

Ask any professional and they will likely agree that work is spilling into their non-work hours more than they'd like.

Then take a look at the research and you'll see how this is negatively impacting all of our lives.

To create more integrated lives - where we have time for work and time for our lives outside of work - we need to break this vicious cycle of chronic overwork.

To get the conversation started we're going to share two different true stories – one that shows the challenges of chronic overwork, the other that shows the benefits of confronting this problem. You'll also see how the negative or positive outcomes spill into both work and family.

The first story illustrates ... how even people with the best of intentions can bit by bit become chronically overworked. It also illustrates how prolonged periods of overwork not only take a toll on our lives outside of work, they also cause us to have no wiggle room during the inevitable periods of time when there is an uptick in work.

The second story illustrates ... how one employee used his desire to work reduced hours to create healthier work habits for himself and for the rest of the people he worked with.

Learn more about these issues by participating on our October 10th Thursday with ThirdPath call. On this call **Brigid Schulte** will talk about her soon to be released book – ***Overwhelmed, Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time***. We will also have two leaders who participated in our Pioneering Leaders Summit share their insights and recommendations.

Bottom line - ***even in a supportive workplace, with a supportive boss, it's challenging to figure out what's the right amount of work for yourself and your team. But there are steps we can all take to significantly reduce chronic overwork.***

While reading the case studies you'll also quickly discover that it's our commitment to things like "love" and "play" that help us set win-win boundaries at work. So join us all year long as we learn how to work in a way that creates more time for love and play! Want the full list of this year's Thursday with ThirdPath calls? [Click here](#).

Happy Fall!
/Jessica and the ThirdPath team

The art of setting win-win boundaries – Where to begin?

Tammy is a senior director in the Human Resources department of a large professional services firm – a firm that has a long history of supporting people to create integrated solutions to work and life. She is also the mother of two young children.

On a good week, Tammy is able to work from home Tuesdays and Fridays. On a bad week she travels for multiple days or needs to work extra hours on site. Tammy's spouse has a job where he is off every summer. During this time he is able to care for their two children full time.

For years Tammy has been practicing the art of setting win-win boundaries at work. In fact, if you met her you would be very impressed with the skills she's developed to attend to what's most important at work while also making sure she has time and energy for her life outside of work.

However, recently she has found this much more challenging. In part this reflects how over time she has increased her expertise and value in the work she does. As a result Tammy has noticed, "I keep on getting asked into significant projects – good stuff – but as a result, most of my emails begin with 'I'm sorry I didn't get back to you sooner.'"

This is a classic problem many professionals face, and the consequences are often hidden.

Tammy laments, "The hardest part of my life right now is maintaining my relationships and taking care of my own health." She then went on to talk about how the dual demands of work and family leave her little time to exercise or see her girlfriends – both activities that she finds re-energizing. She also confessed, "When my husband was home over the summer, it made things a lot easier. In fact, every time I observe that things were less hectic, it was either because I was home or he was home. But I don't like that answer, it feels too traditional, and it's not an answer everyone can rely on."

Although Tammy's boss has gathered their group together to encourage them to think about how to say 'no' to work, Tammy points out that this leader also puts pressure on everyone to hurry up and get things done. Tammy explained, "My boss can see that we are overworked, but he's also part of the group that came up with the long list of goals we are trying to complete." Feeling stuck she concluded, "I also feel bad trying to stick to my work boundaries if everyone else on my team is working overtime."

When looking at Tammy's situation it begs the questions:

- What needs to happen to allow Tammy, her co-workers and her boss to make more realistic decision around how much work to take on?
- Are there systems they could use to easily assess how much capacity they have for additional work?
- What role do they each need to play – Tammy, her colleagues, her boss – in order to adopt and refine these systems?

Join our next Thursday with ThirdPath call – October 10th from 12:30 to 1:30pm ET – and listen to a group of experts discuss these questions and share their recommendations.

Reduced Hour Employees – The Latest American Revolutionaries!

This year professor Ben Hunnicutt will join a Thursday call to talk about how we've lost track of one of our countries founding principles "the pursuit of happiness."

Retracing history, he documents the long and successful campaign Americans have fought to shorten the standard work week. More recently this dream has been shattered by a new norm of long work hours, and an increasing inability to truly disconnect from work.

But ThirdPath has also seen a growing group of men, women and leaders "fight the good fight." These courageous people are showing us that working reduced hours – or resisting the new norm of a 50 hour work week - is not just good for employees, but also good for our workplaces and good for society at large.

Here's a brief overview of one of these new American revolutionaries:

CJ is one of the father's ThirdPath has worked with to "redesign" his work so he has more time to care for his children. CJ was interested in changing to a four day work week, and our job was to help CJ find a "win-win" solution – a solution that was good for him *and* good for his workplace.

For example, in order to reduce his workload from five to four days, CJ was asked to think about whether or not he could: systematize tasks to reduce the amount of work required; change who did the work – for example delegating tasks that no longer were a good use of his time; slow down the pace of his work by reprioritizing the deadlines of less critical work.

To begin with, the data entry work he was doing, although important to the company, could be done more cost effectively by another staff member. He also saw how others could handle some of his special custom fabrication projects if the processes were systematized.

One other idea surfaced when CJ noticed how many of his "highest priority" tasks required focused attention for prolonged stretches of time. As the company's sole engineer, CJ was often the person came to to ask for help – but these constant interruptions got in the way of him getting his own work done.

Experiments such as uninterrupted work time and shifting responsibilities to other employees require support from management, and it wasn't easy for CJ to ask for this kind of support. However, once he did, Molly, the company's general manager, proved to be an ally in the process.

In fact, Molly became one of CJ's biggest advocates to create routine "quiet time." Later, when CJ was still challenged by the constant interruptions during his designated periods of quiet time, it was Molly who gently encouraged CJ to take a look at his own inability to say "no" to the various disruptions. "I do enjoy those interruptions," CJ admitted, "but my job suffers, and engineering and design tasks get put on hold."

As CJ sought input from Molly around these changes, they both also became clearer about what CJ should really be working on. CJ explained, "I can get confused about what my top priority work should be because *everything* seems like a priority. I can see where a regular review of what I am doing could be really valuable."

"In both areas of my work, R&D and process improvement, I have a list that is two miles long. My daily tasks are chipping away at these two long lists. By having too much to do, all that happens is that the progress in both areas slows down. Now I've gotten better at asking, 'What is my biggest priority?' and, 'At what rate do I need these things to get done?'"

The changes CJ made during the course of his involvement with ThirdPath were very exciting. By the time CJ was ready to transition to his four-day schedule, he was able to pro-actively work with his manager to set more collaborative and win-win boundaries at work. Shifting to a four-day work week also helped him create more time and energy for home. The best part CJ commented, "was walking my son to school on that first Friday off."

This week we asked CJ for an update. What he said sure sounds like a "win-win" to us:

"One of the best thing about the changes I made 6 years ago is that I have more energy at work (which means I'm more productive when I'm at work) and I have more energy at home (which means I'm a better husband and father). Combined with my commute my work days are long, but then I get 3 full days to focus on my home life. It also means I've been able to schedule all personal appointments on Fridays so I rarely if ever take time off work for personal matters, this is a benefit for both me and my employer."