

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1783 How Big a Problem is “Ghostworking” in Guam?

What if your boss came up to you today and suggested that you’ve been ghostworking, and you’d better knock it off? First, what exactly were you accused of? Second, are you guilty? I’m Jerry Roberts, and we’re going to dig into the topic of ghostworking, and just how big of an issue is it in Guam? That’s up next on The Extra Point.

The topic is ghostworking. If you’re not familiar, it refers to a worker pretending to be busy while they’re doing something the boss would likely not approve of...or maybe doing nothing at all.

A recent survey has uncovered that over half of US employees admit to doing this on a frequent basis.

Let’s dig a little deeper. Ghostworking is actually the performance of busyness, rather than engaging in meaningful tasks.

Keith Spencer, a career expert at Resume Now, explains that it involves projecting an image of productivity without actually performing significant work.

Lots of huffin’, lots of puffin’, lot of nothin’ gettin’ done.

This survey was conducted back in the mainland U.S., but you know, yes you know, there are a whole bunch of ghostworkers here on our island.

If you’ve got people in your workplace that fit this description, right now I want you to conjure their faces up in your mind. Can you see them? Can you see the ghostworkers on your payroll?

If your boss is listening, do you think the same faces are popping up in his/her mind? I do hope that your face isn’t there.

The survey highlights that 58% of workers regularly engage in ghostworking, with an additional 34% doing so occasionally. I barely

passed third grade math, but I’m guessing that amounts to 92% of workers who at least occasionally “ghost” their employers. Nine out of ten! — how does that go with your granola this morning?

So, what are these employees doing instead of trying to be productive? The findings for folks “back there” reveal that the vast majority spend time searching for a new job.

There might be some of that here, too, but I tend to think in Guam it’s more *Parkinson’s Law*, which states that work expands to fill the time available for its completion. “It’s 10:30, I just came back from the morning break, and there’s an hour-and-a-half until lunch. I’ve got work that will take me about 45 minutes to do, but that will leave me 45 minutes I’ll have to fill. Naw, I’ll go slow and turn this 45-minute job into a 90-minute job, and then go eat. Perfect!” Parkinson’s Law meet Ghostworking.

The survey uncovered another reason for all this: The uncertainty surrounding artificial intelligence in the workplace. Many workers are concerned about being replaced by AI technologies.

Time out. So, you’re worried about losing your job to AI, so you shortchange your employer through this ghostworking? Does that make any sense to you?

Another possible reason comes from a poll done by The Gallup Organization in January. The survey revealed that 46% of employees are unclear about their job expectations, and this disconnect with management leads many to feel the need to appear busier, believing that doing so will help secure their positions.

Okay, you’re unsure of what to do, so you fake doing some part of your job until the boss shows up and gives you a new assignment. Well, this one might be an issue for some.

(Con’t.)

The survey producers added something that I think is telling. They brought up the issue that the American workplace has, over time, shifted from productivity to the appearance of productivity being important.

If you're my boss, you need to see me in motion, doing something. That will check off the right boxes in your mind and you can move on to the next thing.

I could be 100% productive, get done early, and take an extra break. You see that and it may not sit right with you. Maybe you'll call me on it. Meanwhile, the ghostworker in the cube next to me, is doing the minimum but looks very busy — and you nod at them in approval.

If this kind of thing exists where you work, the answer is to focus on production, on results. Nothing less. Set clear standards and let people hit their mark.

Beware of ghosts on the job.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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