

Transcription - Switching Off Work

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. We are revisiting some topics from our 2017 series of 20 questions. Today's topic is switching on and off work. We have talked about this topic a number of times in terms of time management and travel time and your personal management time, so today we want to take a little bit further in terms of looking at when you switch on and off and why you would not switch on and off in some situations.

I guess for some people who are working on the topic of time, some people who work best to say, when I finish work at X-O-block, I don't want to think about work, I don't want to do anything with work or anything like that. And if that works for that person, great. When they say I don't want to think about any social, family or anything, when I start work, that's fine too. But the majority of us, our heads are not like that. We can't help but think about things, whether you are into the work zone or the outside work zone. So to me, I think it's okay, it's actually quite good. Because things, ideas and solutions come to your mind when you are not thinking about it. So that's a good thing.

The danger is that you've got an issue at work and it starts dominating everything you do. If you're angry and frustrated, that's different. You need to focus, get to the root cause and come up with a solution or accept the fact that this is a problem and it can't be solved or whatever the case may be. You've got to address it and not let it keep eating your other thinking time, relaxation time.

In relation to thinking about your work but you think about something at home, that's okay too. As long as you don't let it stop what you're doing and start working on that issue, even if you just write yourself a note, "Oh, I must organise the birthday party" or something like that, whatever it is. But the beauty about our brains is that you might be going for a walk, you might even be at a meeting and you're really, really focused and you're part of the meeting, so you're doing everything right and somebody will say something. Then you think "Oh, that applies to that other thing that I'm trying to remember." That's okay. Just write one word down and stop and go back to where you are because that will help you later. You could be at a Zoom meeting like we are now and you'll say something and I think, "Oh yes." Again, sometimes you don't have to write it down, just pause it in your mind. So you don't have to go by the clock, I'm now not thinking about work, I'm now thinking about work.

Number of hours is different. It's that you say, "Now hang on a minute, I'm spending, how much I love my job and love what I do, 12 hour days", you know, I think that then goes back to another topic which we covered quite well, balance. That's a different matter.

For my mind, I think you do have to write it down. I think you've got to get it out of your head because if you try to file it mentally, maybe it works for some people, it would never work for me. I've got to have it written down because it gets it out of my head. It stops me thinking about it if I write it down. I'm not trying to remind myself that I have to remember this. So whether it's that I have a whiteboard or a bit of paper, often when we are talking to guests on the podcast here, I will preface the conversation by saying, "If you see me writing something down, it's just because I'm going to remember to ask you about that after we finish the

conversation that we're having at the time." So I will actually let people know so that they don't get distracted by the fact that I'm writing something down and I might not be paying attention. That's just my way of managing my head so that I don't forget and so that I don't lose train of thought that I'm on and that I can follow the conversation and follow the discussion that's happening.

So I think that for my mind, as you will have heard over the years, I'm far more structured about on and off work because I've always travelled when I've gone to a physical location for work. I've always had a reasonably long travel time, it's always been a minimum of an hour and sometimes it's longer. For me, to be organised about using that time, I choose a geographic point where it's the turning point, where it's, "Okay, don't have to think about work anymore, now I think about home or the other way around depending on the direction I'm travelling." For me, that works, always has, because that's just how I like to have my life structured. And I know that's not for everyone, but it is a way of managing your thinking time.

As Fulyana said, it's not about, it's bad to be thinking about work a lot. You are committed to work, you are interested in it, you do want to find solutions, you do want to have ideas. It's not just about the thinking time, it's about how you manage that thinking and what you do with what you're thinking about it. So you've got to extend the process beyond just thinking and the "switch on switch off" time and actually have a process that is associated with that thinking, that allows you to manage all of the thinking time that you're giving yourself.

