



Many Employees Moonlight

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According to the U.S. Labor Department, 5.4% of the workforce, or 7.9 million people hold multiple jobs. What does moonlighting mean to your organization?

By moonlight, and sunlight

Years ago, when a person held a second, part-time job it usually involved working at night or on weekends. Reasons for moonlighting varied, but more often than not it was connected to a desire for additional income.

Although there are still people in this category, the 21st century moonlighter is apt to have a different focus.

"What I find is that most people who are moonlighting or looking at moonlighting are just worried about the future," says John McKee, president and founder of BusinessSuccessCoach.net and author of the new book "Career Wisdom."

They are concerned about their companies and their roles at their companies, he explains. Moonlighting is a trend that has been impacting the service industry for some time, McKee says, and it now has moved into IT, finance, law, and medicine.

"The world is changing, and it has everything to do with the flattening of the world," he tells *HRWire*.

As globalization puts more jobs at risk, more people consider setting up their own businesses. However, when it comes to actually doing it, for most people, the process can be daunting. Enter another option.

"Moonlighting allows you to test the waters," McKee says.

Today's moonlighters

More people are testing the waters today, either by holding second jobs or exploring entrepreneurial opportunities. According to McKee, some of the motivation is the same. People want to take more control of the future, as opposed to assuming the future—that is, their employers—will take care of them.

McKee finds this is especially true of Generation X and Millennial workers.

"It's pretty clear that the younger generations are pretty savvy that lifetime employment is a myth," he tells HRWire.

The top two reasons people give for moonlighting are money and career satisfaction, but McKee thinks it ultimately comes down to income. "I think when you root it all out, money is the single biggest driver," he says.

McKee tells HRWire that his firm, which provides career coaching and business consulting, works with a lot of people who have made a lot of money and when they're faced with declining or loss of income they get more philosophical about their careers.

BusinessSuccessCoach.net advocates having a plan for your life. McKee indicates that the plan should take into account three areas of a person's life: career; personal and family situations; and financial situation, including long-term objectives. "Over 85% of people that call themselves very satisfied or satisfied do have a plan," McKee says.

When people contemplate moonlighting, he therefore recommends that people look at their life in total, in order to determine motivation and impact.

HR's role

The same advice could apply to HR when evaluating the moonlighting activities of company staff members.

Despite the prevalence of moonlighting policies, McKee finds HR often avoids confronting the issue. HR executives don't walk the talk when it comes to policy enforcement, he tells *HRWire*. As a result, moonlighting is very common at many organizations.

If there is no conflict of interest or overt corporate risk, like the disclosure of proprietary knowledge, HR may think it best to leave well enough alone. But reasons for moonlighting often are HR related.

McKee finds moonlighters tend to be underemployed. "They're capable of a bigger position with greater responsibility. They're stifled or feel stifled," he says.

What they seek is opportunity for advancement, and they frequently don't find it.

In BusinessSuccessCoach.net's experience, lack of opportunity seems to be more of an issue with female clients than male clients. Women are surprised to find roadblocks in place which they perceive as related to their gender, McKee says. Consequently, women are more inclined to pursue starting their own businesses, which they often explore by moonlighting.

Is there anything HR can do to address moonlighting without directly confronting employees? To reduce the likelihood that employees will moonlight because of job dissatisfaction, McKee says HR needs to be very involved in what's going on.

This isn't to say HR is running the company or running around constantly talking to everyone, he explains. HR can address moonlighting by being involved, by keeping an ear to the ground, by talking to people at all levels; by being proactive, McKee says.

At companies where human resource professionals know people by name and know them on different levels, he finds companies don't have job dissatisfaction issues.

And what about written moonlighting policies? "Most companies of any size have policies that say either thou shall not or which situations are acceptable," McKee says.

Since companies are concerned with loss of proprietary technology and creative development, these policies are necessary, he says. If someone is moonlighting and it involves a competitive situation or valuable secrets, policies provide a way to address the situation.

Going forward

Moonlighting is a trend that McKee expects will grow. He sees outsourcing as a major contributing factor.

Even when employees are not overtly impacted, in that their jobs haven't been outsourced or aren't necessarily in danger of being moved elsewhere, they are becoming increasingly aware of the global nature of work. McKee gives the example of the person who goes to a doctor and finds out that medical tests will be read in India. People get nervous about the implications of such practices, he says, and having a second job or exploring a second career provides an additional level of security.

And then there are financial issues. The declining housing market and the rising rate of foreclosures has brought to light the fact that average person spends 30 to 50% of his/her gross income on a mortgage. In recent years, adjustable rate mortgages have become very popular, McKee points out, indicating that the bulk of these are scheduled to adjust in about 18 months. In other words, housing woes are far from over.

Pressure to keep a home from foreclosure puts a massive burden on a person, McKee says. Under this kind of financial pressure, people often seek second jobs for additional income.

But it's not only employees facing dire financial situations who are impacted by an unstable economy. The turbulent stock market has also created concern, particularly for people looking toward retirement. One answer, for people in jobs of all types, appears to be moonlighting.

What's more, it seems no one is exempt from the lure of the moon. "I'm surprised at how senior a level I see people moonlighting at. Now you see very senior people either doing contract work behind the scenes or trying to get around their employment agreements," McKee says. "The MBA schools are doing a pretty good job about educating future leaders of corporations about contracts and how they can get around them."

It's all part of the new, look-out-for-number-one mindset. And while it creates challenges for HR from a management perspective, HR may have difficulty getting too upset about the practice.

The reason? It turns out HR professionals are also moonlighters.

There are no statistics about how prevalent moonlighting is among HR professionals, but the practice is actually one the Society for Human Resources (SHRM) recommends in its Consultants Forum as a way to test the consulting waters.

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