ByteDance becomes latest Chinese internet firm to ease overtime rules for employees

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ByteDance, TikTok's parent firm, announced on Friday the revocation of its overtime practice that entitles its employees to fewer weekly rest days from August 1, becoming another major Chinese internet firm to shift away from the overtime work culture that was once widely adopted in the industry.  
  
In a widely circulated internal communication notice, ByteDance told its staff that it will cancel the alternation of a "big week" with two days off and a "small week" with only one day off from August. It asked employees who have "demands" to submit work overtime requests via the company system.  
  
Overtime work culture has long been adopted by Chinese internet startups. It was seen as a key reason for their rapid rise to becoming industry giants today. But the culture has also drawn criticism among the public as it can lead to a loss of personal freedom and sometimes health.  
  
A vivid metaphor for how busy it can be to work for ByteDance is a widely circulated joke among its employees: ByteDance and your heart, only one of them can "dance."  
  
An internal survey was purported to have been done by ByteDance as regards the removal of the weekly alternation. Interestingly, the results of the survey showed that one-third of the respondents are not in favor of the change, as the practice can mean higher overtime pay at the stressful yet high-yielding short video platform.  
  
Chinese netizen's reactions toward the overhaul were also mixed.   
  
"If weekends come back, a balanced work and life will also come back!" one netizen said on Friday.  
  
Another, who claimed to be a ByteDance employee, said they will suffer a 15 percent drop in salary due to the new rule.  
  
The announcement also makes ByteDance another major Chinese internet giant to revoke such a rule, after short video platform Kuaishou, Douyin's main rival. Kuaishou announced in late June that it would bid farewell to the alternating overtime, according to media reports.  
  
Its employees would work extra hours in accordance with actual needs and they would be paid overtime - double pay for work on weekends and triple pay for work during statutory holidays, according to the company.  
  
A workshop affiliated with Tencent's Interactive Entertainment Group reportedly unveiled an overhaul of its overtime management mechanism beginning on June 14. The mechanism set 6 pm as the end of the work day every Wednesday and 9 pm as the deadline to leave the office on other weekdays. Two rest days would be guaranteed on weekends, according to the workshop.  
  
Many industry players have interpreted the moves as a change of overtime culture among internet firms in China, and have called for more to join in to create a healthy competitive environment for all.