

Soon after, Curley became embroiled in yet another workplace conflict. A coworker had asked him to remove his hearing protection so the two could discuss a work task. Curley began swearing at the coworker and asking whether he thought he was a doctor. After hearing about the incident, the city put Curley on

administrative leave during an investigation into his behavior.

The investigation revealed that Curley's abusive behavior in the workplace was both more extensive and more egregious than the city had previously realized. For example, insinuating that he had Mafia connections,



WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

Living in a world of information overload

by Jerry Glass
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One of the most difficult questions facing many employers is how to keep employees productive when they are continually bombarded with information. Whether it is a mobile phone, tablet, or laptop, we literally have become tethered to our devices. One of the most common questions I hear in public is, "Where is an outlet so I can plug in my phone, tablet or laptop?" "Let me Google that and find out" is also high on the list.

With streaming capabilities and media outlets racing to get the news out first, people have information instantaneously. In addition, we immediately post our opinions on blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. Our society has become addicted to seeing people's reactions to just about any topic, large or small.

It is easy to blame Generation Y, but all generations face challenges on how to properly manage their devices. It is especially difficult in work environments because our devices have become an integral part of how we communicate with others personally and professionally.

So how can an employer handle policies on personal devices? I want to share some frequently asked questions I receive from clients.

Does it make sense to have a blanket policy limiting the use of personal devices in the workplace? This might surprise you, but my answer is probably not. Remember, if you have a policy, someone has to be ready to enforce it. No one has time to look into offices and cubicles to check whether employees are using personal devices. In some cases, electronic devices are issued by employers, so employees are expected to be available almost all the time. That makes it hard to know whether a device is being used for personal or business purposes.

Should some functions of personal devices like listening to music or using social media be off

limits? While it is difficult to "legislate" the use of personal devices, loud music and the use of ear buds can and should be prohibited in the workplace. Limiting employees' use of Facebook and other websites makes good sense, but it will mean your IT department will have to monitor usage periodically on an individual or corporate basis.

Should personal devices be turned off during meetings at work? As a courtesy to those who conduct a meeting, personal devices should be turned off or put on silent. At some offices, I even see signs stating, "No cellular phones permitted beyond this point." It is up to the person running the meeting to set the tone for the use of personal devices. If an employee has a legitimate reason for keeping a device on, she should let the leader know before the start of the meeting.

Policies on the use of personal devices continue to evolve. Common sense goes a long way in determining what types of policies make sense. If an employee continually misses deadlines or makes errors in her work, she might be distracted by her device. She could be texting, using social media, or browsing online. It may make sense to occasionally remind employees to "curb their enthusiasm" for using their personal devices.

Remember, for many of us Baby Boomers, this is a whole new world. However, several years ago, I recall reading an article in which adults 50 and over were asked if they knew how to text. More than 50 percent responded that they had learned to text. In a follow-up question, the same people were asked why they learned to text. More than 80 percent stated they learned to text so they could communicate with their children. So if you think only Generation Y is savvy with personal devices, think again!



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