

PUT THAT LAPTOP DOWN

4 Reasons Working on the Weekend Isn't Doing You (or Anyone) Any Favors



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Carmen Dahlberg ★ 33 Founder of Belle Detroit Creative Solutions

In June 2015, the financial industry made headlines when a 21-year-old intern died of epileptic seizures following a 72-hour shift. The pressure in investment banking, the division in which he worked, is no secret. But the death naturally shook the world.



Home

Jobs

Reviews

Resources



Me

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Maybe you're pursuing a career in which long hauls into the night are necessary for a promotion or any chance of making partner. Maybe you love your job and spend Saturdays tinkering with projects you love. Regardless of where you sit on the spectrum, not turning off on the weekends is unhealthy and unproductive. Here are four reasons why:

1. Burnout comes with a price tag.

Our [failure](#) to invest in our life outside of work, most notably on the weekends, has adverse physical effects, but the financial repercussions of employee [burnout](#) are equally concerning. According to the Harvard Business Review, the effects of burnout manifest as employees that [don't show up, don't stay and cost more in health insurance](#). While financial and physical impacts of burnout are making waves in the medical community, the condition transcends industry. One [psychology study](#) found a 15.4 percent increase in odds of mortality for [jobs](#) with high demands and low employee control. Stress also [makes managers worse leaders](#).



Home

Jobs

Reviews

Resources



Me

your worth.

Whether you spend your time away from the office building relationships with family or friends, volunteering, or learning a new skill, the separation from your work life is [good for you](#). Hobbies can [provide social support, manage blood pressure and anger, and curb depression](#). And if you're still not convinced, hobbies can actually [make you better at your job](#) by making you more creative, more positive, less inclined to [burn out](#) and more focused.

To invest in those hobbies, you need to set down an assignment and fully transition your focus to something non-related. It's a case in which less actually is more, and the science supports it. In one [model from Stanford](#), for example, researchers found 60-hour workweeks to be two-thirds as [productive](#) as 40-hour workweeks. We simply become [less efficient, more error-prone and less healthy](#).

3. You're not doing the economy any favors.

Just as employees that work fewer hours are more productive than their longer-working counterparts, countries that report shorter workweeks [don't see an adverse effect on their GDP](#). In fact, [evidence indicates](#) that countries with lower GDP also see lower hourly pay for workers and longer workweeks; the three countries with the top GDP were among the five shortest



Home

Jobs

Reviews

Resources



Me

for highest number of hours worked.

Beyond your economic contribution, never leaving your laptop significantly limits your ability to contribute to areas of your life outside of work that would benefit from your attention. These areas could be your personal relationships, or they could be opportunities to [mentor](#), volunteer at a soup kitchen, run a 5k in support of a cause that matters to you or slow down enough to use your time more intentionally.

4. Containing our work week brings more balance to our society.

In 1941, Henry Ford cut his workforce's labor to half of what was standard at the start of the Industrial Revolution, just as he doubled their pay from the era's average. His [reasoning](#) resonates today: "Just as the eight-hour day opened our way to prosperity in America, so the five-day workweek will open our way to still greater prosperity... It is high time to rid ourselves of the notion that leisure for the workmen is either lost time or a class privilege."

Some contemporary advocates don't believe that prosperity has extended far enough. Fashion [entrepreneur](#) Rebekah Minkoff has called for "[a new schedule for adults,](#)" and U.K.-based 4DayWeek Campaign argues that a four-day workweek will lead to [a stronger and more democratic society, more even wealth distribution, and a better impact](#)



Home

Jobs

Reviews

Resources



Me

absent in Henry Ford's age: rather than free us to [work less](#), 21st century technology has only shackled us more tightly to our desks — even if they are virtual.

Regardless of how much you love your job or want the next rung on the ladder, our obsession with working on the weekend traps us more than it enables us. Collectively, we can demand change and still accomplish exciting professional feats. We can refuse to work under unreasonable conditions. We can push for better workplace policies. We can usher in legislation as groundbreaking as the Fair Labor Standards Act. We can, like the laborers behind the Model T, build creative and innovative products and then enjoy the fruit of our work.

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As the founder of Belle Detroit Creative Solutions, Carmen Dahlberg advances opportunities for working mothers by creating accessible, flexible jobs in the design ecosystem and promoting a culture of caregiving across American workplaces.



3



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Home

Jobs

Reviews

Resources



Me

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Jobs

Reviews

Resources

