

japantoday

Tuesday, January 13, 2004

Japan Today's Sachie Kanda dropped into Roppongi Hills to ask:

How do you feel about working overtime?



"Physically I work only 8 hours but I am emotionally committed to my work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. What I mean by that is I am always looking for work opportunities whenever I see somebody, read a newspaper or walk along the street. I am looking for something interesting for my business. I think that is my way of living, but not everyone feels that way."

- Koji Ishikura, 32



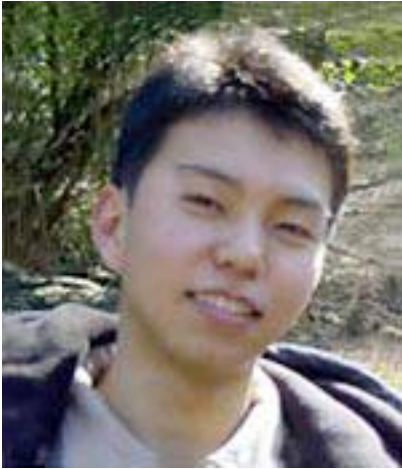
"I usually work about an hour overtime per day, so my average monthly overtime is about 30 hours. In this slow economy, many companies hesitate to let employees stay at work until late, while others have changed their overtime policy. However, there are always so many things to do at work no matter what. If we don't do them, business won't flow. On top of that, Japanese office leaders lack the communication skills to create an efficient team, nor do they appreciate their staff, so people tend to work individually. The team becomes less systematic, and therefore people end up working extra hours. A bad leader leads to more and more overtime. That is the primary problem in Japan."

- Masayo Shiroishi, 30



"I used to work overtime about 20 hours a month for my previous company, but now it is zero because I've just started working at a new place. I am not sure how many extra hours I will have to work now. I only know it will be a lot. Even though Monday was the very first day of the work year at my company, some people already stayed pretty late. I predict that sooner or later I am going to stay late too. It can't be helped, I guess."

- Kumi Tomita, 31



"Staying late doesn't mean you can work efficiently, no matter how much work there is to do. I try to finish my work within the given time every day and not work overtime. I do know there are some people who need to work overtime pretty often, because maybe they are paid by the hour."

- Hitoshi Tada, 28



"As long as I have something I have to get done by the end of the day, I usually stay late. It's better that way and means there will be no hassle the next day. Anyway, my average overtime is between 10 to 15 hours a month. It is not a lot and I am paid for it. I can still enjoy some time after work by going to cheap "izakaya" (bars) with my friends and coworkers."

- Osamu Manda, 42



"Now I live and work in San Francisco and my company is totally different from a Japanese company. I just need to work a certain amount of hours per week. My schedule is up to me. I can go into work in the middle of the night or very early in the morning. If I have a plan with my family in the morning, I can come in to work in the afternoon or I can take the whole day off. In Japan, there is a flexitime system, but that still specifies certain times when you have to come in. Sometimes I do work more than my allotted hours in order to complete a project by the due date, but it is a lot better than working at a Japanese company because I can still manage my time anyway I want."

- Takeshi Okawa, 32



"I work for a communications network construction company, which means I usually work at somebody's office, building their network. Therefore, in many cases, I work when people are away from the office like summer and the New Year holiday period. During those quiet times, I work more than 50 hours overtime, but on average, it is around 20 hours per month. I enjoy what I am doing, so I do not mind working that long at all."

- Kazunori Watanabe, 25



"I am a student, so I don't work. My father works overtime a lot. However, sometimes he comes home early when his work is slow. I don't ask him about it either way because he's got pride in his work and is very responsible. Once I start working, I guess I will work overtime and it is OK as long as I get compensated for it."

- Ryo Imai, 20

<http://www.japantoday.com/e/?content=popvox&id=447>

Copying or using text, photographs, illustrations, video or images appearing on this site without permission is prohibited.
All rights reserved. Copyright © 2000, 2004