

Last updated: 16:00 (GMT+04) Wednesday, July 23, 2008. Rajab 20, 1429.

gulfnews.com

THREE PROGRESSIVE DECADES

Search

Mobile edition

ePaper

Live weather

Shortcuts

Go

GNAds4U

JOBS4U
WHEELS4U
PROPERTIES4U
CLASSIFIEDS4U
THE NATION
THE GULF
THE REGION
THE WORLD
BUSINESS
SPORT
TECHNOLOGY
IN DEPTH
GALLERIES
YOUR PICTURES
VIDEO
FEATURES
TABLOID
FRIDAY
E+
EXPLORE
UNWIND
NOTES
SPORT EXTRA
ASK THE LAW
RESIDENTS GUIDE
ABOUT THE UAE
SPECIAL COVERAGE

Pictures from the past
YOUR SAY
LETTERS
POLLS
EMAIL US
OPINION
EDITORIALS
COLUMNS
WEEKEND REVIEW
GN FOCUS
ABOUT GULF NEWS
SEARCH
PAST EDITIONS
FRONT PAGE PDF
EPAPER
MOBILE EDITION
SUBSCRIPTIONS
GN REWARDS
RSS FEEDS
JOBS AT GN

BUSINESS

COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

Over-attending isn't a workplace virtue

By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News
Published: October 08, 2007, 23:16

We all know about the ever-growing external pressures that force us to work longer and longer hours. But we seldom notice one other pressure from within - the curious psychological need for some people to over-attend. This is so widespread that it has earned a formal definition: Presenteeism.

Obviously this can be seen as part of the puritan ethic, celebrating the virtues of hard work per se. At first glance, it looks like simple punctuality taken to an exaggerated level, too much of a good thing.

But our automated hi-tech culture has clashed oddly with puritanism, greatly confusing those who are loyally trying to do their best. First, we have the permanent sense of emergency generated by the email and mobile-phone way of life. Almost without a word of excuse or explanation, a manager can write off our planned evening with a single text-message or one click on 'CC' or 'FWD', indicating something that looks like a crisis. So against our will, we often have to attend more than is sensible or healthy.

On top of this pressurisation, there is a further puritan effect - guilt at going home while our colleagues are still at work. So we may over-attend for that reason.

And then perhaps deeper still is the psychological need to be needed, the dread of feeling redundant - mixed-in with genuine fear for our jobs, and a desperate urge to make gestures of loyalty and high performance. This leads us to generate an artificial sensation of heroic effort. "Do you realise how late I worked last night... Do you realise how early I got in this morning..."

It also leads to the bad habit of attending the workplace while ill. And this is what has turned presenteeism into a political issue, with unions worried about the cumulative effects on an employee's health, and management chiefly alarmed at the potential spread of some infectious disease around the workplace.

But both sides are increasingly coming to accept that attendance while ill is a bad idea altogether. It stands to reason that unwell employees are not going to perform at anywhere near their full efficiency. At the least, this will have a harmful impact on team performance. At the worst, it could lead to some catastrophic error, with knock-on effects

RSS RSS FEED

>> Get Business as a news feed

YOUR MONEY

>> Latest Forex rates

LATEST STORIES FROM BUSINESS

BUSINESS
Mercedes-Benz launches new generation cars



BUSINESS
Oman plans makeover of ancient forts and caves

AUTOMOBILES

>> GM unveils 2010 Camaro

AVIATION

>> Etihad flights to Almaty in Kazakhstan start in December

BANKING AND FINANCE

>> Emirates NBD profit soars 45%

>> AUB net profit touches \$211.7 million in midway 2008

>> UNB earnings soar 41% to Dh764.6m

>> Emirates NBD plans Saudi operations

>> Noor in venture to open Islamic bank in Maldives

>> Darling hints at 'profound' effects of global credit crisis

>> Sukuk issuance in Gulf rises 17% to \$17b

COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

>> IT industry holds much potential for future growth

>> Winners of oil prices aren't only international majors

>> Going through a transformation

>> Chinese banks could see shrinking profits in coming days

COMMODITIES

>> Apple posts \$7.46 billion third-quarter revenues

>> Costly food and fuel drive Italy's consumer morale to 15-year low

>> Vietnam to tax rice and fertiliser exports

CONSTRUCTION

>> Housing quality in Dubai has a 'long way to go'

