



Ideas and Information for Human Resources Professionals

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EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

WHETHER TIME OR MONEY IS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE IN YOUR OVERALL HAPPINESS

This isn't a question of whether you would rather have more time or money, but which do you value most? In an example used from an article titled, "[Valuing your time over money may be linked to happiness](#)" on CNN's website, living in the city near work means less commuting time, but the cost of your home could be higher. Conversely, living in the suburbs may be cheaper, but it will take more time to get to work. Determining this preference is what University of British Columbia researchers tried to find in their study on happiness.

When pondering which you prefer, don't think of it in terms of a one-time thing such as flying on a commercial airline, where it is often both cheaper and faster than, say, driving. Think of it in terms of an either/or situation.

As you might expect, most people valued time over money, but what you might not expect is that, according to the study, prioritizing time is associated with greater happiness. In addition, if people in the study were older and retired or nearing retirement, then they said that time was more important than money, whereas younger people said the opposite.

This makes sense, right? If you're older and getting ready to retire, then you've probably made enough money to retire and you want more time to pursue your endeavors. If you're young, you think you have all the time in the world, but probably not enough money to do what you want.

Interestingly, researchers discovered that both men and women valued time over money regardless of their income levels. The study, according to the article, focused on working adults who could make more money, or decide not to. In America, according to Gallup, adults working full-time average 47 hours per week - up an hour and a half from a decade ago. And Expedia.com reported that Americans take fewer vacation days versus their international counterparts.

Ultimately, it comes down to personal preference. If you believe the old saying that money can't buy happiness, does that mean that time can buy happiness? Probably not, but depending on how you spend your time, it might.

A Harvard Business School professor said that people tend to be happier when spending money on experiences, such as a vacation, or simply dinner with friends, instead of on "things." Maybe it's because you're essentially buying time rather than a material possession.

Now that I've weighed which I'd prefer, I think I'll keep that a secret and just say that I'd rather have more of both.



LET'S FACE IT; I'M TIRED!

How does a muffler salesperson feel at the end of the day? Exhausted. HR Elements has tackled the issue of sleep deprivation before. However, that article was about how electronic devices were keeping people awake and the need to feel connected 24/7. This time, it's about the effects of being sleep deprived and why it's so important to get the recommended eight hours each night.

Have you noticed a recurring theme that we wish we had more time? In our quest to squeeze more out of the day, we often push sleep aside and humorously tell our friends and coworkers, "I'll sleep when I'm dead." The irony in that statement is that by not getting enough sleep, you may be doing enough damage to your body that death will come sooner rather than later.



According to an article on *The Huffington Post's* website titled, "[This Is Your Body on Sleep Deprivation](#)," if you can't remember the last time you got a full night's rest, or if you're drowsy and have difficulty staying alert all day, then you're definitely sleep deprived. Worse, according to the article, is that we tend to think that by sleeping longer on the weekend we can fix the issue. So what if we only get six hours of sleep each night during the week; we can sleep for 13 hours each night on the weekend and still get the necessary 56 hours a week (8 hours x 7 days = 56). The problem is that our bodies don't work that way. Sleeping varying hours affects our circadian rhythms, which means that our bodies don't know when to shut down.

So? "How bad can sleep deprivation be?" you might ask. Let's start with how it affects the brain. When a person is sleep deprived, the brain slows way down. It becomes difficult to concentrate and the ability to make important decisions and sort information is reduced. Creativity is also negatively affected and people who need more sleep have memory issues. Your mood also takes a hit. If you've ever dealt with someone who is grouchy, irritable, or lacks enthusiasm, then that person probably didn't get enough sleep.

If those undesirables aren't enough to make you sleep more, let's see how the body is affected. According to the article, your appetite suffers, and not the way you may be thinking. When you don't get enough sleep it creates a hormonal imbalance, and the body tries to compensate by making you eat more, especially high-carbohydrate, sugary foods. That's not good. But you think you can just run or bike more miles at the gym. Wrong again. Your body's performance, reflexes and motor skills are all impaired. The latter can cause improper form, so everything from yoga to running to weightlifting will be less effective. Finally, the body's immune system is affected, but not right away. Pulling an all-nighter probably won't be too bad, but night after night of not getting enough sleep will almost definitely increase your chances of getting sick.

