should be a facilitated discussion to have a consistent and respectful approach to texting via blackberry or cell phone and sending and responding to e-mails via outlook. For example, agreeing that not everyone needs to be copied on responses by hitting “reply all”. This should not simply be technical training, but also the etiquette in the use (and abuse) of these technologies. A prerequisite to giving new employees access to an e-mail account should be that they are trained on the etiquette of its use. The department should enforce and reinforce some consistent standards, and staff should be held accountable to those.

Each new executive management team member is provided with a blackberry, but unlike other computer systems such as Outlook and Word, training is not offered. Many are simply handed the device and told to download the manual if they want to learn how to use it. Some respondents were not aware that you could program your blackberry so that once you deleted e-mails from your blackberry, those identified would be automatically deleted from your work e-mail as well. In this way, you would not have to duplicate efforts by performing this function twice.

Part of the training should include how to identify realistic priorities, reasonable deadlines, and who is taking the lead. One method is to discuss creating consistent categories with the rest of the team to use headings such as “need to know”, “nice to know”, “not relevant”, and “for your information”. Other suggestions for highlighting priorities was to use the phone system in the reference line; e.g. 411 (fyi), 811 (needs a response), and 911 (urgent). Copying an assistant helps to ensure that there is follow up to requests.

When there is a formal request with an unrealistic deadline, it is best to acknowledge receipt of the request and respond indicating some more achievable turnaround times. If it is urgent, it should be clearly identified as such in the subject line along with the flag system. It is appropriate
to identify the topic in the subject line so that others can decide whether they have to immediately open it or they can read it at a later time. It is also more efficient to attach documents such as articles as opposed to copying them within the body of the e-mail. A short preamble or summary of the attachment also helps others to prioritize.

Organizations such as ours should define the norms as to what is acceptable and what is unacceptable when operating technological devices when participating at conferences or meetings. A standard of practice could be that all devices are turned off during meetings. Once the norm is established, the leader should model this. If there are emergencies, an administrative assistant can be contacted and interrupt the meeting. Individuals should excuse themselves from the conference or meeting, in order to carry out their conversations. It creates less distraction for others. Often other staff may overhear conversations which could result in a breach of confidentiality.

One respondent shared an experience where, upon returning from a meeting, she or he received e-mails sent which revealed that they were submitted by a participant during the time in which they were both in attendance at the meeting. When this occurs, it places additional demands and an increase in workload on others. Similarly, when the staff e-mail others during off-hours, the effect is similar. In other words, the more people work, the more work there is. There were some who would draft e-mails in the evenings and send them out in the morning, to conceal the fact they were working late. This has the same effect and creates pressure on those who are receiving e-mails in the morning.

There are times when employees distribute e-mails to too many people. Sometimes it is easier to just copy individuals on e-mails rather than calling them. When an e-mail is received, one has to open it, review it, and analyze whether the information is pertinent. This takes time. We should get better at managing e-mails.
It is also a perception of others that when e-mails are sent asking for feedback or input on certain documents, and when others do not “reply all”, some assume that certain individuals have not yet commented. Some feel they have to “reply all” to make others aware that they have reviewed and contributed to the request. It was suggested that the person asking for input should play a coordinating role and receive the response from other individuals as they are the lead on that certain project, and others do not need to view proposed changes from all others until the final draft is submitted.

Sharepoint might be a useful tool, as it allows you to alert others that documents are posted on the site and it would not clog up folders with huge documents. This would make better use of peoples’ time. Sharepoint would allow for easier access of documents and reports to allow for editing without having to do back-and-forth e-mails. The danger is that if systems are disrupted or lost, and there was no printed material, important records can be at risk. Sometimes we rely too much on accessing information electronically and when there are power outages or other system failures, it can impact our ability to deliver quality client service.

There are other methods which could be used to avoid printing off paper such as a Tablet personal computer (TPC) to allow everyone to review documents on-line and visually present them at meetings. This eliminates the need to bring hard copies of agendas and minutes to meetings. “Tablet PC’s extend the mobility provided by laptops by providing the ability to capture handwriting using a magnetic pen. The portability and ease of note taking made possible by TPC have attracted users from various sectors including healthcare, construction, government, and education.” Another suggestion was that Rim Playbook could be offered in addition to a blackberry.

---

It could be agreed that when staff are travelling on business, they should be accessible and check their blackberries, but not while on vacation. When you have someone else act on your behalf, it may have an impact on those employees who have been given the authority to handle issues in their supervisors’ absence if they are aware that their supervisors are checking and responding to certain e-mails. It may undermine their authorities. It is also a way of building capacity. As one respondent stated: “We say we tolerate risk and want to develop capacity in people, but I think when we’re monitoring and always giving direction, we’re undermining the development of our people.” You could then block off the necessary time in your calendar required to review e-mails upon your return. This will prevent others from scheduling appointments or meetings with you.

