

Can media workers ever really switch off from work?

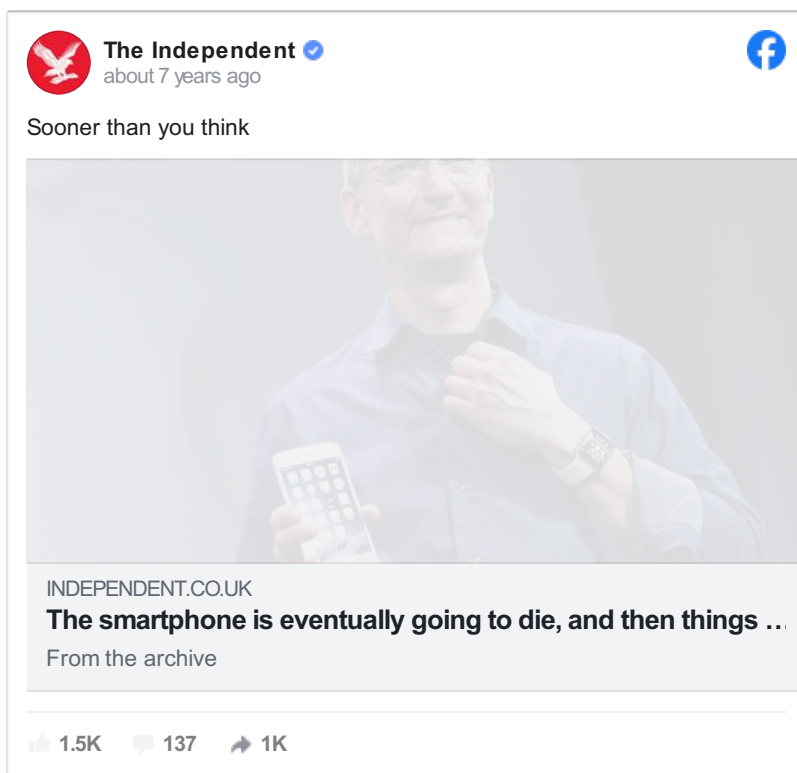
By Leigh Andrews

25 Jul 2017

With each technological advancement, it becomes easier than ever to work from anywhere. But is that really the ideal we should be aiming for? And can we really reach 'inbox zero'?

The fact that we carry our digital interactions around with us certainly has its benefits – especially for those who work online, as you can finish off a task while on the run – but it also has its downfalls. We're glued to our screens, stuck on social media yet antisocial in real-life, and suffering the physical stress of being 'always connected'.

Just last week, our managing editor Sindy Peters shared a Facebook post that explained we'll likely see the demise of smart phones soon, but what comes next will be even scarier.



So while the world may well be smart phone-free in the next decade, that won't have an impact on our busy-ness as any external devices will surely seem trivial and unnecessary if the tech we need to connect and work is embedded in our brains.

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The thought of my brain pinging in breaking news makes me want to run for the hills. That's definitely an oversimplification, but luckily, we're not there yet. Where we are is at a point in history where Corporate South Africa is always on – while locals joke that Cape Town's sleepy and out of the office by 3pm on a Friday, if you face customers you can't just lock the door and switch the phones to voicemail for the weekend. Those that don't respond to complaints on social media after hours fast get a bad name, and you can get hold of just about anyone anytime, anywhere, provided they're not taking a digital detox.



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But what if you simply don't want to be contacted? What if all those incoming calls that get past your Truecaller app, Facebook Messenger tags, Twitter DMs, urgent emails and WhatsApp messages from those you *don't* hold near and dear are the last thing you want, especially after you've turned off your laptop and switched from 'worker' mode to 'mom/dad/wife/husband' mode?



The balancing act

Jane Stevenson 11 Aug 2016



Well, some look beyond our shores for hope. Many rejoiced when France made headlines for imposing a 'no work emails after 6pm' policy a few years ago, which has evolved into a 'right to disconnect' earlier this year, as [Fortune reports](#).

That's because we need downtime to relax, to refocus and to subconsciously solve problems that we can't untangle when they're sitting right in front of us. This is said to be the answer for employees who *Fortune* says:

“ Leave the office, but... do not leave their work. They remain attached by a kind of electronic leash — like a dog. ”

Sound familiar? Of course, those of us who work shifts and chase headlines around the clock can only dream of this becoming our reality, unless we switch careers, jet off to the land of the Eiffel Tower or work at reaching the elusive inbox zero:

But the growing realisation that we simply can't be productive 24-hours a day is taking hold, even for the [workaholics among us](#). For example, [Human Capital magazine Australia](#) reports that the land down under is spending more time on screens and away from family and friends, as "reading over documents, emails and creating to-do lists are happening outside the office on a daily basis and people fail to see they've just worked a twelve-hour day."



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So you may well be a supporter of the 'work smarter not harder', shorter work week ideal, but that clashes with the ability to work from anywhere, anytime. Time will only tell what the future holds – here's hoping it's not as drastic as the futurists predict...

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