

CHAPTER 13

THE LEISURE MOVEMENT

“It has been computed by some political arithmetician that if every man and woman would work for four hours each day on something useful, that labor would produce sufficient to procure all the necessaries and comforts of life, want and misery would be banished out of the world, and the rest of the twenty-four hours might be leisure and happiness.”

~ Benjamin Franklin

A REVOLUTION of sorts is taking place around the world. It may be quieter than the discontents you read about in the World section of your morning paper, but it’s gaining momentum nonetheless. This uprising is about work, and the time that we spend there. If forty hours a week is full-time, what is sixty hours a week? The Happy Unemployed in Germany don’t want to know. Neither do the freeters in Japan or the Slow Food aficionados in Italy.

Recognizing that the work ethic has been hijacked by an overwork ethic, politicians in many industrialized countries are broadening their base by proposing family- and time-friendly legislation such as a four-day workweek. Even in the productivity-obsessed United States, those who favor more balance are organizing and speaking with a more cohesive voice. We call the force behind these global groups the Leisure Movement.

The core advocates are striving for shorter work hours, but the Leisure Movement circle encompasses campaigns aimed at creating a healthier work-life balance for all. The broadest rings include environmentalists, recreationalists, simplicity-seekers, slow movers, slow cities, and even enthusiastic nappers. ¡Viva la siesta!

If you’re looking for leisure for your amigos as well as for yourself, these grassroots initiatives are calling you home.

**shorter hours,
better results,
no extra cost**

Kellogg's

Replaced eight-hour shifts with six-hour shifts, which created jobs, increased production, raised morale, and lowered accident and insurance rates. Six-hour pay rose to eight-hour pay in just one year. The six-hour day survived until 1984.

Ideal Industries

A four-day, 38-hour week at 40-hour pay decreased absenteeism.

United Service Automobile Association

As hours went down, so did turnover and mistakes. Sales, morale, and efficiency all went up.

Medtronic

Paid employees at the 40-hour level for 36 hours of work. Even without hiring more workers, output increased.

Nestlé

Ending the workweek at 2:30pm on Fridays gave employees more time to see the doctor, drop by the market, or skedaddle out of town for the weekend.

SHORTER WORK HOURS

With a world of leisurely pursuits out there to be discovered, it's only natural to want more hours in the day. Alas, the workweek in the United States is 20% longer than it was in 1970. The average working American now spends just under 2,000 hours a year on the job, a full 30% more than the average German. Thank goodness for the folks lobbying for a shorter workweek!

The Basic Gist

According to its proponents, a legislated shorter workweek would ease unemployment, increase wages and improve productivity. If forty people working a 30-hour week can produce as much as thirty people working a 40-hour week, you've created ten more jobs and forty people who are more rested, happier at home and more efficient in the office.

"People working about six hours a day are the most productive people around!" reports Tracy Geraghty, a Master in Public Policy and board member of **Take Back Your Time** (www.timeday.org). Indeed, entire books have been written on the success of Kellogg's six-hour day (see *Kellogg's Six-Hour Day* by Benjamin K. Hunnicutt). Initiated at the time of the Great Depression, the company policy remained until the late 1980s, when it died a political death even though it remained a clear success for employer and employees alike.

Despite the success of these experiments, the Shorter Hours Movement in this country could use some help catch-

ing up with the movement in Europe. There were certainly enough overworked Americans in the last boom economy—surely some of us who've taken sabbaticals are now sold on having a better balance in life.

Productivity

Many European countries have enacted shorter workweeks during the last half-century. Opponents cite productivity declines in Europe since World War II as evidence that a shorter week doesn't work.

"Come again?" say the shorter hours folk. If you divide hours worked by total output, you'll find that Europeans are *more* productive per hour. They do produce less in absolute terms than American workers, but only because they work a shorter year. Danes, Fins and the Dutch work notably short weeks; all are more productive per hour than Americans. Interestingly, workweek declines in Northern Europe coincide almost perfectly with steep declines in religious observance. Bye bye Protestant work ethic, hello leisure!

HE HAD A DREAM

"This country is changing. We had a 58-hour week, a 48-hour week, a 40-hour week. As machines take more and more of the jobs of men, we are going to find the workweek reduced, and we are going to find people wondering what they should do. I want to make it possible, and you do—make it possible for them to see green grass, to travel throughout this great, rich country of ours, not just in other parts of the world, but here in the United States, where I have seen parts of this country which are second to none, to any in the world, and where too many people east of the Mississippi are unaware of what golden resources we have in our own United States."

*~ President John F. Kennedy
remarks at the dedication of the
Whiskeytown, California, Dam and
Reservoir, September 28, 1963*

i could do this in my sleep

It should come as no surprise that rested employees perform better than zombies. Fatigue studies have been documenting that fact since the 1920s. Most people who work seven 50-hour weeks in a row accomplish nothing more than when they work seven 40-hour weeks in a row, one work-time study found.