On an extended holiday, providing an assistant with your personal e-mail or cellphone or blackberry number and informing them to contact you in emergencies only, is one way of having a more relaxing time away. Another way is to provide the person acting in your absence to have this information and trust that they will be able to assess the urgencies and any need to contact you. Furthermore, not meddling in the communication empowers them to make decisions. On the other hand, if it is a business trip, you can often provide guidance without taking charge.

One respondent felt quite strongly that those in non-management positions should not be given access to a blackberry because there was a concern around boundary issues and impacts to their work-life balance. It may create an expectation which should not occur.

Some gain access to governmental portals at home without the approval or knowledge of their supervisors. Requests to work overtime hours have to be pre-authorized by immediate supervisors and if employees have access without supervisors’ knowledge, supervisors will have incorrect staffing needs and therefore will not be able to rationalize a request for additional funding. There is also a privacy issue when you some particular client-related or confidential
information in the home. Both the security of information and workload issues should be considered.

In terms of improving work-life balance, a suggestion was made to choose a technology-free day to allow children and their parents, and children and their grandparents to spend more family time together. For example, a family can agree that Sunday will be the day that no computers are turned on, and no one uses an IPhone or IPad, etc.

Communication:
When you receive e-mails, especially those containing large attachments of reports or documents which are distributed to a number of staff on a committee, within a work unit, within a branch, or within the department for their review, it is suggested that you assess your role and your need to respond. Since we receive so much information on a daily basis, we need to stay focussed as to our own work priorities. You can save it and store it if you think you will need to access it at a later date. A quick search by sender, date, content, or other means can be done.

If you do respond, it should not be copied to all those on the distribution list, but to the sender only. If everyone establishes this protocol, there will no longer be the perception that only those who have copied all others are the only ones who actually have responded, which is often not the case. It is usually a conscious effort not to bombard others with unnecessary information.

Sending e-mails too quickly before reading through them thoroughly can result in unintended negative messaging and internal emotional conflict by the recipient. Saving e-mails in drafts and reviewing them at a later date provides more time to assess potential negative impact. Another way of decreasing the possibility of misinterpretation is having someone else read them prior to sending them. On the other hand, there are employees who use e-mails as a means of communicating information to another co-worker that they would not normally say in person.
We should determine whether to call someone by phone or meet with them face-to-face rather than sending an e-mail or texting them. Phone conversations and meetings enhance the communication and ensure immediate two-way feedback. There are other times when it is best to e-mail if you need to have a record of the information, to share precise information, or to be able to access data at a later date. If it is of a sensitive nature, it might be more appropriate to call the individual. Another time when it might be best to call is when there is a string of e-mails with no immediate end in sight. If you see these snowballing out of control and becoming terse or abrupt, you should check your assumptions by contacting them, and try to put an end to them.

To develop working relationships, an initial approach should be to make personal contact either verbally or in person. At a later time, it can be done through e-mail. This is a way of making connections with people.

It is more respectful to call if there is going to be a change in policy or procedure so that employees do not feel blindsided. When you want their input, you first need their buy-in. To accommodate everyone’s personality types, it might be best to circulate the information and allow employees to read through it. Analytical people need to have time to reflect on it. Then you can discuss it openly to identify possible options and answer any points of clarification. It is also important to have a note taker present who can later distribute the minutes for approval and consensus on any decisions or follow-up items.

Work stations and computer access should be assessed by an ergonomics consultant to educate staff on proper ergonomics. These consultants can help reduce or eliminate workers’ injuries and associated costs by designing and modifying an employee’s workspace. Further to that, staff should ensure that they take health breaks. Since technology allows for so much flexibility, it is important to add structure in your life to ensure that you incorporate daily physical activities. This improves both your mental and physical health.
Subtly changing the culture so that there is less of an expectation to be connected at all times, needs to start happening. The change that needs to happen is not so much with respect with technology; the change that needs to happen is how people manage demands, with or without technology.

We should all be aware of the content of our messages and ensure they are legible. Through the ATIPP, the information could be accessed so the information should always be legible and professional.

The team could assign one half-day as information technology-free in order to complete tasks without disruptions; e.g. no phone, no e-mails, no texting, etc. Furthermore, purchasing software that can sort through and categorize incoming e-mails to avoid the receiver from having to spend time doing so, would allow for more efficient use of our time.

**Further research**

A study would need to be completed to explore the impact technology has on employees in the non-management category in terms of work-life balance. The more senior management work in the evenings and on week-ends, the more work it creates for other employees who may find it difficult to meet the increased demands. For example, you could have a senior management team member working on a report and e-mailing it to his or her assistant and asking him or her to edit it and send out to others with an invitation to others to attend a meeting by 10 a.m. the next morning. The assistant who arrives at 8:30 tries to juggle this priority among many others. Another example is when employees work late to complete a report, send it to their “draft” folder, and forward to peers the next morning for review and comment.

