

# PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

August 2017

**Hugging at work  
– the rights and  
wrongs**

**Humour in the  
workplace**

**Iris scanning  
technology**

**What to do if you are  
unhappy at work**

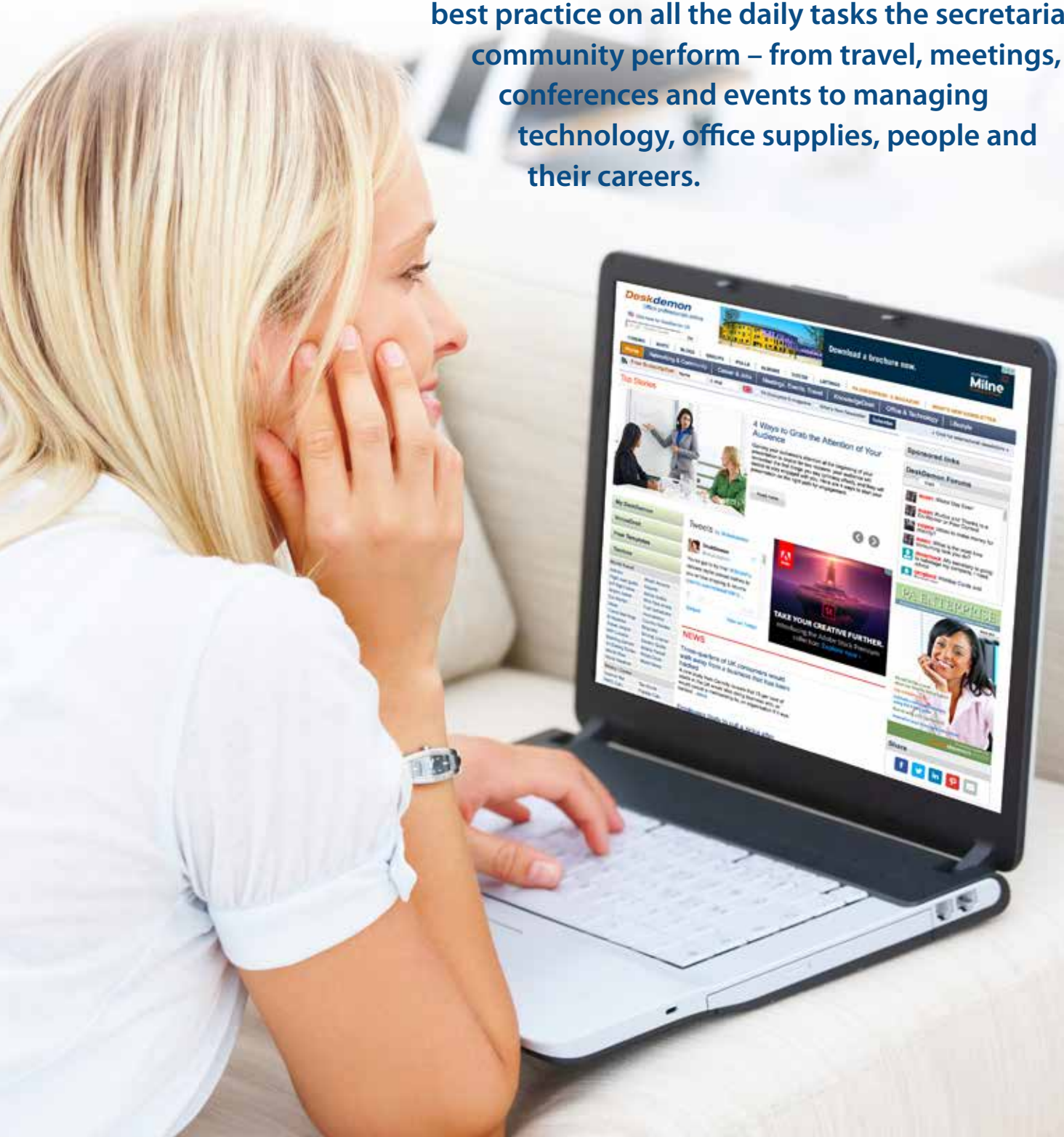
**Toxic Employees –  
how to identify and  
deal with them**

PA Enterprise is published by

**Deskdemon.com**

***As an office worker, where do you go for information, advice, tutorials, vital tools, training and relaxation?***

DeskDemon is the world's largest resource, information and community site for Administrative Professionals, Executive PAs, secretaries, Administrators and Office Managers. Providing essential information, resources, tips, tricks, tools, quick links, templates, editorial features and best practice on all the daily tasks the secretarial community perform – from travel, meetings, conferences and events to managing technology, office supplies, people and their careers.





4



6



10

**4 TSB to roll out iris scanning tech**

---

**6 How to identify and address 'toxic employees'**

---

**10 Are you a hugger or a hand shaker - or neither?**

---

**12 5 things to do if you're not happy at work**

---

**14 8 facts about humour in the workplace**

---

**16 No Time to Exercise? Do It While You Work!**

---

**18 Being a teen today is a breeze compared to what their parents endured**

---



12



16



18



## PA ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

[www.deskdemon.com](http://www.deskdemon.com)

Terminal House, Station Approach, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 8AS

### Editorial

[editoruk@deskdemon.com](mailto:editoruk@deskdemon.com)

### Advertising

Tel: 0870 410 4038

[mek@deskdemon.com](mailto:mek@deskdemon.com)

### Design & Production

Jane Bigos

Graphic Design

[janebigos@deskdemon.com](mailto:janebigos@deskdemon.com)

Kulasekaram Vimalarasa (Raj)

Web Developer

[raj@deskdemon.com](mailto:raj@deskdemon.com)

### Managing Director

Mek Rahmani

Founder, CEO

[mek@deskdemon.com](mailto:mek@deskdemon.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this Publication (whether in hardcopy or electronic form) may be copied, transmitted, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior written consent of DeskDemon.com. Whilst every care is taken in the compilation and publication of this publication, DeskDemon.com can not be held responsible for any consequences, mistakes or omissions. DeskDemon.com can not accept any responsibility for any inaccuracies or changes, or for consequential loss arising from such changes or inaccuracies, or for any other loss. Inclusion of any advertisements does not imply recommendations or endorsement by DeskDemon.com.

