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Captivate Office Pulse Finds Summer Hours are Bad for Business

Study finds decreased productivity and increased stress are unintended consequences of well-intentioned programs

CHELMSFORD, Mass., June 27, 2012 – Captivate Network, the leading digital media company for reaching on-the-go business professionals across North America, has found summer hours are bad for businesses and employees alike. The findings, part of the most recent Captivate Office Pulse, are based on responses from more than 600 white-collar workers in North America. Just under half of those surveyed (49 percent) report working for an organization that offers summer hours (telecommuting, four 10 hour day workweeks, etc.) and the same percentage report a decrease in productivity.

Summertime itself has a negative impact on the workplace. People report productivity goes down (20 percent), attendance dips (19 percent), project turnaround times increase (13 percent) and they are more distracted (45 percent). The addition of summer hours only exacerbates these problems. For example, 53% of employees who leave early on Fridays report a drop in personal productivity and 23% those who make up for fewer Friday hours by working longer hours from Monday to Thursday report that their stress levels increase.

“These are surprising – and perhaps unwelcome – findings,” said Mike DiFranza, president of Captivate Network. “On the face of it, summer hours probably seem like a terrific idea and are welcome by all. Unfortunately, the impact is almost uniformly negative. Given the state of the economy and the unease felt by many workers, perhaps it’s time to reconsider these types of policies.”

The Office Pulse looked at the impact of several popular approaches to flexibility during the summer months: telecommuting, working longer days from Monday to Thursday so Fridays could be shortened or taken off, closing early on Fridays and permitting people to arrive and leave early. Virtually all of them had a negative impact. The table below represents the percentage of workers reporting a change in their workplace in the summer:

	Companies offering	Employees Reporting Decreased Productivity in their Workplace	Employees Reporting Increased Stress in their Workplace
Telecommuting	4 percent	43 percent	14 percent
Increased hours Monday-Thursday	12 percent	52 percent	23 percent
Early closing on Fridays	4 percent	80 percent	16 percent
Early arrival/departure	10 percent	51 percent	21 percent
Other (unspecified)	6 percent	67 percent	16 percent
No specific policy but flexibility permitted	23 percent	52 percent	17 percent
Summer hours prohibited	51 percent	46 percent	16 percent

Of the approaches listed above, only telecommuting has a positive impact with 26 percent of respondents reporting an increase in their productivity. But only 4 percent of companies make this available to their employees. Telecommuting is also the only approach that results in lower employee stress than prohibiting summer hours all together.

“Summertime is a tough time in the workplace,” said DiFranza, “and too many businesses are decreasing productivity and increasing stress in an attempt to be

flexible. While there are many reasons that may contribute to this drop in productivity, we have seen some interesting correlations. For example, people reporting a drop in productivity also report an increase in socializing with co-workers (63 percent), taking extended lunch breaks (51 percent) and leaving early a few days a week (49 percent). Summer hours programs are put in place with the very best of intentions, and I'm sure with some adjustments they can meet the needs of companies and employees alike."

Methodology

Captivate Office Pulse research is designed to offer an empirical glimpse into the white-collar workplace. The research used to develop this study was based on the responses to an online blind panel in June, 2012 by 619 people in 14 major metropolitan centers in the US and Canada. Captivate commissioned MarketTools, the leader in software and services for Enterprise Feedback Management (EFM) and market research to build and manage panelists across Captivate's Footprint of 1,000+ class A office buildings. The panel, consisting of over 4,000 white-collar professionals, is the source for workplace behavior and advertising communications measurement for dozens of Fortune 500 companies and their agency partners. For more information about the Captivate Office Pulse, visit officepulse.captivate.com.

About Captivate Network

Captivate Network is the leading digital media company reaching millions of on-the-go business professionals throughout the workday across North America. Captivate cuts through the clutter of information overload to provide viewers with content and product messages that are timely, relevant and empower them to balance the personal and professional demands of the workday. Known for its vast network of nearly 10,000 office elevator displays, Captivate continues to expand the delivery of customized, actionable information to a busy, upscale audience via emerging technology platforms. Founded in 1997, Captivate was acquired by Gannett in 2004.