

## Phubbing bosses show disrespect for their workforce

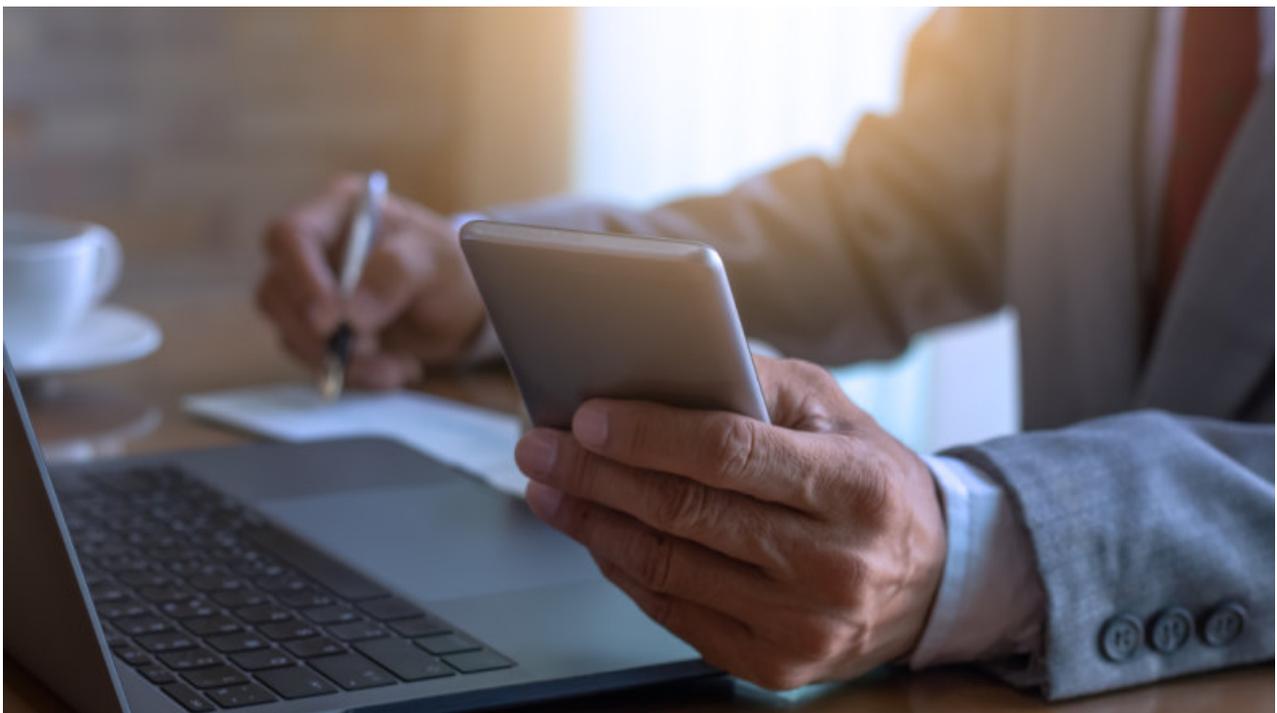
By Gary Martin

2 February 2019 – 12:00am

It is a brand-new word that has crept into the dictionary and though it might not be in your vocabulary just yet, you have been exposed to you – and you are more than likely guilty of doing it yourself.

It is called phubbing – the practice of snubbing or looking at your mobile phone or tablet while in the presence of others.

While the phenomenon may appear relatively harmless at first glance, phubbing can do significant damage to the quality of interaction between people in a face-to-face setting, most probably because the person being phubbed feels unimportant and feels they are regarded as a low priority.



Phubbing can do significant damage to the quality of interaction between people in a face-to-face setting. SHUTTERSTOCK

This unsavoury practice is creeping into our workplace in such a way that many suggest it is now mainstream organisational behaviour. And the biggest culprits are not everyday employees but their bosses.

Bosses have always had tools available to snub employees during workplace meetings – flicking through papers as the discussion proceeds and glancing out the window are two that come to mind. But the unprecedented rise of smart-phone related snubbing has given rise to the new term “boss phubbing”.

We have all been through it. You are talking to your boss and they glance at their phone, or they check their phone while talking to you, or when their phone suddenly pings they grab it to check a message – almost as if you are not there, or don't exist.

The impact of boss phubbing on workplace culture can be particularly damaging and grossly underestimated.

At the very least, managers act as role models for others. Employees who experience boss phubbing or witness it will be quick to jump on the bandwagon – believing the practice has been legitimised by their boss.

There is no doubt bosses have myriad reasons for their phubbing behaviours. Perhaps they use it to shut down their meetings quickly so they can move on to other more important duties.

Maybe their actions are designed simply to demonstrate how important they are and emphasise that their presence is required by others and regularly. Or it could be that they are simply bored with what an employee has to say – so checking messages provides a welcome form of relief and will hopefully serve as a prompt for the employee to wrap things up quickly.

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But there is a much more serious side to phubbing that many of us fail to appreciate or understand – one that exposes bosses as masters of double standards in our workplaces.

The very value that bosses are quick to talk up at every opportunity – respect for others – is being flouted every time an employee is phubbed by their manager.

Yes, boss phubbing is exceptionally disrespectful and a sure sign that the boss either has little emotional intelligence, or refuses to engage their EQ.

It is hardly surprising then that experts suggest employees who experience boss phubbing

are less

likely to feel valued by their supervisor, which may in turn impact their overall performance, morale and productivity.

In this day and age of unprecedented scrutiny on workplace culture and employee empowerment, any behaviour that is counter to acceptable best standards will be called out.

As innocuous as phubbing may seem to you, the fact it can have an understated but very real negative impact on the workplace therefore has to be of concern to you.

So regardless of your situation and whether you are at work or in your personal space, the next time you are talking with others face-to-face yet feel tempted to steal a quick sideways glance at your phone or tablet, stop and think about the signal this sends to the people you are supposed to be focused on.

And if the potential impact on them doesn't sink in for you, think about how you feel when the person you are talking to suddenly expresses more interest in their phone.

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