

Always-On Workday Reality

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. **Distractions** (noun) /dɪ'strækʃənz/: Things that prevent someone from concentrating on something else.
Example: My phone notifications are a big source of **distractions** when I'm studying.
2. **Notification** (noun) /ˌnəʊtɪfɪ'keɪʃən/: A formal announcement or piece of information given.
Example: I got a **notification** on my phone about a new email.
3. **Clocked out** (phrasal verb) /klɒkt aʊt/: Recorded the time one leaves work, especially using a clocking-in machine.
Example: She **clocked out** at 5 p.m. and went straight home.
4. **Burnout** (noun) /'bɜːnaʊt/: The state of being extremely tired physically or mentally, often caused by working too much.
Example: Many employees are experiencing **burnout** due to long hours.
5. **Tasks** (noun) /tɑːks/: Pieces of work to be done or undertaken.
Example: I have several **tasks** to complete before the end of the day.



You're sitting at your desk, trying to focus on work, when an important email comes in. You reply, and then get back to work. A few minutes later, you get an important notification. You check it quickly, and turn back to your computer. That doesn't last long, though, because you have a meeting in a few minutes.

According to a report by Microsoft, the average 9-to-5 employee has work-related distractions up to 275 times a day — or about once every two minutes. And for many, that doesn't stop when the workday officially finishes at 5 p.m. The report found that messages sent outside of working hours have increased by 15% since last year, with the average worker sending or receiving 58 work messages daily after they've clocked out.

The company also warned of what it calls the "infinite workday," which it says may start before we're even out of bed. The report found that many people check their emails as early as 6 a.m., with the average worker receiving 117 emails a day. For many, that workday continues into the evening. Microsoft found that meetings after 8 p.m. have increased by 16% from last year — although that could partly be because people work in different time zones. "This points to a larger truth: the modern workday for many has no clear start or finish," Microsoft wrote on its website.

Microsoft looked at data from 31,000 workers in 31 countries between February and March 2025. As employee burnout becomes more common, Microsoft says AI could help — if it's used for easier tasks that can free up workers' time. But AI isn't enough; the way we work and use our work time also needs to change, Microsoft said. "The question isn't whether work will change. It's whether we will," it said.

DISCUSSION

1. If your email inbox could talk, what funny or grumpy complaints would it have about the "infinite workday" and all the messages it receives?
2. Imagine you have a magical "work-life balance button" that instantly stops all work distractions for an hour. What's the silliest or most unexpected thing you would do with that hour?
3. The report says work messages continue after "clocking out." If your work computer had a personality, what funny excuse do you think it would give for sending you messages at 10 p.m.?
4. If the "infinite workday" was a monster, what would it look like, and what funny (but harmless) power would it have? How would you try to defeat it?
5. Checking emails at 6 a.m. is common. If your bed could talk, what humorous comments would it make about you starting work before you even get out of it?
6. Microsoft suggests AI could help with easier tasks. If you had a personal AI assistant for your daily life (not just work!), what's the most ridiculous or fun task you would make it do for you?
7. If you could create a new "work-life balance superhero" with a funny name and a special gadget, what would they be called, and how would they help people escape the infinite workday?
8. The report says "the way we work and use our work time also needs to change." If you could instantly make one funny rule for all workplaces to improve this, what would it be?
9. If your brain had a "distraction meter" that made a funny sound every time you got distracted, what sound would it make, and how would it change your workday?
10. If there was a competition for the "Most Creative Way to End the Workday," what funny and totally original activity would you do to celebrate finishing work?