Copyright 2017 DeskDemon.com



PA Enterprise is sent to DeskDemon UK e-newsletter, audited by ABCe (5th/6th July 2007) with a net distribution of 70,581 email addresses.

# TSB to roll out iris scanning tech

*Bank customers will be able to use iris recognition software on some Samsung Galaxy phones to log into their accounts from September*

Imagine logging onto your bank account just by glancing at your phone.

That's what some TSB customers will be able to do from September when the bank introduces iris recognition to its mobile banking app.

It will be the first bank in Europe to introduce the technology, but its arrival will test customers' trust in biometric technology.

Customers will need the latest Samsung Galaxy S8 to use the new way of accessing their TSB accounts.

Once they have registered their irises, they will be able to log in by simply looking at the phone.

TSB's chief information officer Carlos Abarca said iris recognition was the most secure form of biometric authentication currently available. "It takes advantage of 266 different characteristics, compared with 40 for fingerprints."

He said it offered customers a combination of security and convenience: "It's extremely fast - it takes less than a second to get in - and the gesture is very natural. And you don't have to remember secret numbers or passwords."

Samsung added iris scanning to the biometric security options, alongside face recognition and fingerprint scanning, when the phone went on sale earlier this year.

In May the German hacking group the Chaos Computer Club said it had fooled Samsung's iris



scanner with a photo used to make a dummy eye.

Samsung insisted that it would take an extraordinary set of circumstances, where someone had access to both the phone and a high definition photo of its owner's eye, to beat its system.

TSB's Carlos Abarca said he was confident in the security of iris scanning: "There's no security option that is absolutely perfect. We're relying not only on the biometrics but the digital certificate on the phone. To fake your eyeball is potentially possible - but it is extremely difficult."

Biometrics has been touted as the solution to establishing someone's identity for the last twenty years but has made slow progress.

You can see facial recognition and iris scanning in use at automated passport control systems in various parts of the world, but it's the widespread adoption of smartphones which promises to supercharge adoption of the technology.

The fingerprint scanning which arrived on Apple's iPhone in 2013 and is now a feature of many Android smartphones allows millions of users to pay for anything from a cup of coffee to a train journey by touching their phone.

### Privacy concerns

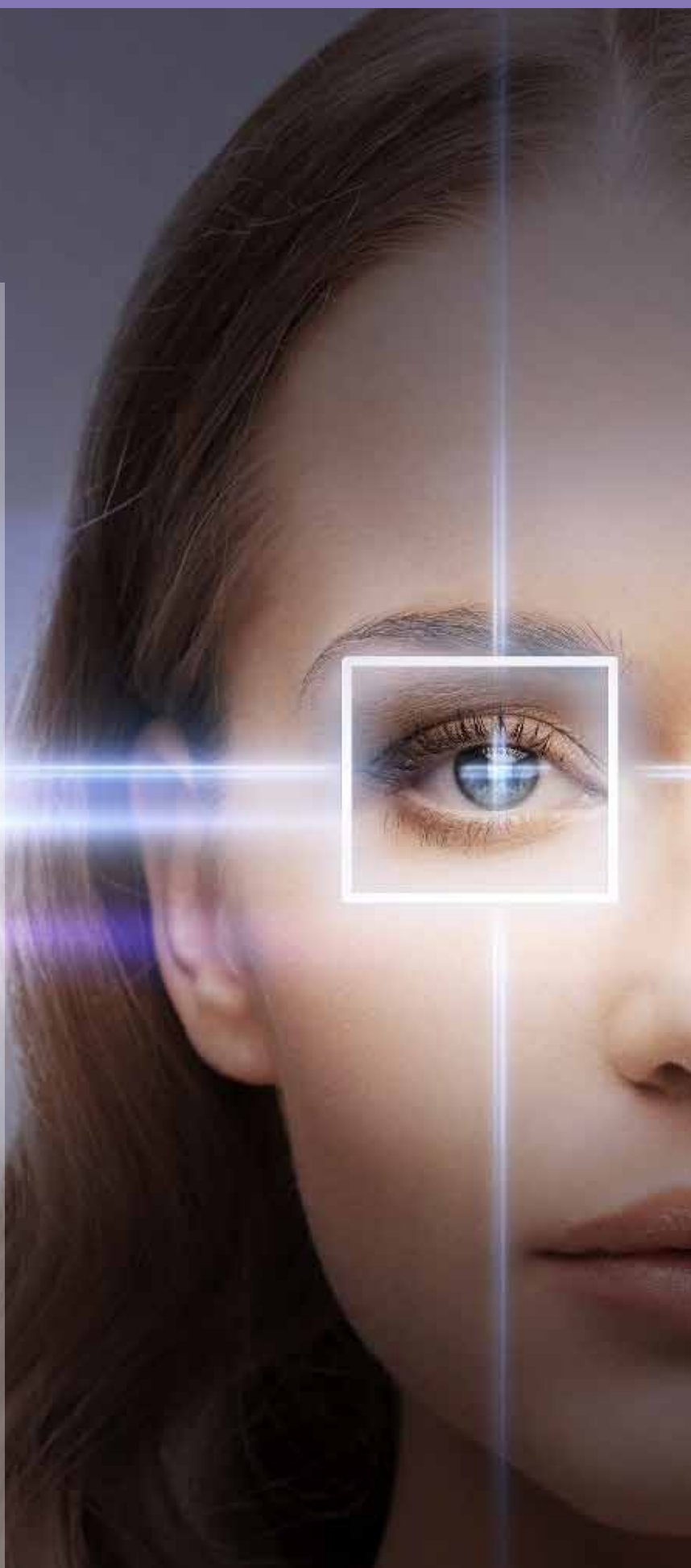
Isabelle Moeller of the Biometrics Institute has been working to promote adoption of the technology since 2001.

