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Animal Farm, Baby Boom and Crackberry Addicts

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Abstract

[Excerpt] In this chapter, we draw from both popular media and research support, along with anecdotal examples drawn from conversations accumulated as part of our own prior studies. Our goal is to present reminders that working hours are a personal life choice, even with external demands, but a choice that is influenced by elements of the individual's working situation. The implications of a choice for long working hours are shown through use of two past "hard working" icons from popular media, one from the 1940s and one from the 1980s. Discussion continues into current time with an overview highlighting advances in technology that provide expanded work opportunities but, also, exacerbate tendencies toward work addiction.

Keywords

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Comments

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As French critic and novelist Alphonse Karr said "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose"-"The more things change, the more they are the same." To examine the topic of work addiction, it is important to look at current trends that contribute to excess work. However, it can be equally valuable to recognize the tendencies that have been constant over time. Further, the problem of balancing work and personal life has become a topic of personal discussion among workers in many industries and job types and has been a popular topic of mainstream media. In recent years, there also has been an increase in scholarly attention to work hours and the potential for work addiction. All of these perspectives, considered together, are important for imagining the future of work and working hours.

Among the trends over the past decade is the shift from an industrial-based national economy to an information-based global economy, which has caused a transformation in the division of work and personal life (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003), As a result, the job market has shifted to require more flexibility in work hours of the employee, in order to compete in the global marketplace. Some feel this global competition has changed the workforce and created a need for committed employees, who are willing to work longer hours (Friedman, Christensen, & DeGroot, 1998). But, an unquestioned shift to longer hours, especially when part of a pattern of work addiction, can create negative effects on an employee's personal life, such as physical and mental well-being and relationship issues (cf. Robinson, 2007). It can also result in less than optimal working relationships on the job (Porter, 1996) and lessen the link between work enjoyment and job performance (Graves, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Weber, 2008).

External forces can encourage people to work longer hours. For example, company pressures to cut costs and/or monitor activity around the globe are two factors that may press workers to expand their time devoted to work. With limited resources and greater demands, working more hours may seem necessary to keep their current jobs or to be seen as deserving of future promotion or pay increase. However, some individuals are internally driven to work long hours beyond what can be accounted for by financial need (Harpaz & Snir, 2003) and the external pressure provided by the company serves as a convenient excuse when a partner/ spouse or children complain about excess work at the expense of family life (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006). Because companies tend to reward workaholic behavior, people with this internal compulsion to work are not often recognized as having any type of "work disturbance," even though "it is probably more characteristic or contemporary culture" than other difficulties of personal development (Axelrod, 1999, p. 47).

In this chapter, we draw from both popular media and research support, atong with anecdotal examples drawn from conversations accumulated as part of our own prior studies. Our goal is to present reminders that working hours are a personal life choice, even with external demands, but a choice that is influenced by elements of the individual's working situation. The implications of a choice for long working hours are shown through use of two past "hard working" icons from popular media, one from the L940s and one from the 1980s. Discussion continues into current time with an overview highlighting advances in technology that provide expanded work opportunities but, also, exacerbate tendencies toward work addiction.

1. Animal Farm

The book Animal Farm, written by George Orwell in 1946, is considered classic literature and a well-known commentary on social change, particularly working-class rebellion. This book is about workers (in this case farm animals) who realize their own strength and rise against the elite (the humans) who have been exploiting them. In addition, it highlights the risk that rebellion leaders may eventually transition into a new elite adopting the undesirable traits of their predecessors. It is a message about social institutions and the use and abuse of power.

The animals Orwell features in this book are dissatisfied because they are doing all the work and receiving little benefit. They long for happiness and freedom and a chance to fulfill their own dreams. When hunger pushes them into open rebellion, they drive out the humans, declare themselves a democratic society, and create a doctrine of "Animalism" represented in seven principles they write on the barn wall — similar to the way company's display their vision statements on walls or banners. As difficulties arise, the quick-witted pigs find they can take advantage of the others and, consequently, they become corrupted by power. The seven principles are compromised one by one and conditions return to their earlier state, the pig leaders having replaced the humans to exploit the other animals.

Woven throughout this tale of power and corruption is the story of Boxer, the loyal, honest and kind workhorse of the farm. Much of the progress the animals make toward their new society is due to Boxer's devotion to working hard. Boxer has two personal slogans by which he faces every challenge. The first is "I will work harder." The second is "[the leader] is always right." The first governed his personal behavior, and the second kept him from questioning priorities.

Though Boxer's work was critical to the animals' achievements, they warned him that he might be overdoing it. He continues, following the goals set out by the leader and, at every obstacle, remarking, "I will work harder."

One day, Boxer decides he can complete more work by waking up a half hour earlier in the morning. This helps for awhile but, eventually, he arranges to be awakened 45 min earlier instead of a half hour. In his spare time, which becomes increasingly rare due to the extension of the regular work day, he would go back to the work site alone to complete tasks that did not require assistance. At times, "Boxer would even come out at nights and work for an hour or two on his own by the light of the harvest moon" (Orwell, 1946, p 59).

