

# The Idle Office

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I haven't work in an office for over a year, and I'm afraid to go back. I worked from home, coffee shops, airports and even in a brewery. I've established a routine and schedule that is best suited for me and the work I have to do, meaning I have a pretty good idea when and how to get things done throughout the day. What all these places have in common was the ability to give me the mental (and physical) space I needed to do the work. The space to reflect, the space to walk and explore, the space to leave or to settle in. In a world where space is often filled, packed with things and possessions, space becomes a luxury.

While offices are the only place built specifically for us to get the job done, we don't actually get any work done at the office — especially creative work. But isn't answering emails, attending meetings and listening to your boss, what we call "working"? Not really.

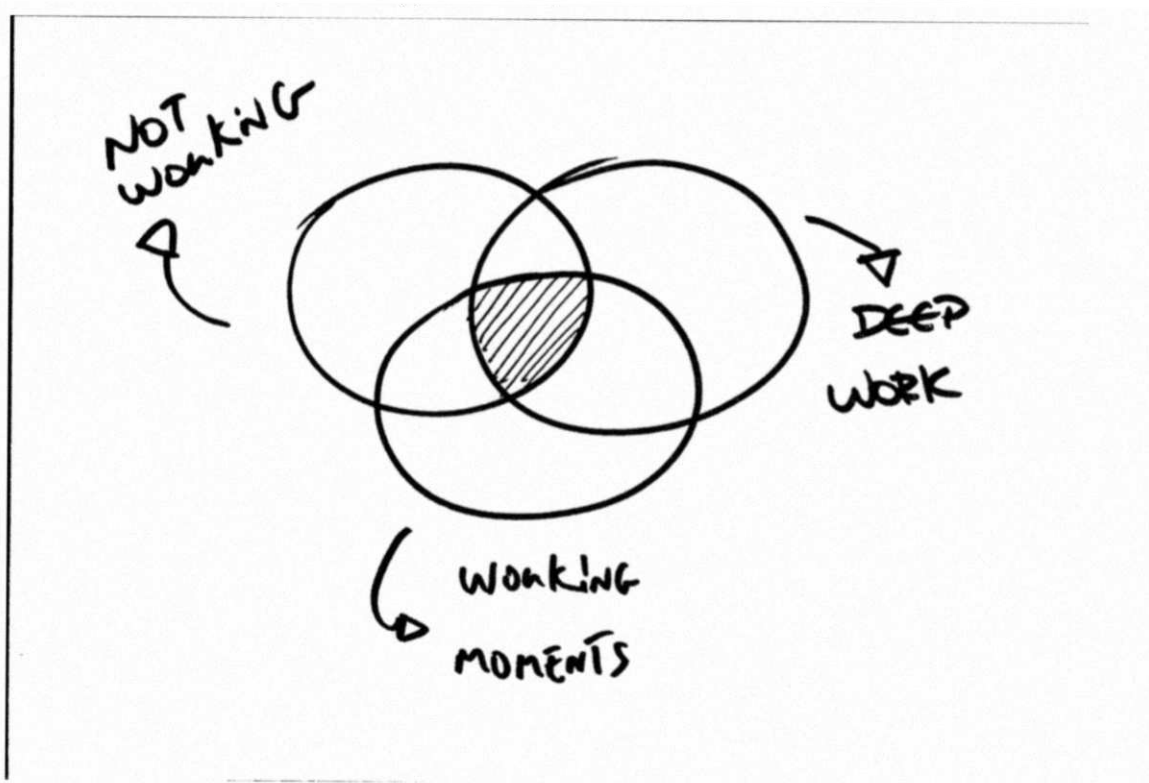
We have small companies, large corporations and co-working business spending (and losing) a significant amount of money building the perfect office. The space where you and I are supposed to do great, creative work. But ask a friend, a family member or a colleague at the office, where do they go to get work done? What kind of space they need?

Usually, the answer is not the office but somewhere else. Like myself, some prefer the coffee shop, others the kitchen table at their home. I've even tried staying up late when everyone else is already gone. (late nights is advertising's favourite choice). Nowadays, the trend is to wake up at 4am, eat a ketogenic breakfast, workout, meditate, journal and by 6am you're done with most of your "work". What a killer start of the day! Not for me. It doesn't have to be this way. It shouldn't be this way.

We are all different from each other, and we work in different ways. Still, we must all come together to the office, usually an ugly building with lousy coffee, at a predetermined time and stay there for at least 8 hours. Of course, eight hours are just for lazy, uncommitted employees. The real heroes are proud of working night shifts and making you feel bad when leaving the office earlier. Going home on time is a form of treason.

The workaholic leisure-less culture of today judges the guy who finishes by 5pm and then goes home to have dinner with his wife or play with his kids. He is good at getting work done at the office. He found his space. Well done.

How come we became so confused about what should we actually do in the office? The Idle Office separates work in three parts to better understand the difference between making a living and having a life. Between finding your own space or taking someone's else.



### 1. Not Working

Idleness and leisure are fundamental to Homo Sapiens. Not working is perhaps the most critical and neglectful aspect of today's humanity. We are always on, connected, pushing pixels, doing stuff when we should stop and do nothing instead. Mental idle time is vital for brain function, good for our health, and required for creativity. Today, in the age of manipulative algorithms, gadgetry and social media, we can't slow down enough. The most significant human achievements from our most beautiful art to the latest advanced technological breakthrough originated in idleness — in calm, contemplative moments of not working.

## 2. Deep and Focused Work

This is where the slow thinking process of a concentrated mind is working to solve a problem and searching to find creative solutions. It's known as "I'm in the zone", or "flow". We all experienced this phase. Time flies, we feel good but doesn't last too long. Unfortunately, it's becoming increasingly rare the ability to perform deep work without being interrupted or distracted by notifications.

## 3. The Rest

Meetings, emails, calls, managers, bullshit. Our brain is in fast mode — full speed, reacting to exterior forces causing interrupted time. Small chunks of distracting moments, working on little tasks that put us on autopilot. Jason Fried, the author of Rework, call this "working moments." You trade your workday for working moments. Your day is shredded to bits. Twenty minutes here, 10 minutes over there, lunchtime, another meeting, quick break and boom! ...It's 5pm, and you didn't get any work done. You didn't have space.

What if we ignore the last part? What if we paid less attention to "the rest"? What if we reduce "working moments" to the absolute minimum? We would probably notice how difficult that is to do. We are so used to live in fast mode, in constant switching, busyness and overwork that a world without it seems impossible. There is an aversion to simplicity and quietness.

Next time a new business decides to spend millions on luxurious office space, perhaps they can pause and think about the Idle Office — where the tyranny of total work is absent. The real luxury is where human existence is fulfilled by just appreciating and living a calm, contemplative life, in one own's space and time. Only then we'll be able to do the work.