

The case for Fractional Expertise

The Pandemic lockdowns changed some of our false assumptions about how work should be.

An easily spread virus naturally got us thinking about space more than ever and thus "where" we should be when we worked and if it made sense. We saw Zoom and Teams as new ways to transcend distance.

But we didn't challenge time nor synchronicity

But the other assumed constraint is "when".

Working 8 hours a day, 5 days a week stems largely from early industrial age factory work. It allowed companies running 24 hours a day to have 3 shifts, and since work was so physical, 2 days off allowed bodies to mend a little, and improved productivity. Studies backed up the idea that for a hard days work, after 8 hours we get crap at shoveling

But a lot (not most) of modern work isn't a linear calculation.

Spending 8 hours a day on a factory production line may likely end up with you gutting twice as many chickens or QA checking twice as many pairs of jeans, but it doesn't make you come up with twice as many ideas, make make double the decisions well, or producing twice as good analyst reports, or writing a script that's twice as popular.

A lot of modern work is really about quality of time, not amount. An expert with 30 years experience can provide incredible value in 30 seconds.

Perhaps saying " call this person "

Or "for goodness sake cancel the project, trust me"

The quality of thought, the quality of connections made, the quality of the communication.

If effort is a linear multiplier, quality is often a "power" function. A slightly better idea can be a thousand times more valuable.

Which all begs the question, why should many jobs be 8 hours a day? Why should the standard week be 5 days a week?

and to a lessor extent, why should we work similar overlapping hours?

If there is one thing I expected to, and still expect to, take off in a pot pandemic era, it's the idea of fractional roles.

And yet Companies have no idea how to buy them. They'd rather pay someone for 5 days a week of work and know they work 50% of the time , than pay someone well to be brilliant for 2 days a week. Does this come from a lack of imagination in procurement or envy or a weird need for "commitment to the cause"

Fractional roles make even more sense given the benefit of time away from roles. You're way more likely to bring in external knowledge or solve problems when much of your time you're not "in " the task but on it.

They make even more sense now we realize that the very very best people tend to pick work on their own terms, they have kids to look after, they have other priorities in life, they've done enough to not need all the money they can get.

When I now pick other people to work with me on projects, it seems nuts that I'd ever start the process around 40 hour weeks, rather than the very

best people and the way to get the very from them.

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