

Constant Email Access Increases Employee Stress

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Five days away from email equals less stress.

This may sound obvious, but that was the conclusion of a recent study that took away email from thirteen civilian workers at an Army facility outside Boston, according to a recent LA Times [article](#).

The first couple of days without email saw no significant stress reduction based on monitoring of heart rates and various sensors in the work environment.

But by day five the trend toward less stress was apparent.

“We found that when you remove email from workers’ lives, they multitask less and experience less stress,” [said](#) study co-author, UC Irvine informatics professor Gloria Mark.

That’s not all.

Other valuable results of being unplugged from email included increased productivity and greater face-to-face social interaction.

In fact, the workers who took part in the study felt liberated. Most tried to change their work habits on an ongoing basis, but all eventually reverted to their old ways.

Their relapse should not dissuade companies and corporate wellness programs that seek to reduce stress and increase productivity in the workplace. Reviewing e-mail policies, and the 24/7 access that exists through email today, should be a part of any overall work environment strategy.

It may not be realistic to unplug your workforce entirely from email (or other forms of pervasive electronic communication), but rethinking work procedures could lead to a resetting of expectations with respect to how quickly internal email should be responded to, offering employees email vacations, and other creative steps.

Such a program may, as the study suggests, reduce stress, improve the work environment and enhance productivity at the same time.

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