In the end, like it or not, you need to devote at least eight hours each night to sleep. Something else will have to get cut if you want to be at peak performance throughout the entire day. The article suggests that a person should add 15 minutes every night to their sleep schedule until they can go a whole day without feeling tired. You just may be surprised at what you can accomplish when you're actually awake and not just going through the motions.

IN BRIEF

THE TEAM THAT EATS TOGETHER PERFORMS BETTER

Are you the type of employee who eats alone? You may be doing yourself a disservice according to an article on the *Society For Human Resource Management's* website titled, "[Breaking Bread At Work Boosts Bottom Line, Study Claims](#)."

This goes beyond the simple question of whether there's food in the break room. The article suggests that communal eating has a marked improvement on performance. Researchers from Cornell studied fire departments in a large city and found that those with kitchens where firefighters ate together earned higher marks for their team performances versus ones who did not.

Unlike fire departments, most companies in the U.S. don't provide the perk of food at the workplace, whether it's free or not. A few, such as Apple and Google, do provide food on-site with the goal of offering healthier food options as well as reducing distractions at work. A side benefit of this is that eating with coworkers promotes collaboration and the swapping of ideas.

The article says that while eating at work may seem ordinary or even dull, it's a powerful activity that fosters business objectives like improving communication among co-workers who might not otherwise talk with each other, increasing productivity due to employees not having to travel off-site for lunch, and even potentially lowering health insurance costs from the healthier choices offered at an on-site cafeteria.

Essentially, everyone needs to eat and people at work have to choose where they eat and whether it's alone or with coworkers. Companies can encourage communal eating and forge ahead with new and improved ways of doing business.

TECHNOLOGY

PROTECT MORE THAN JUST YOUR EMPLOYEE'S HEALTH

As competition heats up in the job market, companies are always searching for that one great perk that might sway a potential candidate to choose them over anyone else. Whether it's health insurance, retirement, paid time off, or even wellness, there's something that's more in demand today than there was yesterday. Companies now have a new benefit they can more easily provide to their employees -- identity theft protection.

According to an article on the website of *Employee Benefit News* titled, "[Regulatory Clarity Makes ID Protection A More Attractive Employee Benefit](#)," identity theft is not only the fastest growing crime in America, but also the fastest growing consumer complaint. The article states that more than 13 million Americans have their identity stolen every year. That equates to one person every three seconds.



Offering this type of theft protection to employees was only given a passing glance by companies a few years ago and was unheard of more than a decade ago. Yet today, employees are signing up for this protection themselves and looking to employers to add it as one of their benefits.

Fortunately, the IRS tried to clear up any confusion regarding how employees would be taxed for this perk if offered by their employer. By doing so, it paved the way for companies to reconsider this benefit. Before the end of 2015, the IRS said it would allow preferential tax treatment for employer-provided identity theft benefits regardless of whether there was an actual breach in data. Previously, this was only available if there was a data breach and then only if an individual's personal information might have been affected.

According to the article, it's anticipated that identity theft protection will be one of the fastest growing voluntary benefits. In addition, identity theft is, regrettably, most likely here to stay so it behooves companies to get ahead of the curve and offer it to their employees before a competitor does. Besides the benefit to employees of protection in the event of identity theft and assistance in restoring their identity, it also benefits employers. This is because an employee will be able to concentrate more on his or her job instead of worrying how they're going to fix the problem or even take time off from work.

The good news for both employer and employee is that if identity theft protection is offered, it should not increase their federal tax liability. State and local taxes may still apply and there are other exclusions such as if cash is received in lieu of protection. Because of all the various implications all parties should consult with a tax professional before implementing these benefits.

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