



The seven habits of highly disengaged employees

By **Life in the Cubicle Examiner**, Dudley B. Dawson
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Peter Gibbons of Office Space:

The patron saint of disengaged employees
([Office Space](#) at IMDB)

There is a glitch in large corporations that cannot be fixed. The glitch is an office filled with disengaged employees.

In the movie *Office Space*, The Bobs 'fixed the

glitch'. In this case, the glitch was Milton, a worthless employee, who had been laid off but still came into the office everyday and received a paycheck for five years. Milton was not a disengaged employee, but in the world of large corporations, disengaged employees are like Milton -- they show up to work, but they shouldn't get paid.

Disengaged employees are typically employees who were once high performers. But, for one reason or another, they become uninterested in the job or organization they work for. As a result, their productivity decreases, their negativity increases, and their poor attitude spreads like a virus throughout the office. In a decent economy, these employees typically find a new employer where they regain interest and their productivity spikes (until they become disinterested six months later). In a bad economy, many of these employees stay put. According to [Business Week](#), disengaged employees increased by 45% over the past year.

Some believe that organizations must fix the glitch by implementing new policies and management practices at the workplace that ensure employees remain interested in their job. Others believe companies should fix the glitch by identifying these employees quickly, and eliminate them even faster. Regardless, disengaged employees are a bitter bunch. They realize that their large employer

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is either too incompetent or too disorganized to fix the glitch. Their disengagement is revenge for the employer's incompetencies.

This article celebrates their wisdom and behavior.

Here are the seven habits of highly disengaged employees:

1. Persevere + evasiveness =

Persevasiveness. Disengaged employees focus all of their energy on eluding any work task that may be assigned. They waste an incredible amount time ensuring their boss thinks they are busy. They'll schedule fake meetings in their Outlook calendar to clear out an entire day or week to ensure they avoid work and meetings.

2. Web surfing is their 1st job, bathroom breaks are their 2nd. It isn't that a disengaged employee loves the Internet. It's that the Internet loves them. The real question is: What did disengaged employees do before the Internet existed? Perhaps an older reader can chime in on his [Smith Corona](#).

3. An exaggerated sense of how evil their employer or manager is. Disengaged employees reach a level of hatred that runs very deep. In some cases, disengaged employees become disenchanting with the

entire corporate culture, while others lose interest in their job because of a [bad manager](#). Even when a manager or company has the best of intentions, a disengaged employee will find a way to put a negative spin on it.

Scenario 1: Manager offers to take his department out to lunch, on the company.

Disengaged employee thinks: "He's just trying to prevent us from taking our usual two hour lunch, that [expletive] [expletive]"

Scenario 2: Company sends out a newsletter to inform employees about the upcoming [summer picnic](#).

Disengaged employee thinks: "Why can't they just let us go home? This is [expletive] [expletive]."

Scenario 3: Manager comes over to ask when the document will be ready.

Disengaged employee thinks: "[Expletive]!" (Disengaged employees reach a point where anything a manager does is considered pestering.)

4. They aren't happy until they convince the world they are right. Rather than spreading the [good word](#), disengaged employees are missionaries of malice. Making others feel unhappy about their job makes them feel better about the fact that they are also miserable. This column is living proof.

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5. They'll find any way to sneak out of work early. Whether it be the back staircase or the lack of coat technique, disengaged members of the workforce are always scamming to leave early.

6. Increased interest in working from home. All disengaged people want to work from home, but not all people who work from home are disengaged. Telecommuting is a dream come true for disengaged employees. It opens up a whole new world of opportunities. At work, their only escape is the Internet. In fact, some argue that 75% of the websites would cease to exist if it weren't for disengaged employees and their entertainment limitations at the workplace. If given the opportunity to work from home, disengaged employees are welcomed to the world of television, movies, and naps on the couch.

7. A firm belief that everyone they work with is incompetent. This is usually true.

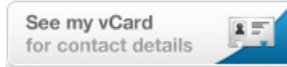
Please note: I am a disengaged employee. This article is self deprecating humor.

'Seven Habits' is a recurring article appearing in Dudley B. Dawson's Life in the Cubicle column at completely random moments.

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** 1. Thanks to GCramer of Ohio for the term *persevasiveness*.

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