As the animals' situation deteriorates to starvation conditions, cruelty and bloodshed resurface, but now it is animal against animal. Boxer — who rarely voices a personal opinion — makes this speech:

> *I do not understand it. I would not have believed that such things could happen on our farm. It must be due to some fault in ourselves. The solution, as I see it, is to work harder. From now onwards I shall get up a full hour earlier in the mornings. (Orwell, 1946, p. 72)*

And Boxer Returns to Work.

Over time, injuries and age cause Boxer to think he may not be able to continue work at the level he has in the past. Yet he perseveres for two reasons: it is the only life he knows and he will be rewarded at a future time. The rules of their new society include a pension policy, by which horses can retire at age 12, and Boxer is now 11. The corner of a pasture had been fenced

off for retiree grazing; each retiree is guaranteed a generous allotment of basic food with a carrot or possibly an apple on public holidays. Again, others warn Boxer that he should slow down, but he wants to see a particular project well underway before he accepts his honorable shift to the promised retirement. Boxer works harder than ever. His appearance suggests health deterioration, but he will admit to no difficulty. Others observe that as he works his mouth often forms the words, "I will work harder" although he has no voice left to speak them aloud.

Finally, one day Boxer drops to the ground. Lying on his side, eyes glazed, he cannot even raise his head. His lungs have given out. He is now within a month of retirement and believes he has at least left the work in a condition that others can carry on without him. Soon, Boxer is being taken away in a large van. The other animals are saying goodbye, thinking it is transportation for medical treatment promised by the leader. But, Benjamin the Donkey, one of the few animals other than the pigs to have learned to read, shouts that the words on the van are ALFRED SIMMONDS, HORSE SLAUGHTERER AND GLUE BOILER. They yell to Boxer that he is being taken to his death and must escape. They can hear him kicking at the van doors, but Boxer no longer has the strength to break free.

Boxer's story is a good example of workaholism or work addiction (the terms used synonymously here). His story applies to a number of people. As challenges increase, these people seem to have the same guiding philosophy as Boxer — I will work harder. Most organizations contain individuals who others refer to as a "workhorse"; some may admit to that profile or even take pride in identifying themselves by that label. It is important to differentiate the loyal, honest and kind worker who Is willing to do extra on occasion from the work addicted

individual who ignores clear evidence of a need to cut back and continues to sacrifice all else in life for the job.

Correctly identifying that difference is complicated by that fact that many successful people attribute their own advancement to workaholic behavior, and they expect the same from the people who work for them. Many who achieve higher ranking positions make the common observation that: "This job would be a piece of cake, if I had myself working for me" — if the next in line were a person willing to give the hours and devotion this individual did. Looking around, they wonder what is wrong with those other people who do not have the same willingness to give up everything for the job. Too often the newly promoted fill in the gaps by, once again, working harder. Given the chance to identify, hire and keep people of a like mindset, workaholics will influence norms until expectations for excess time on the job gradually dominate the organizational culture (Schaef & Fassel, 1988).

Also like Boxer, an increasing number of people have adopted the solution of getting up earlier each morning to create or accommodate more work time. More and more people are scheduling in less and less sleep as a way to pack more working hours into each day. This trend seems to be particularly common among working mothers, some surviving on as little as 3.5 h of sleep per night (Frith, 2005). Some mothers rise at 4 a.m. in order to have a few hours to work while the house is quiet, but this solution is not without cost. Numerous comparisons have reported that people are working more hours than in the past (e.g., Schor, 1993). Yet, according to the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, people have five more hours of leisure time per week than they did in times past (Sauter et al., 2002). All those extra hours are

coming from somewhere and, increasingly, it seems to be through people deciding they can make do with less sleep.

The term sleep deprivation applies to a person that lacks adequate sleep for the span of a few days. The two most common causes for lack of alertness while driving are alcohol and sleep deprivation, and researchers have estimated that between 16% and 60% of road accidents involve sleep deprivation. Studies reveal that people who have been awake for 17-19h perform worse on driving tests than those with a blood alcohol level of .05%, which is legally drunk in many Western European countries (CNN. 2000).

In the attempt to compress sleeping into fewer hours, people often take mild sedatives to ensure being able to get to sleep quickly and stay asleep. Even after having awakened and resumed activity, residue of these drugs in the system has the potential to impair memory of events (National Sleep Foundation, 2006). Overall, it seems an unproductive cycle — sleeping less (often enable by use of drugs) leading to inattention, poor memory, and acceptance of risky behavior. While it is a routine that provides more hours for work, it does not represent the quality of work we could otherwise expect from these same individuals. More is not always better and, in this case where residue effects are common, more does not seem to be even as good.

Another clear example from Boxer's story is that working too hard is likely to directly and negatively affect one's health and well-being. When a person is addicted to work, it goes beyond loyalty to the cause or demands of the job. A person who is addicted to work will continue to choose work even when negative impact becomes apparent. For example, when presented with a choice between giving up work or experiencing significant personal loss — most commonly loss of health or destruction of close personal relationships — those who

continue to choose work are exhibiting an unhealthy relationship to their work (Porter, 1996; Robinson, 2007). When Boxer realized he had given too much, he no longer had the strength to escape his ill fate. Similarly, people may finally realize they have given too much to the job but find they have already initiated long-term health problems or have irreversibly alienated family and friends.

