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Any Time - Any Where

A small article in our first newsletter highlighting working hours and work-life balance generated many calls and emails. Work-life balance is high on many personal and company agendas - as reflected in a recent article in BRW Magazine (May 5-11) titled 'A failed measure of life.' So why the interest and what should we be considering?

Recent research found that 30% of Australians are unnerved by long working hours. In fact, our working hours haven't changed much in the last 15 years (1,850 hrs a year). This contrasts with sharp falls in Japan and many other developed countries, which now leaves us second only to South Korea in the OECD in hours worked.

What has happened though, is that work has encroached into our life in the form of 'always-on' email and mobile. The system is no longer protecting us from our own fear or ambition. As long as you had to physically go to the workplace, the boundary between professional and private life could be enforced to some degree.

There is no denying that it is great to have flexible work practices. At the same time we need to acknowledge the potential down side - given the boundary between work and home is getting more blurry, we have to ask '**Are we able to regulate ourselves?**' To understand this we must explore our needs for significance and security.

From the individual perspective, our ego craves significance. Today, work is the primary source of significance for many Australians. We tend to introduce ourselves by our work title or where we work. Combining the need for significance with excessive ambition creates the classic Workaholic, who has little or no life outside work. And lets be honest - **workaholics are 'the respectable addicts'** in our society. To ensure we can regulate our work-life balance, we must be certain that we gain our significance from all areas of our life: our partner, family, social, recreational, spiritual, personal development etc.

Similarly, in an age where we 'borrow to consume' rather than 'save to invest', is our level of debt and the resulting insecurity contributing to our long working hours?



It would be a folly to presume that work-life balance is solely an individual issue. Work culture and pressures play an equal role.

From an organisational perspective, it is relatively easy to offer flexible working hours to staff. It is much harder to challenge a culture that equates working long hours with high productivity.

The organisational culture can be such that overwork is rewarded with promotions, so an increasing number of staff buy into this culture; and long hours become part of 'the way things are round here'.

Direct internal pressures around targets, KPI's and other measurements can also lead to overwork. This is experienced as pressure (real or perceived) from managers indicating we need to 'lift our game'.

In conjunction with downsizing, this has left fewer employees with the same amount of work, feeling a lot less secure. Perceived financial constraints, job insecurity, pressures on targets and an organisational culture demanding 'hard work' create a tight net from which escape is not easy.

With few companies able to see the costs of stress and burnout and willing to measure productivity instead of hours worked, achieving work-life balance today tends to remain an individual choice. It's up to you to take a good hard look at yourself and decide what work-life balance is worth to you.

Directors' Message



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We recently had the privilege of joining the Ford Australia team at the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment 2004 Awards.

The awards recognise organisations and individuals who contribute to the creation of economic independence for Indigenous Australians by implementing Indigenous employment programmes or strategies.

Ford was a finalist in all 3 categories of awards. Michael Bligh won the award for Outstanding Individual. He joined Ford over 18 months ago via their Indigenous Employment Programme. Michael's story can be read in our previous issue. He has supported many of the other people



employed by Ford during the programme. He is pictured with Peter Doyle (Vice President of Human Resources at Ford). Peter accepted a Special Commendation for Ford.

Gail Rodgers, pictured below with Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations received her finalist certificate for her work developing Ford's strategy.

Our congratulations also to the other award winners and finalists, including Argyle Diamonds, Comalco, Accor, Carey Mining and Spotless. Your commitment to improving the lives of Indigenous Australians is inspiring.

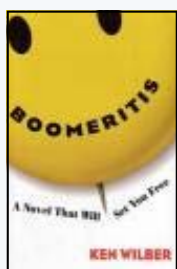
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Boomers & Gamers



It is beginning to dawn on an increasing number of managers that there may be a lot more substance behind loudly proclaimed theories that Gen Y (14-29 year olds) is quite different from the Baby Boomer generation (44-59 year olds). Of course any such generalisation is unlikely to be accurate, but we do believe that some of the values and defining experiences of Gen Y are quite at odds with how Boomers see the world.

As an example, most of Gen Y has grown up with computer games teaching them: i) there is no such thing as failure, just try again, ii) you can be challenged and entertained all the time and iii) competence leads to power. It's not surprising that Gen Y often take these beliefs outside of the game; including into workplace.