The excessive quantity of e-mails received is difficult to manage. One individual claimed s/he was receiving a minimum of 100 emails per day. If not managed on a regular basis, the system
can reach a breaking point and crash due to insufficient storage space. It would be interesting to study how much time is spent performing the task of having to sort through e-mails.

To get a more accurate account of e-mails received, asking people to track them for about a week or two would have provided more accurate data, including how many had attachments and whether they needed to review and comment.

A similar research study could be completed inviting non-bargaining unit members to participate in order to determine the trickle down effects of senior management staff working long hours. To compare extra hours worked with other departments within the Yukon, it would also be useful to invite executive management team members from those departments to respond to the same questions as the ones that Health and Social Services did. To address the challenges, research into best practices from other jurisdictions could be undertaken.

Conclusion:
In this research study, I found that participants had different levels of commitments and expectations for themselves and others. I am anticipating that we will not be able to sustain that same level of commitment with future generations. Organizations which are neglecting work-life balance due to recessionary pressures need to comprehend the long-term relevance of employee engagement and productivity and need to continue promoting work-life balance initiatives. With governmental demands increasing due to increased competition, we will also have to rethink how we do business. If there are no additional resources or perhaps even a reduction, we will be forced to change the way we use our technology.

This study is contrary to Wajcman et al’s claim that found that, while some Internet users were taking advantage of affordances of the technology to weaken the spatial and temporal boundary

---

between work and home by allowing their personal lives into their work day, most were maintaining this socially constructed boundary. Many of the Executive Management Committee members felt that there were not enough hours in the day so they completed tasks at home. This was clearly demonstrated in the compilation of data through this survey. Managers are expected to work the hours required to meet the operational demands of their jobs. Despite each manager being provided with two weeks of manager’s leave in their contract to compensate for additional hours worked, they obviously worked well in excess.

According to my calculations, if each of them worked one additional hour per day during the weekdays, and would normally be paid time and a half for those, they would have earned their two weeks after only 50 hours (50 x 1.5 = 75). This would be much more if managers were working on week-ends as well or over 4 hours per day. “On a day of rest, a regular employee is compensated “for hours of overtime worked on his/her first day of rest at the rate of time and one half (1½T) for the first four (4) hours and double time (2T) thereafter; and for hours of overtime worked on his/her second or subsequent day of rest at the rate of double time (2T). Many of these managers would have earned their allotment of manager’s leave within two weeks as the majority worked over six (6) hours in excess of their regular bi-weekly hours.

“Organizations must ensure that there is a work life balance to their organizations, which will pave the way for better performance, improved morale and results in higher job satisfaction, which will ultimately help to improve the organization’s performance and profitability.” While work demands fluctuate and deadlines are constantly changing due to many being driven by client service needs, this team strives to respond quickly to the emerging needs. Assistance should be

---

provided to help employees find a balance between work and private life demands, in this ever-changing world of work. Strategies should be developed to deal with change and transformation, such as encouraging individuals to engage in physical activity and healthy lifestyles, but especially to express awareness of increased workloads and demands.

New technology has provided more flexible work practices but has also increased the speed at which information is shared and the expectation for responses, action and decision-making. Hours of work extend beyond the daily normal hours regardless of being able to adjust the hours within the 24-hour period, and therefore has generally been found to negatively impact on work-life balance.
Appendix A: Consent Form

Research Project: “The Impact of Technology on Work-life Balance”

I am willing to participate in this study which is part of Laurette Sylvain’s research project whose purpose is to gain a better understanding of the impact technology has on employees’ work-life balance and how boundaries between work and home can become blurred.

I am voluntarily participating to answer questions which will be taped and notes of my responses will be kept in a secure place. I am aware that I may refuse to answer certain questions and that I may withdraw from the study without negative consequences at any time during the data collection period. I understand that, should I withdraw from this study, any data received will immediately be destroyed by shredding of the material or deleting any information from any hardware.

I understand the information provided to me and if I have any further questions about the project, I can contact the researcher by phone at 867-667-3418 or the researcher’s professor, Dr. Paul Kellogg at 1-866-916-8664 or pkellogg@athabascau.ca.

My continued participation should be as informed as my initial consent, so I should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout my participation.