She says consumers have two major concerns: "Privacy and safety - they want to know their data is secure and the system can't be spoofed."

But she says the industry is establishing benchmarks for best practice: "If we can get that right the convenience that biometrics offers can create a fantastic customer experience."

TSB customers can already log on to their mobile banking app using fingerprint recognition. The minority with a high-end Samsung may try out iris scanning when it becomes an option in September.

But in the biometric battle the simplicity of just putting a finger on your phone may prove more attractive than holding it up and looking at it.



# How to identify and address 'toxic employees'

*So-called 'toxic employees' are one of the most common corporate culture downfalls. Good culture isn't founded on ping pong tables or free beers—it's founded on mutual respect and psychological safety. Toxic employees undermine fancy corporate culture initiatives and degrade the best kinds of HR programmes. But like most problems, there's a cure, if you pay attention to the symptoms.*

---

Performance appraisal processes are a great way to evaluate your employees. But what about employee morale? Employee behaviors and relationships are equally important, because they define corporate culture. If you let bad behaviors poison your employees, you'll end up with a toxic work environment. It's fairly easy to spot employees who underperform, bicker with their coworkers or display blatantly unacceptable behaviors, like sexual harassment or stealing. Identifying and preventing more subtle toxic employee behaviors can be difficult.

## Types of toxic employees

Here are a few signs you have a toxic employee on your team and some tips on how to deal with them:

### **1. The gossip: "Did you hear about who's getting a promotion?"**

It's always a good sign if your employees develop friendly relationships and get along. In fact, you should encourage an open communication culture. But, office gossip can lead to a significant decrease in your team's productivity, if it goes too far. You'll spot a gossiping culprit everywhere: they'll be chatting near the water cooler, they'll walk around during lunch, trying to 'fish' for interesting stories and they'll frequently

share juicy office news. They'll interrupt their coworkers, without knocking on the door, simply to ask about their vacation plans.

This kind of 'social butterfly' employee becomes toxic when they're mostly preoccupied with fun stories and gossiping rather than actually working. Besides, excessive gossip and ungrounded rumors can turn into office politics and create drama among your employees. To avoid this, don't squeeze your employees into cubicles, wishing for minimum contact. On the contrary, make sure your employees have enough time to interact with each other during lunch or after-work events. This way, they should stay more focused on work during billable hours. If, however, there are specific employees who seem to constantly initiate office gossip, it's best to speak with them directly and ask them not to distract their coworkers.

### **2. The yes-person: "Yes, that sounds great, if you say so"**

This is a rather difficult case of toxic employee to identify, as they don't seem to cause you a lot of direct trouble. You may have noticed, however, that a particular team member always agrees at the end of meetings, never putting something new on the table. If they don't ask questions,



this could probably be an indicator that they're not willing to learn. They'll put the minimum effort to perform exactly what's expected of them and nothing more. They'll wait for detailed instructions, without taking any initiative.

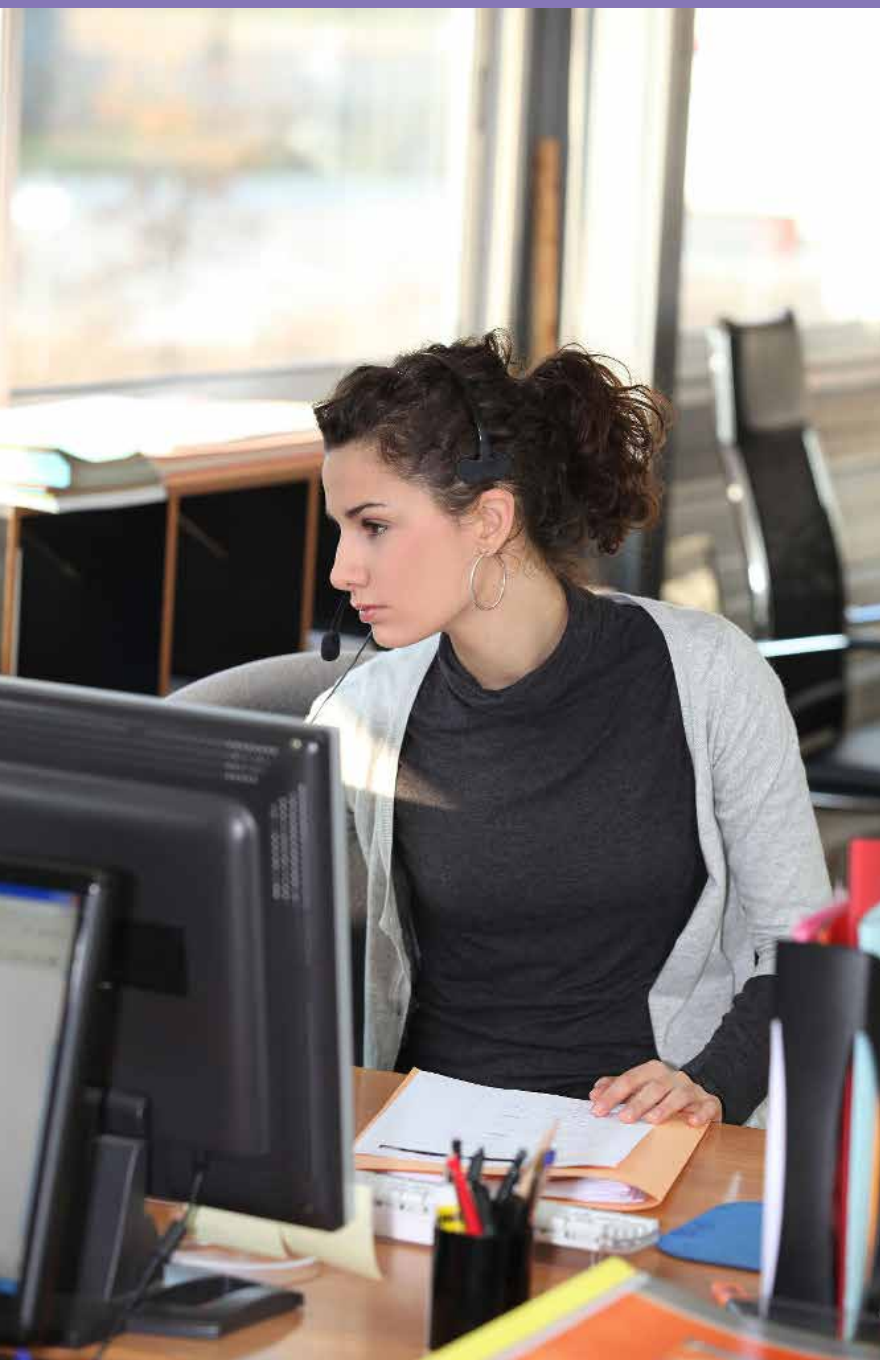
Try to identify these kinds of toxic employee the next time a big project comes up. Is someone from the team significantly less excited than other team members? They're your toxic employee. They're likely disengaged and feel like they can't grow or help their team evolve. You should talk with them to discover the reasons behind their lack of enthusiasm. Perhaps giving them a more challenging task would help them recover their interest. Keep an eye out for employees who run out the door as soon as they've finished work, or who never participate in after-work events. Perhaps they struggle with work-life balance. In this case, applying flexible