Sounds like a lot of wasted time to us.

What's worse, those long weeks create domestic discord. "The '40-hour week' was enacted at a time when most families had one wage-earner," notes shorter work fan Pat Hallihan, a systems administrator in Chicago, Illinois. "When both spouses work, it becomes eighty hours per week per family. Daycare has become the norm and weekends are when you clean. Vacations are when you fix your house and car."

That's why Pat favors a *six*-day workweek: each spouse works three 10-hour days.

Pat's solution could give us a bit more shut-eye *and* turn domestic diss back into domestic bliss.

Yes, time off is productivity's friend, as scads of evidence show. Even in the U.S., numerous companies have breathed new life into their workers by granting them at least three weeks' vacation. A generous vacation policy can conquer high employee turnover and chronic overtime in a single stroke. Vacation goes up, profits balloon, morale skyrockets—it's the classic win-win-win.

Shorter work aficionado Erik Rauch points out, "The most important thing is not how fast productivity is growing, but that productivity is already high enough to sharply reduce working hours while maintaining a high material standard of living. We don't need to wait for future productivity increases—the necessary increases have already happened." In other words, we actually *could* have more hours in the day.

The Health Costs

Downsizing, long hours and unrealistic demands lead to overwork, which burdens the public health care system to the extent that a recent Canadian study recommends governments should consider tax incentives for employers who promote healthy workplace practices. And you can see why—health problems resulting from work overload cost the Canadian provincial governments six billion Canadian dollars a year. "Oh yeah?" says one shorter work time advocate. "I recently read that U.S. companies lose four *hundred* billion annually due to stress related to overwork." However you count, it doesn't add up.

GAME BOYS (& GIRLS)

The **International Game Developers Association** (www.igda.org) sponsored a white paper after a quality of life survey uncovered some alarming findings: “crunch time” was rampant (more than 35% of workers logged in between 65 and 80 hours a week, but only 50% or so received overtime pay), and turnover was crazy (only 3.4% of respondents had co-workers with more than ten years’ experience).

The survey gave the gaming industry a big wake up call on keeping their workers animated.

U.S. video game studios are now morphing one by one from notorious sweatshops where game bangers sleep under their desks into more responsible companies that focus as much on keeping employees healthy as they do on keeping them at work. **BioWare** (www.bioware.com), **Firaxis** (www.firaxis.com), **Blue Fang** (www.bluefang.com) and **Cyberlore** (www.cyberlore.com) are among the growing number of game companies who realize that a happy developer will develop a better game, stick around longer, and maybe even train some new recruits.

The Shorter Work Time List







Robert Bernstein, coordinator for the **Shorter Work Time** email list, read Bertrand Russell’s *In Praise of Idleness* when he was a college student in the 1970s and has been hooked on work hours ever since. “I see it as a fundamental issue that ties together all of the other issues I consider to be important,” he says. “I wrote a one-page summary of the interconnections of these issues about ten years ago and I think they are as valid as ever.” If you’d like to join the cause, Robert invites you to join the **SWT List** (www.swt.org).

Take Back Your Time

It’s widely known that Americans work more than Europeans—350 more hours a year, on average. Translate that into workweeks (about nine), start from the end-of-the-year holidays and count backward. You’ll hit October 24th, the date that workers around the world will celebrate “Take Back Your Time Day.”



the time to care agenda

-  Guaranteed paid child-birth leave for all parents
-  Guaranteed paid sick leave of at least one week for all workers
-  Three weeks of paid annual vacation leave for all workers, guaranteed
-  A cap on compulsory, employer-imposed overtime
-  Parity and prorated benefits for part-time workers
-  A holiday on Election Day

“Let’s bring the United States up to the standards already in place in all other industrial countries,” the **Time Day** agenda reads (www.timeday.org), “thereby creating more jobs and improving our health, families, community and civic life and environment. We call upon elected officials and candidates of all political parties to support this free time agenda.”

The activists who organize this annual consciousness-raising event hope to challenge the “epidemic of overwork, overscheduling and time famine” in this country by encouraging folks to celebrate with barbecues, family-friendly events, and plenty of conversation on the topic of time poverty. Of course, you may have to play hooky to do so....

Similar to Earth Day, which brought so much attention to environmental causes, Time Day is fast becoming the stage on which to speak out in favor of more free time, and the Take Back Your Time organization has already brought several time groups under its umbrella. The “It’s About Time!” coalition and its “Time To Care” public policy agenda propose protections for overworked Americans that they say are long overdue. The coalition urges public officials to put their “family values” mumbo jumbo where their mouths are and seriously address the critical issue of time poverty, as the American public policies protecting our family and personal time fall far short of those in other countries.

