



v.1 issue 1

Interact Report

DISENGAGEMENT AND SEPARATION OF THE VIRTUAL WORKER

January, 2015

 **interact**
authentic communication

Results shown provided by Harris Interactive

from a survey conducted October 9-13, 2014, by Harris Poll on behalf of Interact Authentic Communication.

Harris conducted the survey online within the United States, among 2,026 adults ages 18 and older.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of American employees say they ever work virtually.



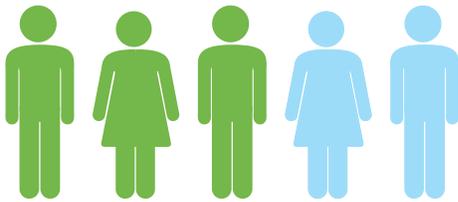
1435 West Morehead Street
Studio 210
Charlotte, North Carolina 28208
704.374.0423 Studio Phone
www.interactauthentically.com

Research Highlights

Among the respondents employed full-time and part-time who ever work virtually in their jobs:



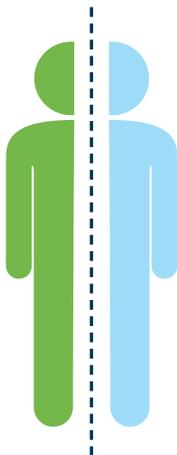
Over two-thirds (69%) of American employees who ever work virtually think management needs to communicate better in order to keep them engaged.



Three-in-five (61%) American employees who ever work virtually think those working in the office/workplace feel more engaged with management than virtual workers do.



Over half (55%) of American employees who ever work virtually report their bosses communicate with them almost exclusively by email, and 53% report that they have to work twice as hard as those in the office/workplace to make connections within their organizations.



One-half (50%) of American employees who work virtually say they feel disconnected from their colleagues when they do so.

NOTE: There are no significant differences for any of the statements between male and female employees who ever work virtually, which, given the end sample size, were the only demographic sub-groups large enough to apply stat testing.



FAST COMPANY *Fast Company Magazine, January 15, 2015*

Six Ways to Keep Virtual Workers More Engaged

We have done such a good job overcoming physical distance with global communications that we have forgotten to do the work necessary to overcome the separateness experienced by virtual workers.

By Lou Solomon

The advantages of working virtually abound with benefits including flexibility and less time spent traveling on the road. However, separateness, the state of being kept apart from ones teammates, managers, leaders, and the culture at headquarters can take a toll. What is the impact of separateness? Employees who work virtually are often unhappy and on the outside of their companies, in more ways than one, and that in turn can hamper productivity.

According to a recent Interact Harris Survey, 61% of American employees who ever work virtually think those working in the office/workplace feel more engaged with management than virtual workers do, and half, 50%, report feeling disconnected from their colleagues as well.

Over two-thirds (69%) of American employees who ever work virtually agree that management needs to communicate better in order to keep them engaged.

Employees who experience separateness can fall short of the engagement that translates to the bottom line. 53% of American virtual workers indicate they have to work twice as hard as those in the office/workplace to make connections within their organization.

Perhaps most alarmingly, 55% of virtual workers say their bosses communicate with them almost exclusively by email. Email ups the probability that people will miscommunicate inadvertently, and people who depend too heavily on email can feel more isolated.

In order to keep team members engaged and ensure productivity and growth, leaders who aim to have "The Influence Factor," a personal authentic voice that initiates change and inspiration, must find ways to stay close to employees, no matter how spread out or what size the organization is that they lead. Here are six ways to do that:

1. Be intentional. Blur the lines between technology and personal communication. Create a strategy for a conversational, relationship-based approach to culture that builds a sense of connectedness. Increase the value you put on human-to-human communication.

2. Humanize corporate communications. Avoid sending out over-vetted, impersonal documents that feel more institutional than human. Speak with simplicity and clarity. Tell personal stories. Invite feedback, listen, and respond.

3. Build genuine, personal connections like Wells Fargo Capital Finance CEO Henry Jordan has done for decades by sending his “Daily Thought” to employees; or post regular video messages to employees on the intranet. Managers should call virtual employees on a regular basis and see if they have what they need to be their best.

“Today our personal communications are crowded by the 24/7 news cycle, status updates, tweets, texts, and phone calls coming at us from all directions. Trying to get anyone’s attention is next to impossible. The key to breaking through is the power of our on-on-one interactions and relationships—how we make someone feel in each interaction is the currency by which we gain someone’s attention and engagement. That’s why our CEO does Town Halls all

It’s time to take thoughtful inventory of virtual workforces to avoid paying the human and financial cost of separateness.

We cannot forget our most basic, core goal in business: to create connections and relationships. Today’s frontier is not the technology required to run a global company—it is applying technology while bringing along the nurturing, engaging aspect of human communication. ●

over the country to connect with employees person-to-person. No script, more listening.”

—Erin Freeman, Chief Communications Officer, Farmers Insurance

4. Think small. Pare down the number of people on project teams to allow for intimacy and trust. What virtual workers often lack is the satisfaction of what it means to be a part of a trusting team of people connected by purpose. Bring a virtual team together twice a year to reconnect face-to-face. Use this time to decide how the team wants to work and communicate with one another.

5. Discourage an email-only culture. Employees are wasting hours managing email that does nothing to build connections much less trust. Consider “No Email Fridays” and “No Email Weekends” for virtual teams. Use Skype and encourage members to pick up the phone for real conversations. It’s important for teams to see each other on video-conference regularly. The standard-issue, audio-only conference call is unsatisfying and draining. We are not influenced and don’t feel engaged by disembodied mediums that allow us to multitask.

6. Be inclusive, and less headquarter-centric. In general, the farther employees are from the home office, the less prioritized they feel. Take this into consideration. For example, pay attention to different time zones and vary meeting times. Recognize the great work being done by virtual employees to the entire organization.