

Hey! What's New? 2025-80

Overworked Or Overwhelmed? The Two Sides of Technology

Bryan Strickland writes, in the *Journal of Accountancy*, that a recent survey of more than 31,000 workers around the world found that 80% said they lack the time or energy to do their work, yet 53% of leaders said that productivity needs to increase.

The Microsoft study highlights a key culprit, “namely that many employees feel overworked in part because of growing responsibilities that take time and energy but actually take them away from true productivity.”

In its recent 2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report, Microsoft charted the emergence of the “Frontier Firm” – powered by intelligence on tap, run by human-agent teams and defined by a new role for every employee, the agent boss. “These firms,” says Microsoft, “are redesigning business processes around AI and agents to scale rapidly, operate with agility and generate value faster than traditional companies.”

But organizations will never complete their journey to becoming a Frontier Firm by concentrating on process alone. “Our research, based on trillions of globally aggregated and anonymized Microsoft 365 productivity signals, reveals a challenging new roadblock: a seemingly infinite workday.”

Among the eye-opening findings from the software giant’s review of trillions of Microsoft 365 productivity signals:

- Employees using Microsoft 365 are interrupted every two minutes by a meeting, email, or notification.
- The average worker receives 117 emails daily and 153 Teams messages per weekday.
- More than half (57%) of meetings are *ad hoc* calls without a calendar invite.

Strickland says “the research also revealed an increase in work-related activities outside of traditional work hours, some of which pointed to employees looking for windows to work with fewer interruptions. On weekends, usage of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint overtook usage of Teams messaging – although the average employee did send or receive more than 50 messages a week outside of core business hours.”

Technology is a double-edged sword, he adds, “offering potential solutions but also distractions.” Microsoft researchers highlighted three ways that artificial intelligence may be able to help:

Follow the 80/20 rule: “Some companies are putting the Pareto principle into practice, focusing on the 20% of work that delivers 80% of outcomes. AI makes this not only possible but scalable by deploying technology to streamline low-value tasks such as status meetings, routine reports, and administrative churn.”

Consider shifting from a traditional organizational chart to a work chart: “an agile, outcome-driven model in which lean teams form around a goal and use AI to fill skills gaps and move fast. The authors shared the example of an AI-first ad agency where employees use a platform

powered by decades of strategy to access insights instantly, limiting the need to loop in a strategist at every single turn.”

The “agent boss”: This “is Microsoft’s vision that executes on the ‘work smarter not harder’ mantra. A researcher at Microsoft designed a trio of AI agents that supercharge the workweek: one collects new research daily, the next runs statistical analysis, and the third drafts briefs to help connect the dots. All three work in the background to free up the employee to accomplish what matters most.”

Download the research at [Breaking down the infinite workday.](#)