working hours or a work from home policy could be a simple solution to handle their toxic behavior.

### **3. The procrastinator: "I'll do it tomorrow"**

In a world where employees use the web for their work or even have to stay connected on Facebook to communicate with customers, we're all guilty of small distractions from time to time. But when those distractions stop being quick and innocent, problems arise. If your employee starts missing their deadlines or submitting low-quality work, you have to address their behavior. Give them stricter or more detailed deadlines, assign them demanding tasks and ask them to prepare a presentation of their work so far for an ongoing project. This way, they'll know exactly what their responsibilities are and it's up to them to hit or miss.

*Continued* ►



avoid work. But, the excuse-maker gets more creative. They'll make excuses for their tardiness, they'll have a coworker pick up their work and they'll try to slip under the radar for as long as possible. Other common 'symptoms' include high absenteeism, low energy and lack of motivation. You can identify and possibly 'cure' these employees with unexpected visits, asking for periodical reports and holding them personally accountable for specific tasks. Keep in mind that they can tank your whole team productivity and ruin your team balance and retention, so waste no time in addressing their toxic excuses.

#### **5. The narcissist: "Nobody can do what I do"**

Who says a toxic employee can't be a high achiever? A narcissistic employee is usually an excellent performer, but doesn't seem to recognize the value of a strong team. They prefer to work independently and may even underestimate their coworkers. Your company, though, needs team cooperation to meet challenging targets. You should promote your team successes and encourage group projects. Recognize team efforts to showcase that every member's input is important.

You can also motivate your employees by praising them when they successfully complete their tasks. Getting recognition on a regular basis makes employees put more effort into their work and try to perform better. But procrastination isn't always bad. You should embrace creative ideas from employees who use procrastination productively. If they show you that they can innovate while doing their job, let them take their time.

#### **4. The excuse-maker: "That's not my job"**

This type of employee is similar to the procrastinator, in the way that they both try to

You can pick up on the signs of rude behavior early and try to avoid hiring a toxic employee with no respect for teamwork. During the interview they'll probably be nice to the hiring team. But, were they polite to the receptionist? Did they engage in friendly small talk with the person who walked them into the interview room? Additionally, you can use structured interview questions and get references to discover their previous experience working as part of a team and see if they'll be a good fit for your work environment.



## **6. The over-timer: “I don’t leave the office before 9 pm”**

Your hardest worker could, surprisingly, be your most toxic employee. It may sound dreamy to have an employee who never falls behind schedule and follows every procedure by the book. But what about a workaholic who never takes time off (even when they’re sick), or a control freak who talks only about work during lunch? These employees are prone to burnout and can easily make mistakes due to stress.

Installing desks that literally get pulled up into the ceiling at 5:30 p.m could be a drastic solution, but there are simpler things you can try. Make sure your employees use their vacation time and encourage de-stressing activities that can take their minds off their duties for a while. Your employees will discover that small breaks (like to celebrate a coworker’s birthday or to host a welcome party for a new hire) can do miracles for their productivity. Next time a coworker can’t take their eyes off of their computer screen to speak to you for 2 minutes, invite them to have that quick chat in the kitchen instead. That email can wait for a couple of minutes.

## **7. The grump: “Why do things like this happen all the time?”**

It’s rather common to have a coworker grumping on Monday morning. But when this becomes a habit, they’re probably toxic. They’re the employee who complains about everything all the time (whether there’s a real reason or not): from the broken coffee machine to the low-speed Internet connection. They don’t seem to be satisfied with anything and, ultimately, create negativity for your team.

Before asking grumps to leave, it’s best to have a discussion with them. What’s causing their dissatisfaction? Is there something you could do to improve the workspace, that would actually be beneficial to all? Often, people who doubt the status quo, are the very people who foster change and innovation in your company. Listening to your employees reasonable

complaints could eventually result in progress. But complaining just for the sake of it is a behavior you can’t accept for too long, unless you want to see most of your employees coming to work with long faces.

## **8. The sage: “I know it all”**

We’ve all come across a ‘know-it-all’ person in our lives—personal or professional. Those who have an answer for everything, who won’t accept or even listen to a different point of view. Employees who exhibit this kind of behavior are toxic because they won’t receive feedback. How are they going to perform better if they refuse to incorporate constructive criticism into their work? In addition, imagine how they would build a wall against new ideas and solutions coming from your newly-hired employees. You could consider training sessions for your ‘know-it-all’ employees to broaden their knowledge. You can also encourage and publicly recognize employees who think outside-the-box and suggest innovative ways to improve company performance.