______________________
Name (Print and sign)

______________________
Date
Appendix B: Questionnaire

- Are you on a compressed work week?
- How long have you worked for the Government? For the Department of Health and Social Services?
- Is your substantive position excluded from the bargaining unit?
- On average, how many hours of work do you spend in excess of your bi-weekly hours of work?
- Have you ever checked a message either on your blackberry or home work e-mail after 5 p.m.? before the start of your work day? If yes, how often? On average, daily? once a week? twice a week? More than twice a week?
- Have you ever sent an e-mail to a non-management employee after your regular working day, someone you either supervise directly or another staff member in the department? Whether there is a deadline or not, do you always expect a response?
- Do you sometimes receive e-mails with large attachments and are expected to review and respond within a certain timeframe? If so, how often? On average, daily? Once a week? Twice a week? More than twice a week?
- How does technology impact on your work-life balance?
- Describe how you feel technology has impacted on the quality of communication.
- Do you feel your mental and physical health has been affected by the use of technology? If so, in what ways?
- With the aging population and expected increase in retirements of baby boomers, what would be some ways of addressing these technological challenges to ensure a more engaged workforce?
Appendix C: Definition of Terms

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP) - provides individuals with a formal method of requesting information held in Yukon Government departments. Under the ATIPP Act individuals can also request corrections to their own personal information contained in Yukon Government records.

Auxiliary On-call (AOC) - an employee who normally has one or more work assignments each year determined by the call of the Employer.

Bargaining unit – means, for the purposes of this plan, bargaining unit members as well as confidential exclusions as defined in the Public Service Staff Relations Act (p. 3 of section M). Those employees who are part of the Yukon Employees’ Union (YEU) and whose terms and conditions of employment are governed by the YG/PSAC Collective Agreement, with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and represented by the Yukon Employees’ Union. Auxiliary employees are also represented by the YEU and covered by this collective agreement.22

Carpal tunnel syndrome - pressure on the median nerve -- the nerve in the wrist that supplies feeling and movement to parts of the hand. It can lead to numbness, tingling, weakness, or muscle damage in the hand and fingers.23

Compressed work week (CWW) - is a way for an employee to change their hours of work over a two-week, three-week or four-week basis. The employee works longer days than the normal 7½ or 8 hours, and then takes a predetermined day off in the two-week, three-week or four-week period. A CWW provides the employee with the opportunity to work their regular hours over a two-week basis in either eight or nine working days instead of 10 working days; over a three-

---

week basis in 14 days instead of 15 days; or over a four-week basis in 19 days instead of 20 days. Employees who do not mind working the longer hours find this a useful schedule when they want to consolidate their personal activities into one day, or when they simply want an extra day off on a regular basis.

Flexible Work Arrangements: acknowledging the role balance plays in creating personal well-being, satisfaction and productivity in our workforce; promoting the use of flexible work arrangements to help our employees resolve the conflicts created by demands in their personal and work lives.\(^{24}\) (p. 8 of section M).

GoldCare system - the health care division of Campana, which offers business, resident and community support management, scheduling, payroll, and fully-integrated health care records. The GoldCare suite of Care Management applications integrates clinical, administrative, financial, and reporting functionality.\(^{25}\)

Management - Employees excluded from the bargaining unit by reason of managerial duties are governed by the General Administration Manual (GAM) Policy 3.8: Confidential and Managerial Employees and Section M: Conditions of Employment, Management Plan. Section M is the primary reference for terms and conditions for employees in the management, legal, and deputy minister groups.\(^{26}\)

Manager’s leave - A manager is entitled to ten (10) days paid leave per year (10/12’s day per month) as recognition of the extra hours required of managers. Manager’s leave may be taken, with the approval of the supervisor and subject to operational requirements, during the year in which it is earned.\(^{27}\) For administrative purposes (leave, etc.), the number of hours worked by full-time managers will be 37.5 hours per week or


\(^{26}\) Public Service Commission website:  http://www.psc.gov.yk.ca/employeeinfo/management.html

7.5 hours per day. There is no compensation for concepts such as “overtime”, “standby” or “callback”.

Personal needs leave – provides the manager with a period of paid leave when personal circumstances prevent the manager from performing the manager’s normal duties.

Sharepoint - SharePoint 2010 is a platform for the new intranet that provides a single integrated location where employees can access people and information to be more effective and make better decisions to the job done. The intranet will become an important part of our daily work and its name will become well known.

Special Leave – leave provided to bargaining unit members to attend funerals, medical, dental, optometrist, chiropractor or counselling services, or to care for his/her sick dependant(s) or a sick person permanently residing in his/her place of residence, or a sick mother or father or spouse, or other reasons preventing them from reporting to work.

Telehealth provides access to care via videoconferencing for those from remote and isolated communities. TeleHealth enables individuals, groups and professionals living and working in remote communities to access consultation, training and support by connecting directly with programs and professionals in urban centres. This program reduces time, travel and costs.

Texting refers to the use of abbreviations and other techniques to craft instant messages.

---

Bibliography