Even when an individual recognizes the dilemma, the choice is not easy if excess work has become the prominent life-style. For example, a director of a large technology company has stated, "After my heart attack at age thirty-seven, my doctor told me, 'Get a new job or you won't make forty,' I knew the important things in my life were health and family, but I loved my work and I couldn't face the prospect of giving it up. Isn't there any way to have a life and still do what I love to do?" (Bailyn, Fletcher, & Kolb, 1997, p. 11). Again, the person of concern here is the one who would face this dilemma and choose work rather than health and family. The implications of choosing work over health were recognized in the 1940s when Orwell wrote Animal Farm, and they are still relevant today.

It is like that old joke about going to the doctor saying, "It hurts when I do this" and the doctor replies, "don't do that." When someone is on their second heart attack and the doctor says slow down on your working hours or it is going to kill you... When someone has children who no longer even expect appearance at birthdays or other events because the parent's work demands have consistently taken priority over the years ... When there is dear indication that the choice to continue the current level of work will have dire consequences and work is still the choice — this is a person we refer to as a workaholic or one addicted to work. Someone who is, in fact, a workaholic has given priority status entirely to work. This is an act of accepting that work is

always the correct response and whether there is any life left for other things is a function of waiting for work demands to ease up telling us it is OK to have other interests. This is reminiscent of Boxer's second slogan, "the leader is always right." Accepting that work is always the highest priority without questioning the required sacrifices would mean that work has become the unquestioned leader in all life choices.

It is not easy to step back away from a job in progress. Many tend to think, as Boxer did, that it is only for now, it is only to meet a certain need, its behavior I will engage in only until...

–things are in good enough shape for another to take over,

–I reach the next promotion level.

–my company wins a particular large contract I have been working on,

– my retirement account reaches a certain level.

Perhaps the image of Boxer on his way to the glue factory might help people invest a little more thought into their choices about integrating work with other life values.

2. Baby Boom

In the 1980s, actress Diane Keaton starred in a movie called *Baby Boom*, about a hard-driving businesswoman forced to reconsider her total devotion to career. The beginning of this movie is filled with powerful examples of workaholic behavior. The film opens with Diane's character, J.C. Wyatt, walking to her office at a major advertising agency. The consummate multi-tasker, she is reading the Wall Street Journal as she walks, still managing to notice and

greet an individual who is apparently an important business contact. J.C.'s entrance to the office

is a flurry of demands to the staff that jump at her every command. At one point, a woman

hesitates when told they have to work this weekend. When questioned, she admits having tickets

to the ballet, tickets she waited six months to obtain. With a single look from J.C., she

immediately reassures that there is no problem and she will be there to work.

A second scene shows J.C. at dinner with her boss who announces he wants to suggest

she be made a partner in the firm, but he wants reassurance that she is not going to suddenly

decide on marriage and children which would, of course, negate her ability to perform as

expected in that role. She assures him that she does not want to "have it all," she only wants the

career. During this conversation, her excitement over the possible promotion is visible to viewers

who are shown her leg bouncing under the table — that knee jiggle that so many people do when

they must sit still but have nervous energy to release. Although her boss cannot see this, he does

hear the resulting tap as her other foot (she is sitting with legs crossed at the knee) taps against

the table support. When he asks about the tapping sound, she tries to stop, but her excitement is

so strong that she can not subdue it completely.

Now some contrast. The next scene involves J.C. and her equally career-driven partner

Stephen in their bedroom. She is propped up in bed with work and newspapers spread around

her, carrying on a conversation with Stephen as he gets ready for bed. Soon he comes in and asks

if she wants to make love. She keeps the other conversation going until, a few minutes later,

realizing that he is serious and waiting for a response. She says "Oh, OK," moves some

paperwork, takes off her glasses and the scene fades out showing the bedside clock at 11:46. The

scene fades back in on the clock at 11:50 as she sits up, puts her glasses back on, and returns attention to the paperwork.

It is good to love your work. It is good to be excited when your talents are recognized through promotion or other rewards. And, it is good to have a spouse or partner who respects your choice to give significant time and energy to a career that offers personal fulfillment. The demonstration in this film that is important, however, is J.C.'s unemotional acquiescence to four minutes of intimacy with her partner in comparison to her absolutely uncontrollable physically reaction to a potential promotion, even while guaranteeing she is willing to increase her already 60-80 h per week given to the job.

In the movie, J.C. inherits a baby when a cousin and his wife die in an auto accident. At first she tries everything to unload this burden, but softens to the little girl eventually. Even with all her management skills, she cannot maintain her previous level of job involvement and has to make drastic changes in when, where, and how she works. Stephen departs at this point without a second thought. J.C. leaves her high-powered job, moves to the country and faces enormous new challenges. Over a period of time, she develops and successfully markets her own brand of baby food. As the new business grows, her old firm wants to bring her back in, at an even higher level position, as part of a deal to acquire her company.

During deal negotiations, she steps out to the ladies room in an attempt to regain control of her emotional reaction. The old excitement is taking over. She is BACK!!! She has won by doing things her way and now they are asking her to return. Then the reality sets in of what she would be coming back to and the life she would be giving up — a life in which she can experience somewhat more low-key success but control her time, be with her daughter and enjoy

other relationships and activities. This is a life she has learned to value, but there is no question in the viewers mind that the prospect of returning to her previous high-pressure situation sparks a "high" that is very different from the gentler contentment of her more recent situation. If she succumbs to the cycle of pursuing that high — a cycle in which every success only shifts the bar higher for what it will take for the next adrenalin surge — that choice and the accompanying sacrifices would suggest work addiction. She does not return to her former life.