Having a toxic employee on your team is more costly than just having a bad employee. Their behavior affects your entire team and prevents you from hiring a better fit. But firing toxic employees isn’t always the best approach; you may be able to get rid of the toxic behavior and keep the person. People aren’t always aware of their awkward behavior. That goes for everyone, not just your employees. Create a healthy work environment and engage your team members by setting an example.

If, however, you identify toxic employees it’s always best to have a personal discussion with them, let them know about their problematic reactions and try to understand the reasons behind their behavior. When you find a solution you’re both comfortable with, give them some time. Behaviors aren’t easy to change.

Article by Christina Pavlou, [workable.com](http://workable.com)

# Are you a hugger or a hand shaker - or neither?

*When a work colleague returns from holiday or maternity leave, do you go in for the double bear-hug, or a friendly hello from across the desk? For those people who prefer a non-physical greeting, the direction of office etiquette may be moving against you.*

---



There is evidence that workplaces are seeing a rise in hugging culture. In a survey last year more than half of advertising and marketing executives said hugging was common, up from a third in the survey in 2011. Experts say it could have a lot to do with more relaxed workplace environments.

But there's a downside. A separate study last year on sexual harassment in the US fast food industry found that more than a quarter of workers felt they were hugged inappropriately.

Deborah Wallsmith, an assistant professor of anthropology at Kennesaw State University, Georgia, says that the gradations of hug discomfort depend upon nuances, relationships, and personal preferences.

"The least offensive is the one armed side-by-side hug, where the huggers are standing next to each other, and extend their adjacent arms around each other's waist. The most objectionable is the full-frontal squeeze that goes on forever."

She adds that she "feels uncomfortable getting hugged by former professors and former bosses".

Kara Deringer, a business coach from Alberta, Canada, explains that context is all-important. Yet many people get it wrong. She agrees that hugging can be very useful. "It creates connections." But on the other hand, she says: "Be careful. I have seen lots of misunderstandings. I currently work in a team, and we're huggers. But

there are those who will courageously say 'I'm not a hugger'."

Ms Deringer recommends either asking people for a hug, or paying very close attention to body language. "If they reach out their hand? I've got it, they're hand shaker or a high fiver."

The chief executive of Cardiff-based Introbiz, which hosts business networking events, says: "We are quite a friendly team, and usually give a kiss on the face, both cheeks, when we are familiar with them.

"But if you don't know them, best not to kiss or hug, because you don't know how they will take it. You have to be careful."

Some of this may sound like commonsense. But what if hugging is standard practice in your office, but you really don't want to indulge? Are you the office grinch?

Toronto-based musician Cynthia Pike-Elliott, who has had careers in healthcare and law enforcement, says that in both environments hugging was standard.

"Hugging was a huge part of my workplace, a huge part in maintaining these personal relationships," she says. For her, hugging is "a way to say to someone that you've made a connection with them, and that you trust them... It's not hurting anyone," she says.

Not everyone's so keen on the idea of hugging, however. Sometimes, it ends up in court.

Earlier this year, California corrections officer Victoria Zetwick California accused her superior, the county sheriff, of giving more than a hundred unwanted hugs over a dozen years. A court said it was enough to constitute a "hostile environment".

Canadian labour lawyer Shaun Bernstein advises against hugs in the office, particularly in light of the province of Ontario's update to its Occupational Health and Safety Act last September.

This included more provisions against workplace harassment and unwelcome attention.

Mr Bernstein says: "If the hug is taken in the wrong way, it can easily be construed under the law as workplace sexual harassment, which places a responsibility on the employer to investigate..."

"There's the specific prohibition when it comes from a person in power, so I think that that's important to note."

It is also the responsibility of the company to have a designated harassment complaints officer, as well as a back-up person in case the officer is the one causing trouble.

Mr Bernstein adds: "Employers have a serious responsibility when it comes to protecting their workers against harassment, and are obligated to have policies in place to prevent this kind of conduct."

For Adina Zaiontz, chief executive of Napkin Marketing, in Toronto, the simple rule is: "When in doubt, don't hug... Everyone feels differently about personal space and boundaries." It's possible to hug and still avoid full body contact, she adds.

### So, when does she feel it's OK?

- **Someone you are close to at work is very upset, and confiding to you about a death or personal tragedy in their life**
- **Someone you are close to at work is telling you big, happy personal news, "I'm engaged!" "I'm pregnant!"**
- **A close colleague or employee is telling you they got a new job, and the departure is on good terms**
- **You meet a colleague whom you haven't seen in a very long time**
- **You're at a party and everyone is being a little extra huggier**

Ms Zaiontz adds: "No matter what you think, your work friends are different than your real friends. Your real friends can't call HR on you."

# 5 things to do if you're not happy at work

*Unhappy at work? Whatever your reasons are, it's best to tackle them straight on. You don't want to make any rash decisions, but letting things simmer won't do you any good, either — it'll only lead to an explosion eventually.*

---

With that in mind, here's a five-step plan for addressing your unhappiness in the workplace:

## **1. Determine Whether You're in a Slump or Facing Something More Serious**

Slumps come and go. We all experience them from time to time, even in the best of workplaces. When you're unhappy at work, you have to take into account how long you've been feeling this way and what triggered the feeling. Next, ask yourself if this is a situation you can realistically pull yourself out of. If the answer is "yes" — or you're not sure — take some time to see what happens. Try not to dwell on the feeling. If after two weeks you're still not feeling like your motivated self, start to explore the other possibilities. Whether personal reasons, like feeling disconnected from the company, or professional reasons, like losing passion for your work, are the cause of your unhappiness, it may be time to make a change.

