



Smartphone junkies

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Has checking for text messages on your smartphone in the middle of the night become natural for you? Do you find yourself not being able to go five minutes without checking your inbox? Do you find it difficult to sleep or do anything without your smartphone by your side or at least an arm's grab away? Do you find yourself looking for apps in everything you do? If so, you are welcome to the new breed of smartphone addicts. The good news is, you are not alone in this hyper-connected world. Experts say that as many as 6 percent of smartphone users could be termed addicts. According to a Rutgers University study, being addicted to your Blackberry is similar to being addicted to drugs. No wonder the device was coined "crackberry." It's a tough habit to break.

The trend has caught up among the young generation in Bangladesh too. Teenagers texting away on their smartphones is becoming a common sight. "It pretty much lives in my hand", says an obsessed fan.

According to David Greenfield, PhD, a West Hartford, Connecticut, based psychologist, computer technologies can be addictive because they're "psychoactive"; they alter mood and often trigger enjoyable feelings. Email, in particular, gives us satisfaction due to what psychologists call "variable ratio reinforcement." That is, we never know when we'll get a satisfying email, so we keep checking, over and over again. "It's like slot machines," Greenfield says. "We're seeking that pleasurable hit." And smartphones, they of course, allow us to go to the inbox feeding trough anytime and anywhere.

It's very difficult to ignore a piece of technology when it's beeping or vibrating at you. It's insisting you give it attention and a lot of people feel drawn to instantly respond, even if they know the incoming phone call, email, or message is likely nothing important.

Many argue that the smartphone helps them stay on top of political and current news all the time. Many more find it convenient in letting them to stay in touch with work even when they're taking a lunch break at a fancy café or are traveling abroad. There's a whole host of these people who depend on these modern "Swiss Army knives" for everything from planning schedules, finding entertainment, managing our social networks and yes, making calls too.

There are serious question about what these gadgets may be doing to our brains. Some researchers say intense multitasking degrades a person's ability to focus deeply, think creatively



and, in the end, be more productive. Smartphones are among the technologies promoting this mode of thinking, where people toggle continually between streams of information.

A 2009 Stanford University research study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, found that multitaskers -- those who try to view two or more types of media simultaneously -- are more easily distracted.

"They're suckers for irrelevancy," Stanford professor Clifford Nass said in a written statement about the study, which examined 262 university students. "Everything distracts them."

The real and more immediate concern, though, is how these phones have started affecting their users' relationships and family life. Many don't realise that text messaging your friend during an intimate dinner with your spouse is just the same as physically having the friend sit right in the middle and talk. It is equally rude and screams out the message "you are not important". These little screens have the power to suck you into its world. Without even realising it, you come back to reality to find that you haven't even said a word to your spouse in the past half hour.

Very soon you find it taking over your life. So now it's time to take control. First step is to admit to yourself that your phone is managing you and not the other way round. Once you confess

there's an issue, then you can deal with it. Now work out your daily schedule to allot certain 'smartphone-free' hours, or even better, set specific time slots, wherein you will check your mails and reply to them and try to stick to it. Don't get tempted to check your mail at other times, unless you are expecting a really important mail. Make sure you inform your friends and colleagues about this too, so that don't wonder why they didn't get the instant response that they're used to. Avoid using your smartphones while working out, at a party, going to mosque and on vacations. It kills the purpose of these events.

With all that text-messaging, don't forget that the phone's main function making calls. General rule of thumb is, if it takes more than four exchanges, the subject should be discussed over the phone. Let new messages pile up in your inbox. Then devote time to responding to each one. Frequently a steady line of thinking is interrupted by a new message notice. Try not to check email first thing in the morning. It can wait until you get to work. Lastly, resist the temptation to use your phone in the middle of the night by not taking it to bed. Many people nowadays use their mobile phone's alarm function to wake them up. But if the temptation seems to be disturbing your steady sleep, buy an alarm clock instead. It is most important to remember that you are the master, not the slave.

Web address boom could be search engine boon

AFP, San Francisco

The decision to open the internet to a flood of Web addresses ending in anything from company names to social movements could prove a boon to search engines.

The internet's global coordinator on Monday approved the creation of website addresses ending in just about any word, triggering one of the biggest ever shake-ups in how the web operates.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) voted overwhelmingly for the proposal at a meeting in Singapore despite fears the shift would cause some confusion and favor large companies.

The change shouldn't make it tougher to scour the internet for what people seek, according to internet search giant Google and its rival Bing.

"Google is experienced in ranking and returning web pages, regardless of top-level domain (TLD)," Google told AFP, referring to the code after

"In order to sort out this confusion, TLDs might actually cause users to turn to search engines more often."

The \$185,000 price for companies or organizations to apply for generic TLDs of their choosing could reduce the explosion of Web addresses.

However, companies will be under pressure to buy the domain names just to make sure they control Web addresses related to their brands or images.

ICANN chairman Peter Thrusch told reporters the new naming system will be a "tremendous opportunity for people to take control of this aspect of their branding and develop it in their own way."

Industry observers say global giants such as Apple, Toyota and BMW could be in the vanguard of launching websites with their own domain names, ending in ".apple", ".toyota" and ".bmw". Cities or trademark holders may do the same.

"Bottom line -- the new names will almost certainly mean nothing special to search engines," Danny



the second dot in web addresses, such as .com, .gov and .org.

