

Why it is important to go the extra mile – working in your own time

So many people don't recognise the importance of completing work within their own time...and not getting paid for it. Particularly within this economic climate, there are a large number of individuals who have ruined or reduced their career progression chances because they just don't have the right, proactive attitude when it comes to working weekends and holidays. Whilst you may consider that the work you do is simply just a job, if this is a message that you send out to your boss or even your work colleagues, you'll no doubt find yourself in trouble pretty quickly.

Every person's job is different, but most people find that there are particular times of the year when their job is busier than others. If you want to demonstrate your commitment to your role, then these busier periods should be embraced by you, rather than met with an 'I've worked my hours today and everything else will have to wait until tomorrow' attitude. There may be times when you have other engagements and so you have no choice but to push work to the following day or the following week. But there will also be plenty of opportunities for you to complete a little bit of work at home or stay an extra hour or two in the office to get yourself ahead of the next day's work load or to support your colleagues with their work load. These opportunities shouldn't be seized as a great way to earn overtime! That completely defeats the purpose. Instead they should be seen as a way to demonstrate your worth within the role and your commitment to the company and the job you fulfil. Don't put in an overtime claim or instantly jump to request time in lieu. Instead recognise that you do have a responsibility to work extra hours when the company demands it, and that in return you'll see a greater flexibility from your employer towards your own needs when you in turn need a bit of assistance from them. Note also that by demonstrating your commitment to the company, your co-workers and your personal role, you are insuring yourself as far as possible against being the first on the redundancy list, and you are putting yourself in a strong position for an annual bonus or a promotion.

There is of course a need for balance. No one should be expected to work every evening, weekend and holiday period – no matter how important their job title or how good their salary. And unless it is stated in your contract that you have to work as many hours as it takes to complete a task then there is no requirement for you to work over and above your paid hours either. But do try to remember that employment is a game of give and take. If you want time off during the day to watch your child perform in a Christmas play, if you need to visit the dentist during working hours or if you want your employer to be sympathetic towards your childcare arrangements or significant commute, then they in turn will want to see that you are willing to go that extra mile at every opportunity. And not because you fancy earning a couple of extra pounds worth of overtime this month, but because you respect the role you have within the company, because you recognise the privileges the role provides for you, and because you want to seize the progression opportunities that may be made available to you in the future.