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Yet Over a Third Feel that their Management Underestimates the Benefits of these Tools



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Nearly Half of Information Workers Say that Using Social Tools Has Increased their Productivity

Yet Over a Third Feel that their Management Underestimates the Benefits of these Tools

New York, NY – For nearly half (46%) of information workers, using social tools has increased their productivity, while less than one in ten (9%) say these tools have reduced their efficiency, according to a new poll of 9,908 employees across 32 countries conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Microsoft. “Social tools” were defined as instant messaging, text messaging, video conferencing, news feeds, social networks, and team sites such as SharePoint.

In addition to bolstering productivity, two in five respondents (42%) report that social tools have resulted in more workplace collaboration – something that many (39%) say there is not enough of at their workplace.

Majorities of information workers say that they use email (93%), team sites/intranets (58%), IM (56%) and videoconferencing (51%) for professional purposes. While they are more likely to utilize external social networks for personal than professional purposes, they are being used in the workplace by nearly a third of workers (31%). Less prevalent workplace social tools include internal social networks (22%), blogging platforms (17%), micro blogging (17%), and web aggregators (14%).

Organizational Support of Social Tools

Six in ten (62%) report that they have access to all of the tools and technologies they need to do their job well, and many report that their employer encourages them to use social tools, such as email (80%), team sites/intranets (45%), video conferencing (42%), and IM (38%). Over a quarter (27%) say their company encourages news feeds, while almost one in five say their company supports public FTP/cloud storage (19%).

Though information workers generally recognize the benefits of using social tools, their employers do not always feel the same way; over a third (34%) of workers surveyed feel that their management underestimates the benefits of these tools. Likewise, many report that there are barriers or policies in place that limit the use of social tools. At least a quarter of workers report that there are restrictions in place when it comes to using external social networks (32%), microblogging (30%), and internal social networks (25%). Similarly, 40% feel that their IT department can be a barrier to using social tools.

Companies’ wariness of social tools may be detrimental; nearly two in five (37%) workers believe that they could do their job better if their management were more supportive of social tools.

Reasons for Restrictions

Across all countries, security concerns (68%) and productivity loss (58%) are the top two reasons why social tools are restricted. Roughly a quarter of information workers also say that social tools are restricted due to human resources concerns (28%), concerns about company image (25%) and data loss (24%). An additional one in five cites bandwidth (19%) as a reason for company restriction.



These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted March 25 – April 24, 2013. For the survey, an international sample of 9,908 information workers (defined as those employed at a company with at least 100 employees who use a PC, laptop, tablet or Smartphone for at least 75% of their job function) in 32 countries was interviewed online. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of 9,908 and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 1 percentage point 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been had the entire population of information workers in all 32 countries been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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