

Leave Work at the Office

Are you awake at night worrying about work? Or taking work on vacations? One famous business person has sent out tweets to his staff at 2 AM and expected responses. Answering emails / instant messages / tweets at all hours of the night. Being on call from midnight to 5 AM and yet expected to do a full day's work. Sleeping in the spare office. These are all signs of how work has been invading personal time. Americans work some of the longest hours of any "first world" nation. Yet, the pressure to take on more keeps coming. This pressure is not helping our productivity. At some point, we need to start shedding work.

The pressure to work more hours does not help our productivity.

One place has estimated that the average office worker is productive less than 3 hours per day. The office interactions often distract and prevent actual work. This could be one reason why many people who have worked from home during the pandemic feel that they have been far more productive than at the office.

Yet, many a manager feels that they are not as in control of the action as they would like and often think that people at home are less productive. Managers who manage remote workers rely on measured outcomes rather than observed "busyness" and companies that have successfully switched to fully remote often are more productive than traditional office based companies.

Working longer hours does not always mean more productivity. As more and

more of our work is mental work instead of physical, productivity is based on the quality of that work far more than the quantity. In many cases, increasing work hours has resulted in less production because of the increased stress factor.

The stress is affecting our sleep. Many people do not get enough sleep. At some point, this sleep deprivation becomes not just a health issue, but also a safety issue. Many accidents happen when people are sleep deprived. One accident can negate weeks of work.

As work has shifted, we need new routines to make a strong break between work and life. We need to acknowledge our humanity. We are not robots. Nor are most

people able to switch on and off from work in an instant. Routines to signal to our minds that we are letting the work go help us make strong breaks from the pressure.

The solution often is adopting a practice of "shedding work" at the end of the work day. We can review the day's activities and accept our failures, limitations, and successes. Then, leave all of that alone till the next day.

Some people need to acknowledge their mistakes each day. Many of us never want to acknowledge any mistakes, but that is not being human. We all make mistakes and acknowledging them, figuring out how to make things better, and letting go of the results are all techniques that help shed the day and its activities.

As we let go of work, we can be far more productive and creative.

Let Go Of Work

It Always Takes More Time

Many a young programmer has looked at a problem and confidently asserted that they could write a program in a short time to fix it. Sometimes, months later, that project is gently killed having badly overrun the time estimate and produced only a bug-ridden mess. They ran into the problem that has been described as "Those who plan on winning a short war often lose a long war." Nearly every development project that does not consider all the aspects of delivery has run well over the estimate.

We often jump into problems without fully understanding them. Many a new CEO has come into a company with high hopes and offers new dreams. Then, in a few years, that CEO is let go having not fixed the problems.

Many a science class teaches cause and effect. Yet, the world is a complex, chaotic system where often the effects have a weak linkage to the cause. We can act, yet our actions may not have the effects we want or we need to learn about a new aspect that we had never considered before.

The real world is messy and simple solutions rarely work. Starting a war, starting a new company, writing a new program, etc. often are done on an assumption of a simpler world. But the world is messy and we can only hope to modify things rather than "fix it" or "set things right".

In order to succeed in any such venture, it helps to be humble and willing to learn. In so many cases, it takes far more resources than we originally planned. Our commitment to continue is often tested. Sometimes, we run out of resources.

Without full understanding and without deep planning, many a venture has failed.

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Risky World

Researchers in Japan have figured out how to use a 3D printer to create food such as a cookie to contain QR codes by adjusting where voids and solids will be. The QR code is seen by shining a light through the cookie. In short, now a food cookie can contain a web cookie.

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