One difficulty in studying the topic of workaholism is separately identifying those who are addicted to work in contrast to those who are only reacting to external pressure and would ease back if given the chance. In today's working environment, there are many demands — growing global competition, changing preferences among customers, changing priorities of society and potential or real changes in laws and regulations to meet those priorities. Identifying true work addiction requires looking deeper than the surface behaviors, because so many people are working well beyond a 40-hour week.

Here is an accumulation of information across multiple sources, with emphasis on work habits in the US:

- Fifty-one percent of American men and 30% of the women say they work more than 40 h per week. Further, 35% of employed adults in the US do not take all of their awarded vacation days for the year, typically relinquishing 3 days each year of an average 14 days entitlement. Only a small proportion of people (14% of the men and 9% of the women) are paid for unused vacation, so most of the estimated 574 million unused vacation days represent time donated to the company (Expedia.com, 2007).

- Compared to workers in the US, Australians, Canadians, Japanese and Mexican workers are on the job 100 h less per year (2,5 weeks), Brazilians and British employees 250h less (>5 weeks) and Germans 500h less (12.5 weeks). However, Czechs put in 100 h more than the Americans and South Koreans almost 500 h more (Anderson, 2001).

- Thirty-seven percent of Americans with household income over $100,000 say they typically work 41-50 h per week, with another 17% report that their usual is more than 50 h (Lorenz, 2007).

- Nineteen percent of men and 14% of women say they work overtime everyday; 8% of workers exceed their schedule work hours once per week and 15% either take work home or work overtime 2-3 times per week (Work/personal boundaries, 2001).

However, workaholism is not a problem unique to the United States. A 2005 study of Canadian social trends showed that one in three workers between the ages of 19 and 64 describe themselves as workaholics. Sixty-five percent of these self- declared workaholics admitted a sacrifice of time with family and friends. Overall the workaholics were more likely to feel trapped, rushed and unable to meet goals for each day; over half of them said they had no time for fun (Study: Workaholics, 2005). In Japan, widows can receive compensation for loss of a spouse to Karoshi, or death by overwork, Germans have a term, arbeitssucht, which means work craze, a disease in which people are driven to work (e.g., Heide, 1999). Books in the Czech Republic warn about the dangers of developing an unhealthy relationship with one's work so that it becomes excess (e.g., Nespor, 1999). Business press in Brazil has highlighted workaholism (Correa, 2002), Researchers have also been testing for and finding workaholic tendencies among professionals in Turkey, Norway and Australia, just to name a few additional countries (Ersoy-

Kart, 2005; Burke, Richardsen, & Martinussen, 2004; Burke, Burgess, & Oberklaid, 2003, respectively).

As work increasingly spills over into personal time, there is some evidence of backlash from those who do not enjoy workaholic behaviors. By the end of the 1990s, white-collar workers including managers and professionals in banking, sales, engineering, programming, journalism, insurance and law, had begun to file lawsuits to claim overtime pay, and many of them won generous settlements. Although pay for overtime was traditionally seen as applicable to blue-collar workers, the flattening of organizational hierarchies has resulted in a wide scope of jobs that did not clearly fall within the definition of overtime exemption specified in U.S. federal laws (Conlin, 2001).

More commonly, workers are simply deciding that the spillover of work into personal time entitles them to consider the boundary permeable in both directions. This can certainly seem justified, but who will determine the appropriate amount of trade-off? One survey indicates that 75% of today's workers attend to personal tasks while on the job. Among this 75%, people report an average of 1.35 h per day spent on personal tasks (Work/personal boundaries, 2001).

Now that the door is open to integrated lives where work and non-work activities overlap, rather than segmented lives where there are clear maintained boundaries, it is a definite struggle to manage the understanding between company and employee about appropriateness. This would include the explicitly stated expectations (which are difficult to define and, therefore, avoided by most companies) and implicit agreements or evolving norms of behavior which have as much or more impact on organizational results as stated agreements. One manager explained that he felt it was his job to push people toward realizing all their potential, and the employee was responsible

for letting him know when the pressure became too much. With the lack of job stability over the past decade, it has become more difficult for employees to feel they can give that type of response to their manager. The organizational culture, therefore, may evolve into one that requires workaholic behaviors to survive, one in which some workers will struggle to survive while those with work addiction tendencies will adapt, appear to thrive, and make similar demands and those around them (Porter, 2001).

Steve Prentice is an author who writes about the benefits of slowing things down, not just because it is good for us but also because we are more efficient and effective in our work when we have breaks. In his latest book, Cool Down, he reminds the reader that breaks are critical by calling to mind the cheetah, the fastest animal on earth (Prentice, 2007). A cheetah can run 90 miles per hour, but a cheetah is also smart enough to not try to run 90 miles an hour every hour of every day. The Cheetah might be considered the Corporate Athlete (a term from Groppel & Loehr, 2000) of the animal kingdom — intense when the job must get done but smart enough and able to rest for times in between. Both companies and individual employees should be looking for ways to ensure those rest times are available in some form.