Time Day is gaining ground in large part due to the appeal, competence and straight talk of Take Back Your Time’s National Coordinator John de Graaf and Program Director Gretchen Burger. “It’s time America caught up to the rest of the world in terms of balance for working families, which in the end benefits everybody,” says Gretchen. “Time is a value that builds strong relationships and strong families, which in turn create strong communities.”

For more information, check out www.timeday.org and the book *Take Back Your Time*, edited by John de Graaf.

The Work to Live Campaign

“There’s no rest for the weary,” says Joe Robinson, author of *Work to Live* and founder of the **Work to Live** campaign (www.worktolive.info). The guilt, fear and lack of support that keep employees from taking vacation—sometimes vacation that they are contractually entitled to—has motivated Robinson to crusade for sensibility.

In addition to the many tips Joe arms his readers with (“break the Office Commandments that fuel overwork” for example), Joe lobbies single-mindedly for anyone who has been employed for more than a year to have the right to three weeks of paid vacation. Other industrialized nations have at least that—why shouldn’t the world’s “superpower” be powerful enough to guarantee the same? Robinson says that reforming the Fair Labor Standards Act to entitle workers to paid vacation is the only way to curb the mindtrip that has many believing they’ll lose their jobs if they take time off.

Work to Live campaigns in cahoots with the Take Back Your Time team to lobby politicians like Senator Ted Kennedy, who, along with Senator Orrin Hatch, introduced winning legislation declaring October 2003 “National Work and Family Month.”

The legislation called for discussion and action to improve the balance between work and family time in America. We hope politicians, from mayors to the President, finish the “discussion” part soon—and get on with the action.

Politricks

As well-organized and charismatic as the shorter-work-time activists are, you might have noticed a deafening silence from inside the D.C. beltway. Yes, the declaration of National Work and Family Month was passed unanimously, but politicians are all too aware that one of the biggest obstacles to gaining a shorter workweek, as well as more flex-time and part-time work, is the cost to U.S. employers for employer-provided healthcare coverage. Hiring more people working fewer hours apiece would add a bundle to a company’s cost of providing standard employee benefits, as things work right now. Thus, systemic work-hours reform touches on one of the most contested political issues of the day: universal healthcare.

“It is no coincidence that the European countries have universal healthcare and shorter work time,” one shorter-work advocate notes. Making healthcare administration a public service would go far in paving the way toward a shorter workweek in the U.S.

But it’s not like shorter-work-time advocates haven’t claimed *any* political victories. Activists did succeed in derailing proposed changes to overtime laws that would have enabled employers to extract overtime work without overtime pay. The extra work would have been compensated for with more time off, which sounds reasonable—until you read the small print, which says that comp time could have been deferred for up to thirteen months, at the employers’ discretion.

For every one letter or email they receive on a particular issue, politicians assume a hundred or more voters feel the same way but didn’t write. In other words, your message to your senator about family-friendly work legislation carries weight. So pick up that pen! For a list of U.S. senate committee members and contact information, go to www.senate.gov, “Committees.” For national congressional representatives, search by your zip code at www.house.gov.

The Genuine Progress Indicator

Did you know that Simon Kuznets, the man who invented the concept of the Gross National Product, warned against using it as a measure of national welfare? We didn’t either. But seeing as how the GNP (which evolved into the Gross Domestic Product, or GDP) counts natural disasters as good for the economy, you can bet something’s all wet. Recovery and rebuilding activity means money is changing hands, which makes cash flow look good, but what about the balance sheet? Floods and hurricanes destroy a lot of assets, something that GDP doesn’t reflect.

Enter alternative measures of national welfare that move away from using cash churn to measure well-being and instead take into account the fact that a dollar in the hands of someone in poverty is worth more to that person than that same dollar in the hands of, say, Bill Gates. Not to get too Socialist here, but a little Robin Hood action could actually make everyone happier.

One such alternate measure is the Genuine Progress Indicator, or GPI. The GPI shows the number of hours per week that an average full-time employee’s workweek could be reduced if productivity

were applied to time rather than increased output. In other words, it shows how much time you could spend somewhere other than work if your boss took into account that you were actually producing more in fewer hours.

From there, you can calculate the Disposable Time Index (DTI), which shows how much worktime could shrink if consumption stayed the same from year to year, rather than continually growing, as it does now. Note that it has risen faster, cumulatively, than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over recent years.

