

Sun, Surf & Cell Phones

Out of sight doesn't necessarily mean out of mind for vacationing professionals, a survey shows. An estimated 61% of those polled said they check in with work at least once a day while on break.

For better or worse, technology has made it easier for professionals to check in with the office from just about anywhere. However, being overly connected can detract from the benefits of time spent away from work. Professionals should prepare for their vacation as if they won't be available,

rather than planning to check in.

The Creative Group (www.creativegroup.com) offers these tips to help professionals make a clean break from the office:

❖ **Put someone on point.** Managers should select someone whose judgment they trust to make decisions in their absence. It's important to give the point person the responsibility and authority to make judgment calls.

❖ **Establish ground rules.** If you do need to check in, set spe-

cific times when you'll be doing so, rather than letting people contact you throughout the day.

❖ **Don't leave them hanging.** Use out-of-office functions to let your clients and customers know when you're away, and provide the names and contact information of colleagues to contact in your absence.

❖ **Let it go.** Delegate projects that must continue in your absence. Be sure to let co-workers know where to find key materials. ■

Quick Ideas

Ideas for Reducing Stress

- ❖ Identify resources for financial counseling, childcare or eldercare issues, or other concerns that may impact your life before something happens.
- ❖ Find an outside activity that involves positive, healthy interaction with others.
- ❖ Acknowledge the reality of the situation. Rather than hope for a "miracle solution," begin with accepting things as they are and strive toward workable strategies.
- ❖ Seek advice from a trusted peer or employee assistance professional on how to manage work and life demands.
- ❖ Good nutrition and exercise are paramount. Find time to exercise – even 10 minutes a day can improve your health and decrease stress.
- ❖ Establish family mealtimes for better personal interaction. Families are also great reinforcements for better health, wellness, and self-care.
- ❖ Develop healthy sleep habits. If you're working two jobs, find time for a "sleep break" in order to avoid physical and mental exhaustion.
- ❖ Observe and learn from your own signals when you feel close to "hitting the wall," and determine what you can do (take a break, avoid a difficult conversation, or shift your focus) to minimize stress. ■

Source: Disability Management Employer Coalition.

We Want to Hear from You!

We want to know what readers think of various articles in *Employee Assistance Report*.

Each month we will use the *Employee Assistance Report LinkedIn group* to refer readers to an article in the most recent *EAR* and encourage feedback.

Be on the lookout for it!

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8505385>

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EAP professionals

We Want to Hear from You! See page 8.

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Leading Trends in EAP & Wellness – Part II

By Pam Kouri, Todd Donalson, and Richard Lennox

In its annual trends report Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) examined leading trends within EAP. The five trends CGP cited are: 1) Increasing demand for EAP services due to occupational stress; 2) More companies are seeking global EAP services; 3) Utilization of mental health apps increases, but do they drive outcomes?; 4) The relationship between fatigue and workplace safety is increasing; and 5) Employee engagement initiatives are having limited impact.

The first two of these trends were examined in part one of this article. The remaining trends are presented in the conclusion.

Trend #3: Utilization of mental health apps increases, but do they drive outcomes?

In the past two years, the volume of commercialized mobile health applications (mHealth apps) has more than doubled to over 100,000 according to the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics. In fact, 32% of consumers have at least one mHealth app on their mobile device, and that number is expected to keep growing.

The functionality of mHealth apps is varied and ranges from controlling the inflation or deflation of a blood-pressure cuff to the measurement of blood glucose levels; providing smoking cessation reminders to storing personal health data; connecting medical providers with diagnostic or dosing tools; and motivating patients to do their physical therapy exercises through video games.

But while the capability to connect so many individuals to so much information has never been greater, published research is limited as to whether these apps actually improve health outcomes in a meaningful or sustainable way.

Think of the number of downloads an app receives as similar to the number of gym memberships sold. Because only a portion of individuals purchasing a gym membership actually participate in regular workouts, membership data by itself is not a useful metric for measuring behavior change.

