

LexisNexis® 2010 International Workplace Productivity Survey

Executive Summary of Results for White Collar Professionals

A new international survey of white collar professionals reveals that “information overload” is a widespread and growing problem around the world. Not only does the incessant flow of information decrease productivity and performance in the workplace, it also takes a toll on employee morale. The survey found professionals in every market struggling to cope, and looking to their employers for customized solutions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Too Much Information: A Global Challenge

- A majority of white collar professionals in every market surveyed say that the amount of information they have to manage at work has significantly increased since the economic downturn (U.S.: 59%; U.K.: 57%; China: 61%; South Africa: 61%; Australia: 56%).
- On average, white collar professionals report spending over half (51%) of their work day receiving and managing information, rather than actually using information to do their jobs. For U.S. professionals, this is an almost 10% increase in time spent during their work day receiving and managing information since 2008.
- Professionals in each market report that between one-third and one-half of the information they receive at work each day is not important to getting their job done.
- Approximately three-quarters of professionals in the U.S. (73%), China (75%) and South Africa (75%) agree that search engines give them access to huge amounts of information but don't help them prioritize it for their professional needs. In Australia, more than nine out of ten (95%) professionals agree that this is the case, and in the U.K., two-thirds (65%) of professionals agree.

Drag on Performance, Productivity and Morale

- A majority of workers in every market (62%, on average) admit that the quality of their work suffers at times because they can't sort through the information they need fast enough.
- An average of half (51%) of all professionals surveyed in each country say that if the amount of information they receive continues to increase, they will soon reach a “breaking point” at which they will be unable to handle any more.
- Approximately one in two (52%) white collar professionals report feeling demoralized when they can't manage all the information that comes their way at work.

The just-released survey, commissioned by LexisNexis—a leading global provider in workflow solutions—builds on a similar survey conducted in 2008 and shows that information overload among American professionals appears to have gone from bad to worse. The expanded 2010 study surveyed 1,700 white collar workers from the United States, United Kingdom, China, South Africa and Australia, and reveals that information overload is pervasive across the globe.



“24/7” Communications: Improving or Impairing Productivity?

- When asked how they prefer to be reached with important information, more workers in the U.S. (42%), U.K. (67%) and South Africa (62%) choose email over any other means, including mobile or landline phone, text messages or in-person meetings.
- More than eight in ten (85%) professionals in Australia and seven in ten (69%) of South Africa’s professionals say the constant flow of email and other information is distracting, making it difficult to focus on the task at hand. Most professionals in the U.K. (60%), U.S. (58%) and China (57%) agree with this.
- Nine out of ten (91%) U.S. professionals say they have deleted or discarded work information without fully reading it, as have eight in ten professionals in China (84%) and Australia (82%), and almost three-quarters of professionals in the U.K. (73%) and South Africa (71%).

Impact Varies from Market to Market

- Nine in ten (92%) U.S. professionals report needing to search for old emails or documents at least once a week, and that not being able to access the right information at the right time is a huge time waster (90%).
- Workers in China are more likely than those in other countries to report needing to recreate documents because previous versions can’t be found (66%), missing deadlines because of trouble finding the necessary information (45%) and missing meetings or appointments because of scheduling miscommunications (50%) at least once a week.
- In South Africa, more than half (57%) of respondents report delivering incomplete documents, emails or other communications because the necessary information or materials could not be found on time, while in Australia, 58% of respondents report disagreements among colleagues about the right way to organize information at least once in an average work week.

Professionals Want Solutions: Employers in Some Countries Seen as More Supportive Than in Others

- In each country, more than eight in ten workers say their employer has taken at least one action to help them manage information efficiently, such as investing in technology, offering training and establishing “email-free” times.
- Six in ten (62%) Chinese workers say their company has provided information management technologies designed specifically for professionals within their industry vs. 25% of workers in the U.S., while 26% of workers in China say their companies have established “email-free” days or times, vs. only 6% in the U.S.
- Almost nine in ten U.S. professionals and more than 94% of workers in the other four markets say their companies could do more to help them handle information in their job.
- The popular solutions requested by professionals are: investments in faster computers and up-to-date technology, tools that work together to improve productivity, information management technology designed specifically for professionals in their industry and training in information management.
- Eight out of ten (82%) professionals surveyed say they could be more efficient if the software tools that they use were designed to work the way they work.

Survey Methodology

LexisNexis commissioned the 2010 International Workplace Productivity Survey. The national study included 1,700 white collar professionals across five countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, China, South Africa and Australia. The study included 300 non-legal professionals and 200 legal professionals in the U.S. and 200 non-legal professionals and 100 legal professionals in each of the other markets. It was fielded by WorldOne, an international market research agency, specializing in the collection and analysis of data for leading market research organizations, consulting firms and corporations.

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Or visit:

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