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WHAT BLOGS COST AMERICAN BUSINESS

In 2005, Employees Will Waste 551,000 Years Reading Them

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By [Bradley Johnson](#)

LOS ANGELES (AdAge.com) -- Blog this: U.S. workers in 2005 will waste the equivalent of 551,000 years reading blogs.



Currently, the time employees spend reading non-work blogs is the equivalent of 2.3 million jobs.

About 35 million workers -- one in four people in the labor force -- visit blogs and on average spend 3.5 hours, or 9%, of the work week engaged with them, according to *Advertising Age's* analysis. Time spent in the office on non-work blogs this year will take up the equivalent of 2.3 million jobs. Forget lunch breaks -- blog readers essentially take a daily 40-minute blog break.

Bogged down in blogs

While blogs are becoming an accepted part of the media sphere, and are increasingly being harnessed by marketers -- American Express last week paid a handful of bloggers to

discuss small business, following other marketers like General Motors Corp. and Microsoft Corp. into the blogosphere -- they are proving to be competition for traditional media messages and are sapping employees' time.



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Case in point: Gawker Media, blog home of Gawker (media), Wonkette (politics) and Fleshbot (porn). Said Sales Director Christopher Batty: "The Gawker audience is very at-work; it's an at-work, leisure audience -- a.k.a., people screwing off on the job."

Bosses accept some screwing off as a cost of doing business; it keeps employees happy and promotes camaraderie. Andy Sernovitz, CEO of the Word of Mouth Marketing Association, said blogs have become the favored diversion for "office goof-off time," though he notes it's hard to segregate blog time since blogs often bounce readers to professional media sites.

But at the end of the day, more blogging means less working. Jonathan Gibs, senior research manager at Nielsen/NetRatings, said at-work blog time probably comes in addition to regular surfing -- meaning more time on the Web but less time on the job.

Expansion of online behavior

"Since for the most part blog readers tend to be the most engaged readers of online content," he said, "they do not appear, at least for now, to be sacrificing time from their favorite news sites. Instead, it looks like blog usage is in addition to existing online behavior."

Some blogs do relate to work, but deciding just how relevant they are to the employer is open to debate. For this analysis, *Ad Age* chose a simple score: Count all business blog traffic, half of tech and media blogs and one-fourth of political/news blogs as directly related to work.

Based on ComScore's tally of blog categories, this suggests just 25% of blog visits directly connect to the job. Employees this year will spend 4.8 billion work hours absorbing wisdom from other blogs that may enlighten visitors but not amuse the boss.

Wasted time

Hard and detailed data on blogging time is limited, so *Ad Age's* analysis is a best-guess extrapolation done by reviewing blog-related surveys and data. By *Ad Age* estimates:

- Work time spent reading and posting to blogs this year will consume 2.2% of U.S. labor force hours.
- Work time spent at blogs unrelated to work will eat up 1.65% of labor force hours.
- U.S. workers this year will waste the equivalent of 551,000 years (based on a 24-hour day) or 2.3 million work years (based on a typical nearly 40-hour work week) reading blogs unrelated to the job.

There is strong evidence of workday blogging. Server traffic for Blogads, a

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network of sites that take ads, spikes during business hours, reflecting page views on about 900 blogs. FeedBurner, a blog technology company, also sees a jump in work-time hits.

Workday traffic patterns

"Traffic rockets at 8 a.m. EST, peaks at 5 p.m. EST and then slides downward until L.A. leaves the office," said Blogads founder Henry Copeland. "You see the same thing in the collapse of traffic on weekends. ... Bottom line: At work, people can't watch TV or prop up their feet and read a newspaper, but they sure do read blogs."

And they create and post to them. Technorati, a blog search engine, now tracks 19.6 million blogs, a number that has doubled about every five months for the past three years. If that growth were to continue, all 6.7 billion people on the planet will have a blog by April 2009. Imagine the work that won't get done then.

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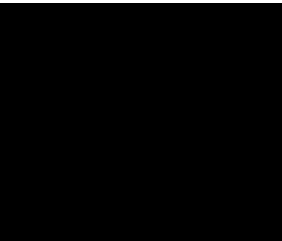
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