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EDITORIAL

It's always a pleasure to publish our e-newsletter, which aims to provide food for thought on current issues.

A particularly hot topic these days: our addiction to technology!

Whereas in the mid-90s computers began to appear on our desks, in 2010, we now have access to technology that allows us to read and answer our emails 24/7.

Most workers claim that these technological advances give them lots of flexibility and that they wouldn't want to go back to the way things were before. However, despite the fact that these tools make our life easier, there are drawbacks: "techno-addiction".

I therefore encourage you to read our e-newsletter, to take a step back from technology, and perhaps reflect on your habits, as well as on those of your team members.

I wish you a pleasant read and invite you to come and see us!

Isabelle Côté, President

TECHNO-ADDICTS

Just after his historic election as President of the United States, *Barack Obama* stated that his **greatest challenge would be to let go of his BlackBerry**. In April 2007, Research in Motion (RIM)—a company that markets these devices and manages its own network—had a service interruption that lasted a few hours, which extremely annoyed users who stated that they felt like they had had a limb amputated! And so these **BlackBerries, iPhones and other smartphones**, increasingly lighter and effective **laptops, wireless Internet sticks**, etc. contribute to major technological advancements in Western society. Caution though—**they are also key factors behind our techno-addiction**. We will share with you some facts about techno-addiction, as well as its impact on resources within organizations and on companies as such. We will then put forward recommendations to help you benefit from technology and minimize its impact that could be harmful over the long term.

Tangible proof of techno-addiction: Do you think it's possible to be addicted to technology? Is this statement exaggerated? And yet here are some facts to convince you about the importance gained by technology in our environment:

- According to Cyberpresse, **North America represents 67% of RIM's global market (BlackBerry)** and this same company has sold 16 million devices in 2007, which constitutes a 50% sales increase over just a year.
- Hotels in British Columbia are now offering "technology detox" packages and require that participants leave all their technological devices at reception upon their arrival.
- As well, a Northampton University (England) study revealed that **over a third of BlackBerry users show signs of addiction similar to that of alcoholics**.

It's actually a real addiction that requires careful consideration.

What tangible links can we establish among technological advances, addiction and work?

According to Statistics Canada, the increased use of technology leads to a significant rise in **non-paid overtime** to do remote activities and follow-ups, make contacts, etc. Do you recognize yourself as the heavy user profiled here? How many people read their emails during the late evening, on weekends or even while on holidays?



What does this mean for workers and their employers? A study reveals that there is a direct link to be made between extra work and major changes to the way of doing things, mainly in environments where technological advancements are a definite reality:

- Ironically, it seems that nearly **60% of techno-savvy employees most often feel that they have less time to do their work**, even though technological advances are supposed to facilitate task completion and productivity;
- Work today also seems more complex and more demanding (more tasks), **since 65% of techno-savvy employees claim that they often have to respond to unexpected requests**, abandon one task for another, have to quickly perform a task away from the office, etc.

As well, **60% of American workers in management stated that due to new technology they work more**, whether at home or elsewhere, after work hours, thanks to laptops, wireless phones, BlackBerries and other technological devices.

In principle, this may seem highly advantageous for employers: increased work hours, deeper employee involvement, and greater ease to reach them. On the other hand, it is important to note that the American study, just like one previously quoted by Statistics Canada, **reveals that one of the major consequences of this new reality is the substantial increase of stress and fatigue among workers**.

Are you a techno-addict?

Think about your way of doing things...

- When your BlackBerry rings, regardless of what you're doing, can you stop yourself from answering your email?
- How many evenings per week do you start up your laptop for professional reasons?
- Can you leave your house without your wireless phone, even on weekends?
- Can you travel from your home to the office without your Bluetooth so that you don't miss a call?

If you recognize yourself in these situations, you may be a techno-addict. Reflecting on your work habits and changing them may be essential for you to improve your quality of life.

Would you like to share your comments on this article or previous e-bulletins?

Or suggest a topic for a future e-newsletter?

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However, advantages are not one-way, since technology also makes life easier for workers:

- Greater flexibility at work means more opportunities for teleworking, since employees can often carry out most of their tasks from home;
- The possibility of being quickly reached anywhere is an invaluable asset: children can reach their parents easily even if they are on the road, for example. Employees can also communicate more easily with their family and friends by taking a few moments to relax at work.

A few recommendations to enjoy technology rather than putting up with it: Even if past technological advancements impact both positively and negatively every aspect of employer-employee relations, there are always opportunities available to improve the pros-and-cons ratio with regard to our relationship with technology.

Here are a few tips and recommendations to improve employee-technology relationships and make the most of technology.

- Limit, if possible, multiple comings and goings between offices or meetings so as not to be constantly on the move. This way, we ensure that **technological tools are not the only tangible link with the office;**
- Leverage the technological benefits that are available: teleworking, flexible work schedules, etc. Let your employees take advantage of these so that technology is perceived as an ally rather than as a ball and chain to the office;
- During extended holidays (summer holidays, Xmas holidays, and spring break), **respect employees' time off.** Don't contact them and, if possible, ask them to leave their technological devices at the office **so that they can rest fully.**

It is especially important to keep in mind that technological advancements shouldn't be a burden, since we only need to protect ourselves from a "techno-addict" behaviour by setting limits with regard to work and technology. It is essential **to take advantage of technology rather than putting up with it.** For example, a technologically-advanced company can more easily adapt to change and is therefore more resilient. With regard to this last point, workers from the younger generation can help you surf the technology wave, since they have literally been swimming in it since a very tender age. They will be your key to making technology your ally.



THE CHALLENGES OF TELEWORKING

In line with technological advancements, it is increasingly common these days to be able to carry out certain tasks while teleworking, and even teleworking during full days, such as specific days per week or month.

What does this new work reality involve for employers and for workers alike?

How can employers manage employees who aren't physically present at the office?

What is the profile of an efficient teleworker and how can you avoid having work taking over the entire household?

We will attempt to answer these questions in our September issue.