

# Traditional virtues in a changing world

How and where will we work in the future? What kind of jobs will no longer have defined structures, workplaces and times? These questions can lead to heated discussion. But despite our two contributors' very different viewpoints and very different generations, they do have some common ground. Both value the 'traditional virtues' of respect and discipline.



"The education system's unimaginative approach to learning and its function mimic that of robots."

Jyoti Guptara (21) and his brother are co-authors of 'Calaspia', the fantasy bestseller. He was one of 28 young talents who took part in the six-week Palomar5 Innovation Camp in Berlin, which was themed "The Working Environment of Tomorrow".

Photo: Carolin Seeliger

## Opportunities

### A question of discipline

Pioneering thinkers have long been predicting the demise of the nine-to-five working day. This demise still hasn't come about, owing to the conservative, cowardly mindset of society. That is, however, set to change. Look at me, for example: at 15, I left high school, and became an unpublished "freelance" author. Since then, my novels have made it to the market, although the journey was always more important than the destination.

I wanted to escape from the unimaginative education system, which despite the Internet, globalization, and the postindustrial revolution, still equips people with only the basic skills, creating cogs for the money-making machines. This system molds entire generations, perpetuating the nine-to-five mentality.

It's no surprise that this approach to learning, and its function, mimic that of robots. Robots are easier to program than people, so how many of us will continue working as we do today in the future? So the question should be: can people better serve their company when they are happier and more flexible? Or rather: how should the business world change in order to support people so that they can be productive and creative? After all, the ultimate purpose of a chosen profession is not to earn money, but to develop as a person.

The "shift work" mentality of factories, influenced by Frederick Winslow Taylor's scientific management concept, has infiltrated the office world so that employees work, network and talk to each other during working hours. That was very efficient, in an old-fashioned way. International business in various time zones, with cheap communications and travel, free us from this structural monopoly. Would you rather be controlled by your work, or be in control of your work?

Clearly, everyone has different mental and physical rhythms. Some people are early birds, others night owls. Ideas may come to you in the shower. Variety nurtures innovation, yet the shared staff experience, the sense of community, must not be neglected. It calls for more discipline to be your own boss, for reasons of inertia, not laziness. The bottom line is yes to flexibility, no to lack of structure.

In my opinion, the debate over where and when people work is long overdue, and it doesn't go far enough in view of the coming revolutions. We have to look at the issue in a much more fundamental way. We have to decide whether mankind is made for work or work for mankind.

Link: [www.twins.guptara.net](http://www.twins.guptara.net)

Risks

## A question of respect

We are experiencing a new revolution. Our world of work is fast being reshaped by the information and knowledge society. The Internet, in conjunction with increasingly fast broadband networks, enables a liberated 'work where you want' approach. Sooner or later, we'll have a Work 2.0 community, where access to data and information is possible anytime and anywhere. But does that lead directly to greater knowledge, ideas and innovations?

The question is: what kind of work is necessary in order to have long-term success in the face of global competition? How can we retain value creation in all its facets within our own country – from the creative economy to the energy industry, from manufacturing to the services sector? This is only possible if not everyone works exclusively with computers and digitized information – some activities will still need to remain, literally, hands-on. This brings home the message: whether in a factory or in logistics, in the police or in a hospital, there will still be something called regular working hours, even if it comprises three shifts, around the clock.

Only the office, if anywhere, is displaying signs of a disintegrating working day. But there are two factors preventing everyone from working on the

move or from home, being fully time-flexible. First of all, not everybody is creative, nor do they want to be. And that is a good thing. Because for an idea to make it to the marketplace, you need people who have other skills, who deal with nuts and bolts, not just bits and bytes. The rule of thumb for all value creation is: five percent innovation, 95 percent perspiration. And it has much to do with cause and effect, which requires the close collaboration of people, process standards and shared experience. These are good reasons for meeting face-to-face, to jointly develop ideas and find solutions.

Secondly, the desire to work without predefined time, place or structure is less a question of generation than of mindset. Many find working from home, and going to the office only if really necessary, very appealing. However, people's interpretations of the ideal work-life balance differ considerably. I think it's important to make it possible for people to decide for themselves how they want to work, what they think is useful for the work process, and to respect this choice. To say that 'nine-to-five' is on the way out for all industries and types of workers ignores the realities of the labor market and the economy.

Link: [www.iao.fraunhofer.de](http://www.iao.fraunhofer.de)



Photo: Berthold Steinhilber

### Join the discussion

We would like to hear your opinion.

Simply send an email to:

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