Year	Work Reduction Equivalent	DTI	CPI
1996	1.2 hours	2.8%	3.0
1997	1.0 hours	2.3%	2.3
1998	1.1 hours	2.6%	1.6
1999	1.1 hours	2.6%	2.2
2000	1.3 hours	3.0%	3.4
2001	0.5 hours	1.1%	2.8
2002	2.1 hours	4.8%	1.6

“People fail to realize the enormous potential of productivity,” says Erik Rauch, who tabulates the DTI. “Think of the material standard of living in 1990—do the improvements since then make you that much happier? Then consider that, with productivity having gone up forty-four percent since then, it now takes twenty-nine hours to produce the goods and services that it took forty hours to produce in 1990. So people should be able to work twenty-nine hours a week with hardly any material disadvantage. Every single year, the increase in productivity makes it possible to shave one or two hours off the workweek while keeping the same living standard.”

Nice work if you can get it. Erik freely admits that not everyone has the flexibility to work less than full-time, not to mention the cost to employers. Still, he sees the DTI and GPI as a “preview of what could be more widely available with this bonanza of increased productivity that technology has brought us over the last hundred years—if only our economy would get its priorities straight.”

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

The Work Less Party

Spearheaded by colorful Canadian Conrad Schmidt, **The Work Less Party** (www.worklessparty.ca) is Canada’s newest political squad, complete with candidates for office. They campaign for shorter work

hours from their headquarters in Vancouver—and insert a large dose of play into their activism.

They celebrate Leisurely Yours Day at least twice a year, more often if they can. Laudatory activities include enforcing the pace (the Work Less Constable, accompanied by his pet turtle on a leash, cites those who are rushing down a busy shopping street “at scandalous speeds”) and relaxing in their “living room” (complete with sofas, easy chairs, magazines, lemonade, cookies and a coffee table—smack dab in the middle of the business district).

Send a “Leisurely Yours Day” e-greeting any day of the year by visiting their home page, then “Past Events,” “Leisurely Yours Day,” and “Send A Leisurely Yours Day Greeting.”

leisure today, leisure everyday!

Consecrated in San Francisco, the now-international **Day of Leisure** marks a once-a-year commemoration of leisure and leisurely pursuits. Mark your calendar for the fourth Friday in June and enjoy a day of relaxation and personal fulfillment. Take the afternoon off—heck, take off the whole day! Nothing’s wrong with playing a little hooky now and then.

International Day of Leisure
(www.dayofleisure.com)

If you’ve been feeling like a cog in a wheel or a rat in a cage, act out by joining in on a Work Less Party Rat Race. The Rat Race courses through a number of obstacles such as being scolded by a supervisor with managerial aspirations, and traveling down the Boulevard of Lost Dreams. You don’t have to train for this event. Just arrive at the starting point wearing business attire. Whiskers and tails will be provided.

Operating under the slogan “Alarm Clocks Kill Dreams,” the Work Less Party has created a three-day weekend calendar, the first of its kind in the world, and is the first political party whose platform favors personal growth versus continued industrial growth as a better

solution to the world's social and environmental problems. "Instead of working so hard to make an endlessly growing stream of consumer goods that just land up in landfills polluting the environment and destroying our lives," they say, "it's now time for things that are not only good for us but good for the planet as well; music, art, leisure, community, family, sanity and what's wrong with a little clean air?" Yep, breathing works for us.

Work Your Proper Hours Day

Due to weaker laws, lack of enforcement, increased "white collar" work where overtime is not paid, and a "long hours culture," workers in the United Kingdom log in the longest hours in Europe. That's why the Trades Union Congress (TUC, the umbrella for Britain's trade unions) created **Work Your Proper Hours Day** (www.workyourproperhoursday.org). The holiday usually hits in late February, marking the first day of the year when the average employee who works unpaid overtime stops working for free. Many managers don't start earning money for their time until closer to the end of March.

The cousin to Take Back Your Time Day, Proper Hours Day brings the "It's About Time" campaign across the Atlantic. It's about time to remind your boss how much firms rely on unpaid overtime, the TUC's **workSMART** website (www.worksmart.org.uk) points out. On proper hours day, arrive on time (not early), eat a decent lunch (at a table, not a desk), and leave when you're meant to—preferably off to somewhere where your boss will buy you coffee or a cocktail. "More than five million people at work in the United Kingdom regularly do unpaid overtime, giving their employers £23 billion of free work every year," says the TUC. "If you're one of them, why not take some time to reflect on how well (or badly) you're balancing your life?"

A festive short-time site, workSMART offers e-Cards and free poster downloads, and invites employees to trip the Boss-A-Gram machine to remind their bosses—anononymously, of course—of the holiday. Their unpaid overtime calculator will help you figure how many days you work for free.

Send it to a friend, then ring them up and go for a pint. After all, it's up to you to lead the charge: work your proper hours!



**WORK YOUR
PROPER
HOURS DAY
FRI 25 FEB**

i am leisure, hear me roar

Arm yourself with advice from the experts and you'll be in the best position to work less and live more.

