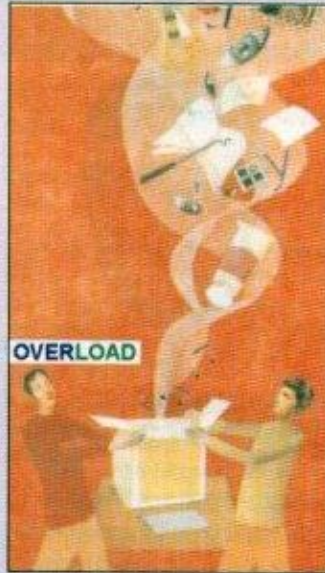


MANAGERIAL INFORMATION OVERLOAD

S.M. Darraj Hossain
darrajit@yahoo.com

Information technology (IT) is expected by corporate management to improve the productivity of knowledge workers, enhance the quality of their work lives, and improve managers' decision making skills, along with the bottom line. However, the organizational capacity for producing information far exceeds the human capacity for processing it. Burdened by information overload, knowledge workers feel stress, strain, and anxiety, thus threatening productivity and the adoption of new technology.

In a survey sponsored by Reuters International, 1,300 managers in Hong Kong, Singapore, the U.K., and the U.S. reported that while they needed lots of information to perform effectively, 25% of them also suffer ill health, ranging from headaches to depression, as a direct result of the enormous amount of information they have to absorb. Moreover, most of them (94%) do not expect the situation to improve, and 56% expect the future to be even more stressful. Along with the emergence of information media, including email and the Internet, issues related to information overload take center stage in the lives of millions of knowledge workers world wide. In a survey of managers in a number of industries by Computer world magazine, more than 40% of them described their work as "extremely stressful," and 67% expected it to get



worse as they sought to manage the information they needed to keep up with their counterparts in their own organizations, as well as those in their industries. In general, information overload can be characterized in two broad ways.

The first is when knowledge workers are given more information than they can absorb; in such situations, information overload is viewed in light of receiving more of it than is needed or wanted to function effectively and further the goals of the individual or the organization. Alternatively,

information overload can occur when the information processing demand on an individual's time for performing interactions and internal calculations exceeds the supply or capacity of time available for such processing. Regardless of how it manifests itself, information overload affects decision making in

two ways. First, the affected knowledge workers may be unable to locate what they need most due to sheer volume, even causing them to overlook what they themselves would consider critical. Second, information overload may cause these knowledge workers to fail to use the relevant information at hand or known to be available, leading to the inefficient use of decision making time. An especially difficult challenge facing organizations today is finding ways to use technology to deal with information overload.

Source: *fidelformunications IT Magazine*