

9 in 10 UK employees are neglecting microbreaks when WFH

Working from home has shaken the traditional workplace habits and everyone had to adopt a new routine the way they could to stay productive and on top of things. But recent research conducted by team-building platform Wildgoose showed employees working from home most of the time overlook their breaks throughout the day.

While nearly half of employees stated that their mental health is being impacted by the working patterns and decreased social contact with their colleagues, 95% of UK employees are neglecting microbreaks when working from home when breaks and microbreaks improve work-life balance and mental health.

Statistics from a recent study shows that microbreaks have decreased for over 9 in 10 employees during home working, as lockdown sees us glued to our desks more than ever before – highlighting the need for companies to do more to support their workforce.

The ‘Working from home’ study, conducted by remote team building company Wildgoose, asked employees from 133 companies throughout the UK how their working day differs at home compared to in the office, whether they

wanted to continue working from home after lockdown has finished, and how companies could improve home working practices.

One of the main findings, when employees were asked which aspects of home working could be improved, was that employees have been taking significantly fewer microbreaks throughout the day. Microbreaks lasting a few minutes are linked to wellbeing, productivity, good company morale and a happier working environment.

When the respondents were asked about their desk time and break habits, the following common 'microbreaks' were said to have been done less frequently during home working days:

This points to a large portion of the working population not taking the health and safety recommended break from the desk every hour (47%), failing to take breaks for physical activity or stretching (50%), and a large portion of UK employees (61%) losing social aspects of work and the mental benefits that accompany them.

“Remote working has presented challenges for companies of all sizes, and morale is right up there with the biggest of them. When you take away tea breaks and office chats, teams can struggle to stay motivated at a distance, which makes regular team-building exercises more important than they’ve ever been. We’ve adapted our offering to help companies with remote workforces by looking at what most engages people about team-building – social interaction, that sense of collaboration and staying connected with colleagues– They’ve seen a fantastic response, and we expect this trend to continue growing.” – Jonny Edser, Managing Director

at Wildgoose

Further questions from the study found that nearly half of the study respondents (47%) stated that they felt their mental health was being affected when working from home – companies need to address this as they would in an office.

When asked what managers could do to make homeworking arrangements better, employees said that the biggest areas for improvement were:

Lack of social contact with workmates (56%)

Not seeing workmates face-to-face (52%)

Not protecting employee mental health (47%)

Uncomfortable and impractical desks and equipment (45%)

Working excessive hours (36%)

Conversely, however, 74% of those asked said that they would be happy to continue working from home after the lockdown has finished. The study also found that small businesses face greater pressure going forward to allow employees to continue working from home, with 89% of workers in SMEs wanting to continue, compared to only 69% at companies of over 1,000 employees.

Identifying that the biggest issues faced by home-working employees revolve around social interaction, Wildgoose has produced four new remote team building products to help connect employees who find themselves spread across the UK: The Daily Kick-Off, The Team Quiz, The Virtual Away Day and The Virtual Escape Room.

“Even without the lockdown, employees are encouraged to take microbreaks. These are good for their mental health as well as for their physical health. If you look at the biggest problems with

desk working such as prolonged sitting and staring at a screen, this can harm the body in areas such as the spine or eyesight. People are encouraged to take breaks away from those postures and to stretch one's back and do eye exercises away from the screen for at least 5 -10 mins at a time, hourly, depending on the source of the advice. 'Water cooler' conversations at work will certainly provide more frequent breaks. They will have a positive impact on wellbeing and productivity because humans at their basic level are social creatures, even the most introverted of us. It actually gives us the energy to socialise, even in small doses. Through casual conversations, sharing stories, or chatting about a piece of work will enhance your thinking and give you some ideas on how to improve your current project. This will bring about increased motivation, engagement and build and enhance working relationships. These all contribute to wellbeing and productivity at work. By having frequent microbreaks and regular interactions with others, you're building micro-communities and this is what helps individuals thrive. The social interaction and the workplace community of subtle but no less important relationship-building – they all help the organisation's productivity, as well as the

wellbeing of individuals.” – Karen Kwong, Director of Renoc Consulting, organisational Psychologist and wellbeing coach

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