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CONSUMERS SAVE £1.5 BILLION ON ENERGY BILLS BY CHARGING UP AT WORK INSTEAD

New research shows that cash-strapped consumers are saving energy by charging up their phones and gadgets at work. But by saving an average of over £110 a year each on their bills, they are collectively adding over £1.5 billion onto their employers' energy bills instead^[1]. And when you add in the amount of energy workers waste, in total this is costing Britain's businesses almost £3 billion a year^[2].

- **Workers cost businesses over £1.5 billion a year^[1] just by charging gadgets at work instead of at home – a fifth (20%) deliberately do so to save on household bills^[1]**
- **Consumers are less worried about wasting energy or resources at work than at home, but their relaxed attitude is costing employers a further £1.4 billion a year^[2]**
- **People are more likely to leave lights on at work than at home, and while more than four in ten people (41%) leave devices plugged in when they're not in use at work, just over a quarter (28%) do the same at home^[3]**
- **But despite the huge cost employers are reluctant to crack down – 26% turn a blind eye while just 37% prioritise cutting back on waste^[4].**

With energy prices having risen by £224 or 21% in the last year^[5], consumers looking to save on their household energy bills are doing so at the expense of their employers according to new research from uSwitch.com, the independent price comparison and switching service. Almost half (49%) charge up phones or gadgets at work, with two in ten (20%) doing so deliberately to save money on their household bills^[1]. On average these 'cheeky chargers' are saving themselves £120 a year, but are collectively costing their employers just over £1.5 billion a year^[1].

But it's not just deliberate energy usage that is costing employers. While consumers may be becoming more energy efficient at home, their 'green' attitudes don't extend to the workplace. However, this relaxed attitude towards wasting energy and resources at work is costing British

businesses almost £1.4 billion a year^[2]. When added to the cost of ‘cheeky charging’, businesses are potentially paying out almost £3 billion a year more than they have to.

Workers are racking up bills by not taking simple energy saving steps at work, even though they may do so at home. Three times as many leave lights on at work (35%) more than they do at home (10%) and more than four in ten (41%) leave devices plugged in when they’re not in use at work, compared to just over a quarter (28%) at home. Workers are also less concerned about wasting energy on heating or air conditioning. Just 4% would leave it on when it’s not needed at home, but almost a quarter (23%) would do so when they’re at work^[3].

Almost two in ten people (19%) admit that they aren’t worried about wasting energy or resources at work because it’s not their pocket that is affected. However, a third of workers (34%) willingly monitor energy and wastage because they are aware of the impact on the company’s bottom line. Interestingly, those who do try to avoid wasting energy and resources at work tend not to do so for financial reasons – four in ten (41%) are doing it because it’s better for the environment^[6].

This suggests that bosses worried about spiralling costs should perhaps try a different tact with wasteful employees. However, at the moment employers seem to be reluctant to crack down on wastage, despite the huge costs to their businesses. A quarter (26%) turn a blind eye to wasting energy and resources, while less than four in ten (37%) prioritise cutting waste^[4].

Kevin Sears, energy efficiency expert at uSwitch.com, says: “With energy bills rising consumers are becoming more energy efficient at home. However, when it’s the boss’ pocket and not our own, it seems that even simple energy efficiency measures go out of the window.

“Being efficient doesn’t have to be hard work, but with the high cost of energy hitting households and businesses alike, it does have to be a full time job. Even small measures such as turning off lights when you’re not in the room and not leaving devices on standby can all help cut energy bills, whether you are at work or at home. And not only will it cut costs, but it will help the environment too, making it a win-win for everyone.”

For more information visit www.uSwitch.com or call 0800 093 06 07

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Notes to editors:

Research carried out online with the uSwitch.com Consumer Opinion Panel in October 2011, among 1,369 British adults.

1. When asked "Do you ever deliberately charge your phone or other gadgets at work to save on household bills?" 3.8% said 'yes, all of the time'; 16.2% said 'yes, some of the time' meaning 20% said yes. 29.2% said 'I charge my items at work, but not to save money'. This means that 49.2% of workers charge their phones or gadgets at work. When asked how much they save by charging gadgets at work the average amount was £9.18 a month, which equates to £110.16 a year. Based on ONS stats which show that there are 29.1 million people working in the UK (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/october-2011/index.html>), this means that $(0.492 \times 29.1) \times 110.16 = \text{£}1.577$ billion is spent charging gadgets each year
2. When asked "How much do you cost your business through wasted work resources and unnecessary energy use each year?" the average amount was £47.25. Based on afore mentioned ONS stats, the total cost to businesses = $\text{£}47.25 \times 29.1 = \text{£}1.375$ billion a year
3. When asked where do you do the following more:" 'Leave lights on when not in a room' 9.7% said at home, 35.4% said at the office; 'leave air conditioning/ heating on when not needed' 3.5% said at home, 23.2% said at the office; 'leave devices plugged in when not in use' 28.4% said at home, 40.6% said at work.
4. When asked 'How much emphasis does your employer put on monitoring energy use and work resources to keep control of costs?' 25.7% said 'It's never talked about'; 28.4% said 'A lot of importance is placed on this'; 8.5% said 'My employer has strict rules in place to safeguard against waste'.
5. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a standard Dual Fuel plan, paying quarterly by cash or cheque with bill sizes averaged all big six suppliers and all regions.
6. When asked 'Thinking about at work, which of the following statements do you agree with?' 6.2% said 'I don't even think about monitoring waste – it's not my pocket that's affected'; 12.4% said 'I don't even think about monitoring energy use – it's not my pocket that's affected'; 33.8% said 'I monitor wastage and unnecessary energy use to play a part in helping out the bottom line of the business'; 41.1% said 'I monitor wastage and unnecessary energy use as it's better for the environment.'

About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email CustomerServices@uswitch.com or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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