

Taking a short smartphone break improves employee well-being, research finds

July 7 2014, by Jennifer Tidball



A Kansas State University researcher has found that short smartphone breaks throughout the workday can improve workplace productivity, make employees happier and benefit businesses. Credit: Kansas State University

Want to be more productive and happier during the workday? Try taking a short break to text a friend, play "Angry Birds" or check Facebook on your smartphone, according to Kansas State University research.

In his latest research, Sooyeol Kim, [doctoral student](#) in psychological sciences, found that allowing [employees](#) to take smartphone microbreaks may be a benefit—rather than a disruption—for businesses. Microbreaks

are nonworking-related behaviors during working hours.

Through a study of 72 full-time workers from various industries, Kim discovered that employees only spend an average of 22 minutes out of an eight-hour [workday](#) playing on their smartphones. He also found that employees who take smartphone breaks throughout the day are happier at the end of the workday.

"A smartphone microbreak can be beneficial for both the employee and the organization," Kim said. "For example, if I would play a game for an hour during my working hours, it would definitely hurt my work performance. But if I take short breaks of one or two minutes throughout the day, it could provide me with refreshment to do my job."

To study smartphone usage, Kim and collaborators developed an application that the 72 study participants installed on their smartphones. The app privately and securely measured the employees' smartphone usage during work hours. The app also divided the employees' smartphone usage into categories such as entertainment, which included games such as "Angry Birds" or "Candy Crush," or social media, which included Facebook and Twitter.

At the end of each workday, the participants recorded their perceived well-being.

"By interacting with friends or family members through a [smartphone](#) or by playing a short game, we found that employees can recover from some of their stress to refresh their minds and take a break," Kim said.

Taking a break throughout the workday is important because it is difficult—and nearly impossible—for an employee to concentrate for eight straight hours a day without a break, Kim said. Smartphone microbreaks are similar to other microbreaks throughout the workday:

chatting with coworkers, walking around the hallway or getting a cup of coffee. Such breaks are important because they can help employees cope with the demands of the workplace.

"These days, people struggle with a lot of different types of stressors, such as work demands, time scheduling, family issues or personal life issues," Kim said. "We need to understand how we can help people recover and cope with stressors. Smartphones might help and that is really important not only for individuals, but for an organization, too."

Provided by Kansas State University

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