"Seriously consider, and prepare how to handle, how work itself might change if there's less of it—as in, 'What's the chance my boss will relegate me to the filing closet after a few months of this?'" time expert Tracy Geraghty counsels.

"Since our culture and workplaces require work-leisure choices to be arranged through private and often personality-driven negotiations," she says, "as opposed to in the U.K., say, where certain workers have a right to flexible hours and a shortened workweek, the more strongly centered and clear a person is about what they want and need, the more likely that negotiation is going to go well."

Working Mothers and Fathers

Lack of free time hits families with young children and two working parents the hardest. Should that problem be solved privately, or should something be done on a larger scale? Tracy Geraghty undertook her Masters studies to research that very question.

"A few years ago," Tracy told us, "after becoming a mother and living the battle of working-motherhood—while working for the State Legislature, ironically—I decided to go back to school to research and understand the work-life balance problem, figure out if it's a public problem and therefore a matter for public policy intervention."

Tracy realized early on that the concerns of working mothers, of fathers, even of non-parents, is actually a big conversation about time and who has control over whose. "From there," she says, "it was a short step to the time movement where I found really smart people already working the policy angle."

According to Ann Crittenden, contributor to the *Take Back Your Time* book, the situation for working parents is not changing much. "All kinds of evidence

shows that families are really suffering from work-related stress," she says. "The more parents are stressed out, the more they take it out on their kids. People don't know who to turn to or how to organize. There's not a single day of sick leave guaranteed for sixty-two million people. It's amazing that we put up with it."

Many working mothers groups don't plan to. **Mothers Ought To Have Equal Rights** (www.mothersoughttohaveequalrights.org) is fighting tirelessly for Paid Family Leave for each parent, as well as for guaranteed flex-time and a shorter workweek for parents of infants and toddlers. The 2005 Mother's Day campaign led by **Mothers &**

More (www.mothersandmore.org) and its many thousands of members know that the real story is about time. Both groups coordinate their efforts with the **National Partnership for Women & Families** (www.nationalpartnership.org), the education and advocacy non-profit founded more than thirty years ago as the Women's Legal Defense Fund. Highlighting issues such as the epidemic of "presenteeism" (when workers with no sick days are forced to go to work) the National Partnership promotes policies that help parents meet the dual demands of work and family.

In 2004, California became the first state to offer wage benefits for employees who take time off from their jobs to care for a new child or a family member with a serious health condition. The California law, known as Paid Family Leave, creates a Family Temporary Disability Insurance program within the State Disability Insurance program. Employees can receive partial reimbursement of their pay for up to six weeks during any 12-month period. California also finally granted new fathers paid paternity leave. New mothers were not forgotten: paid maternity leave was extended from six to twelve weeks. We challenge the other states to pass similar legislation!

Downshift Yourself

Are you convinced but can't wait for the political winds of change? Ready to step off the corporate treadmill and plan a new way to work, starting today? You'll be part of the movement towards downshifting, a term used to best effect by psychologist John Drake, founder of the worldwide human resources consulting firm Drake Beam Morin, and author of *Downshifting: How to Work Less and Enjoy Life More*. A corporate dropout himself,

a, b, c, downshift

The successful downshifts of consultant John Drake and other former execs are proof that it can be done, but remember that downshifting isn't all play and no work. You'll need to study up first. The good news is that the ABCs of downshifting are as easy to learn as the alphabet:

Acknowledge that the time is now.

Begin again in a career that truly interests you.

Cash? Fuhget about it.

Whether you're leaving an architecture firm to become a potter, stepping off the sales ladder to open a gallery, or turning in your security card at the brokerage firm to pursue your dream of being a landscape designer, if you know your ABCs, you will already be steeled for the downshifting challenges that lie ahead.

Drake now counsels others on how to do what he did—leave a tenured executive position for a less traditional career by drawing on income from several sources and sparing plenty of time for personal interests.

WORKOPTIONS.COM

While the wheels of public progress slowly turn, Pat Katepoo of **WorkOptions.com** (www.workoptions.com) helps individuals negotiate shorter workweeks and more vacation. “You’re a trained and experienced employee who wants to stay at your current job and who can be more focused and productive with a work schedule that allows for time to attend to outside responsibilities,” Pat says. “The employer who recognizes your value as an employee doesn’t want to lose you, and spend more time and money recruiting and training someone else. So, having you three days a week or four days a week is better than not having you at all. A shorter workweek is a reasonable solution to meet your need and theirs.” Pat creates template proposals to help people make non-standard requests of their employers—such as asking for an additional week off from work. Her newest new template explains how to request three to four weeks off when you get only two, and should be available as a free download by late Fall 2005.