"If the best result is on a non-traditional domain, we still intend to return that page to our users," the California-based firm said.

Microsoft online services division senior director Adam Sohn said that freeing constraints on the endings of Web addresses will have "not much" of an impact on the company's Bing search engine.

"When you look at how search is done, the domains do not have a big impact... On the consumer side, people search using keywords or names, not domains," he said.

On the back end, or indexing side, search services examine content, links, and myriad other "signals" to rank pages in search results.

The new domain names could drive more traffic to search engines, as more users rely on them to navigate the amalgam of domain names.

"We feel that the decision to allow anyone to start their own top-level domain has the potential for widespread user confusion," Google said.

Sullivan of news blog Search Engine Land said in an online post. "They won't have any super ranking powers."

ICANN has spent years crafting a guide for approving applications for any suggested top level domains.

The process encountered controversy after the United States expressed interest in having veto power to preclude the creation of top level domains such as .gay that might be blocked in some countries.

"It was a suggestion by one government that was never picked up by the others," he told AFP. "It never got out of the gossip phase."

One concern was that countries blocking entire domains could lead to a balkanization of the Internet.

But Thrusch dismissed the worry, reasoning that adult content is on the Internet regardless of what letters come at the end of websites.

"The issue is the content, which is exactly the same," Thrusch said. "It doesn't change if a website becomes .gay."

Kaspersky unveils 2012 AV solutions



Altaf Halde (left) and Jagannath Patnaik at the Kaspersky event.

IT.TELECOM REPORT

Kaspersky Lab, a world leading computer security company, introduced its latest 2012 editions of Anti-Virus and Internet Security solutions to the local market at an event in the capital.

Prabeer Sarkar, CEO of Officextracts, the exclusive distributor of Kaspersky Lab in Bangladesh & Bhutan said it was the first official launch of the 2012 editions in the Asia-Pacific region for the company.

It was also first time for Bangladesh to have a globally reputed software company made its new version's regional debut launch in Bangladesh.

Altaf Halde, managing director, South Asia emphasised

on Kaspersky Lab's continuous support to Bangladesh in moving forward to a safe digital Bangladesh while Jagannath Patnaik, director - South Asia focused on the development of channel business systems in the local market.

The new Kaspersky 2012 version incorporates the cloud computing technology that makes the product line much more effective and fast.

At the event Kaspersky Lab also introduced its corporate sub-distributor in Bhutan and Musa Ibrahim, the first Bangladeshi to conquer the Mount Everest, as the profile representative for Kaspersky Lab in Bangladesh.

ETL brings Acer touchbook

IT.TELECOM DESK

Executive Technologies Ltd (ETL) has introduced Acer's new concept device- Iconia touchbook in the Bangladeshi Market.

Iconia has 14" dual-screen with virtual keyboard as well as all-point multi-touch functionality, which means you can use all the fingers of your hands to navigate the device.

With the dual-screen you can run two different applications simultaneously on both screens. You can also expand document or folder window or web page to both screens for better view.

Both the screens have HD 1366x768 resolution, high-brightness Acer CineCrystal LED-backlit TFT LCDs and support all-point multi-touch for precise on-screen input.

Protected by the ultra-thin yet durable Gorilla Glass, the displays are scratch and fingerprint resistant.

Powered by Intel Corei5 processor, Iconia is designed to deliver smart performance for multimedia, social networking and other demanding mainstream applications.

The touchbook features Acer Ring that appears simply by placing five fingers on the screen. It allows you to start touch applications by scrolling through the App cards and tapping on the one you choose. The Ring also provides fast access to Virtual Keyboard, Gesture Editor, Window Manager, and Device Control Console.

The Virtual Keyboard can also be launched by placing both palms on the bottom screen. It comes with a full-size

QWERTY layout with international language support to give users the same experience of a traditional physical keyboard and features predictive text input for natural-speed typing while avoiding mistakes. The keyboard also includes a touchpad and a numeric keypad and can be easily switched to handwriting mode.

Besides Acer's present built-in touch applications, Iconia includes three new touch applications - SocialJogger, My Journal and Scrapbook.



A fusion of the latest Iconia and best technology, can also be equipped with 3G connectivity, while its HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) port guarantees high-definition.

The touchbook weighs 6.18 lbs and comes with 320GB of hard drive (up to 750GB), 4GB of DDR3 memory, 802.11 b/g/n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 3.0 + HS, 2 USB ports, one USB jack.

The Iconia is available now at a promotional price of Tk 99,800, which will be valid until July 10.

Google translates Bangla

IT.TELECOM DESK

Google has expanded its free internet translation service to include Bangla, one of the most spoken languages in the world, reports AFP.

Bangla language is spoken in Bangladesh, West Bengal, and parts of the Indian states of Tripura and Assam.

Translation of the newly added language was in "alpha" form meaning that there was polishing to be done, Google research scientist Ashish Venugopal said in a blog post.

"If you notice incorrect or missing translations for any of our languages, please correct us; we enjoy learning

from our mistakes and your feedback helps us graduate new languages from alpha status," Venugopal said.

Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu languages, spoken in India, were also added to Google Translate, bringing to 63 the number of languages supported by the California-based firm's online service.

"We hope that the launch of these new alpha languages will help you better understand the Indic web and encourage the publication of new content in Indic languages," he added.

Google also made software for fonts used in the languages available for download.

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