A 2002 survey supported by the temporary staffing agency OfficeTeam asked 567 full-time workers to identify their number one career concern. Thirty-two percent responded by stating, "Being able to balance work and family demands" (OfficeTeam, 2002). As referenced earlier, many people are truly seeking to have a meaningful work life without allowing work to become the single focus. A small group, estimated to be between 5% and 23% of the workforce (Burke, 2000) will instead show patterns of work addiction. Rather than incorporating rest like the cheetah, these people will work like Boxer in *Animal Farm*. They will face a similar fate as

that workhorse, unless they recognize the imbalance of their sacrifices in time to stop while they have energy enough to make change.

As seen in the example of J.C., the main character of *Baby Boom*, people can make a change when the right motivation presents itself. The attraction to work does not go away. Just as J.C. started to feel the old excitement when offered a chance to return to her workaholic life, any work addict will likely have similar times of remembering that adrenalin high and need to renew their commitment to alternate work patterns. As shown by the examples of Boxer and J.C., there is nothing new about the problem of people working to the exclusion of other life interests or even self-preservation. But, there are new tools — enablers — that add to the temptation and facilitate indulgence in work addiction.

3. Crackberry Addicts

Since the advent of Internet technology, people have gained the ability to communicate and conduct business transactions from any place in the world within seconds. This has resulted in access to an endless supply of information readily available 24 h a day. Although, this technology helps business keep up with expanding markets, it may also contribute to an unhealthy working environment for employees. Again, some employees struggle with meeting these new demands, while others find the increased access through technology as an avenue to support their addiction to their work (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006).

Korn/Ferry International (2006) studied 2300 executives across 75 countries. They found that 80% of executives are connected to work through mobile devices. The majority of them (77%) felt the mobility enhanced work-life balance, but approximately one-third found the

devices to be addictive. That may sound somewhat contradictory, but a mixed reaction is very common. As one manager in another interview stated, the devices are invaluable for handling business across time zones but are "like owning a cat. You don't know who's in charge" (Crandell, 2007, p. 41). Work addiction research estimates that 5-25% of the working population is workaholic (Burke, 2000) is compatible with the results from the Korn/Ferry study on use of technology. Addictive behavior related to work and addictive behavior related to technology are mutually reinforcing forces. A workaholic who wants to take work home, continue working on vacation, or sneak in a fix anytime anywhere, can do so more easily now than in the past, because these devices are easily transported. A person who becomes addicted to technology, seeking excuses to justify the activity to a complaining spouse or friends, can use demands of the job to explain the necessity of excess.

Users often will admit to the addictive potential of technology, but it is always the "other guy" who is having the problem. This rationalizing is similar to what alcoholics or drug addicts might say prior to seeking help. Other typical responses noted by Crandell (2007) include:

- "My friends think I have a problem, but I don't."
- "It affects every aspect of my life, but I don't think that's a bad thing."
- "It affects relationships negatively, but it helps in so many other ways."

One suggestion for identifying whether work addiction is a problem is for the subject to draw a family organization chart based on allocation attention, not on what they think it should be but what it really is. If the technology device is above your spouse, that is likely a problem. If your children do not appear on the chart, that is another sign of trouble (Crandell. 2007).

Other researchers compare workaholism to obsessive-compulsive disorder, or OCD, (e.g. Mudrack, 2004) as an alternate interpretation to addiction. As described by Crandell (2007), evaluating email is one example resembling OCD behavior. This behavior occurs when you "overvalue" incoming messages, assigning each one with a sense of urgency and feel that if you do not answer, something catastrophic will result. Similar to the fears an addict experiences, there is often an underlying (perhaps unidentified) feeling that, if I am not available every minute, people might realize they do not need me (Crandell, 2007).

One benefit of technology is that far more women with children under the age of 18 think that part-time work is their best option, compared to 10 years ago. In 2007, 60% of women in this category said part-time work was preferable compared to 48% in 1997 (Crary, 2007). The choices they were given included full-time, part-time or not working. This shift to part-time preference comes entirely through lowering of preference for full-time; the proportion saying they prefer "not-working" has held constant. One reason is that technology today enables people to work part-time in terms of hours on the job while at the same time maintaining a strong professional presence in the workforce. In other words, 10 years ago, it was necessary to work full-time to be involved in certain types of work and at certain professional levels, whereas now there is more flexibility on what can be done from the vantage point of part-time hours.

However, technology can encourage taking dangerous risks. The Wall Street Journal (Cooper, 2007) reported last March oh a 5-vehicle pileup attributed to text-messaging while driving — what has now been referenced as DWT, or driving while texting. Nationwide Insurance company (2007) conducted a survey of 1200 Americans to find that 73% of drivers talk on cell phones while behind the wheel but that, among drivers identified as the Gen Y age

group (those born in 1981 or later and also called "millenniums''), 37% text while driving their vehicles. Several states are considering laws to address this specifically. Not all drivers that text or talk on their cell phones while driving are addicted, but those who are addicted will be far more inclined to discount the risk to maintain that technology interaction or their contact with the job.

Where is the tipping point where technology shifts from a benefit to a problem? And, is it a serious problem? Consider these situations:

- Women in a line of chairs receiving pedicures — promoted as a relaxing break — have been seen to ail be actively using handheld devices. They may be denying themselves some of the benefits of that relaxing break — personally harmful in that respect.