## **2. Identify What Needs to Change to Make You Happy**

Unfortunately, it's not always easy to figure out exactly what will make you happy again. One place to start, though, is with a good, old-fashioned pros and cons list.

Start by writing down all the things you know you don't want at work. Then, dig deep to figure

out what you're really looking for in your job. Be specific.

Concerns like "I want more money" are fine and totally valid, but a higher salary alone might not be what ultimately makes you happy. True happiness usually stems from deep within yourself. It comes from things that give you satisfaction. These things could range from more decision-making authority to a more flexible schedule that promotes work/life balance.

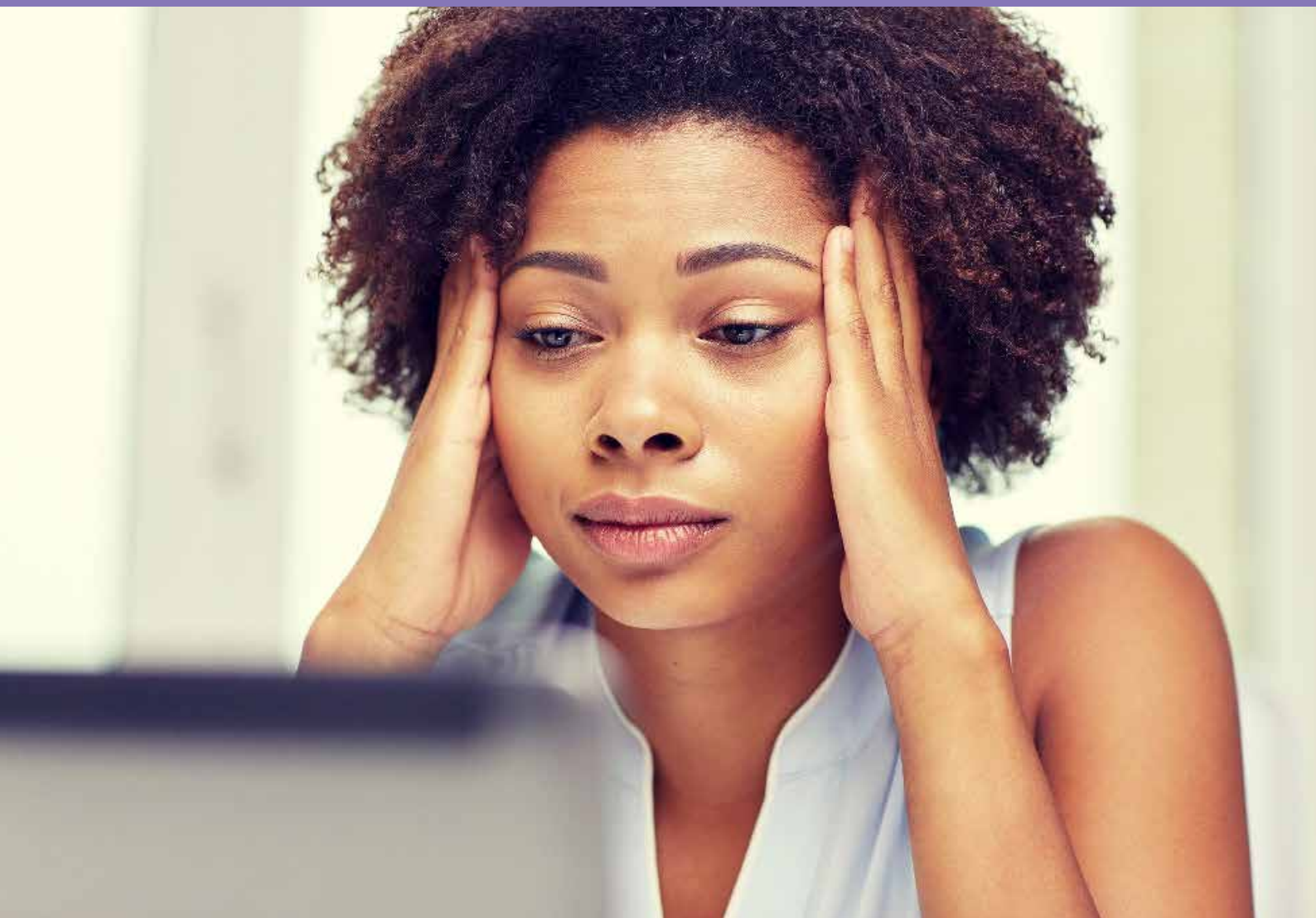
Unsurprisingly, the list of things that make you happy tends to change as you move through various stages of life. If you're feeling unhappy at work, it might be because the job that was once ideal now no longer meets your new set of needs in your new stage of life.

## **3. Determine the Best Way to Make These Changes**

You may need to make a change, but that doesn't mean you need to make a change as big as leaving your organization.

Are there any internal tweaks that would satisfy you at your current employer? Perhaps you could look into taking on new responsibilities within your department or move to another department altogether?

Some organizations are admittedly more flexible than others, but you shouldn't assume your



current organization can't offer a solution that works for you. If you think it's possible to make changes at your current place of employment, talk to your manager. If, on the other hand, your unhappiness stems from something deeply ingrained, like the workplace culture, then it may be time to look outside your current organization.

#### **4. If You're Searching for a New Job, Keep It to Yourself**

You may find that simply making the decision to move on puts a spring in your step and makes you feel better instantly. You may want to share the good news with certain coworkers — but don't let this feeling cloud your judgement and make you impulsive. Moving on often takes longer than expected, and internal shifts in an organization may work in your favor: For example, a manager who once made you miserable may

leave the organization, and you may decide to stay as a result.

Anything can happen. You might very well change your mind about finding greener pastures. Respect the organization and yourself by showing restraint. Stay away from gossip, even if you're the source and the subject.

#### **5. Keep Things in Perspective**

No company is without its faults. No matter how much you love what you do or the company you work for, at some point, you'll face situations that remind you "they don't call it 'work' for nothing," as the saying goes. But even then, you should be thankful that you have a job. If it's one you want to keep, great. If not, you can always take action to make things better.

