Web Surfing Helps at Work, Study Says

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The Wall Street Journal:

Don't feel guilty about browsing the Internet at work—turns out it may actually improve your performance.

According to a new study, Web browsing can actually refresh tired workers and enhance their productivity, compared to other activities such as making personal calls, texts or emails, let alone working straight through with no rest at all.

The study, "Impact of Cyberloafing on Psychological Engagement," by Don J.Q. Chen and Vivien K.G Lim of the National University of Singapore, was presented last week in San Antonio, Texas, at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, an association of management scholars.

The researchers conducted two studies. In the first, they assigned 96 undergraduate management students into one of three groups—a control group, a "rest-break" group and a Web-surfing group. All subjects spent 20 minutes highlighting as many letter e's as they could find in a sample text. For the next 10 minutes, the control group was assigned another simple task; members of the rest-break group could do whatever they pleased, except surf the Internet; and the third group could browse the Web. Afterward, all of the subjects spent another 10 minutes highlighting more letters.

The researchers found that the Web-surfers were significantly more productive and effective at the tasks than those in the other two groups and reported lower levels of mental exhaustion, boredom and higher levels of engagement.

Read the whole story: The Wall Street Journal