



The Challenges of a 24/7 Workplace

HBR article by **Erin Reid** and **Lakshmi Ramarajan**, June

People today are under intense pressure to be “ideal workers”—totally committed to their jobs and always on call. But after interviewing hundreds of professionals, Reid and Ramarajan concluded that such selfless dedication is often not only unnecessary but actually harmful to individuals and their firms. The authors discuss three strategies for coping with demanding workplaces—accepting, passing, and revealing—and the risks associated with each.

It would be very helpful if managers understood how difficult being a 24/7 employee is and adopted the authors’ ideas for creating a saner workplace. However, I’m afraid that, with its gentle tone, this piece will be lost on many people, who don’t have a clue what they’re doing to their workers. This isn’t a new issue, but it’s an easy one for a boss to ignore.

As the economy improves, I’m hearing more about people who are looking for new jobs because their workplaces are toxic and demand unreasonable time commitments. And more people are turning off their phones altogether when they leave work.

Michele M. Horaney, principal, Thought Leader Public Relations

Most corporate environments need a little of all three strategies the authors mention. Sometimes deadlines and collaborative projects require a more accepting approach, where you devote yourself to work. But it’s important to balance that with the revealing approach—being open about your life outside work—to preserve a healthful culture.

Jason Walton, executive, Mortenson Construction

It takes courage for a manager to demonstrate the revealing behaviors and encourage them among his or her team, especially if the company culture supports only “ideal” workers. However, I’ve seen that when employees are given the support to be their whole selves, they willingly go the extra mile and perform better overall.

Caroline Foote, marketing manager

I loved the recommendation that while it’s up to individuals to protect their personal time, it’s usually a leader in the organization who can and must drive the culture toward accepting a balanced life.

Devashish Pandey, senior consultant, Deloitte Consulting

What about responding to e-mails after work with “I don’t receive e-mails on my personal phone” or “I don’t share my personal phone number at work—if I’m needed in the evening, I should be given a company phone and compensated for being on call.”

Sophia Wallingford, data analyst

Workers are increasingly aware of the importance of balancing health, happiness, and a career—and those who aren’t burn out inevitably. A well-oiled machine is much more efficient than one that has run itself into ruin.

Amanda Luecht, administrative assistant, Premier Island Management Group

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