Article by Michele Mavi [www.recruiter.com](http://www.recruiter.com)

# 8 facts about humour in the workplace

*Humour and work have always had a tenuous relationship, albeit one that has softened in recent years. Even in the most casual office environments, there are certain stigmas and uncertainties surrounding humour.*

---

The reasons behind this hesitation are obvious; humour often comes with a bite. It can be about poking fun or making light of things that matter to people, and this can easily lead to conflict. On top of that, some leaders associate humour with a lack of dedication or seriousness about work.

However, these fears surrounding humour in the workplace directly contradict a growing body of research that suggests that workplace humour is paramount to productivity, cohesion and creativity.

## **1. Humour Is More Important Than Pay**

An industry-wide study of over 2,500 people found that 55% of workers would take less pay to have more fun at work. This means a majority of people would literally take a pay cut for a more light-hearted work environment.

## **2. A Sense of Humour Reduces Sick Days**

Laughter boosts your immune system by enhancing your antibodies (which help fight infections) and increasing your immune cell count. This helps reduce your chances of illness and missing out on work.

## **3. Joking Around Does Not Distract People From Work**

Worried that office humour will lead to distraction? Studies show increased humour in the workplace does not detract from people's productivity or their ability to complete tasks that require concentration.

## **4. Humorous Advertisements Are More Effective**

On the marketing side, humour has been proven to make advertisements more memorable and increase the likelihood of the viewer taking action. Studies measuring advertisement awareness found that ads with humour had nearly 25% greater impact across the board.

## **5. Laughter Lowers Blood Pressure and Improves Blood Flow**

Not only does laughter help your immune system, it also has an effect on your cardiovascular system. Laughter can lower your heart rate, reduce your blood pressure and even improve the function of your blood vessels.

## **6. Supervisors Who Use Humour Are Perceived as Better Leaders**

Leaders who integrate humour as part of their management style are not only proven to foster greater work performance, satisfaction and cohesion amongst workers, they are actually perceived as better leaders and managers. Subordinates also report experiencing greater work satisfaction when working with managers who integrate humour in their interactions.

## **7. Fun Environments Reduce Burnout and Turnover**

Not surprisingly, humour in the workplace has been proven to enhance worker's coping mechanisms and reduce worker withdrawal and burnout. It has also been shown to improve



employee retention and reduce overall rates of attrition.

### **8. Humour Boosts Creative Thinking**

Humour has been proven to help develop creative thinking in various settings. Not only does it provide a more colorful environment, a playful office also helps encourage openness and diminish the fear of criticism towards outlandish or creative ideas. Even people who don't share their humour at the office are more relaxed about speaking up in settings where levity is encouraged.

#### **A Word to the Wise**

Humour may do wonders for lightening the mood, but it also has the power to dampen it. Jokes, no matter how farcical they are meant to be, can also be used to perpetuate negative stereotypes. Stay away from any remarks about protected classes, which may be interpreted as discrimination. Jokes should also not be used to veil criticism, put somebody down or make light of something serious or sensitive. Here are some tips for lightening up a professional environment


the right way:

- If you are in a new situation or one that lacks humour, you can set the tone by making a joke about yourself; this signifies that others are welcome to incorporate humour, while avoiding the possibility of offending someone. A little bit of well-timed self-deprecating humour can also demonstrate that you are self-aware and confident enough to laugh at yourself.
- If you do make jokes about others, use it to lift them up (e.g. "John keeps insisting he's a beginner at Photoshop, but he seems to be designing the next freakin' Da Vinci masterpiece over here!"), not to put them down (e.g. "Yeah, you were right when you said you are beginner at Photoshop!").
- A good joke won't make people feel singled out (e.g. "Why did you do that? What sort of weirdos were you working with at your last job?!"); it will help them assimilate (e.g. "You're addicted to coffee too? You'll fit in great here!").

Article by Rochelle Bailis

# No Time to Exercise? Do It While You Work!

By: Lorrie Tabar



There just aren't enough hours in the day. At least, that's what we tell ourselves. Most of us struggle with busy schedules, too many time demands, and desk-bound jobs. That doesn't help with the aches and pains - tight necks, aching backs, sore shoulders, tired muscles - that many people face every day. It is quite common for people who are "bound" to their desks and "chained" to their computers to suffer chronic pain and stiffness. Too many hours sitting in stationary positions, craning their heads toward computer screens, and performing repetitive motions like typing and running a mouse can cause damage and weakness to muscle tissue. Stress, too, can cause overuse of certain muscle groups, which results in tissue damage and pain.

One thing that can definitely help to strengthen muscles and relieve stress, counter-balancing the effects of too many sedentary hours, is exercise. But, who has the time? And even if we dedicate several hours a week to healthy exercise (highly recommended and beneficial),



it may not be enough to combat a week's worth of sitting still and staring at screens for both work and play. What works best for conditioning muscles and alleviating chronic pain and stiffness is a combination of routine, heart rate raising exercise (walking, running, swimming, dancing, weight training, etc.) with targeted stretching and light exercise conducted for brief intervals throughout the day, every day. This can be achieved by devoting just five to ten minutes every few hours to small, quiet movements that target specific muscle groups.

For example, in order to perform computer work, our arms remain in a shoulders-forward, elbows-bent, wrists-locked position. This forces our biceps and pectoral muscles to continually contract, and the rhomboid muscles in our backs to over stretch. To correct the daily damage this causes, it is necessary to perform the opposite motions, which means stretching muscles in the arms and chest, and shortening/relaxing muscles in the back. There are very simple stretches that can accomplish this, and they can be done anywhere, at any time - even at the office while seated at our desks!