According to the IMS report, the average 30-day retention rate for a health-and-fitness app is 47%. Interestingly enough, when mHealth apps were prescribed by

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a health care provider, the 30-day "retention rate" increased an additional 10-30%, suggesting that outcomes for health apps may improve when used in conjunction with the supportive guidance of a health professional.

Moreover, does use of the mHealth app actually lead to behavior change or improved health? The American Heart Association (AHA) conducted a recent literature review on mobile technologies and the impact on cardiovascular risk behaviors (i.e. smoking, physical activity, healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight).

The AHA found that "although the number of apps continues to grow at an exponential rate, none have been critically evaluated, and their development was not evidence based, often not building on the theoretical frameworks that address behavior change."

Similarly, the 2015 IMS report states that while there are hundreds of mHealth apps currently in clinical trials, "the majority of studies published discuss app usage, not app effectiveness in terms of improving health outcomes or lowering healthcare costs."

The authors of the IMS publication go on to indicate that while there is preliminary evidence that mHealth apps can produce positive clinical outcomes and cost effectiveness, greater research is needed before this can be stated conclusively.

The following are among several actions to consider when purchasing mobile health apps. (Space precludes me from listing all of them. [The URL for the complete CGP report is listed at the end of this article.](#))

❖ **Verify the basis for claims made.** When a health app is touted as a "top" app, is the distinction

based on customer reviews/ratings, the number of downloads, or the ability to create behavior change that improves health metrics?

❖ **Verify the engagement or retention rates.** Are the retention rates sustained long enough for habit formation to occur? Habit formation varies from 18 days for easy tasks to 254 days for more complex tasks.

❖ **Consider a blended approach** that allows for a mobile health app to be used in combination with a health professional. A health professional, coach, or counselor who is highly skilled in the art of behavior change and utilizes evidence-based practices can nicely fill in the "app gap."

Trend #4: The relationship between fatigue and workplace safety has increased

Initial efforts to manage worker fatigue over a decade ago focused primarily on limiting the maximum number of hours worked per day/week or rotating shifts in a manner that allowed for sufficient rest opportunities. However, these efforts have been shown to be inadequate in part because they fail to address the behavioral, lifestyle, and medical conditions that commonly contribute to fatigue.

In the last 3-4 years, the concept of an integrated **Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS)** has begun to establish itself as the gold standard for reducing organizational risk caused by worker fatigue, and a number of industries have implemented one or more of its components.

A FRMS is a data-driven, science-based system that focuses on outcomes rather than prescriptive rules. A number of authors have

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outlined the *key characteristics of a FRMS, which typically consists of six components:*

1. Employee and supervisor education on sleep disorders, sleep health, and strategies that help workers stay alert during periods where sleepiness is high due to circadian rhythms.
2. Screening and referral for treatment of undiagnosed medical

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Comprehensive EAP History to be Funded by EARF

The Employee Assistance Research Foundation (EARF) has announced a major new research effort, the EAP History Project, to address a critical deficiency in the Employee Assistance knowledge base: the need for a definitive resource that documents the history and evolution of EAPs from their beginning to the present day.

This undertaking will be solely funded by EARF, the only organization dedicated to supporting rigorous research for effective, quality-driven EAPs.

Two grant recipients, Professor Dale Masi, PhD, CEAP, and Professor Ann Roche, PhD, will document the origins, develop-

ment, milestones, and key influences in employee assistance services, using academic and archival research methods.

Dr. Masi, an internationally recognized EAP expert and author of numerous books and articles about EAPs, will conduct the initial phase of the effort detailing the history of EAPs in the US and Canada. She will be assisted by Jodi Jacobson Frey, PhD, LCSW-C, CEAP, Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, School of Social Work.

Dr. Roche, an internationally recognized researcher and Director of the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction at Flinders University in

South Australia, will conduct phase two of the project, focusing on EAPs outside North America. She will be assisted by Dr. Ken Pidd, an international expert in workplace behavioral health.