The floral art for me for example, so the things that I wouldn't consider work so much, I like to think about them. And certainly with the floral art, because so much of that is about a creative time where you have to think about the title that you're given and you think about how you're going to interpret it, because it's not work, I don't allow myself the thinking time. If I start to stray and think about that, I'll pull myself up and say no, you haven't got time for that. You've got to focus on this other thing and think about this work stuff. That's a hobby, that's something you think about when you've got time. Because if you've got something that is in your mind that you are, once again, you're committed to doing it. So with the floral art, I will commit to a competition. I do need to give myself time and to give myself permission to think about that and to have thinking time. So it comes back to the permission that you are managing yourself. If you give yourself permission to have this time that is about work, you give yourself permission to have this time that is thinking about other things. And that's where I struggle most because I'm not good at giving myself permission to think about the stuff that I don't think of as work. So my struggle is not so much about switching on and off, because I don't give myself permission to make that change, to do the other stuff.

Part of that, as well, is ditching the guilt. I think it's that permission and guilt thing. I'll give you an example which I recently dealt with one of the clients. Needed to be at the football training for their children and at the same time, there's a Zoom meeting. Now we know all the timelines are blurred because everybody works like globally and the hours, different hours, and everybody's available. So he goes to the game but kept thinking about, I'm not there. So he lost on both fronts in that sense, even though physically he was at the game. Then for the next time, he said I won't go to the training, I have to make other arrangements and I go to the Zoom. We talked about other ways, try to change the Zoom and all the obvious things. So no, ditch the guilt, go to the game, stay at the game, give your contribution to the Zoom meeting through others and through papers. So that worked, not for every Zoom

meeting but it's just one occasional when it works.

Another situation when it used to be, when I went home, how I switched off work, I walked in the door and the kids took over. I had no choice and that was good because I was able to concentrate 100%. Now I'm doing that but the back of my mind is as soon as I put them to bed, I need to answer all these 300 emails and blah blah blah. And I think you have to be a bit more kind to yourself, but also very disciplined by saying realistically, I can only do these and I can't stress and feel guilty, I'm not doing my bit socially, family friends, etc. and I'm not doing my job. There is a limit and everyone is in the same boat. So let's not think that they are all okay and I'm the one that has to juggle, they all have to juggle some things.

What I was reminded of then when you were talking about it, was in our very first year we talked to Josh and Krystle Hockley. They tried to think about their work/life balance and they said in that that they don't have time for social activity. They don't have time, they might make time once a week for family but other social activity just doesn't happen and that the people who matter don't mind, and the people who mind don't matter because the people who don't mind understand that their focus, at that time in their lives, was about the training and about getting ready for the next race and having their bodies and their heads right for that goal that they were trying to achieve. The people who were with them were following that journey and so they used social media to their advantage by keeping people updated on what they were doing in that arena. People felt included and they didn't need the one on one time, they didn't need the personal interaction that was only going to take time and focus away from what they were doing. The way is of managing the interaction, and I know with floral art, that is what I will do, is that when I'm really focused on a big competition I'll just give people updates through social media and they know that that's what's happening. They know that that's the way I do things and that when I've got time I will reconnect with them on a personal level.

And if we look at some of the early years when technology wasn't as accessible for Fulyana as it might have been, let's just say in the pre-Zoom days when we really had to rely on Skype if we wanted to do this kind of activity and neither of us were particularly comfortable with Skype, I don't like it as an interface but that's my preference. But I used to do a recording and then send it to Fulyana and she would listen to it and she would do her reactions and record her reactions and send it back and then I edit it and I'd put it together. So there's ways of interacting with people without it having to be pressure for you to do it in a certain way at a certain time.

I think that that's probably the message that I'd like to get out, is that switching on and off about work is not as black and white as it might sound. There are so many other ways and so many other pressures that we put ourselves under to manage that situation that we need to think a far more broadly about the permission and the guilt side of things.

Yeah, most definitely.

All right, well now we've got your work and home life balance happening we will leave the conversation there. I'm Kimbaillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.