### Try this stretch

**Start by striking a comfortable pose, with arms hanging long and loose by your side. Concentrate on pulling your shoulders backward, and relax your neck. Keeping your head up and facing straight forward, drop your shoulders, bend right arm at elbow, and bring right arm to rest against your back.**

**Enjoy the stretch for 10 seconds; then lower right arm to loosely hang by your side. Perform the same movement with your left arm, holding behind your back for 10 seconds.**

**Then, with your left arm still behind your back, bring your right arm back to rest against your left arm that is still pressed against your back. To stabilize the position, you can grab your right wrist with your left hand and hold.**

**Gently thrust your chest forward and your shoulders back. Hold this position for 5 to 10 seconds. Relish the proud posture (and even the discomfort, if any) knowing that your muscles are liberating themselves from daily constrictions. Relax your arms down at your sides for a moment.**

**Drop your head down to stretch the back of your neck; then, raise your head to face forward again.**

**Repeat the full stretch sequence three more times for one complete set.**

This is just one of the very simple stretches that should be accomplished every few hours throughout the day. It requires little time to perform, and is not disruptive to the work environment. But it is well worth the effort, allowing overtaxed muscles that have been constricted in limited positions to release tension and increase blood circulation. There are many other simple stretches and exercises, like this one, that can help to correct the problems caused by repetitive, constrained desk work and computer use. A little effort, thankfully, goes a long way.

#### About the Author:

Lorrie Tabar is a Georgia-based writer, marketing professional, and a licensed/certified massage therapist. Having worked as a PC-bound employee in the corporate world for 17 years, she is personally acquainted with the long-term effects that computer work has on the body. Her blog <http://pcprisoner.wordpress.com/> (and eBook co-written with a licensed professional counselor) "Exercises for the PC Prisoner" provides more information on helpful stretches that can be performed in an office environment.

# Being a teen today is a breeze compared to what their parents endured

*Having to walk to the video shop to rent a film, fiddling with your TV aerial for hours to get a better signal - and writing hand written essays until your hand hurt are among a list of things modern teens will NEVER have to experience, according to their parents.*

Researchers surveyed parents who were teenagers themselves in the 80s and 90s and found being a teen today is a breeze compared to what they had to endure.

According to the study by broadbandchoices.co.uk, 62% believe teen life is FAR less cringeworthy than it ever was for them, with 86% claiming they experienced a host of annoyances and embarrassments their own children will never have to face.

Other nostalgic pains parents believe today's teens are entirely unfamiliar with include recording the Sunday charts on a tape recorder and having to stop every time the DJ spoke, having to do PE in your knickers if you forgot your kit and worrying that a parent was eavesdropping your call on a second landline.

Having only four TV channels emerged as the biggest gripe about being a youngster back in the day, with having to venture out to a video shop to rent a movie second on the list of complaints.

Having to take at least three rolls of film for your camera on holiday emerged among the list of reasons being a teen in the 80s and 90s was harder - as did fiddling with the aerial on your telly to get a better signal, having to wait a full

week for the next episode of your favourite show and writing to a pen pal and having to wait weeks for a response.

Nearly half said being a teen now is easier than when they were young – with 58% saying technology has given kids today an easier ride.

A further 55% claimed they often wonder how they managed to survive their own youth without the internet or a mobile phone.

However, despite the tough lessons of yester year, 66% said they would not swap places with their own children and a further 85% reckon they had more freedom as a teen in the 80s and 90s.

The poll of 1,500 parents found rowing with siblings because they recorded over your VHS tape was also an inconvenience the modern teen will never have to endure – as was the cringeworthy ordeal of calling your friend's landline phone and having to speak to their parents first.

Vix Leyton from broadbandchoices.co.uk, who commissioned the research said "The evolution of technology, and specifically smart phones, means teenagers are operating in a completely different world that has allowed them to sidestep

*Continued* ►



some of the awkward 'rites of passage' 80s and 90s teens had to suffer through. That said, the new technology comes with its own set of complications and rules of engagement - while you might never lose your mate on a shopping trip, and can ask someone out over text (and repent at leisure staring at those Whatsapp ticks) and it's not surprising that the majority of parents wouldn't choose to swap.

"Etiquette and awkward conversations aside, having the luxury of not being restricted to 140 characters per text and having untapped conversation potential alongside built in cameras for instant memory are benefits that we can all appreciate, and no one is anxious to back to the dark days of monophonic ringtones."

42% of parents rely on their own children for technical help, according to the study, with uploading apps, helping set up new phones and finding programmes on catch up among the main things kids help their parents with around the house.

### THINGS MODERN TEENS WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE

- Having only 4 TV channels
- Having to go to the video shop to rent a film • Writing labels for VHS tapes so you would know what was on it
- Recording the charts on a tape recorder on a Sunday night and pausing every time the DJ spoke
- Missing your favourite TV programme and having to just lump it
- Having to watch Top of the Pops to see what songs were in the charts
- Fiddling with the aerial on the top of the telly to get a better picture
- Going to music shops to buy the latest singles or albums
- Having to wait a week for the next episode of your favourite show
- Having to write hand written essays until your hand hurt
- Calling your friend on a landline and having to speak with their parents first
- Having to take at least three camera rolls on holiday with you
- Looking up cinema times in the local newspaper
- Using a paper map to find where you were going
- Searching for a pay phone to call your best friend's house to find out what time they left when they were late to meet you
- Waiting until after 7pm to make calls on the landline because it was free
- Having to wait for the weather forecast on the telly to know what tomorrow's weather would be
- Rowing with your siblings because they recorded over your VHS tap
- Having to do "one ring" on the landline to let your parents know you've arrived safely
- Carrying extra batteries around in case your Walkman died
- Having to get on the bus into town to buy a new item of clothing
- Having to go to the bank
- Not knowing what time your train would leave until you got to the station
- Having to walk to the local take-away to pick up your order
- Worrying your parents were eves dropping on your calls via a second landline
- Inviting your friends around to see your printed holiday pics
- Using a disc-based encyclopaedia to research your homework