

# Working 9 TO 5...6...7

Your boss always stays late. Does that mean you have to?

By ERIN COE

## YOU WORK HARD.

You're a team player. You believe in accountability. You have a good work ethic. You always deliver. And when the clock hits 17:01, you're out of the office like a shot. After all, you have worked your eight hours and it's time to go home. But ... you notice your boss is always still at her desk when you pack up. So you decide to hang around a bit - you don't want to be seen as a slacker, after all.

But is this really a good idea? Should you stay late simply because your boss is? Career coaches Obert Mandimutsira and Penny Holburn weigh in.

## Employee of the month

You may think staying late shows that you're dedicated to your job and committed to the company, but that's not always going to be how it's perceived. 'Your boss may actually conclude that you

lack self-organisation or self-leadership if you keep working late,' explains Obert. After all, why do you need so much extra time every day to finish your work? And, as Penny explains, 'Even if your boss is impressed that you stay late, if you don't have anything to show for it at the end of the day, someone up high is going to figure out your long work hours aren't translating into results.' And that's going to impact you more negatively than if you'd just gone home at 5 pm.

## Healthy living

Staying late can also have a negative impact on your health. After all, it's one thing hanging around for an extra 15 minutes, but if your boss is clocking up extra hours per day, you could have a problem. In fact, a study published in science journal *PLOS ONE* found that working at least 11 hours per day resulted in workers having a higher risk of depression than

those who worked a standard seven- or eight-hour day. 'If you're mimicking the working times of your boss, your work-life balance and, ultimately, your well-being will be out of kilter,' Obert explains. 'Too much work at the expense of other important things, such as family, can also eventually make you sick. While it may work for your boss, there is no guarantee it will work for you.' And is it really worth getting home late; missing dinner or not tucking your kids into bed because you're hanging out at the office unnecessarily? We're going to go with no.

## Boss lady

'In most jobs, it is your contribution that counts and not the time spent in the office, so focus on making a positive difference rather than clocking up a huge amount of hours.' That's advice from Penny - and Libby Allen, 33, a script manager, agrees. She says, 'I've had managers who've made me feel really

## OFFICE CULTURE

If there's an unwritten rule that you have to stay until the boss leaves, at least use that time wisely.

It may be tempting to spend the time scrolling through social media, watching cat videos, but Obert urges you to rather do something constructive. 'Use the time for reflection about the day you've just had. What worked and what didn't, and what you can try do better tomorrow.' Obert also recommends you reflect on your career and personal goals now and then. 'What are you doing towards achieving these goals - and what more could you be doing to take you to the next level of your career?' he asks.

scrutinised; it's debilitating. That's what clock-watching feels like to me: it disempowers my team; it tells them I don't view them as professionals. We have a healthy dynamic, and if someone on my team needs to leave early, they'll explain why and make up the time. If they leave before me, then I trust they have worked sufficient hours. In an age of flexi-time and time-sheets, I care about attitude and output. Not when you clock out.'

## Fake it till you make it

If you decide not to stay late, but are also concerned about the impression you're giving off and your boss not being happy with you, remember: there are other ways to project a hard-working image. Ask Michele Landers, 37. 'When I was younger, I used to enjoy working from 6 am to 3 pm, as I was more productive in the morning. Then one day a colleague jokingly said,

'Gosh, how do you manage to get away with leaving early every day?' It turns out, my colleagues didn't know that I was coming in early. I was mortified at being considered a slacker, so I started coming in at 9 am and leaving at 6 in the evening. Because I was now working the same times as everyone else, my presence was now obvious. Even though it was the same hours and the same workload, it didn't take long before I was began to get

commended for all my "additional hours". I had always been ambitious and committed to my job, but suddenly everyone started taking notice of me.' Penny, however, warns that playing games can backfire. 'When it comes to trying to impress, most people try too hard and it fails. Simply do your work and if you want your boss to know that you're working hard, then tell them. It's really that simple.' ■



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