

'Netflixitis' on the job

MORE THAN A THIRD OF AUSSIE EMPLOYEES ADMIT BINGE WATCHING SHOWS AT WORK

CAREERS

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Netflix has become a major disrupter to the workplace, with Australians binge-watching shows during work hours. Jenny Folley, founder and chief executive at @WORKSPACES, says many workers became hooked on streaming services while at home during the pandemic and are continuing to watch up to six episodes of their favourite program at a time, even after returning to the office.

She says 37 per cent of Netflix subscribers admit to watching shows while at work.

"It is becoming a national problem. I am calling it Netflixitis," Folley says. "Instead of working at home, people are taking time out to binge on Netflix."

"Even as workers return to the office, they are spending a lot of time talking about their favourite Netflix shows with work colleagues and it is costing businesses a lot of money in lost productivity and work time."

"Even worse, some have even admitted that when their favourite show drops, they can't stop themselves from bingeing and have to watch while at work instead of working."

BINGE RESPONSIBLY

Erin Faehrmann, chief executive at Youth Opportunities, a not-for-profit that provides services to increase wellbeing and develop enterprise skills and resilience in young people, admits she and her colleagues became so hooked on reality show *Love on the Spectrum* they organised an after-hours watch party.

"We were all watching it at night at home and on the weekends so we just thought, 'Let's watch it after work on a Friday night'," she says.



Youth Opportunities
chief executive officer
Erin Faehrmann.

Faehrmann, who never imagined people would spend their work hours streaming television, believes binge-watching alone exacerbates fatigue and a sense of disconnection but watching shows together helps people to relax and recharge.

"For us, (watching shows with colleagues) is increasing inclusivity, it's creating connectivity and we are watching content that's engaging and optimistic," she says.

"Just by adding those magical elements, you are actually supercharging your wellbeing and it's reversing the negative effects (typically associated with binge-watching)."

MAKE NETFLIX WORK FOR YOU

Productivity expert Donna McGeorge suggests workers can limit the distraction of streaming services by using them as a reward for getting tasks done.

"Focus on what are the three key things you need to get done today and, if you get those done, then go for your life (and binge your favourite show)," she says.

She says streaming television is not all bad and, in some instances, popular shows can be an important bridge to re-establishing work relationships that waned during Covid's work-from-home arrangements.

"As we are getting back into the world of workplaces, we have missed a bit of social interaction and TV shows form a large part of what we talk about with each other – whether it's Netflix or the latest *MasterChef* (episode) or the (televised) footy," she says.

IS IT A SIGN?

McGeorge says if workers are easily distracted by Netflix, it could be an indication they are in the wrong job. "If productivity (at work) is a

problem, then it's probably a problem whether it's Netflix or anything else (causing the distraction) and maybe you need to find some other work that you love," she says.

"Because when you are really motivated, when it's work that you love or you really enjoy, then nothing can distract you."

She says those who genuinely cannot stop watching, despite their best endeavours – or, when not watching, are thinking about shows instead – should seek professional help.

"Anytime that you think you should be doing housework, or your job or playing with your kids but you stay and watch six episodes of Netflix shows, or it gets to 3am and you're still watching, then it's impacting your work and your relationships and your quality of life," McGeorge says.

"That's when you probably should seek help, in the same way you would with any other addiction."

Nail your priorities

How to prioritise your work over Netflix

- **Set** designated work hours, particularly when working from home, and make a list of what work needs to be completed
- **Limit** work breaks – if you spend hours talking about Netflix with colleagues, having short, timed breaks will force you to have a quick catch-up or to continue your conversation outside of office hours
- **Adhere** to strict limits on the amount of time or episodes of a show will watch. Involve your friends and family to make yourself more accountable.
- **Stop** your streaming subscription if you feel you need to remove temptation altogether

Source: Jenny Folley