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Working for 90 hours a week makes zero sense. The world needs to evolve, now!

With these corporate leaders' comments on the hustle culture and extended work hours, the internet was driven into a frenzy. Why is the well-being of employees not considered to be of paramount importance? Will this mindset change? Coach AB writes...

Soch with THE COACH

With Adarsh Benakappa Basavaraj,
The Coach

edexlive.com

WORKING FOR 90 HOURS A WEEK MAKES ZERO SENSE. THE WORLD NEEDS TO EVOLVE, NOW!

Can you work for 90-hours a week? (Source: EdexLive.com)

Adarsh Benakappa Basavaraj

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When the chairman of
workweek because all t

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brace a 90-hour
it a new low.

Whether it was an off-the-cuff remark or simply poorly thought out, one thing is clear: Aren't "leaders" supposed to understand that their words and actions carry weight? Aren't they meant to set the best example?

This isn't just about a single tone-deaf comment. It's a glaring symptom of a mindset stuck in the last century, where overwork was glorified and personal lives were dismissed as inconsequential.

1. The "sexist" cherry-on-top

Casual sexism being normalised? (Pic: EdexLive.com)

While there's been plenty of debate about this incident, one aspect hasn't been emphasised enough — the casual sexism embedded in this toxic productivity narrative. As someone who has been surrounded by strong, independent women and witnessed the challenges my mother, Dr Asha Benakappa, faced in navigating patriarchal work environments, this hit particularly close to home.

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Let me be clear: The issue isn't how long employees are staring at their spouses — it's how long corporate leaders have been staring at outdated, exploitative work models while ignoring modern research on productivity and well-being.

Reducing personal lives to awkward staring contests trivialises the emotional labour and partnerships that sustain us. Meaningful relationships improve resilience, reduce stress, and enhance workplace performance. Yet, this remark reveals a troubling lack of emotional intelligence (EQ) and highlights how out-of-touch a few leaders remain in 2025.

2. A wake-up call for leaders

The world has moved on, so should your thoughts. (Pic: EdexLive.com)

If you're a leader in today's world and still pushing the "work-until-you-drop" narrative, this is your wake-up call: The world has moved on, and so should you. It's time to leave behind the glorification of overwork and embrace equitable partnerships, emotional support, and — dare I say it — rest.

Leaders should focus on creating policies that enable employees to spend quality time with their families rather than demonising it. Research has consistently shown that happy, well-rested people are far more productive.

3. The 90-hour illusion: Burnout Isn't a badge of honour

Why romanticise burnout? (Pic: EdexLive.com)

Let's address the elephant in the boardroom: The romanticisation of burnout.

Humans are not machines. Studies from organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and Stanford University have shown that productivity sharply declines after 50 hours a week. Beyond 55 hours, the risks of burnout, heart disease, and stroke increase. 

Leaders who promote marathon workweeks often mask inefficiencies and poor delegation as "ambition." Truly successful companies streamline workflows, invest in automation, and empower their teams. If your solution to inefficiency is making people work longer

hours, you're not leading — you're running a sweatshop.

Practical tips for leaders:

Use automation to eliminate redundant tasks.

Adopt agile project management to prioritise efficiency over effort.

Conduct regular audits to identify and eliminate time-wasting activities.

4. Let's talk about pay: The ₹51 crore elephant in the room

Equitable and fair pay for all. (Pic: EdexLive.com)

Indian workers are some of the hardest-working globally yet among the lowest-paid. The chairman in question earned 535 times the median employee salary last year. So, why are employees being guilt-tripped for not working more?



Fair pay = Higher productivity

Research from MIT Sloan Management Review highlights that companies with equitable pay structures experience lower attrition and higher employee engagement.

Practical steps:

Normalise transparent pay structures.

Offer equity bonuses and performance-based rewards.

Invest in upskilling opportunities to foster employee growth.

5. The 'whole-person' paradigm: A new approach to success

Treating employees as humans. (Pic: EdexLive.com)

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For nearly two decades, I've been advocating for a holistic approach that treats employees as whole individuals, not cogs in a machine.

A conversation with Anil Santhapuri, Head of the Academy of Management and Leadership Excellence at TVS Group, reinforced this idea. His 'whole person' paradigm focuses on nurturing every aspect of an individual's well-being.

Why does this matter?

Gallup research shows that employees supported in their physical, mental, and emotional health are 45% more likely to perform at their best.

Actionable ideas for leaders:

Introduce policies promoting holistic well-being, such as mental health days and financial literacy workshops.

Shift from solely measuring key performance indicators (KPIs) to nurturing human potential.

Lead by example — prioritise your own well-being to inspire your team.

6. Do we even need 90 hours in an AI-driven world?



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The human-AI relation (Pic: EdexLive.com)

In 2025, technology isn't just an enabler — it's a game-changer. With AI and automation advancing rapidly, the balance between human effort and machine efficiency has shifted.

The AI advantage.

A PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report predicts that AI could contribute \$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. This isn't about replacing humans but freeing us to focus on creativity, strategy, and problem-solving.

What leaders must do:

Upskill employees to work alongside AI, not compete with it.

Reframe performance metrics to value outcomes over effort.

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If machines can handle the grunt work, why are we still romanticising 90-hour workweeks?



My philosophy: ABCD

As I sign off, let me leave you with my philosophy of ABCD — Accepting and Building Constructive Dissatisfaction. Progress begins when we acknowledge our flaws and refuse to get complacent.

If India wants to lead the global workforce by 2040, we must abandon the toxic hustle culture and build a future where work is meaningful, equitable, and humane.

To the chairman who inspired this discussion: sStop staring at your employees' work hours and start staring at your blind spots.

With regards,

Adarsh Benakappa Basavaraj

Your Coach, constantly "staring" at real issues

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