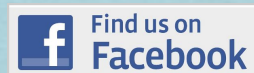


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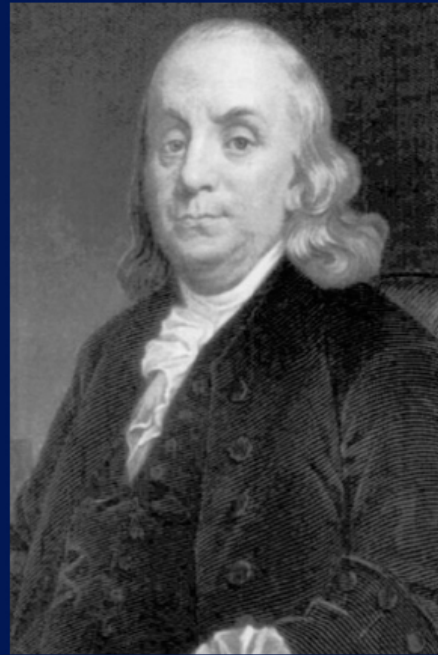


TOM TOM ENGLISH

“Early to bed,
early to rise
makes a man
healthy,
wealthy,
and wise”

~
Benjamin Franklin

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VOCABULARY

Harried =

Feeling strain due to
persistent demands

Mandarin =

A high government
official or bureaucrat
(literally a member of
the 9 ranks of public
officials in the ancient
Chinese empire)

Take on =

To undertake, or to
begin to handle

Tally =

Score, count, or
amount

Discussion questions

1. What time do you wake up in the morning? Is it different in summer/winter? Why?
2. What do you think about the government's suggestion of starting work earlier in summer? Is it a good idea?
3. Do you agree that Japanese employees under-report overtime? How much overtime do you/did you work?
4. What do you think “presenteeism” means? Do you think Japanese companies have a culture of presenteeism?
5. Do you feel that drinking with colleagues is “practically compulsory”? If so, is this a good thing? Is it work?
6. What do you think about Daylight Savings Time? Is it a good idea for Japan? Why? Why not?

VOCABULARY

-ism =

Suffix to make a sound
into a doctrine, state, or
condition. Examples:
capitalism, Darwinism,
absenteeism, socialism

Archipelago =

A large group of islands
e.g. Japan, the
Philippines

Tick up =

To increase, to cause to
increase

Mull =

To think about
something deeply

Japan's famously long working hours will get a shakeup this summer, the government announced Friday, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pushing early starts and European-style flexibility.

In a bid to better balance work and play for Japan's **harried** employees and to encourage them to spend time and money on private life and leisure, Tokyo **mandarins** want the working day to start—and end—earlier in July and August.

“Prime Minister Abe said we would **take on** changing the summertime lifestyle so that (people) will start working early in the morning and spend time with families and others in the evening,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters.

To begin with, central government officials will promote early starts and flexible finishes, Suga said. Abe has recommended employees start work between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., and finish work at around 5 p.m.

“It is often said that long work hours in our country keep people from appreciating its benefits,” Suga said. “We believe reforming work styles is extremely important in letting people feel the benefits of ‘Abenomics’ and making our country’s growth sustainable,” he said, referring to the government’s program of economic reforms.

According to statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the average Japanese put in 1,735 hours’ work in 2013, far more than the 1,489 of France and

Germany’s **tally** of 1,388, but fewer than the 1,788 of the United States.

However, labor experts suspect Japan’s true number is higher, with employees under-reporting overtime in a culture where presentee**ism** prevails.

Employees are sometimes expected to spend time with their colleagues in the evening, with often alcohol-fueled bonding sessions practically compulsory.

The prime minister has told his ministers to talk to private companies about the push for change, in the hope of dragging them along with the initiative, Suga said, adding that summer had been chosen because of its longer daylight hours.

But, he said, the introduction of daylight saving was not currently on the table because of the huge latitude differences of the Japanese **archipelago**.

“Considering that, I think we need careful consideration at the moment towards **ticking up** our country’s standard time in a uniform way,” he said.

In summer months, the sun rises in Tokyo at around 4:30 a.m. and sets by 7 p.m. Japan has previously **mulled** an annual time change like that in Europe or North America where the clocks go forward in spring and back in the autumn, but has never tried it.

Opponents cite reasons ranging from the simple nuisance of changing time and the risk of inviting even longer work hours to the possibility of increasing home air-conditioning demand in the evening.