DEVELOPMENT

>> Mubadala forms \$8b GE venture

>> IFA launches \$200m project in Thailand

>> Lifestyle City raises budget to Dh4b

>> Depa venture wins Singapore contract

>> Work begins on tallest building in Jordan

ECONOMY

>> Inflation in Kuwait accelerates to 11.4%

GENERAL

>> e-governance gains ground in Abu Dhabi

>> Russian firm wins \$418m Dolphin deal

HOTEL & TOURISM**RADIO 1**

Listen now

RADIO 2

Listen now

>> Streaming FAQs
>> Radio schedules

SPECIAL COVERAGE

Olympics 2008

for the entire corporate output. And that is quite apart from possible long-term effects of a workforce below normal health levels.



Managers are now starting to see the sense of sending employees home if they are struggling to attend while ill - or sometimes, even if they are not ill, but there is simply nothing for them to do. It is worth noting generally that long hours do not always translate into more effective output, and that they may stem from inefficient time management anyway. Managers should also check that they are not setting an example of working over-long hours, which their employees are trying to emulate.

Key points: What constitutes presenteeism

- Many employees have a psychological need to work long hours.
- This is partly exaggerated loyalty and partly fear of redundancy.
- It often leads to attendance while ill, which lowers performance.

- *The writer is a BBC broadcaster and motivational speaker, with 20 years' experience as CEO of Carole Spiers Group, an international stress consultancy based in London.*

More from [Business](#)

Email this article 	Printer- Friendly version 	Email the Editor 	Bookmark this article 
---	--	---	--

Post this story to:

[Del.icio.us](#) | [Digg](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Reddit](#)

>> [Travelodge plans to boost UK seaside holiday market](#)

INDUSTRY

>> [Swatch, Rivoli tie up to boost market share in Saudi and India](#)
>> [Caterpillar's earnings climb 34% on Asia sales](#)

MARKETS

>> [Dubai market advances for third straight day as Arabtec gains 7.61%](#)
>> [Wachovia reports record quarterly loss of \\$8.9b](#)
>> [DuPont earnings up 11% as sales gain](#)

OIL & GAS

>> [Fuel price rise boosts Chinese demand](#)
>> [Iran not to press for output cuts at Opec's next meeting](#)
>> [Demand for oil products hits two-year low in Korea](#)

TELECOM

>> [etisalat leads global mobile operators posting fastest first-quarter growth](#)

TOURISM & TRAVEL

>> [Oman takes a 'different approach'](#)

TRADE

>> [Strong currency forces Dubai to import less from euro zone](#)

MORE STORIES FROM BUSINESS

AUTOMOBILES

>> [Mercedes-Benz launches new generation cars](#)

AVIATION

>> [BA to transfer to Dubai Terminal 5](#)

BANKING AND FINANCE

>> [Doha Bank Q2 net profit increases 25%](#)
>> [Noor Islamic Bank expands in Maldives](#)
>> [Emirates NBD expands in Saudi Arabia](#)
>> [Emirates NBD profit up in Q2 2008](#)
>> [UNB records Dh764.6 million profit](#)

COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

>> [Do you really fly economy class?](#)

COMMODITIES

>> [GCC-based jeweller posts 55% growth](#)

ECONOMY

>> [Map of the global food crisis](#)

INDUSTRY

>> [GE, Mubadala tie up for global venture](#)

INTERNET

>> [Web threatens MidEast business growth](#)

OIL & GAS

>> [Dolphin Energy taps Russian contractor](#)

REAL ESTATE PROPERTY

>> [Limitless to build Jordan's twin towers](#)

TECHNOLOGY

>> [BlackBerry or Apple?](#)
>> [Joining the competition](#)
>> [Wearable gadgets are in](#)
>> [The degeneration of online debates](#)

[Business](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Features](#) | [Pictures](#) | [Site Map](#)
[About Gulf News](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Jobs at Gulf News](#) | [Advertising Guide](#)

[gulfnews.com](#) | [XPRESS4me.com](#) | [GNAds4U.com](#)

© Al Nisr Publishing LLC 2007. All rights reserved.