

Why they pay you

A forthcoming business book, *Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It*, by Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, is getting lots of pre-publication buzz because it says your problem with work isn't you: it's the system, man.

The book's basic premise is this: "Our beliefs about work—forty hours, Monday through Friday, eight to five—are outdated, outmoded, out to lunch." The authors' solution is called a Results-Only Work Environment, in which "...people can do whatever they want, whenever they want, as long as the work gets done."

They tested their trademarked approach at Best Buy. In a pilot program, 320 people in one department were allowed to choose from a menu of various schedules—such as four 10-hour days—but once they chose a schedule, they had to agree to stick to it and help figure out how to make it work.

Not surprisingly, the 320 people affected by this change were so much happier and more productive that the program has grown to include about 3,000 corporate employees. That's right—corporate. Not the people working in the stores. Not the workers who turn on the TVs and camcorders in the morning or close out the cash registers at night. Not the people who clean the store after hours or drive the trucks full of TVs or work at the electric company to make sure the stores (and those 3,000 corporate employees) have power whenever they need it.

Those people still have to work the old-fashioned way—the way in which an employer (and if you're self-employed, your customer) has certain expectations, and you either live up to them or find a new job.

You may have an employer whose expectations are reasonable and whose policies are generous. You may have complete control of your own schedule. You may enjoy and appreciate the time spent with your coworkers and customers. You might manage good people and be managed by someone who makes you better. You may look forward to going to work, and feel satisfied by a job that's rewarding and fulfilling.

But show me someone who feels that way about his or her job every single day, and I'll show you someone who is either a liar or crazy.

Here's what business books and commencement speakers and plenty of other people fail to mention: Work is *work*. That's why they pay you to show up.

If you're in a workplace so draconian that Ebenezer Scrooge would feel right at home, you're in a bad job. If you dread work every morning and lie awake at night worrying about it, you're in a bad job. Get out. Lots of guides will help you find a job you don't hate.

But even in the most wildly flexible scenario, if you want to earn money, you have to trade some sunny days in the park for dreary days at your desk. If work was nonstop fun, they wouldn't have to pay you to do it. If work weren't work, you'd go for free.

So set aside that spring fever, and get busy.

Well said.

Anyone can do any amount of work provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at the moment.

Robert Benchley, humorist