To date, the EARF has funded research on the current state of EAPs globally and an evaluation study demonstrating the clinical and workplace outcomes of employee assistance services on employee productivity. These studies have generated multiple peer-reviewed articles, webinars, and professional conference presentations. The new project will make a major contribution to understanding the important contributions of EAPs in the global economy. ■

Moreover, most measures of engagement are questionnaires administered to employees on a population basis. The most influential of these is the Gallup survey that consists of a series of self-report items directed at engagement-like behaviors thought to indicate a strong emotional connection to the organization. There is typically not an attempt to conduct a research study, but rather a simple assessment designed to get an indication of the engagement culture in the organization.

Blessing and White (2013) assert that engagement is funda-

mentally the responsibility of the employee. Yet there is very little discussion in literature about the potential for change in individual employees, and none of the published research present any analysis of individual change based upon a specific intervention.

What is still needed is to provide employees with the tools for change such as a curriculum that specifies the reason why employees should be concerned about their personal work engagement, and a method by which they can direct their own improvement.

Put another way, a missing piece of an employee engagement intervention is one that helps the employee understand the importance of their role, and how improved work engagement benefits not just the company, but the employee as well. ■

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The complete version of this report is available at <http://chestnutglobalpartners.org/Portals/cgp/Publications/Chestnut-Global-Partners-EAP-Trends-Report-2016.pdf>.

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Mood Coach helps Manage Depression

Each year, millions of people in the U.S. experience symptoms of depression, including fatigue, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, impaired concentration or indecisiveness, insomnia or hypersomnia (excessive sleeping), loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities, restlessness, recurring thoughts of death or suicide, or significant weight loss or gain (a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month).

Mood Coach, a mobile app produced by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is designed to help individuals manage their symptoms of depression. The app is based on behavioral activation, an evidence-based treatment for depression.

Users of the Mood Coach can:

- Identify key values (like family, career, spirituality);
- Select and schedule activities that are enjoyable or meaningful, and that align with your values;

- Track mood and depression symptoms over time;
- Find resources, like how to get professional care

It's important to note that Mood Coach is a self-management tool and is *not* a substitute for professional care (such as counseling). Mood Coach is available for iOS (iPhones, iPads, & iPod Touches) from the App Store. ■

Quick Ideas

Short Summer Fridays is Smart Practice

Many workers love it when summer rolls around because one of their favorite job perks kicks in – *Short Summer Fridays*. This means that employees get to leave work early on Friday afternoons and get a jump on the weekend.

According to MSNBC, very few organizations – even small ones – have done away with traditional shorter Friday hours. How come? Karyn Ravin, president of a New York PR firm, says that giving employees a few hours off is smart for business – partly because it's tough for companies to attract and keep workers, and partly because it's a great morale-booster, and an easy way to reward and motivate

employees, many of whom are working harder and longer hours than ever.

For instance, Welz and Weisel Communications in New York City lets people leave at 3 p.m. as long as they've finished their work. Since all staffers have smartphones and access to email, clients can still reach them if necessary.

The Devon Group – a PR firm in New Jersey – keeps Summer Fridays going because most of their clients take time off on Fridays. As a result, having the office open wouldn't bring in any new business.

Other companies have created a more flexible approach to time off – for example, giving

employees one Friday off each month during the summer, but letting the employee choose when to take the time. ■

Additional source: John Tesh: Intelligence for Your Life (www.tesh.com).



Leading Trends...cont'd from Page 2

or behavioral conditions such as sleep apnea, which can place employees at up to four times greater risk of an accident.

3. Analysis of workplace hazards contributing to fatigue such as performing tasks in harsh environments, or which are highly strenuous or monotonous.

4. Implementation of a reporting system that provides early intervention for employees demonstrating warning signs of fatigue impairment.