- Instead of meeting new people in an unfamiliar social setting, some people will maintain focus on a handheld device, which eliminates social interaction beyond, perhaps, a quick nod. This social crutch provides some relief from stress of the situation, but it is not likely the best long-term solution, particularly if the social event has career implications or high personal importance.

- At any kind of meeting — business, children's schools, or volunteer activities — people feel compelled to multi-task by checking messages or organizing their schedule on a device while the meeting is in session. Granted, there are often gaps or discussion sidesteps that seem unproductive but. Frequently, information must be repeated and misunderstandings corrected — adding meeting time due to split attention.

In addition to technology helping us with work we have always had to do, tt is important to also recognize that demands have increased and consider whether we would stand any chance

at all of meeting those demands if not for improvements in technology. What has changed; what is the same? In the US, some expectations are deeply engrained in the collective psyche. When the country was in early stages of development "popular stories by Horatio Alger and other authors emphasized the theme of individuals rising from rags to riches. The main character would always begin from a disadvantaged position but, through hard work and perseverance, would reach success. This fostered the belief in America being the 'land of opportunity' in which anyone willing to put in the effort deserved to achieve a higher social position and material wealth. An unfortunate side-effect was the implication that people who do not improve their standing must be deficient in either ability or ambition to not have capitalized on that opportunity" (Porter, 2008).

Other countries have their own stories initiating pressure to succeed. In this example, the premise starts people off with a felt obligation to improve from wherever they start, and the pressure builds from there. The increasing amount of available information is one factor that adds demand on time and energy, and rate of increasing information is accelerating. The term "cumulative codified information base" means the sum of all human intelligence that has ever been written down. In the 1930s scientists estimated the base to double every 30 years; by the 1970s they estimated it was doubling every 7 years; by 2010 it is expected to double every 11 h (Bontis, nd). That is a tremendous amount of available information, and we are already inundated with more than we can process for most decision-making.

From a study of international business managers, researchers estimated that as many at 60% were suffering from "cognitive overload" — high stress, loss of job satisfaction, physical symptoms like headaches and dizziness, and felt exhausted but had difficulty sleeping (Maslach,

Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Any time people are asked to mentaliy process more than they can handle, the tendency is to become more impulsive, to make decisions without getting complete information, to opt for short-term closure, to be tactical rather than strategic (Nichols, 2007). We also will begin to avoid tasks that require focused mental effort. When there is too much data, it can cause people to indefinitely put off reaching a decision; some may reach a stage of burnout. People suffering from "serious burnout," estimated at 3-5% of the working population (Maslach et al., 2001), have lost the capacity to make sound judgments, their mental and physical health is compromised, they feel chronically exhausted and have difficulty maintaining relationships. Feeling exhausted at the end of a tough workday is normal, but the difficulty arises when there is no structure in which to recover. Something like those vacations we discussed earlier that people in the US are not taking.

Not only are people at risk for Burnout from trying to do too much, but many have developed a belief that hard workers can and should do multiple things at once. Harvard Business Review, in its recent listing of "Breakthrough ideas for 2007" describes what they call "Continuous Partial Attention," an adaptive behavior that has emerged over the past two decades (Stone, 2007), Continuous partial attention is different from what is referred to as multi-tasking, or simply doing more than one thing at a time. In a business setting, we typically restrict simultaneous activities to the overlapping of fairly automatic tasks that do not require much mental processing — Internet scanning while talking on the phone or eating lunch and things like that. Continuous partial attention is a higher cognitive activity in which we are constantly shifting among things that are ail demanding and all relative high priority, so it is more taxing and focus deteriorates unless there are recovery opportunities. NASA has studied human ability

to truly do two tasks at once and found that it typically does not work well, even when the person is highly skilled at the required work (as described by Beaton, 2007).

People often do not always realize the loss experienced through constant interruption. Several years ago, Hewlett-Packard commissioned a study at King's College in London, in which they tested whether distractions of phones ringing and email pinging would impact scores on an IQ test. The results show that the interrupted group scored an average of 10 points lower than those who were not interrupted. Additionally, the interrupted group had average scores 6 points lower than the group that took the same test while high on marijuana (Pimentel, 2005). It is the misuse of technology — not use but MISUSE of technology — that has contributed to the rising incidence of burnout and gives a false sense of having the ability to constantly split attention in multiple directions. Those addicted to technology or using technology to enable their work addiction will likely be attracted to situations of misuse, because maintains the appearance of working hard and, ultimately, may even increase the time needed to complete the work, thereby maintaining the need to keep working.

Mr. Dennis Kneale, a Managing Editor with Forbes Magazine, participated in an experiment as part of a series in which the NBC television network challenged people to "Do Without" something that had become an important fixture in their life (Could you do without?, 2007). This is a man who started each day with a cup of coffee, two laptops, a cell phone and his BlackBerry, and they challenged him to go one week without those pieces of technology. He lasted only 40 h before he tearfully gave up and asked that all his devices be returned. In that short time:

- He had anxiety attacks.

- He had experienced phantom rings (he would hear his cell phone ringing but did not even have it with him).

- He bounced two checks because he could not rely on his usual online funds management.

