

Why Hustle Culture Is the Most Dangerous Lie Founders Still Believe

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Death by overwork. In Japan, they call this phenomenon “karoshi,” a term coined to capture the ultimate cost of the “rise and grind” hustle culture – the human life.

With 70% of the C-suite reporting they’re seriously considering finding another career, turnover costs due to employee burnout have reached a staggering \$322 billion globally. Add burnout being linked to a host of physical and mental health struggles, from depression to heart disease and it’s not a far reach to theorize that something isn’t working.

Undoubtedly, there’s always another goal to crush, but is it worth working until we quite literally...drop? Are our greater efforts leading to greater rewards, or are we simply paying a price we never intended to pay?

Related: [Why Hustle and Work-Life Balance Are 2 Clichés I Wish Would Go Away](#)

How did we get here?

While hustle culture didn’t happen overnight, by 2015, the average full-time worker in the United States was logging a 47-hour workweek. Somewhere between Silicon Valley tech startups, the explosion of the gig economy in the early 2010s and the rise of social media influencers, overwork became a normalized way of life. Not only did the emergence of startups

like Apple and Facebook glamorize the full-throttle, no-excuses grind, but after the 2007-2009 recession, hustling felt like a lot more than a mindset – it became a survival tactic.

Wanting to prove our worth, we listened as influencers like Grant Cardone or Gary Vaynerchuk told us from their G-Wagons that the recipe for success was to grind harder. As our physical, mental and emotional resources were slowly sapped, what we once valued was forced to take a backseat. Wellness, relationships and sleep be damned. Just a little more hard work, more hours, more networking, more output, more...more. After all, our worth was measured in the number of hours we worked, wasn't it? If hashtags were to be believed, #sleepisfortheweak.

Soon, we were a caricature of our former selves, swimming in a sea of sameness fueled by adrenaline, caffeine and the latest “self-improvement” mantra we picked up on TikTok. After all, if we were going to reach that unreachable dream, someone had to pay the cost.

Does hustle culture deliver what it promises?

Earlier this year, Elon Musk posted on X that “Very few...actually work the weekend, so it's like the opposing team just leaves the field for two days! Working the weekend is a superpower.” Twelve hours later, the world learned that the DOGE employees were working a staggering 120 hours a week.

Was Musk right? Does working more hours give us superhuman powers, or does his “simple math” fail to add up? Let's take a closer look.

- A Stanford University study found that overwork comes with diminishing returns. Logging more than 55 hours a

week actually decreases your productivity.

- According to Gallup, the risk of burnout for engaged employees doubles when an employee works 45 hours or more per week, with the risk climbing even higher for employees who aren't engaged in their jobs.
- After recognizing burnout as a global health issue in 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that working long hours can put you at a significantly higher risk of stroke and heart disease.
- According to another study, the life of an entrepreneur doubles your risk of depression and triples your chances of becoming an addict – all thanks to factors we've normalized, like the stress and isolation of the job.

Despite these alarming statistics, new findings show a shift is happening. While the Baby Boomers may still be stuck sipping on the hustle-culture Kool-Aid, younger generations like millennials and Gen Z are increasingly prioritizing healthier lifestyles and work-life balance over a bigger paycheck.

In fact, work-life balance is their number one priority when choosing a new job, with millennials leading the charge. In other words, they're waking up and realizing there's truth to Dolly Parton's words: You don't have to "get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life."

Related: Hustle Culture Is Lying to You – and Derailing Your Business

How to de-hustle your way to a life worth living

I don't know about you, but if my #alwaysbeclosing mantra has me so locked in that I'm on the fast track to barely recognizing myself, are all those late-night hours still the badge of honor I thought they were? If I hustle my way from an

abundant life with loved ones to a one-man show, will my “success” really justify the cost of what I’ve lost? If relentless stress has my mental health nosediving, are soaring profits truly worth making short work of the one life I’ve got?

Seven years ago, I decided I was done being another mindless cog in the hustle machine. I’d taken a hard look at what I’d become and realized I no longer recognized the man in the mirror. I’d lost my authenticity, what made me...me. My creativity was sapped, and my work was essentially a carbon copy of my colleagues. My hustling hadn’t just cost my creativity – it had cost my company, my customers, my relationships and my well-being. It was time to de-hustle my life.

No, I didn’t decide to take up forest bathing or goat yoga, but I did integrate a set of “de-hustling” principles I still follow today. Adopting these hasn’t just transformed how I live, but they’ve been a game-changer in how I run my business. It turns out that de-hustling didn’t kill my business – it’s increased our revenue every year by at least 30%.

A real hustler operates like this:

- Works no more than 30 hours per week and often enjoys three-day weekends
- Prioritizes time with loved ones and themselves
- Keeps work as a second, third or fourth priority
- Explores diverse cultures and ideas to develop a richer intellect
- Rejects systems and recipes for chasing the dollar
- Operates with true strategy and purpose, where every action is connected to a measurable outcome
- Leads with empathy and compassion

In the end, adopting a living-first mentality isn’t about

dreaming smaller or capping your potential. It's about slowing down, ditching the autopilot of the grind and being intentional and efficient. It's about caring for ourselves and choosing presence over the quick plateaus of performance. It's about spending time with those we love and doing the things that make us feel alive. It's about building a life and business without sacrificing what matters most at the altar of rhetoric disguised as self-improvement.

Welcome to de-hustling – where your life as a real hustler begins.

Death by overwork. In Japan, they call this phenomenon “karoshi,” a term coined to capture the ultimate cost of the “rise and grind” hustle culture – the human life.

With 70% of the C-suite reporting they're seriously considering finding another career, turnover costs due to employee burnout have reached a staggering \$322 billion globally. Add burnout being linked to a host of physical and mental health struggles, from depression to heart disease and it's not a far reach to theorize that something isn't working.

Undoubtedly, there's always another goal to crush, but is it worth working until we quite literally...drop? Are our greater efforts leading to greater rewards, or are we simply paying a price we never intended to pay?

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/how-to-quit-the-hustle-grind-before-it-breaks-you/493055>