

MANY POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR ALLEVIATING WORKLOAD STRAIN RAISE MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS.

What?

A study titled, Responding to 'Relentless Growth' of the Radiologist's Workload, found that:

- “A well-created AI tool will result in increased radiologist efficiency but this increase in efficiency has not translated into regained time, Instead, it has increased pressure on radiologists to interpret more studies.”
- Although workload and duty limits have the potential to relieve workload pressure, it's unclear how to implement them in a way that would be effective for all radiologists. A mandated limit may be set too high and still result in the radiologists at the lower end of the curve being pushed beyond their limits and therefore becoming unsafe,

It seems that while solutions such as AI, disconnecting from work, and limiting work and duty volume are supposed to reduce the workload, they also add some pressure on the worker. If we focus on AI, for example, we notice that:

1. AI has been touted as reducing workload, making employees' lives easier, and creating room for individuals to do more “meaningful” work. This study demonstrates that the opposite can actually occur. Instead, the following can happen
 1. Employees feel pressured (as seen above) to find more and different work to meet quotas and expectations
 2. Employers leverage the gained time to increase capacity/workloads, basically making the AI an additional employee instead of an enhanced assistant to a human employee
 3. Employees don't know how to properly leverage the AI or dismiss it out of fear or defensiveness, and end up experiencing more stress and anxiety trying to keep up manually
 4. Employees see AI as a competition and experience more stress and anxiety
2. AI is simply a tool. Workplace and workload strategies are a philosophy. Until employers and organizations veer from “productivity first”, employees are less likely to escape the high volume workloads despite AI's existence. Instead, as mentioned, companies will use AI and the human employee unto their limits.

So What?

The study in question presents two currents of thought: the first is that AI is supposed to lighten the workload of the employee while increasing his efficiency, the 2nd that the best solution is more of a philosophical nature. Dr Sebro, a radiologist said that: “We need leaders who seek to enhance science and innovation in the field in a way that improves workload issues, while enhancing accuracy and safety among radiologists”. In other words, AI could be the solution, but it needs to be monitored or framed by managers.

This opinion suggests that AI may not be the solution or, worse, may cause of more trouble than we realize. If so, what would or could be the consequences of an AI that, instead of improving the employee's professional situation in terms of workload, would cause of new or additional stress, burnout, more turnover? What if, rather than freeing employees and their mind, it imprisons them? What would be the best AI/employee match in this case? More precisely, how do you see the future of workload? How can the workload might be reshaped?

References

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IS WORKING 9-TO-5 NO MORE RELEVANT?

What?

In the early 1900s, Henry Ford proposed an eight-hour workday to lure workers to his company. At that time, most workers were accustomed to twelve-hour workdays. For the workers, this hourly reduction felt, essentially, like an offer for additional time off. At that time, maximum output was the key to success (“The more people you had and the longer they worked, the better because it meant more output” as Kelly Teng, a content strategist, from The Vector Impact, says.). Nowadays, automation, technological advances, remote-work have changed the situation. Production rests less on human shoulders and more on machines. While there are still jobs that involve manual labor, modern jobs require us to solve complex problems, collaborate with others, or focus on the task at hand. Office workers work longer hours way into the night and during weekends. These are some of the considerations that led Aytakin Tank, Founder and CEO of JotForm, and Jack Kelly, founder of WeCruitr, to say that working from 9 to 5 is no longer ideal.

A Microsoft Study found that white-collar workers have three productivity peaks in their workday, or a “triple peak day”: just before lunch, just after lunch and in the late evening. 30% of workers, who allowed Microsoft to track their keyboard events, showed a third mountain of work in the evening. Working in the evening or working longer hours might be related to the flexibility of at-home work. For example, parents of young kids might interrupt their workday or cut it off early for school pickup, dinnertime, bedtime, and other child care. This leaves a lot of work for them to finish later. On the other hand, at home, work is especially leaky: leisure seeps into work and work seeps into leisure. Another reason for working in the evening is that white-collar work has become a bonanza of meetings. During the day, they attend many meetings and have to work in the evening to meet expectations. Meetings require the presence of everyone at the same time and many office works can be at least asynchronous. Reflecting on that, Hernandez, a researcher at Microsoft, says that the future of work requires that we think about what work should be real-time and what should be anytime.

So What?

Jack Kelly, founder of WeCruitr, says: “[Working 9-to-5 is an antiquated relic from the past and should be stopped right now.](#)” He adds, “Being stuck inside of an office for hours on end feels antiquated and barbaric to the younger workers.” From his remarks, we can therefore ask ourselves if a reorganization of work schedules is necessary to accommodate young workers, perhaps it would be better to give them the opportunity to plan their work schedule? “With a bit of flexibility, workers can determine when they do their best work, and then plan accordingly”. – recommend Aytakin Tank Javier.

A study, conducted by Vouchercloud, a leading UK money saving brand that surveyed 1,989 UK office workers, found that the average office worker is only productive for [2 hours and 53 minutes per workday](#). If these productive hours include the moments where the worker has their productivity peaks as found by Microsoft Study, considering all that is written above and considering the post-pandemic options for the future of work

(remote work, telecommuting, hybrid, back to office), what might be the ideal working hours and the ideal length of the working day? What can be the consequences, what impact could this have on performance, on work-life balance, on employee well-being?

References

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WORKLOAD SCALING: THE FUTURE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

What?

The various responsibilities, demands, duties and obligations to which an individual is subject vary over time, both in their personal and professional lives. Everyone tries to maximize the time they spend at work, both as an employee and an employer, so that they can enjoy their free time. It is therefore in the interest of both the employee and the employer to determine when a person works best and when they do not. A new model of work management that analyzes people's energy and productivity, called "workload scaling," is advocated. This model aims to spread an employee's workload over a period of time. At times this means that employees will have a workload of more than 100% during a certain period of time, equal to 100% during another, and less than 100% during the 3rd period. All of this eventually balances out. For example, in 3 years, a person could have a workload of 120% in the first year, 100% in the second, and 80% in the third.

So what?

Scaling workloads could mean doing roughly the same amount of work spread over a working life. According to Gary Martin, CEO of the Australian Institute of Management, scaling workloads should help optimize an individual's health and well-being, reduce the risk of burnout, and improve productivity in the workplace. Careful workload planning is therefore necessary, especially since there are significant challenges involved, such as accounting for unforeseen events such as sick leave, work emergencies, or employee turnover.

Questions:

1. Can workload scaling be applied in the public service? If so, what might be the impact?
2. What else do you see as the future of flexible working? What might drive it? What would be the implications and consequences?