THE BROADER CIRCLES OF LEISURE

Okay, enough talk about work. Let’s turn to the flip side of the work-life seesaw—the living part.

Simplicity

More a community than a political movement, voluntary simplicity caught hold in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1990s and has since spread throughout the country. Researchers say one in ten Americans now practice some form of voluntary simplicity and predict that this number will continue to rise. Some practitioners believe that simplicity requires the rejection of consumerism, a commitment to social justice, or the embracing of a low-environmental impact lifestyle. We prefer—well, a *simpler* view of simplicity.

"I like to clarify simplicity," says Cecile Andrews, long-time simple-living proponent, "because people have this view that it has to do with going back to the land; that we're asking people to give everything up because they're shallow; that simplicity is deep, and if you're deep, you're not enjoying yourself. But you can be deep *and* fun! You can focus on laughing, smiling. This is what life's supposed to be about." In the U.S., Cecile has spearheaded Simplicity Circles based on a Swedish form of adult education and change, where people come together to share ideas and talk openly about an issue like time. "A lot of people immediately understand what simplicity is all about but other people just go blank," she says. "They believe they're already having the most fun in the world. That's why it's important to talk about it, to learn that there is another way. In the U.S., we've lost so many of our social skills, and our skills of sitting still and not feeling like we have to get up and do something. The practice of getting together to talk, even for talk's own sake, is itself a step toward a more leisurely way of living." See the **Simplicity Network** (www.simpleliving.net) to join a circle in your area, and for all other things simple.

Center for a New American Dream

(www.newdream.org)

The Center for a New American Dream conducted a Labor Day survey in 2003 and found that more than half of American workers would trade a day's pay in exchange for a day off from work. The rest couldn't afford even a small pay cut. Both parents and non-parents—greater than 80% of each group—want more time for family. Three out of four feel pressure to spend too much. What do you do when you can't cut your time because you can't cut your income? Spend wisely. Replace the pressure to buy more than you can afford with the satisfaction of knowing that you're making every penny count. Yes, it's better for the environment. Yes, it helps keep you out of debt. But the biggest bonus of buying only what you need is that with all the money you *don't* spend, you're buying time. By both lowering the income you need to support yourself (and your acquisitions), and lowering the amount of time you spend managing your "stuff," stepping off the consumption treadmill will free up your most treasured commodity—your time. Fewer possessions means fewer repairs, fewer spring cleaning sessions, more space in your closet, and more time to fully enjoy what you do have. Who knows, you might just discover an extra gear on your mountain bike and an extra key on your piano!

just in time living

Just as simplicity is not about getting rid of all your things, the Slow Movement is not about doing everything slowly. “Sometimes you do something fast because it makes sense to,” says Carl Honoré, author of *In Praise of Slowness*.

“Personally, I’m not working any fewer hours,” Carl says, “I just work them differently. At the moment, we’ve got a one-size-fits-all culture, which is, ‘be busy all the time.’ I wouldn’t want to swap that for ‘be slow all the time.’ To me, slow is about people working at their own tempo, doing the work we like, getting out of that roadrunner mode we’ve collectively gotten stuck in.”

In other words, give things the time they deserve. Take ten minutes to meditate and refresh, for example. Make sure you take a lunch break. Mix a little play into work. “It doesn’t mean you have to go live in a shack in the Rocky Mountains and grow organic carrots—although you can. I live in London, a very energetic city, but I do things slow here.”

Interviews should be slow but getting to the airport has to be fast. Carl has to run now—he’s off to Iceland and his taxi is downstairs.

Slow Movement

Common lore has it that after a certain point, people don’t get any happier as they get wealthier; they just get more fed up.

Now there’s a growing body of scientific evidence to match the anecdotes. You can read all about it in journalist Carl Honoré’s *In Praise of Slowness: How a Worldwide Movement Is Challenging the Cult of Speed*.

“There is very much a Slow Movement,” Carl told us. “That’s the essence of the book.” Its popularity—translated into eight languages, slated for at least fourteen more, and a bestseller in Spain—shows the world’s need to take a breather.

Carl sees people pulling together around the brand “slow,” and thinks it’s a wonderful way to sum up a whole lifestyle. “I hear things like, ‘I’ve been slow but I was ashamed to admit it. Thank you for making it okay to be slow,’ and ‘Now I know what the word is. Slow is a word to be proud of!’” He sees the Slow Movement as “a broad church in a big tent,” part of the same culture quake that recognizes it makes sense from all angles to work a bit less—or at least work differently.

Of course, some people crash and burn before they change gears. But once people see the light at the end of the tunnel, they come back with one hand on the brake. “They might even go back to the same job,” Carl says, “But they’ll never work the way they did. Nobody ever has two burnouts.”

