



**Mixing business with pleasure, pleasure with business - part
3 - by Dan Castner**

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This is part three of three. Outside of office hours, workplace leaders are also recognizing the need to build camaraderie through extra-curricular activities. Hobby clubs may include cooking, reading, exercise, crafts, sports, and outdoor interests. Pagani notes that there may also be a generational gap in terms of the hobbies individuals choose. The older generation may value singular activities, while the younger tend to enjoy hobbies that involve collaboration. Ultimately, as Forbes suggested on July 28, 2021, the workforce has clearly shifted. Office managers need to consider how hobbies can contribute to the collaborative spirit and ultimately be incorporated into the office culture.

It may seem like there is no single right answer to how leadership can bring people back to the office. Some organizations are acting like the fictional government in the Radiohead video “If You Say the Word”. In this case, government “wranglers” are out in the countryside capturing grazing “professionals” out in the wild and dropping them back into office environments. The video acts as a humorous metaphor for how some organizations are forcing an RTO or Return to Office, without trying to learn anything in the process.

Other organizations attempt to create an atmosphere of FOMO or Fear Of Missing Out to encourage return. One particular confidential media company located in Manhattan already had a basketball net, pool tables, foosball, shuffleboard, hammocks, and outdoor terraces prior to COVID. Now that they are shifting to two and three days a week, after-work parties with alcohol are becoming common to dislodge people from their basements and dining rooms. But examples like these and scenes from the Apple TV+ series “We Crashed” showing the continuous party culture at WeWork remind us of an important truth: perhaps not everyone needs parties and festivals in the office. Some people like to work. Some people are not interested in the isolation of working in a basement and are simply looking for offices to adapt and evolve with the times and shifting generational ideals. They find the camaraderie and the fulfillment of years of learning enough motivation to get out of their bed and their pajamas. And ultimately, the chemistry of their office makes the commute worthwhile. We don't have to pretend we're going to a beach party to have fun.

It is true that mixing business with pleasure and pleasure with business may not be for everyone. Multiple articles on the internet provide examples of why everyone should be careful with this approach to living. The balance within each of us may be different. But, as facility managers and real estate executives plan for the future, diverse environments with multiple-pronged policies encouraging interaction and collaboration appear to make the most sense.

Personally, if I am able to mix a wine tasting in with my networking, the gap between the office and the backyard fire pits closes a little bit. Injecting my own life into my professional goals seems to make them easier to accomplish. Essentially, I'm looking to do the opposite of Adam Scott's character from the Apple TV+ show “Severance” where he completely severs his work memories from his mind when he leaves the office. Much like the trend to remove physical partitions from our offices, the removal of partitions from our own lives may serve as a path to personal satisfaction and a worthwhile commute.

If I can move a conference call to the High Line or that introductory meet and greet from Starbucks to a nearby park, it dials the stress down a little. Offices need to understand that happiness can't be forced, and multiple solutions for personal interaction will be necessary to encourage a diverse workforce to return — gladly on their own terms.

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