**UP Experts on Managing Techno-Stress in the Digitised Workplace**

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Techno-stress – the constant presence and change of information and communications technology in digitised workplaces – is a growing phenomenon that significantly affects the well-being of employees. Research and organisational dynamics are pointing towards an eradication of many job functions in favour of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) at an unprecedented rate, thus creating workplaces that are under perpetual transition and putting additional stress on the workforce.

Despite higher education institutions incorporating work-related technology skill-building in their curriculums for the future workforce, job security is threatened by the rise of AI, as workers also try to keep up with continuous digital upskilling to remain relevant. While we’re going through these somewhat disruptive transitions as we find new ways of stabilising the workplace, work-life must go on, with all hands on deck to curb the unintended consequences of evolving, technology-heavy workspaces, which are characterised by smart technologies, AI, robotics and algorithms.

In 2023, organisations and managers continued to contend with significant workplace shifts, by adapting to hybrid work settings on the back of work-life changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial projections were that towards 2030, we could anticipate more stability in the workplace, better adjustments in optimally utilising technology for productivity and more adequate remote work measures. However, evidence across the world is showing that the opposite is happening. The workplace remains volatile and ambiguous, meaning we can expect disruption to continue beyond 2030.

Despite evidence indicating that AI will not replace all current jobs, redesigning job responsibilities will be imminent. This will understandably increase heightened anxiety about job stability and security. When new systems are implemented, employees tend to feel insecure because of a lack of training (or digital competence) and uncertainty about the real purpose of the new system. Navigating workplace dynamics has become more sensitive and unstable as organisations and employees search for the correct answers and ways to co-exist with technologies and balance them with collegial relationships.

Considering the evident influence of techno-stress on corporate performance and its potential implications on the overarching prosperity of organisations, it is imperative to come up with interventions for evolving hybrid work settings to alleviate the effects of techno-stress. In our recently published research paper, titled ‘[Technology self-efficacy and mindfulness as coping strategies for techno-stress in hybrid work settings](https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/1154182)’, we attempt to do so. We also unpack the challenges associated with technology in hybrid workspaces, techno-stress creators and hybrid work models, and offer practical tips on utilising personal resources, technology self-efficacy and mindfulness as coping mechanisms.

**Techno-stress coping mechanisms for employees**

Organisational mechanisms known as techno-stress inhibitors – such as literacy enhancement, frequent technical assistance and engagement facilitation – have been used to effectively reduce the influence of techno-stress on employees. However, with the shift to a hybrid work model, the problem seems to have taken a new turn, and presents unique challenges that call for new ways of navigating the phenomenon.

To mitigate techno-stressors and hybrid work challenges, we suggest that employees leverage personal resources such as technology self-efficacy and mindfulness. While these tips are not exhaustive, they can go a long way to help buffer the impact of techno-stress:

* Avoid techno-overload by being mindful about notifications – for example, by disabling notifications and pop-ups on various devices. Also focus on “single-tasking” – not attending to emails during virtual meetings, for instance. Additionally, uninstalling apps that you don’t use can be less distracting.
* Try to understand the functional details of work-related devices, apps, systems and software to minimise techno-complexity and uncertainty.

* Partake in digital fasting and make use of tech-free zones; exercise mindful emailing; create boundaries for meetings; and take mindful pauses when consuming online content.
* In most instances, individuals feel insecure and/or afraid of losing their jobs to technology or people who are tech-savvy, but this can be mitigated by embracing and recognising the positive aspects and impacts of technology.

In their research, Maximilian Valta, Yannick Hildebrandt and Christian Maier (2024) propose the application of the digital mindset – which is an individual’s experiences, knowledge and core convictions regarding digital technologies. It forms people’s cognitive filters and determines how they make sense of situations in the context of digital technology use. High levels of the digital mindset enable employees to manage perceived techno-stressors better.

The digital mindset can be considered to be a dynamic information technology (IT)-specific and malleable trait which, unlike other traits, is characterised by its IT specification and dynamic trainability. This trait can be enhanced through relevant training programmes and interventions, some of which are highlighted in the following section.

**What organisations can do**

Creating a supportive work environment that is merged with digital effectiveness is essential. This may include using regular surveys to assess levels of employee techno-stress and identify potential stressors before they become detrimental.

Building and improving employee competence at a systemic level is the most effective mechanism to build their confidence in new technology. Wellness and skills-building initiatives that address common technology challenges, develop digital literacy and explore new devices, systems and apps should be considered. This support can ensure that employees solve system-related problems and will increase their comfort level with a new system.

Entities such as Facebook, Google and Intel have been offering tailored, in-house mindfulness sessions for their employees. Organisation-led mindfulness programmes that are aligned with the technical challenges of the organisation can be created and used to teach and promote stress-reduction strategies.

There should be open communication channels for employees to share their experiences and challenges related to technology use so that they may receive mutual support in dealing with techno-unreliability and other technical challenges. Moreover, through policies and incentives, organisations should support the mindful use of technology, which promotes positive reappraisal of the situation and activates positive coping mechanisms, such as social support and taking breaks.

The impact of the coping strategies implemented should be tracked regularly and, where necessary, adjusted; new, proven coping strategies should then be introduced.

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