

What The Best Do Better

by Anna Wells, Editor, IMPO



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When it comes to email, I'm a sucker for a good subject line. One of the more recent to hit my inbox attracted my attention with this: *Why Good Old-Fashioned Hard Work is Back in Vogue!*

The email is pitching editorial coverage for Jon Gordon and his recently released book *"Training Camp: What the Best Do Better Than Everyone Else."* If this doesn't sound enough like an action film title, here's how the trailer might begin: "If you think you're already working hard at your job," says Gordon, "think again."

It's this blanket, unwarranted criticism that makes me continue reading. If I were one of those desk jockeys glued to ESPN.com, I'd just laugh it off—but I've had too many 7 a.m. conference calls and Sundays in airports to find validity in this statement. So just how hard should I be working, Mr. Gordon? Here are some of the book's suggestions:

- **Burn the midnight oil:** "Come into the office an hour early a few days a week to get ahead... if you like to make it home for dinner with your family each evening, spend an hour or two catching up on work at night once the kids are in bed."
- **Be willing to bear the load:** "Continually compare yourself with those around you. Are they working harder than you? If the answer is yes, then you have some reevaluating to do."
- **Be a penny-pincher and a pitcher-inner:** "Roll up your sleeves and start helping out with the little things around the office, like taking out the trash or cleaning up on Friday afternoons," suggests Gordon. "Volunteer to stay late to stuff envelopes or get the filing caught up so that there isn't a need

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to add a part-time intern to the payroll.”

The press release’s closing line makes me swallow my gum: “Make sure that when others are sleeping, you are working.”

I think I understand Mr. Gordon’s recession strategy here, so let’s get down to business: Tell your son or daughter that you’ll be missing the remaining soccer games in this season because you’ll be busy with a shop vac, getting to those coffee grounds in the corners of your office break room kitchen floor.

Mr. Gordon’s suggestions come from a good place. I get it—the economy sucks, and hanging onto your job right now can be like struggling to gain a foothold on very tenuous ground. Still, I find his analysis of today’s business conditions theatrical and down right dangerous.

To suggest that back-biting competition over who can sleep the least and work the most is the new norm is yet another over-dramatization. Aren’t there other ways to remain a valuable team member without giving up your life? I guarantee it. In fact, the last thing we need right now is a nation of workers on the proverbial hamster wheel, trying to stave off stress- and fatigue-related medical issues while still putting in a solid 14 hours per day. Please, *please* continue to sleep and take vacation days, and spend time with your families. If you have some more constructive ideas for how to better contribute to your companies without giving up your health and happiness, email me so we can share them with other readers: anna.wells@advantagemedia.com [1].

Comments:

Robert

I just read your Editor’s Note and I couldn’t agree more.

It sounds to me that Mr. Gordon needs to sit and learn some lessons from a Hospice Chaplain. Ask someone in that role how often they hear regrets that I should have worked more hours or I wish I could have stayed later, or I wish I could have made more money. I find it amazing how the fear of death clears our vision. I think someone should sponsor Mr. Gordon for a mission trip and have him hold a starving child in his arms. Let him feel that desire to be held and the love that radiates and see if he is still interested in spending more time at the office. Someone should ask old Jonny boy how spending more time at the office helps him reach the ultimate goal of eternal life. (but then again, maybe that isn’t his goal.)

Wow!!! “Make sure that when others are sleeping, you are working.” Anyone that makes a statement like this obviously has not given true priorities a second thought.

Don’t get me wrong, I work hard. I am in the upper echelon for our organization and we are very successful. I am happy that the subject line caught your eye because it sounds as if Mr. Gordon has written a very good comedy that I may want to pick up. After all, I could always use extra kindness.

Hopefully maturity will allow Mr. Gordon to realize the error in his thinking before that Hospice Chaplain has to try and help him repair his life in 6 months or less. I am going to buy two copies of the book to teach my sons exactly what not to do in order to live a fulfilled and balanced life.

Michael

A successful organization needs highly motivated productive people and the correct efficient processes that will achieve its goals.

Productive people are organized and are able to handle multiple projects. Techniques to do this have been described by David Allen in his book [Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity](#) [2].

Individual effort will not overcome inefficient processes. Many examples of how to improve processes can be found in the cover stories of issues of IMPO. In most cases, everyone in the organization participates and true teamwork results.

Mr. Gordon did make one good point - be a pitcher-inner. Make another pot of coffee when you pour the last cup. Pick up the mail for your office. Bring in a box of doughnuts occasionally for your group.

Robert

Being a valuable team member is not a 24/7 commitment. I do believe in the statements ... mostly believe anyway. It’s a good thing to suck it up and get it going when you need to. The one thing my parents taught me is that “you are not done ‘til everybody is done.” That motto has served me well - it keeps me from dropping things on another’s lap. I have been blessed to work in an environment that is flexible enough to allow me to leave early or come in late when appropriate. But following my parents rule the best I can shows my employers that I value them, and the company as well. The employer-employee relationship is a two-way street; me following rule #1 makes flexibility very easy for both parties.

There are times when we need an extra burst of work to get done, then it’s 12 hour days if necessary, but only for short periods. When you start to burn out, you productivity goes way down, you lose focus, get crabby ... definitely not effective.

A 24/7 approach isn’t a balanced life. Unbalanced things do not survive - they will break down and, in the process, wear out (or break) the surrounding pieces. Again, not effective.

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[1] <mailto:anna.wells@advantagemedia.com>

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[2] <http://www.amazon.com/Getting-Things-Done-Stress-Free-Productivity/dp/0142000280>