

Dear All

The pandemic has opened up many aspects of work life. The new expression is anti-work. This expression started with reddit in 2013, and it has taken 9 years for it to become more of a talking point and a rallying point. I studied this closely over the last few weeks and here are my learnings:

1. The concept of a 9 to 5 job, with 8 hours of work per day started with the industrial era. A lot of people at work argue that this 8 hour rule no longer applies in today's technology world.
2. We are seeing hi profile strikes, record quitting ratios, the lying flat movement in China and the 20 % record attrition in India. We earlier thought that only heavy industry people have an anti work stance. We are seeing that in technology companies too.
3. The pandemic has made people reflect on the 'role of work in a person's life' "what do I really get from work?"
4. We have seen the 'occupy wall street' movement a few years ago. That was targeted more at wall street and the financial excesses of that industry. Anti-work is a more broader movement.
5. Anti-work is an idea with a cultural traction. We see this in USA, in China and in India. In China it is the anti 996 movement – working 9 to 9, six days a week.
6. We have seen strikes at John Deere, General Mills, Google, Kellogg's.
7. This Reddit movement went from 150,000 people to 1.5 million people in a year. The reddit movement is hurting companies, the chatter on r/anti work is ensuring that Kellogg's is not able to find replacements for available jobs.
8. A simple way people express anti work is in three statements : 1. Use your vacation, 2. leave on time every day and 3. ask for more salary.
9. The anti-work movement also asks employees not to compete with their colleagues in trying for employee of the month, star performer etc.
10. Funnily this is not ideology of being a conservative or a progressive, or a republican, or a democrat or a communist.
11. The signals to this movement are wage stagnation, rising inequality, always on via technology leash, and a bad hierarchy of poor bosses.
12. The anti-work movement is also linked to the person's context, his/her social structure in society, housing, food , mortgage plans , ability to progress in career etc.
13. Some workers feel that they are doing more, but getting less, hence they are looking back and saying what's the use of this productivity.
14. Anti-work is not anti-labor, I think it's more anti antique work practices.
15. Their tagline for the movement is telling " unemployment for all, not just the rich"

I personally believe that work is important in people's lives, I do not ever see work being a non-issue. Many people derive satisfaction from doing a great job, of doing a better job. I don't think people go to work saying I don't want to achieve something significant. I have encountered people who say, why should I do more, let me do less. When somebody opts to do less in a team or company, then what I see is that the team members lose respect for that person. In today's distributed workplace, team members want everyone to chip in, every team member is clear that they cannot carry passengers.

I think each individual needs to evaluate his/her own attitude to the workplace if they seek any level of fulfilment.

I think leaders and CHROs need to be every clear in what they want from a team, a manager in their team and the individual.

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