- He broke the rules by borrowing a cell phone from a cab driver to make a call.

One could assume this man was a competent businessperson before all the electronics were available to him but, he did not revert to what he had done as past practices. Rather, he attempted to operate as usual but without the tools that supported it. He could not do it and that result is not so surprising, given the pace he was trying to maintain.

His anxiety and rule breaking are suggestive of an addictive pattern, but there is another side-effect worth mentioning. Mr. Kneale's friends, family and business contacts had learned to expect a quick reply and got angry when they did not hear back on their messages in a short period of time. Our expectations of each other have changed dramatically. Today's average knowledge worker receives 75 emails per day, but some people receive as many as 400 per day (Beaton, 2007). Although email allows for asynchronous communication, users will develop a particular "responsiveness image" and calibrate their behaviors to match their primary correspondents. The communication becomes "peri-synchronous" with very clear norms as to when to reach each other by email and how long a wait to expect before response (Tyler & Tang, 2003).

When everyone is expecting quick response, how does one handle that demand? One suggestion is that we all become more adept at speed reading. Yet, the issue is not just reading fast enough to get through the messages but the extent to which we are willing to interrupt other activities to simply monitor the arrival of new messages. A McKinsey survey of 7S00 managers

in multiple countries reports that 25% consider the burden of voicemail, email and meetings to be either nearly or completely unmanageable. Within the total time they spend with these communications, nearly 40% reported spending a half to a full day on messages that are not valuable to them (as reported in Mandel, Hamm, Matlack, Farrell, & Palmer, 2005).

One difficult aspect of email to manage is the proportion of messages which are directed to another person and then copied, or CC'ed, to a full distribution list. Some describe CC'ing as an act of aggression, because so often the message is of no interest to all the parties on the CC list, but the sender felt a need to cover bases by distributing broadly. One manager reports sorting his mail so that everything on which he is CC'd drops into a separate mail folder — something he views as slightly, but not much, above a spam or junk mail folder which he can separately review at a later time, rather than have to wade through those to find the real messages every day. A close cousin to the CC aggravation is the proliferation of return notes that only say thanks or I agree and are done through a "reply all" command.

Email has become a tool of survival for many businesspeople and a prime activity for those who are addicted to technology, work, or any combination of the two. According to a survey of more than 4000 individuals around the world, 15% of the Americans believe they are addicted to email. Here are some usage numbers to consider. Of users with portable devices, 59% say they check each time a new message arrives and 43% "keep the devices nearby when they are sleeping to listen for incoming mail." In addition, not only do 40% say they have checked in the middle of the night, but also 26% report doing email in bed in their pajamas (AOL, 2007). This is not really new but, rather, the same work behavior as J.C. in the *Baby*

Boom. The only difference is that in the 1980s she was shown with paperwork spread all over the bed and now we have done away with the paper.

Those who manage other people might want to stop for a moment and think about what is being communicated to the employees that translates into thinking they need to be working on email in bed or while driving. Some managers have explained that they put thoughts into email over the weekend simply as a way to deal with something on their minds. Once the thought is recorded in the email, they can move on to other activities without worry of forgetting to ask the question or offer the instruction Monday morning. It is not their intention that the employee receiving that message read it and responds over the weekend. It is sent out for personal convenience. Unfortunately, in today's volatile work environment, employees do not feel they can take the chance of not responding. As the habit spreads, a norm develops and carries the suggestion that those who want to succeed in the company will be available at any time and quickly responsive. It would communicate a very different message if the managers saved those messages in draft mode and sent them all out first thing Monday morning.

The same is true with people away on vacation. In a 2006 survey, even though a very small percentage of employees (4%) report that they have been directly asked to stay connected while away, a much higher number say there is an unspoken expectation in their company to stay connected. Sixty-one percent of executives reported feeling obligated to stay connected, 36% of middle managers and 27% of those in non-management positions. Further, 81% of Human Resource professionals said that their companies provided the means to stay connected — cell phones, laptops and or handheld devices (Victor, 2007). There may or may not be a difference in perception (company versus employee) about whether company-supplied devices are intended to

communicated an expectation of 24/7 availability, but there would seem to be potential for differing interpretations of both intent and outcome, OF 155 Executives asked about work-life balance, 56% felt their electronic devices had helped improved balance; 44% said the devices did not improve their ability to balance. In the same survey, only 10% said it is not expected that they can be reached outside of traditional working hours (Can't disconnect? You are not alone, 2007).

Again, not everyone who is a heavy user of technology is addicted to technology or to their work. Much of what we see on a daily basis that causes concern can also be rudeness. We are still sorting through how to meet changing expectations and how to communicate to others what those expectations can be before crossing the boundary into unreasonable. In a study commissioned by T-Mobile, 90% of BlackBerry users said they consider their handset vital to business, but two-third of them also 'said it improves their status and makes them look more professional (Crandell, 2007). It may be this latter statistic that begins to cause problems. An accessory that adds to status will be used frequently and once the habit develops it will spread to more times and places unless social norms develop that communicate what is generally considered appropriate.