The naysayers insist things can't change. "You get them any time a social revolution starts happening," Carl says. "We are battling the prejudice that says as soon as you slow down, you're road kill. You're boring. You're lazy." But believers see the pace slowing. "People are starting to say, 'I can live better.'"

If you'd like to be a believer too, take some tips from around the world. The Poles have set up a chat room, **Slow Now!** (www.slownow.org), to help launch the Slow Movement in Poland. Canberra, Australia held the first ever Slow Festival, with workshops, meals and talks to get people thinking. The **Slow Biz Group** (www.slowbiz.org) in Toronto was formed to push the idea of slowness in corporate North America.

Nothing slow in your part of the planet? Start your own initiative. But take your time about it...



MORE FROM THE GODFATHER OF SLOW

"We've been accelerating pretty unremittingly since the industrial revolution," Carl Honoré told us. "In the last fifteen years, we've made amazing advances in technology that accelerate the speed of everything. Yet all the way along there's been a countercurrent of people trying to preserve the slow culture. For the most part, those people have been steamrollered, but they're now a large and growing minority. We can feel it in our bones that we've hit the wall. Everything is about racing against the clock. It's folly. It's bad for our families, for our communities, bad for our health, bad for everything. People are starting to do something about it in the form of what I call the Slow Movement."

Slow Cities

The Slow Movement has inspired other decelerated movements, like entire cities of slow folk. The Slow Cities agenda has won the backing of municipal officials in more than 100 towns and cities in Europe, Japan and Brazil, with their policies to reduce noise and traffic, preserve the local aesthetic and gastronomic customs, and establish more pedestrian zones and green spaces. Find out how to receive a certification for your own town at **Città Slow** (www.cittaslow.net, click on “How to become a Slow City”).

The European Lifestyle

Any economist will tell you that people consume normal goods in greater amounts as they become richer. Leisure is a normal good. So why shouldn't its consumption increase with income?

The Europeans are doing it. They like their summer holidays, and for the most part don't complain about paying higher taxes for a higher level of government-provided services. If their shorter workweeks mean they won't keep up with the Joneses, they don't care. The Jacques, Bachs and Giovannis of Western Europe have less child-poverty, a higher literacy rate and a longer life expectancy than the Joneses do, which makes you wonder which nation is really falling behind. The Europeans aren't even in the race—and that's exactly the point.

One would expect no less from the region that's home to the **World Database of Happiness** (www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness). Run by Professor Ruut Veenhoven at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, the database surveys reveal that happiness in the United States and Japan has been flat over the past thirty years but has risen in most West European countries. “The main difference from the U.S. is that we spend



LEISURE CITY TIMES

KING OF BHUTAN DECLARES
GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS
MORE IMPORTANT THAN
GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT!

more time enjoying life,” said Jorgen Ronnest, director for international affairs at the Danish Employers’ Confederation, which represents about 30,000 companies. “And if you look around, maybe we don’t need more refrigerators and more cars.”

Sometimes “hard work” is all a matter of perspective. Iceland’s Tourist Board claims, “We work a long work week in Iceland, about 40 hours. But our summer holidays are for example longer than they are in the U.S. Under the age of 30 people that have worked one whole year with the same company have 24 days summer holiday and between 30 and 40 years old have 27 days vacation.”

Must be n-ice!

Downshifting in Australia

Support for a 35-hour workweek in Australia has risen greatly in the past five years. Why? Work takes up too much of life, say more than a third of employees asked.

Most Aussies predict they’d be just as productive in a 35-hour week, and would take on average a 13% cut in salary to be able to work fewer hours. Indeed, in the past decade, nearly one in four Australians between 30 and 60 years old voluntarily took a pay cut to adopt a better lifestyle.

Yes, downshifting has caught on strong Down Under. The trend goes hand in hand with the Australian rep for valuing friends, family and a good lager over burning the midnight oil (“Midnight Oil is a *band*, mate!”).

effortless

The Japanese prefecture of Iwate was tired of trying to keep up with Tokyo, so they quit. Now they’re slow—and they like it. “We don’t make an effort in Iwate,” declared Governor Hiroya Masuda.

“In Tokyo, people are chased by speed, and life consists of working, eating and sleeping. Here, I want people to go home early in the evening, take a walk with their family, and talk to the neighbors.”

It wasn’t just an off-the-cuff remark. Mr. Masuda’s administration launched an entire “no effort” advertising campaign, printing the we-don’t-make-an-effort slogan on their business cards and explaining that “no effort” is about rethinking values, not about goofing off; about taking pride in what you have instead of focusing on what you lack. “No effort” means living closer to nature and away from the economic pressures of the city. “We don’t make an effort in a normal way,” says a happy Iwate resident, “but we’re very busy. It’s just not the kind of busy-ness where you feel stressed.”

