The overtime and decruitment phenomenon in the internet industry

Nowadays, although the internet companies earn a high profit, they suffered a high pressure to compete with their opponent. The effect is, they let their staffs do overtime working and lay off some unnecessary staffs. I’ll start at the overtime working, and Brain will talk about decruitment, but today he’s not here. I tried to connect with Brain but he didn’t reply me so far. Here’s a chart showing the latest closing time of the top ten Chinese internet companies in 2017:

There were nine different companies located in this chart. The earliest end time is later than 8:30 p.m., and the latest time is after 11 p.m. It will lead negative effects such as increase healthy problems and decrease productivity (circadian.com, n.d.). However, there are some people support to overtime working because they can earn extra overtime pay (Global Times, 2021).

There is a noun created by Chinese internet companies, which is “996”. It means people go to the office at 9 a.m., end their work at 9 p.m. and working 6 days a week (Yu, 2019, para1). Before 5 years, there were staffs from 58.com accused their company not compensated for 996 work time (para3). In the GitHub repository ‘996.icu’, we can find a name list contains over 200 Chinese companies which uses 996 work time. Although the authority of this name list is controversial, it reflects the 996-work time is a general phenomenon in Chinese internet companies. As Yu (2019) mentioned in para 7, the job that suffered most of the overtime working is web developer. Business development specialists, accountants, UI/UX designers, and IT architects are also victims. Actually, some department does not force their employee do overtime working, but these employees finish their work at a very late time. This is interesting, and I’m going to analyze the possible factors of the cause.

The one is staffs do overtime working voluntary. As Yu mentioned, some people can leave their office later than 11 p.m. and still feel good because they enjoy their work (2019, para11). It is not a matter to these people who are willing to do overtime working, but the problem is there are still some people who doesn’t want to overtime. When seeing his colleague do overtime working, they probably not to choose leaving the office. One of the reasons is these people who do overtime working can do more works than the people who don’t, and the manager will more appreciate to these people. The effect is these people will more possible to be promoted. However, every staff wants to be promoted, so if there is a one person do overtime working, others have to do overtime working to do more works, otherwise their performance would be lower than those do overtime working. That’s why there is not a rule of overtime working in a department, but staffs are actually do overtime working.

Another situation is, they have a high pressure to finish their work, and they have to do overtime working or they can’t do all of their work. This is like an instructor assigns too much homework to his students, and the students should do their homework until late night. The punish of not finishing homework to students is a low grade, and to workers is the risk to be fired. According to Yu (2019, para13), when a company facing a rat race, they might to ask their staff do overtime working to take advantage in the competition.

Higher salary is the factor drive people do overtime working as well (Yu, 2019, para23). The living cost in big cities is high, and workers should extend their working time to reduce their pressure of living. The most ridiculous is the manager enjoys to see his staffs working without break, and ask their staffs do overtime working (para19).

The disadvantage of overtime working is both on physical and mental health. For an extreme example reported by inf news (2021, para24), in the December of 2020, there were three workers died because overtime working in the same month. A worker from Fuzhou died when he attends the meeting of his company. Another worker from another company in Shanghai died on the sofa in his company. The third worker, when she finishes her work at 1:30 a.m., she died on her way home. It is contrary to the human rights of being healthy. In the official website of circadian.com (n.d.), overtime working can also cause high blood pressure, impaired performance and lowered attention, and decrease productivity. If people can’t stop overtime working, it will be more workers be harmed from overtime working, and the human rights of life and health can’t be ensured. Overtime working also takes away the personal time of workers. It is contrary to the human rights of manage their own life. The good news is that Chinese internet companies are aware of this problem and making changes. The Global News (2021, para2) reported that ByteDance has changed their working schedule to reduce overtime working.