5. Creation of an incident investigation process that includes assessments for fatigue impairment.

6. Internal and external auditing of the FMRS to evaluate outcomes and ensure a continuous improvement process.

How are some industries responding? The Federal Aviation Administration and the Federal Rail Administration have issued regulations requiring the implementation of a FRMS in recent years. However, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has stopped short of requiring implementation of a FRMS, and instead considers it voluntary.

While the FRMS outlines the key components of a best practice approach to reduce fatigue risks, *organizations not yet prepared to implement all of the components may want to consider the following guidelines as a best practice starting point.*

1. Review your incident reporting process and collect at least 2-3 fatigue-related data points such as time of incident, total hours slept in the previous 48 hours, or total hours continuously awake at time of accident.

2. Consult with your EAP vendor to determine if they can provide resources to assist in



Editor's Notebook

In the conclusion of a two-part cover story, Chestnut Global Partners continues

its examination of important trends affecting EAPs. The use of mental health apps is increasing, and it's a platform that today's tech-savvy Millennials expect to see from their EA providers. However, caution needs to be taken when using mobile mental health apps, and tips are presented for doing just that.

Does your EAP use a Fatigue Risk Management System? If not, it's something you may wish to consider, as the authors discuss. The article also explains why employee engagement initiatives are having limited impact.

The URL for the complete report is listed at the end of the

article. Many thanks to Todd Donalson and his colleagues at Chestnut for compiling this insightful, extensive report.

We want to hear what *EAR* readers thought about this two-part article! Was it helpful? Were the trends areas that are affecting your particular EAP? What additional trends would you like to see in a future newsletter? Our new LinkedIn group is at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8505385>. I look forward to hearing from you and hope your summer is off to a great start.

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reducing fatigue risks such as sleep health education, screening for sleep disorders or behavioral health intervention for conditions contributing to fatigue. In addition, *find out if your EAP offers specialized training or health coaching programs for sleep difficulties.*

3. Consult with your occupational health provider to determine if pre-employment or post-accident evaluations assess for sleep disorders or other conditions impacting sleep quality and quantity.

Trend #5: Employee engagement initiatives are having limited impact

Employee engagement has shown little improvement despite the deployment of significant resources by many organizations. One reason for the unchanging

level of employee engagement is that there has been *very little change in approaches to measuring and improving engagement during the past two decades.*

Unfortunately the current approach creates a fairly fragmented coverage of the topic as typified by the lack of an agreed upon single definition. Some researchers sidestep emotional and cognitive issues that are primarily within the control of the employee to change.

MacPherson (2014) defines work engagement as the degree to which an employee is psychologically invested in the organization and motivated to contribute to its success. Though somewhat vague, *it is essentially about one's emotional connection to the organization.*

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Not Surprisingly, Screen Addiction is Here

Some people spend a good chunk of their waking hours glued to the screen of a smartphone or computer. What they're doing generally varies — sometimes they're checking Facebook or texting, some are in a seemingly unending battle to manage work email accounts, while others are frequently compelled toward Internet pornography.

"It depends on the level of severity," said Dr. Beverly Young, a licensed psychologist and also a professor of journalism and mass communications at St. Bonaventure University. "When we talk about screen addiction, I think what happens is there's a continuum. ... People become preoccupied with the Internet. They're unable to hold a job or serious relationship because of the Internet."

Additional warning signs available at her website — netaddiction.com — include:

- Failed attempts at controlling behavior;
- Neglecting friends and family;
- Not getting enough sleep in order to stay online;
- Being dishonest with others;
- Feeling guilty, ashamed, anxious or depressed as a result of online behavior;
- Gaining or losing weight;
- Suffering from backaches, headaches, and/or carpal tunnel syndrome; and
- Withdrawing from other pleasurable activities.

Exactly how prevalent is screen addiction? Much like



alcoholism, the commonly cited statistic is between 5% and 10% of all users. However, because many never seek help or report honestly, the numbers are really a guessing game for the experts, according to Young.

"There are no real outcome studies looking at how prevalent it is. I think the reality is there's varying degrees," said Young, who in 2014 gave one of the popular Internet-streamed TED talks on the topic. "There's people that I

call chronic checkers. They just check their phone all the time. Is that an addiction? No. It's more of a compulsive problem."

