

THE THREE-MINUTE MANAGER

My employees are burned out from too much work. How can I create a better environment?

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WHY SHOULD I BOTHER CHANGING OUR APPROACH?

→ I've had people tell me they haven't had a vacation in ten years. That's not good. You may not have had a physical vacation, but I know you've had a mental vacation. **No one can work ten years straight and not have his mind wander.** You need breaks to come back as a better employee.

→ **Happy people work harder and better.** These days we all want to join a company that cares about us, that lets us live fulfilling lives. The old model, like at GE, of sacrificing the bottom 10% of the workers will only drive people away and take a toll on the spirit of other employees.

→ **It's mostly about leading to better performance,** in all parts of life. I've worked with many companies on ways to integrate work and life better. One firm was able to save \$6 million by making simple changes like reducing the number of trips taken.

WHAT ARE SOME BASIC STEPS I CAN TAKE?

→ **Communicate the importance of working smart.** One thing that drives me crazy is if it's 4:15 and [a salaried employee] is done but he's just watching the clock so that when it's five he can walk out the door. Just leave! Make it clear to employees that it's okay. But be sure the job gets done.

→ Happiness is tied to having more free time, so give your employees more of it. Ask them to think about what work can be eliminated from the day. Chances are, **40% of what you do is useless.** There are often too many meetings, and you probably don't need to see half of your e-mails.

→ Don't look for one-size-fits-all solutions, like "From now on, everyone can work from home on Fridays." Those are disastrous, because one size does not fit all. **Look for solutions that help individuals.** If an employee wants to come in an hour later and give up his lunch hour, then try it.

HOW DO I MAKE SURE THE WORK STILL GETS DONE?

→ At Aflac, we have standard practices and objective measures. For example, in the call centers **we expect a certain number of calls to get taken.** So we watch those measures carefully. But what it really boils down to is, no one's trying to take advantage. We trust employees, and they trust us.

→ If you have to worry about employees getting their work done, **you haven't hired the right people,** and you haven't created the right culture. At Toyota's production plants, managers don't worry about how to get the job done. They worry about how to inspire their people to climb higher.

→ Say to your employees, "I want you to be experimenting in ways that are good for you and good for me. Try new things." If someone wants to shut off his BlackBerry between 6 and 9 two nights a week, try it for a month. **If it doesn't work, then go back.**

WHAT ABOUT MY OWN PRIORITIES?

→ Fifteen years ago my son was in the track and field state finals. It was during our annual analyst meeting. **I told everyone I was missing the final Q&A session,** and if they had any questions they had to find me on the first day and a half, before I left. Everyone was stunned, but I never looked back.

→ Think of devices like the BlackBerry as tools for saving time so we can **break the day into pieces.** You should be able to do what I did today: I got up at 5:30, worked all morning, and played tennis for three hours in the afternoon. I plan on working until 9:30 or 10—and then going out to dinner.

→ An integrated life is important at the very top too. Sit back and **think about changes you can make for yourself.** I worked with a senior executive on Wall Street who drove every day from Long Island to Manhattan. He decided to hire a driver so he could use the time more productively.

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