

# THE ENDGAME

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## The End of Boundaries

I can still see my dad bringing home an extra-large pizza as part of our Sunday-night tradition and fighting with (and losing) the battle with my brothers for the last slice. And then, as part of the same ritual, he would disappear into the den to work, because my father was a lifelong IBMer and so many at IBM back then recognized that while God may have rested on the seventh day, you didn't at the world's largest computer company.

I remember this because work-life balance issues are in the news often these days, and they can be pretty confusing.

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We hear a lot, for example, about how so many jobs today come with the expectation of working on Sundays—one survey found that 80 percent of employees feel increased work stress on Sunday nights. One CEO even bragged

about texting prospective job candidates at odds hours on Sunday, just to rule out those who don't respond quickly.

Yet at the same time, some companies and governments are considering four-day workweeks. As you have read in our magazine, at least one outfit in New Zealand reported a 20 percent jump in productivity when it cut its workweek to four eight-hour days but still paid for five days. More firms, meanwhile, are allowing people to work at home and creating better tech tools for these virtual offices—which only circles us back, of course, to a world where the tendency to work on weekends is only greater.

In short, the walls of work are coming down

everywhere we look, though they're quietly going up in other ways.

This isn't earth-shattering news for most corporate leaders, but the toll of disruption in any area has costs that are not always apparent. In a recent Korn Ferry survey, 36 percent of the employees surveyed expressed concerns about their large workloads and questioned whether their employers were helping them achieve a reasonable work-life balance. And with these feelings come a potentially costly retention issue: Among employees who are committed to staying with their current employers for more than five years, 72 percent say they are getting support for work-life balance. Among those who are thinking of leaving in the next year, only 40 percent do.

So in that sense, the message is clear. People understand that work-life harmony will always be a balancing act. But the best firms will balance all that out—sooner rather than later. ▀



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