Given that most Boomers tend to avoid making mistakes at all costs it is easy to see

see how these different values and expectations can lead to severe clashes. Along the same lines Boomers struggle with the inflated expectations Gen Y has of their first job; e.g. responsibilities, status and career prospects.

Further conflict can arise from the fact that Gen Y believes in working hard, but not long hours. They are much more life focused than career focused. They are more prepared to take risks and will happily have a year off to do voluntary work in South America. This less linear approach to life than Boomers' further exacerbates the differences.

Managing a significant number of Gen Y staff is therefore a big challenge for (typically) Boomer managers. As a manager, you will need to become more flexible in your leadership and how you motivate; and in setting and measuring targets. We also recommend that you are open to the suggestions for changing the workplace that Gen Y are bound to come up with.

If any of this hasn't happened to you yet, rest assured that it will as more Gen Y enter the workforce.

Take It Personally

In this era of digitally enhanced photographs it is hard for us mere mortals to not, at some stage, have a hang-up about our body image. For some, this may trigger or exacerbate a downward spiral into a life of eating disorders. Belinda Dalton, Founder and Dietitian of The Oak House (www.theoakhouse.com.au), believes that eating disorders are triggered by a mixture of factors: genetic, personality and environmental - ranging from media influence to life crisis and trauma.

Belinda and her team are worried about society's fixation on body image and when you read some of the statistics it's not hard to see why they are concerned:

- ◆ A study of 3,000 Australian women showed that purging behaviours were found to be most common in the 35-44 age group.
- ◆ 77% of those with bulimia or binge eating disorders were over 25 years of age.
- ◆ In 1972, 15% of men reported dissatisfaction with their overall appearance. By 1997, this had jumped to 43%.
- ◆ Of women aged 70-75 years, in an Australian study, 47% said that they would like to weigh less than they did.
- ◆ The chance of an active Australian woman (18-35 years) having the same height, waist and hip measurements of a shop mannequin is 1.1%.



(for full statistic see www.eatingdisorders.org.au)

"One of the things we want to do at The Oak House," Belinda said "is break down the stigma around mental health and eating disorders. It's amazing but many people still think this is just attention seeking."

So how has The Oak House, a specialist outpatient facility that offers individual, self-paced recovery programmes for sufferers of eating disorders and staff of BP- one of the world's largest energy companies - joined forces to support the recovery of nearly 40 Oak House clients? Through **Mentoring**.

"We always have a large case load here at The Oak House." said Belinda "Which means when our clients are sufficiently recovered to start thinking about finding work or going back in to education we don't have the time resources or specific expertise to help them with the practicalities.". Over the last 2 years 2 groups of Oak House clients have participated in a 3 months mentoring programme, each getting a dedicated mentor – a female BP employee, who aids them in their job

search, stepping back into education or in one case starting a new business.

Chenoa's background is scientific, with a B.Sc. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. She had been with The Oak House for about 18 months and was making great progress with her recovery, when her counselor told her about the mentoring programme. "I jumped at the chance of having a mentor. I had started the NEIS (New Enterprise Incentive Scheme) programme, as I wanted to start my own business. I was working on my own a lot of the time and knew a mentor would help me stay motivated and give me another perspective."



Chenoa's business Microscopica (www.microscopica.com.au), creates corporate fashion with designs fusing science and art. She is pictured above wearing her DNA T-shirt, with her mentor Kerry Gallagher, who has an administration and customer service role with BP and is also wearing one of Chenoa's designs.

"Kerry really kept me focused, I don't think my business would have come this far so quickly without a mentor." Chenoa has just won her first large scale contract and has also been asked to create logos and website designs, with the same mixture of science and art. "I hadn't anticipated all the logistics." Chenoa said "Things got really hard on a couple of occasions and I didn't want to face making difficult phone calls . Kerry just said 'Come on, I'm going to sit with you in the office and help you with the call' it was great".

From Kerry's perspective getting a protégé who wanted to start their own business was a bit daunting. "I kept thinking 'Does Chenoa really need me?' she was so courageous." Kerry said "But I could see that with all the organisational and people skills I have learnt, I could help Chenoa. Plus, I could offer reassurance in those difficult times."

