



# More companies tell workers to silence cellphones

## Ring-tone noise annoys others

By Stephanie Armour  
USA TODAY

More companies are limiting the use of cellphones on the job as workplaces react to the noisy jangle of beeps and tunes emanating from incoming personal calls at work.

Carey O'Donnell, head of Carey O'Donnell PR Group based in West Palm Beach, Fla., has adopted a policy that requires employees to keep their cellphones on a vibrate setting.

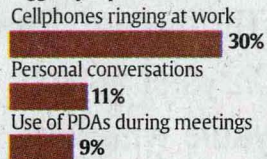
"It's a big issue," O'Donnell says. "In the office, you have to have some guidelines to facilitate an environment that gets work done."

Thirty percent of employees said cellphones ringing at work was their No. 1 pet peeve, according to a March study of more than 2,000 employed adults by Randstad USA, a staffing company.

It's enough of an irritant that some employers are limiting or banning cellphone use. More than a third of organizations have policies to address the use of personal cellphones, according to the Society for Human Resource Management.

### Employee pet peeves

Percentage of employees who said the following were their biggest pet peeves:



Source: Harris Interactive study for Randstad USA

By Robert W. Ahrens, USA TODAY

Employment lawyer Audrey Mross in Dallas says more employers are expected to ban or limit cellphones as more workers get fancier models with the

ability to take pictures or watch TV clips, posing a greater risk of productivity drain.

"It's an issue that (human resources) departments are grappling with right now," Mross says.

The driving reason for the limits is the noise and distraction that can come with the use of personal cellphones in the office. Fifty-three percent of employees say they feel impatient or angry when a coworker stops a conversation because of an incoming wireless call, according to a July 2004 survey by Sprint.

"There is nothing worse than a cellphone with no owner to

be found blasting throughout the office. It is incredibly rude," says Holly Jespersen, an account supervisor in New York, in an e-mail. "It is a common courtesy that most Americans need to learn."

But cellphone use is not just an etiquette issue: A growing number of lawsuits involve employer liability for traffic accidents caused by employees talking on cellphones.

"The safety issue is huge," Mross says, adding that employers may be liable in an accident even if an employee is using his or her own phone and conducting business outside of normal working hours.