



HOW TO AVOID 24 HOURS WORKING?

I have heard from many colleagues in management positions complaining “I work in the office since 7 o’clock in the morning and I constantly feel that I have to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week”. Well, this might be necessary at peak periods, but under normal circumstances...

During my career I experienced this phenomenon for several times, but there have always been the same two reasons primarily responsible for it: **your organization is not functioning in a proper way or there are weaknesses in the way you are organizing yourself.**

Let me just give you a few examples first about the organization. By the way: as you can realize I try to avoid the word “problem” as much as I can. Why? Because someone wise once said: **“If you are talking about a problem, you will have it. But if you are talking about a solution, you will find it.”**

Is your organization efficient enough? I remember a banking institution, which I had to analyze years ago. And whenever I asked employees in different departments in the Head Office, what are they doing, they usually told me: “Reporting”. After some time we centralized all reporting-related tasks in one single business unit, deleted a huge number of reports, which nobody anymore demanded years after, and the effect was much higher efficiency in the whole bank.

Another question is: what you as a manager are doing for the whole day, focused on your customers? Or let me ask the same question the other way around: Is each and every minute that you spend in your job, contributing to the right side of your company’s income statement?

Please forgive me, if I am too much provocative, but be very honest to yourself when answering the next question: Do you have proper skills and competences to fulfil all expectations and requirements in your company? I saw a lot of managers, especially in small companies, who wanted to meet all customers’ needs by saying “we are small and therefore flexible”, regardless if the company was prepared and ready for that or not. At the end employees were dealing with non-standardized procedures and the so-called “learning on the job” (or flexibility as those managers believed) caused a lot of bottlenecks in the whole organization.

And finally the question that nobody wants to touch upon because it seems that it doesn’t go together with the actual “cost cutting hype”: Do you have enough staff and is your team big enough to settle all the workload, which is demanded?



The second reason, why some leading staff is working almost the whole day and night, is in my opinion the poor organization of a manager.

I remember for instance the CEO of a start-up company, who wanted to have control over the whole organization. But as the company was growing more and more, so that he couldn't oversee all the procedures anymore, he asked all his close employees to put him on CC: in each and every E-Mail. The gentleman was busy the whole day with how I called it **“Management by Reading E-Mails”** and he thought that he was now controlling everything ... but what he totally lost was the capability to lead and manage the company.

Steven Covey, the author of several excellent management books, said – in my opinion – in very smart words: **“Are you doing the right things or just doing things right?”** Of course, provided that a manager already defined his own personal goals and objectives within his business framework, he suggests to breakdown these goals and objectives into different tasks and to divide them into four levels of priorities:

1. Urgent and important
2. Urgent, but not important
3. Important, but not urgent
4. Neither urgent nor important

So, now it's up to you to give this idea a trial,...

Young managers usually learn a lot in different trainings and educational programs and especially how to act as a manager and connected to this how to delegate tasks to associates. But where is the borderline between the risk a manager is taking when delegating something to someone else and the fact that some – maybe inconvenient – tasks are now off the manager's desk, because at the end the one who delegated things is usually also taking the responsibility?

Or there is the other extreme, which means, if a manager is cooperating with a subordinate, who is an “expert in delegating things upwards”. Whatever you are delegating to this colleague, it always comes back to you like a boomerang, but usually with additional content and questions.

Dear Reader, dear Manager, have you been very honest while answering all the questions above? Of course, there are a lot more questions to be raised, but for the beginning you can easily get a position-fixing, which means where you and your organization stand at the moment in regards to overwork, bottlenecks etc.

Maybe you are now busy like in our example at the beginning of this essay, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week and therefore not having enough time anymore to think how to escape this vicious circle. If this is really the case **I would like to recommend you someone independent, from outside**, who is able to analyse your situation and come up with appropriate solutions, **regardless if this is a consultant, a coach or a friend.**