The ad campaign propelled Mr. Masuda to a third term—he won 88% of the votes cast—and spurred nearly 25,000 laudatory emails.

Neo-Leisure

There's another way to work fewer hours yet fly under the radar, and that is to show up and just pretend like you're working. Do you exercise at work? Well, at least you're at the office. Have "business meetings" at Starbucks? Yeah, that counts. Maybe your company has a ping-pong table in the lounge, or a meditation room, or even a room filled with hundreds of conga drums and other percussion instruments, like Toyota's training headquarters in Torrance, California.

This is neo-leisure—spending time at the office on activities other than business. It's a counterculture that blends leisure into work (or adds a little work to your free time, as you prefer). The non-cynical view is that fusing work with recreation leads to greater creativity, nurtured by friendly competition and the spirit of play. Work becomes fun and energized in nothing but the healthiest of ways.

Then the cynic comes knocking. Hello, laziness!

Corinne Maier, the French author of *Bonjour Paresse*, has become a countercultural icon of another type by encouraging her compatriots to "actively disengage" to pass hours at a job that seems more like a prison sentence. Look busy by always carrying a stack of files, she says, rather than trying to con yourself into thinking you like what you do.

This tract, whose title translates into "Hello Laziness," contains more than a whiff of the Dilbert mindset, compared to other pro-employee advice. Still, it makes the valid point that we shouldn't just sit back and take it. Or would that be recline back? Whatever it takes, it's time to drop the pretense that we all live to work.

Freeters—Twixters—Kippers—Mammone—Slackers

Twenty-something, unsalaried, with no idea what to do with themselves or their lives. Are they slackers, or just ordinary kids facing a modern world?

Young "non-regular" employees have come to be known as freeters in Japan, a term derived by coupling the English word "free" with the German word for worker, *arbeiter*. These men and women between 15 and 34 work only part-time, or in a series of temporary gigs. Known as "twixters" in Australia, "kippers" in the U.K., "mammone" in Italy, and of course "slackers" in the U.S., they are viewed by the establishment as perennial temp workers with no motivation to get "real" jobs.

There's more to the story, of course. Sure, those who live to ski in the winter and surf in the summer will never tie themselves to a salary. The rest of us may *want* a stable job, but have to deal with a nagging recession, more middle-aged and elderly workers in the job market, and the ever-more-popular trend of outsourcing. This leaves many young people working part-time or in side jobs despite their desire for conformity.

Still, many young grads are just not attracted by prospects of full-time employment right after high school or college. Studies in Japan define three types of freeters: the "okay for now" types who have no immediate plans; the "freeters with a dream" who want to break into show biz; and the "dead-end freeters" who no longer have a choice because they've never had regular work. About a third of freeters surveyed said that they didn't know what they really wanted to do, but at least a fifth were glad to be only semi-employed—and more than a tenth felt free to do what they liked.

The Happy Unemployed

In the summer of 1996, a couple of unemployed Berliners penned the *Happy Unemployed* pamphlet. Within a few months, it had reached at least 150,000 people. An informal network of Happy Unemployed sprung up across Germany, and then some groups protesting unemployment in France declared themselves Happy Unemployed. Now in Europe alone, the Happy Unemployed say they number nearly twenty million.

breaking the slacker stereotype

"Steve" doesn't want us to use his real name. He doesn't even want us to mention his industry. That's because he doesn't want employers to know that he quits his job every year to take three months' vacation. He calls himself a serial long-vacationer.

Yet he has no problem getting hired when he returns. "Even though I'm sneaky about my serial vacation lifestyle," Steve says, "it's not like I'm a slacker. In my industry, a lot of people do it. They are the most competitive and the most in demand, they just don't admit to how much time off they take. I tell them, 'I thought you were a workaholic!' and they tell me, 'No, I just work efficiently.'"

Sounds like they're all on to something. Why should you log in 10-hour days if you can get your work done in six? Why *not* take off to travel every summer if you can keep your skills up and contribute the other nine months of the year?

Don't worry, "Steve." Our lips are sealed!



This cheerful clan sent a message that caught on like wildfire—the very sensible declaration that an unemployed person is no more than a worker without work, and no less a poet, traveler or human being. Not lazy, not irresponsible, not the sole source of blame for the situation they find themselves in. They set down on paper a few truisms not often said out loud, such as that workers are publicly woeful to have been laid off but privately ecstatic to finally have time to go to parties every night or cook a decent homemade meal. If the unemployed are unhappy, they point out, it's not because they don't have any work, but because they don't have any money.

Although fans of leisure, the Happy Unemployed don't promote shorter work hours per se. They do see a day, though, when people would be less afraid of unemployment if they admitted they could be happy even without a job.

Amen to that!