

Sample research report

Executive Summary (Summary or Abstract)

The aim of this report was to investigate UniLab staff attitudes to personal mobile phone use in staff and team meetings. A staff survey on attitudes towards the use of mobile phones in the staff / team meetings was conducted. The results indicate that the majority of staff find mobile phone use a major issue in staff meetings. The report concludes that personal mobile phones are disruptive and should be turned off in meetings. It is recommended that UniLab develops a company policy banning the use of mobile phones except in exceptional circumstances.

Introduction

There has been a massive increase in the use of personal mobile phones over the past five years and there is every indication that this will continue. According to Black (2002) by 2008 almost 100% of working people in Australia will carry personal mobile phones. Black describes this phenomenon as 'serious in the extreme, potentially undermining the foundations of communication in our society' (2002, p 167). Currently at UniLab 89% of staff have personal mobile phones.

Recently a number of staff have complained about the use of personal mobile phones in meetings and asked what the official company policy is. At present there is no official company policy regarding phone use. This report examines the issue of mobile phone usage in staff meetings and small team meetings. It does not seek to examine the use of mobile phones in the workplace at other times, although some concerns were raised.

For the purposes of this report a personal mobile phone is a personally funded phone for private calls as opposed to an employer funded phone that directly relates to carrying out a particular job.

Methods

This research was conducted by questionnaire and investigated UniLab staff members' attitudes to the use of mobile phones in staff / team meetings. A total of 412 questionnaires were distributed with employees' fortnightly pay slips (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire used Likert scales to assess social attitudes (see Smith 2002) to mobile phone usage and provided open ended responses for additional comments. Survey collection boxes were located in every branch for a four week period. No personal information was collected; the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

Results

There was an 85% response rate to the questionnaire. A breakdown of the responses is listed below in Table 1. It can be clearly seen from the results that mobile phones are considered to be disruptive and should be turned off in meetings.

Table 1

Personal mobile phone usage in staff and team meetings is...	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %
Not a problem	5	7	65	23
An issue	40	45	10	5
Disruptive	80	10	7	3
Phones should be permissible	6	16	56	22
Phones should be turned off	85	10	3	2
Allowed in some circumstances	10	52	24	14

The survey also allowed participants to identify any circumstances where mobile phones should be allowed in meetings and also assessed staff attitudes towards receiving personal phone calls in staff meetings in open ended questions. These results showed that staff thought that in some circumstances, eg medical or emergencies, receiving personal phone calls was acceptable, but generally receiving personal phone calls was not necessary.

Discussion / Interpretation of Results

It can be seen from the results in Table 1 that personal mobile phone use is considered to a problem; however it was acknowledged that in some situations it should be permissible. 80% of recipients considered mobile phones to be highly disruptive and there was strong support for phones being turned off in meetings (85%). Only 12% thought that mobile phone usage in staff and team meetings was not a problem, whereas 85% felt it was an issue. The results are consistent throughout the survey. Many of the respondents (62%) felt that in exceptional circumstances mobile phones should be allowed, eg medical, but there should be protocols regarding this.

These findings are consistent with other studies. According to Smith (2005) many companies have identified mobile phones as disruptive and have banned the use of mobile phones in meetings. Havir (2004) claims that 29% of staff meeting time is wasted through unnecessary mobile phone interruptions. This affects time management, productivity and team focus.

Conclusion

The use of mobile phones in staff meetings is clearly disruptive and they should be switched off. Most staff felt it is not necessary to receive personal phone calls in staff meetings except under certain circumstances, but permission should first be sought from the team leader, manager or chair.

Recommendations

It is recommended that UniLab develops an official policy regarding the use of mobile phones in staff meetings. The policy should recommend:

- mobile phones are banned in staff meetings
- mobile phone may be used in exceptional circumstances but only with the permission of the appropriate manager or chair

Finally, the policy needs to apply to all staff in the company.