In a recent radio broadcast, they had polled a listener group to find the answer to this question; What is the one thing a man can do on a first date that wilt immediately end any further interest by the woman? Having determined the number one answer, they now were offering a prize to the caller who could correctly match that top answer. The very first caller to guess said. "He takes calls on his cell phone." That was not the number one answer, so she did not get the prize, but it initiated a sharing of horror stories about having dates who have done that. It is far

too easy to learn more than one wants to know about strangers' personal lives while riding in airport shuttles or sitting in coffee shops. These unwanted exposures through overhearing cell phone conversations are the flip side of the frustrations of wanting to have a face- to-face conversation with a person whose attention is cast downward onto their electronic device. Social norms have not yet evolved to cover the rudeness potential of using new technology. As norms develop, it will become easier to identify those who routinely violate them as potentially having an addiction problem.

4. A Look to the Future

Just like J.C. in *Baby Boom*, people can make a decision to curb their immersion in work, whether focused on technology or more traditional workaholism. While one heavy technology user eliminated arguments with his wife by getting her a device of her own (to which she became somewhat addicted), others have achieved better harmony on the home front by disciplining themselves to leave the device by the front door or agreeing to blackout times of non-use. Steve Prentice (2007) recommends that each family designate two nights a week that everyone will put away their personal devices, PDAs as well as music and phones, to have dinner together. Sadly, two nights of dinner together might be a difficult transition for many households, with or without the electronic device ban. It is not just the working adults that are overly busy and distracted from home life but the young people, as well.

Many of the articles about technology reference the comparative ease with which the younger generation accepts both the technology and the pace and scope of interaction that it brings. Does this mean they will be better at handling the work- related technology demands than their predecessors? There is evidence that some might while others might not. College

counselors are increasingly advised to watch for signs of Internet addiction among the student population. Students can become so engrossed in their net world that they ignore coursework and fail classes before realizing they have sabotaged their own long-term goals. They go off to school where they have unlimited Internet access, large blocks of time that are unstructured and free of parental control, and faculty encouraging them to use Internet resources. Many are highly stressed when first at college, feeling pressure about grades, parents' expectations for success and constant reminders about competition for jobs when they finish. The signs of a problem are fatigue from lack of sleep, dropping grades and progressive withdrawal from other social activities. They deny there is any serious problem, rationalize that the Internet offers better information than their college courses, lie about the amount of time they spend online and claim "I can cut back or quit any time I want" (Young, 2007).

A contrasting example is someone like Victor De Leon who has been competing on the professional video game circuit for five years and, at his current age of nine, may be the world's youngest professional gambler. His story was featured on the television show 60 Minutes in a segment naming the seven most amazing youngsters. In answer to people critical of his parents' allowing this focus on video gaming, his father responds that those people do not live in his house and should not criticize. As the father explains, when Victor is not in preparation for a specific competition, he spends about two hours per day with the games, but he also enjoys riding his bike every day. His other interests are playing the violin and playing with Star War toys; he has a hamster and a dog (Lambert, 2007). From this account, it appears Victor is able to "work" at his competitions, which happen to be based on technology, but still maintain other sources of satisfaction in life. He does not yet show signs of work addiction.

Although the upcoming generation seems more comfortable working with technology, the potential of addiction to working with technology will likely continue to be a problem for some while others are able to maintain balance. The messages given to employees about acceptability of long working hours could make a difference. The workplace and society in general need not glorify workaholic behavior. Companies can have policies that encourage better balance and, even more importantly, enforce those policies as the preferred standard rather than simply an available option that might limit one's career if utilized. Although colleagues cautioned Boxer that he should slow down, their organization did not require that he take a day off each week for recovery time. If it had not only allowed for but insisted he take time for rejuvenation, he might have accomplished as much and lasted much longer. If J.C.'s company had offered better consideration for family responsibilities, she would not have been faced with an "all or nothing" career decision. The element of personal choice is paramount, but that choice happens in a larger context. Only when social norms and company cultures discourage excess, will those individuals unable to give up their excess stand out as addicted people creating a problem for themselves and the organization.

In 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services published a report on "The Changing Organization of Work and the Safety and Health of Working People." Within their recommendations, they emphasized the need for more research attention on the changes in how work is organized and how that might impact the safety and health of employees (US National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, 2002). This chapter has referenced some of the ways in which the organization of work has changed, considering the increasing demands of globalization, the impact of restructuring and flattening of organizational hierarchies, and the adjustment to technology that makes available more information while it demands more

availability of the workers who use that information. Much of the research referenced here fits as response to the call for investigation of the employees' safety and health, because the impact of behavioral addictions is directly tied to employee well-being.

In addition to scholarly research, many references have been incorporated here from popular media in the belief that what people are talking about, reading in magazines, hearing about on television or finding on websites is a strong indicator of where the general public will set priorities. These priorities hold valuable information for defining content of future research on work behaviors.

The icons used to structure this discussion — Boxer from the 1940s, J.C, from the 1980s and crackberry addicts in the new millennium — offer a progression into current time that considers many changes impacting today's world of work, without losing track of the potential for individual choice that remains constant. A person's work can be a source of fulfillment and personal growth. Individuals can pursue work that enriches their lives, rather than consuming their lifetime. Organizations and societies can decide to create and maintain workplaces that nurture this enrichment rather than enforcing demands. Although no clear answers are offered here, perhaps some images are relayed that will help both workers and organizational decision-makers stay mindful of the positive and negative potentials of choices.

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