



WHY YOU SHOULD WORK WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS

It is generally the youngest and most promising on paper whose careers take a hit due to their work ethic. Presumably because of past achievements, these individuals think they are exempt from having to work hard, they can simply coast along on the merits of their past accomplishments. However, unless a person works weekends and holidays, his or her career with most serious organizations will be fairly short. What I am about to write may not appeal to you. However, if you are interested in holding a job through all economic climates and receiving repeated promotions and advancement in your current role, then you should consider what I have to say. Most jobs are very competitive. Do you want to win against your peers, or lose? While this list is by no means exhaustive, you should be working weekends and holidays because (a) it is a privilege to be able to work; (b) there is only one way your organization makes money, and it involves work; (c) clients and customers do not care about your weekend; (d) there are only a certain number of opportunities for promotion in your company; (e) you will not always be expected to work weekends and holidays. If you are in a job with a lot of work you should consider yourself very fortunate. The fact that an employer has a lot of work means the employer is doing something right. The presence of work means the company is generating money to pay your salary. An abundance of work means the company is probably getting repeat business from having done a good job with its current clients or customers. This also means the firm likely has opportunities for you to advance. As someone who has been a legal recruiter for a long period of time, in good and bad economic cycles, I have personally seen and spoken with hundreds of associates who were laid off because there was not enough work, and the firms had to downsize. I am talking about numerous talented young attorneys. Believe me, when the work goes away, these associates are not happy. Everyone in a firm gets nervous when there is not enough work because this means everyone's jobs are in jeopardy. There is no difference between the practice of law and any other industry. Work is always good! There is also the potential situation in which your company may not have a lot of work, but you do. This is even better. If your employer is seeking you out and giving you a lot of work, this means he or she likes your work product and/or you personally. If your boss likes your work and gives you more, you are being recognized and are in a position where you have added job security. Employers rarely give you excessive amounts of work to punish you. They do this to reward you. If you are asked to do work on a weekend or holiday, keep in mind there could be problems much worse than this. The company might not have any work to give, or your boss might think someone else's work product is better than yours. Having work is a privilege. The worst thing that can happen to you is to have your employer stop giving you work. This is a bad thing and it is very scary. You need work to survive. Work is your lifeblood. Work is also important to your company. If your company is like most others, there is only one way it makes money: by you working. Depending on your position, chances are you have no idea of the economics of your company. You may not know what your company's office space or furniture costs, or what the company's obligations are for salaries and the products or services it provides. Regardless, your company needs money – and lots of it – to survive. If you help your company make a lot of money, you will be contributing to its survival. However, you should be concerned with your company making money for your own sake. When your bosses and other decision makers evaluate you, they will be concerned with how hard you are working because this is how they make money. If you were running a law firm, for example, would you rather have an associate taking up a desk who bills 1,500 hours a year, or an associate who bills 3,000 hours a year? Clearly, the harder working associate is going to be favored. You need to work hard in order for your employer to make money. This is essential. When it comes right down to it, your relationship with your employer hinges on your ability to make the company money. The employer does not care if you do this on a weekday, holiday, or weekend. Similarly, clients and customers do not care about your weekend. I am sometimes astonished when I speak with associates in law firms, who are upset about working weekends. The reason I feel this way is because I am putting myself in the shoes of one of their clients. In a large law firm, clients typically have major problems and transactions the attorneys are working on – whether it is “bet the company” litigation, a major bankruptcy filing, or defending an important patent. When you are working on matters like this you must remember they are important to the client. Clients need attorneys who take their legal matters as seriously as they do. Most businesses are similar to the practice of law. They have clients and those clients' needs are ongoing, regardless of whether it is a holiday or not. If you have issues with working weekends and holidays on important or time-sensitive matters for clients, I have a question for you: “Why are you in a job in which others are dependent upon you?” The people depending on you need someone who is not afraid to work weekends and holidays. While it's important you work weekends and holidays on pressing and time-sensitive matters for your employer, the opposite is also somewhat true. Your employers want to know you have their backs covered at all times. Your employers pay your salary. If your employers think your assignments are important enough to you that you are working on the weekends, they will be grateful. Employers also want to know the work you are doing for them is the most important thing on your agenda. Also keep in mind there are only a certain number of promotions your employer can give. Because of this, your employer will be looking for reasons not to advance you when comparing your contribution to others. Notice I used the word ‘not’. When choosing between two people for advancement, employers generally seek reasons to exclude one candidate from consideration because the number of available spots is so limited. In a major New York firm with 40 associates in an entering class, for example, it would be exceedingly rare for more than one or two of those first-year associates to ever make partner. You will not always have to work weekends and holidays. Those who expect you to work weekends and holidays almost certainly did the same thing before they became your supervisors. In fact, they probably were among the hardest working people in the company. Because they did this, they see absolutely nothing wrong with you doing the same. In order to rise, you must bond with your superiors. You can bond with your superiors by showing them you are sharing the same experiences they had. While much can be said against working weekends and holidays, you need to understand that doing so is important to your company, your clients, and your own advancement. If doing so is offensive to you, then you should learn to be happy with your current position and no advancement. Certainly, working weekends and holidays is not expected at all companies. Nevertheless, doing so will only help you if your objective is to get ahead.

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