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### Understanding Workaholism & what can be done about it

The 40 hour work week is clearly a bygone. Technol-

ogy gives us the option of being connected to our work 24/7. But there is a



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delicate balance between the necessary work commitment and workaholism. Employees working long hours at companies are often seen as assets, however with a little investigating, one may discover the opposite to be true. And that discovery can have a financial impact on the company.

Workaholism is an addiction that usually involves the cyclical process of one feeling discouraged by one's personal life and/or other non-work related issues, and resolves to feel better by completely submitting oneself into work. For a workaholic, the constant need to work and accomplish task after task

gives them an adrenaline rush and it is to this rush that they are addicted.



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Workaholism, then, can be an unhealthy behavior that causes harmful mental, personal and in some cases physical effects for the employee ultimately leaving the employer with an exhausted, stressed, and unproductive handful.

Beyond the employee/employer relationship, Workaholism has its negative impact on the efficiency and morale of a team if a workaholic employee is engaged with co-workers on a project or initiative. Since a workaholic's primary goal is to constantly work or find more work to do, they may unknowingly create more work for the sake of working more. This can cause missed deadlines, unnecessarily elongated project

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duration and process cycle time, and frustration among co-workers. A workaholic manager may also push subordinates to work longer hours than necessary by holding his or her subordinates to unrealistic standards.

Resolving workaholic related issues at your company involves a multi-step process. Begin by educating your management team on the signs, symptoms and business impact of Workaholism; when setting individual, departmental or project specific goals, be sure to include time management as a measurement for success. Same goes for the performance appraisal process. Have employees understand at the

onset that their time management skills are being evaluated and it's not just a matter of "getting it done no matter what." Establish policies that encourage use of accrued paid time off and a healthy work-life balance.

If you've identified a possible workaholic at your workplace, the first step to take is to review their workload. If the workload is legitimately more than the average employee has, try to delegate some projects to someone else if possible. However, if it appears that the excessive work or processing has been "created" by the employee, a candid discussion needs to take place, not about the individual but about the

business impact resultant of the excessive process. Help must be offered either in the way of streamlining or delegating. This process could be traumatizing to someone attached to their work, so caution should be taken when doing this. Perhaps a professional should be consulted on the best way to handle the process. If all else fails, there is a Workaholics Anonymous group that has its own twelve-step program much like Alcoholics Anonymous.

Although seemingly benign, and even sometimes a positive characteristic, Workaholism can chip away at efficiency, productivity, morale and profitability of your company. ■