

Back In The Race: The Employer's Guide To Understanding (And Dealing With) Pokémon GO

If you run your own law firm, you may have noticed some unusual behavior from your employees in the last few weeks. You may have seen them walking outside the office swiping their smartphones. They have a newfound interest in going to parks. And when they talk, they use unfamiliar words like Pikachu, Snorlax, and Pokéstops. If this sounds familiar, then your employees are into Pokémon GO.



Pokémon GO is basically a treasure hunt where people travel to various places in real life and use their smartphones to capture randomly placed critters known as Pokémon (short for Pocket Monsters). These critters are then used to battle other players' Pokémon and take over Gyms placed in select real-life locations. Finally, in order to catch and take care of the Pokémon, they have to obtain items from Pokéstops that are also placed in various real-life locations.

Pokémon GO has been credited with helping normally sedentary people get out of the house and [exercise](#). It has also helped shy people [improve their social skills](#), as complete strangers collaborated to find and capture the rarer Pokémon in the area.

But it has the potential to be a [distraction at work](#) (to say nothing of, well, [killing you](#)). So Pokémon GO is different from other online games like Candy Crush because employees may have to leave the office to play. This is not a problem if your firm is located in a [rural area](#) or near residences with little to no Gyms and Pokéstops. In these areas, Pokémon only appear a few times during the day, and the ones that do appear are the common rats, snakes and pigeons that nobody wants after a day or two. But if your firm happens to be located near a popular Pokéstop or a park that spawns rare Pokémon, you may find that your employees may be spending more time on their smartphones responding to Pokémon spawns rather than client emails.

The good news is that the Pokémon GO phenomenon is beginning to die down. In my opinion, most professionals will quickly lose interest in the game because of its repetitiveness and the massive time, money and walking commitment required to catch all of the rare Pokémon. Also, the game seems to [crash frequently](#), which has been a major

source of irritation. Finally, Niantic has recently made changes to the game that make it [more difficult for players to find and capture Pokemon](#). Players have expressed their butthurt over social media, saying that they don't want to spend hours or days searching for a single Pokémon.

While most people will play Pokémon GO responsibly and during appropriate times, some people will be addicted and will focus more on catching them all rather than billing them all. And that must be dealt with swiftly.

The old-school way to deal with this is to issue an ultimatum: Stop playing the game in the office or play it as much as you want at the unemployment line. At certain times, this is the appropriate thing to do. But this also breeds resentment, and it will not stop them from thinking about the game while working. During water-cooler discussions, you will be known as the old fart who is out of touch. Finally, if enough people complain about their lack of Pokémon time to one of the columnists here, they may write yet another piece on the importance of work-life balance.

So before pulling out the iron fist, try to convince the Pokémon trainer in your office to get bored of the game on his own. I offer the following suggestions:

First, point out that it is very difficult and expensive to get all of the Pokémon in the game. While some Pokemon appear frequently in certain real-life locations, they still have to walk around – sometimes for hours – to get them. And a hot summer day is not a good time to be outside walking around going on wild goose chases. And while Pokémon GO is free to download, players have to spend money traveling to rare Pokémon nests, eating out, and sometimes paying admission fees to parks and museums. All of this can add up to hundreds of dollars.

Second, there is no ending to the game, which tends to give people less motivation to continue playing. You don't rescue a princess and get fireworks after capturing every Pokémon available. If you are able to capture a Gym, someone else will kick you out before the end of the day.

Third, and this is mostly for the men, *being an advanced Pokémon GO player will not get you laid*. While [more women are playing Pokémon GO than men](#), it does not mean that they are playing to hook up. Men and women should strategize and enjoy the game together to capture that elusive Snorlax or Aerodactyl. But unless you have something else going for you that women desire, your 100+ Pokédex and Level 20 status is not going to get you further than a walk in the park. And only to hunt Pokémon.

I think most employers should not worry about Pokémon GO polluting their employees' work ethic. The game isn't that great and will get boring fairly quickly to everyone but the most hardcore players. And most professionals will put their work duties first. But for those who may be taking the game more seriously than they should, it is generally better to get them to quit the game on their own.

Earlier: [Pokémon Go Could Kill You, Warns Law Professor](#)
[Wherein An Associate Curses Out A Partner Over Pokémon](#)

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