For Anna (pictured with her mentor Anne-Maree O'Kane, Energy Manager for BP), as for most sufferers, it is difficult to pinpoint the starting point of her eating disorder, but it certainly was a major part of her life by 1997. Anna heard about The Oak House in early 2002 and became a client "They are very caring and compassionate." she said "Treating sufferers with respect and dignity." Comments you hear from all The Oak House clients. "There is a homely atmosphere at The Oak House. It doesn't feel like a medical facility."



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Take It Personally *Continued from page 3*

"When The Oak House announced this programme with BP, it was perfect timing for me." said Anna "Even though I had a job, I was at a crossroads and didn't know what to do; and I didn't necessarily have the confidence to do the research alone."

Anna was devoting her time to many community organisations and finding it difficult to say No. "I wanted to make a difference, but I was doing too much." Anna Said "Having a neutral and completely objective mentor as a sounding board really helped. Anne-Maree encouraged me to put things on paper to get clarity." You don't have to spend much time with Anna to see how passionate she is about helping young people; and with a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing.

For Anne-Maree the mentoring experience was also positive. "My meeting with Anna always left me inspired and motivated to re-assess my priorities. It was good timing because shortly after completing the mentoring process with Anna, I was offered another role in BP. Because I had been reflecting on my own life as I was supporting Anna reflect on hers, I knew the new role was a fit with where I wanted to be."

Anna now has 2 part-time jobs. She is a Grants Administration Assistant for The Foundation for Young Australians and co-ordinates the *Friends of Butterfly* campaign for The Butterfly Foundation an organisation dedicated to supporting individuals with eating disorders. This is done in the short term by raising funds for individuals who need to access the services such as those offered by The Oak House.

In the medium to long term the focus is on research, education and the reform of services so more specialist services can be offered under Medicare - "For too many sufferers they are cut off from these great services because they can't afford to pay." said Anna

This concern is echoed by The Oak House team. "We need to be able to offer sufferers a full range of services." said Belinda "The cost of our service is prohibitive to 80% of the people who contact us. The Butterfly Foundation has partially funded several clients, which is great. The key is for the services to be covered by Medicare."

The Butterfly Foundation is holding its fundraising Butterfly Ball on 28 May. For information, check out the website. (www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au).

Jess has spent the last 6 years living with and recovering from an eating disorder. She had been with The Oak House for 18 months when she got the opportunity to participate in the 2004 mentoring programme.

Jess was in her second year at university, doing a B.Sc. in

Psychology and Psychophysiology when Amanda Purnell, a Franchise Manager with BP became her mentor. "The first couple of weeks were informal as we got to know each other." Jess said "Then we filled in a contract and put down some ground rules - such as always switching off our mobile phones."

Jess was unclear about her direction and options. "As we talked," said Amanda "we got more clarity on what Jess wanted to achieve and I could see where I could add value. We did a lot of very practical things: revamping resumes, mock interviews, (including with HR specialists at BP), research on the internet." One key thing Jess enjoyed was learning how to develop a professional network. Amanda encouraged her to research her options, get clarity by speaking to people and keep track of all her new contacts by creating an Excel spread sheet of contacts and outcomes.



Learning how to network professionally resulted in Jess sourcing contacts at a number of recruiting firms. She also got a short term contract as a research assistant, measuring peoples psychological response to drinking wine. Jess finished up by saying "I saw Amanda as a true role model. I would be very happy if I presented myself as professionally as she does."

As for Amanda "In working with Jess, I saw me 10 years ago. It felt great to help provide a little direction, and particularly good to see Jess's confidence grow. For me personally," Amanda continued "the coaching experience was very valuable. In BP we have a pretty flat structure and so I don't always get much chance to practise a range of communication style. This programme provided a safe environment to practise coaching people with real and challenging issues."

For Belinda and The Oak House team "We see the BP mentoring programme as a wonderful opportunity for our clients." Belinda confirms "Working towards a goal has a very positive impact on self esteem and this might be their first relationship in a long time, where they aren't primarily seen as a sufferer of an eating disorder."

For all involved in the programme it was encouraging to see that we don't have to shy away from 'big' issues such as eating disorders or mental/emotional health issues in general. Everyone can contribute their time, expertise and interest to supporting viable programmes that make a difference. The resulting increase in awareness in the mentors contributes to challenging the stigma that is still attached to mental health issues today. Sharing their stories through this article might give you the insights and desire to make a similar contribution.