

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

TO WORK WELL: SLEEP

I have written about finding a work-life balance before, but am prompted to raise the issue again because of a conversation I had with a friend this weekend. We have brownies together as often as possible, and I already knew she was passionate about her career and studies. But imagine my shock when she casually told me she gets up every morning at about 3:45 a.m. to study before going into the office to put in, on average, 10 hours! Granted, she goes to sleep at 9:00 p.m. but I was still a little surprised. She said her only alternative, as she saw it, was to go to sleep even earlier and wake up at 1:00 a.m.!

So you might find it strange that I'm writing about sleep in a workplace article, but the one (work) cannot survive without the other (sleep). It is a widely acknowledged fact that lack of sleep results in poor concentration, impaired reading ability and poor ability to process information. In general, your performance will suffer, alongside your health, and accidents will happen. If you are tired, constructive study is near impossible. Question: isn't it weird that many people do not think twice about taking work home but you would never consider sleeping at work?

As if to validate these points, I was recently emailed an excerpt from a speech given by a CEO of one of India's leading IT companies; a man hailed by Thailand's Prime Minister as one of the top 50 influential people in Asia. There with some of the things Mr. Murthy has to say:

'I know people who work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, or more. I don't know if they are working all these hours, but I do know they are in the office this long. Others put in long hours because they are addicted to the work place. Whatever the reason for putting in overtime, working long hours over the long term is harmful to the person and to the organization. Being in the office long hours, over long periods of time, makes way for potential errors. My colleagues who are in the office long hours frequently make mistakes caused by fatigue.

Correcting these mistakes requires their time as well as the time and energy of others. I have seen people work Tuesday through Friday to correct mistakes made after 5:00 p.m. on Monday. Another problem is that people who are in the office long hours are not pleasant company. They often complain about other people (*who aren't working as hard*); they are irritable, or cranky, or even angry. Other people avoid them.

As managers, there are things we can do to help people leave the office. First and foremost, set the example and go home ourselves. Second, encourage people to put some balance in their lives. For instance, here is a guideline I find useful:

- 1) Wake up, eat a good breakfast and go to work.
- 2) Work hard and smart for 8 to 9 hours.
- 3) Go home.
- 4) Read the books/comics, watch a funny movie, dig in the dirt, play with your kids, etc.
- 5) Eat well and sleep well. This is called re-creating. Doing steps 1, 3, 4, and 5 enables step 2. Working regular hours and re-creating daily are simple concepts. They are hard for some of us because that requires personal change.

Perhaps some people put in such long hours because they don't want to miss anything when they leave the office. The trouble is that events will never stop happening. Things happen 24 hours a day. Even when you are gone for good, things will still happen. That's life.'

Madeleine Dunford
Managing Director
Career Connections



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