There are sometimes other underlying problems accompanying degrees of screen time. Again, like other addictive diseases, Internet addiction often coincides with depression, anxiety, other psychological afflictions and chemical imbalances, Young explained.

"When we talk about Internet addiction or screen addiction, it's typically someone who doesn't have a handle on life, kind of like with drugs or alcohol," she added. "There are people who might drink every day, but they're not falling down, sloppy drunks. They may have a glass of wine or two a night, but they hold down jobs and relationships and otherwise function in society." ■

Additional source: Kelsey Boudini, Olean Times Herald.

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People Planning: Boosting Performance – Part II

By Gregory Lay

"Ideas are great, but real brilliance is giving ownership of an idea to people who can actually make it work. When the whole team participates in creating a concept, they make sure it succeeds!" Judy told Dan in part one of this article.

Judy went on to outline several ways of people planning to get buy-in from the people who would implement Dan's proposals. One such method (finding patterns) was explained last month. The remaining suggestions for people planning appear below:

❖ **Observing the entire team.** Watch group processes and results. Mistaking one person's actions for a group pattern often leads to false conclusions. Individual performance is the responsibility of each direct supervisor and commenting about individuals will make you look like a busybody instead of an effectiveness advocate. Remember that documenting people outside of your authority can create an *unfriendly work environment* for which you could be reprimanded!

❖ **Focusing on positives.** When there are positives and negatives, start with the positives and do it in 'broadcast' mode, making sure others hear how well their colleague is doing, especially those in authority. People listen better when hearing about what they're doing right than when being told what's wrong! Emphasize their triumphs, and then ask how they'd expand on that success so that *they* find the negatives instead of having them pointed out.

❖ **Crediting those doing the work.** Sometimes it takes patience to keep asking questions until others 'get' the idea that you've been trying to offer. It's worth the effort to keep trying to hand off your ideas, because when a team feels like a change is *their* idea, they make sure it works! Working from the inside, they find even more ways to improve the process. And you're known as a helpful friend, instead of a critical busybody.

A few days later, Dan found a nice note from Judy in his email, reinforcing his notes from their meeting while adding a few more reminders:

❖ **No blaming allowed.** Formulate questions that are curious, not judgmental. When people feel blamed, they become defensive just when the situation calls for creativity and cooperation. The person most likely to be blamed is exactly the person in the best position to suggest and implement a solution.

❖ **Watching without expectations.** An open mind won't let conclusions arrive before observations. You wouldn't be observing if you didn't think there was a solution to be found, but your previously held conception may be exactly what blinds you to new ideas and the opportunity to encourage the person who can make that idea work.

❖ **Using colors for tracking.** It takes practice to start to recognize patterns. Marking events on a calendar using different colors helps quantify areas of behavior and

potential solutions. Be conscious of marking team, not individual observations.

❖ **Reviewing notes often and quickly.** New ideas come from new ways of seeing, not from seeing the same thing over and over. Spending more than five minutes reviewing a week's notes is probably wasteful. You're not writing a book report, you're just looking for ideas for discussion with other problem-solvers. ■

Gregory Lay is a certified speaking coach, specializing in organizational understanding. To learn more visit www.AccidentalCareer.com.

Resources

📖 **Bud to Boss** workshop. Learn how to handle the difficult and uncomfortable situations that new leaders face in their role. This powerful training equips them with the skills they need to prepare them for all of the unexpected challenges they'll face. Go to <http://www.bud-toboss.com/difficult-situations/people-team-things-irrational-illogical/>.

📖 **Unleash Your Inner Company: Use Passion and Perseverance to Build Your Ideal Business**, by John Chisholm. Called the "Yoda" of startups, Chisholm explains why business teams must understand that different is better when considering customers' needs. "Different" means a qualitative advantage using a different approach, design, or technologies that make a product or service the best choice for an important set of customers. ■