

British workers choose to chat but shun sharing in the workplace

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Vodafone UK and YouGov survey reveals what workers are happy to share – and what they're not

- Office gossip is one of the top things shared between work colleagues in the UK, with IT & Telecoms workers among the biggest gossipers
- Festive season does little to lift the spirit of generosity with 75% of workers saying they wouldn't share more during Christmas
- Tough climate highlights the need to encourage the 'right kind' of sharing in the workplace, says relationship psychologist Corinne Sweet

Christmas is a time for sharing. But are we Brits actually any good at fulfilling that old adage? Not so according to a nationwide survey by Vodafone UK, which asked if the 'goodwill to all men' spirit associated with the festive season has any impact on workers' attitude to sharing with colleagues.

The survey, conducted by YouGov on behalf of Vodafone to support Vodafone Data Sharer, which enables businesses to save money by sharing their mobile internet allowance across employees and devices, revealed that difficult economic conditions don't just have an effect on businesses' bottom line, but it also appears to have an effect on workplace culture.

Relationship psychologist Corinne Sweet, best known for her work on Big Brother, comments: "During tough economic times people are a bit more wary about sharing things of monetary value (food, wine), or sharing due to health implications (like mugs, earphones, even kisses), as they need to stay healthy to keep working. The economic gloom and doom has dampened our generosity somewhat as a nation."

While the survey showed that overall small treats (46%) are the things most shared by workers, office gossip came a close second with 45% saying they like to engage in a quick chat, and in some regions gossip is the most common thing that gets shared at work. It showed that workers in Scotland and the East of England are the top gossipers (61% and 52% respectively), but was also identified as the most common thing shared by workers in London (39%) and in the South (44%). At the other end of the scale, gadgets are one of the least likely things that people share with their colleagues (9%).

Retail workers are the biggest gossipers with 46% citing it as the most common thing they share with one another. In the IT and Telecoms sector office gossip was the second most common thing shared among work colleagues (52%), just behind treats (53%).

In terms of the most contentious items that are shared, food tops the bill with 31% of British workers saying their lunch would be one of the top three things they would least like to share, closely followed by an equal aversion to sharing a favourite coffee mug and details about their private lives (both at 30%). People in Scotland (41%) said they have the biggest gripe when it comes to other people borrowing their mug, and people from the North of England have the biggest bugbear when it comes to having details about their private lives shared by other colleagues (35%).

Retail workers least like sharing their mug (34%), those in Financial Services are most reluctant to

share their food (39%), as are those in IT and Telecoms (38%), marginally ahead of an aversion to sharing headphones (37%), and Medical & Health Services workers and those in Education both least like having details about their private lives shared (32% and 37% respectively).

Christmas is traditionally seen as a time for sharing but this seems to have little impact on the mindsets of most British workers, according to the survey. Of the 1,153 workers polled, 75% said they wouldn't be more likely to share just because it was Christmas. Workers in London, perhaps surprisingly, were most likely to share more things over the festive period (23%), compared with any other region. In Scotland, for example, 82% of workers said Christmas did not make them more likely to do it.

Chocolates (62%) were the most likely item distributed by those workers who would be more likely to share things over Christmas, followed by mince pies on 39%. Less than one-fifth (17%) of Christmas sharers, however, would split a bottle of champagne at their work Christmas party, and only 18% said they would have a dance with a colleague at the office party, while just one in 10 would join in that most iconic British tradition of kissing a work mate under the mistletoe (12%). It would seem though, that some people like taking the idea of sharing too far: of those that are prepared to share a kiss under the mistletoe, one fifth of them are married!

Psychologist Corinne Sweet says: "To some extent we fear how gossip will spread round the workplace today, especially with the added power and speed of social networking. We like to be in control of what is talked about us, whether at the water cooler or on Facebook, as out-of-control gossip can be damaging to morale and reputation. However most of us indulge in tittle-tattle-Tweeting, especially after a few drinks at the Christmas office party. However some gossip can work well, as many long-term romances evolve out of office 'dos' at this time of year."

Peter Boucher, Enterprise Marketing Director at Vodafone UK adds: "We know from working with British businesses every day that people on the whole are actually becoming increasingly open to sharing in the workplace, demonstrated by their willingness to adopt new working styles, including sharing a desk. Using tools like Vodafone Data Sharer, workers can collaborate even more and businesses can make the most of their resources by pooling data allowances amongst employees and devices. But Britain's workers shouldn't be worried: introducing more flexible ways of working through tools such as Vodafone Data Sharer shouldn't mean they have to share personal things like their mug if they don't want to!"

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Notes for editors:

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2037 adults, of which 1153 were working adults with one or more colleagues. Fieldwork was undertaken between 30th November -

3rd December 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Further regional statistics are available on request.

About Vodafone Data Sharer:

- Vodafone Data Sharer is a mobile internet plan designed to make using data easy. Businesses only need one plan for all employees, and there are no individual limits. There is one large allowance that everyone can tap into and share from
- This new approach to buying and using data means employees can use the internet freely without worrying about individual data allowances, resulting in more productivity, more flexibility and the ability to provide better customer services
- Employers choose the amount of data they want and are notified by text when they reach 80% and then 100% of their usage levels. They can also monitor their usage by texting 'datashare' to 40560 to get a real-time free update to see how many MBs they have used. And of course employers can choose to buy more data if they need to

For more information visit vodafone.co.uk/datasharer Or if your business has 1-5 employees, call 08080 996778, and if your business has more than five employees, call 08080 044496