

Younger generation doesn't like making phone calls (Kuchikomi)

In companies many bosses like to call their staff to deal with a problem. But sometimes when they call, they get a recorded message “X is unable to respond at this time...”. They don't like this. They find it frustrating. All the boss needs is a single word – maybe “yes” or “no” from his staff, but he can't contact him.

This is more than a minor inconvenience, says Shukan Post. It stands for a whole range of problems, from a “generation gap” to a new psychological syndrome - “telephone fear syndrome.” Many young company employees hate to have phone conversations.

Young adults in their 20s and early 30s grew up texting and to them, that's communication. Anything more than that – for example voice-to-voice or face-to face – is a waste of time. It's also terrifying for them.

“Sometimes when I'm in talks with a client, my boss rings me over and over,” the magazine hears from a real estate employee in his 30s. “If it's an important client this is distracting. When the meeting's over, I call back. Usually it wasn't an emergency, just a routine matter. If he had emailed me I could have handled it easily, with no problems.”

In this case it's easy to understand why the employee doesn't answer his phone – he's busy. But sometimes, the employee fears his boss might be angry or annoyed. Sometimes it's easier to send a short message to explain a problem, rather than stammer an explanation on the phone. Also, mailing saves you from having to reply “cold” to an unexpected question. It gives time to think carefully about the matter.

But clinical psychologist Masaharu Asakawa says there's a more ominous problem here. People now in their 20s and 30s grew up texting and playing video games and are so deficient in elementary communication skills that “telephone fear syndrome” is commonplace.

“A growing number of people,” he says, “get so flustered by repeated phone calls from bosses that they develop physical and emotional symptoms – depression, headaches, nausea. The cell phone has been with us for nearly 15 years now, and over the past 5-10 years the syndrome has increased.”

But who has the biggest problem? The young people who are afraid of phone conversations, or the older ones who telephone all the time. A young employee in the finance sector tells Shukan Post, “I see my colleagues in the toilet on the phone with the boss, and I hate it!”

Questions

1. Do you suffer from “telephone fear syndrome”? Do you know anyone who does?
2. Which form of communication are you most comfortable with? Face-to-face? Calling? Texting/emailing?
3. Do you think it’s true that the older generation use the phone too much, and the younger generation text too much? Which is better/worse?
4. How many phone calls to you make in a typical day? How many do you receive?
5. How many emails and texts do you send in a typical day? How many do you receive?
6. Did you experience any communication problems in your working life? In your home life?
7. Can you suggest anything to improve communication between generations?