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Is it true that in Japanese long hours of work there are a lot of non productive chats?

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5 Answers



Alexandre Mercier, was in a Japanese senior high school and now work in Japan

Answered Jul 14

Yes.

Unfortunately, this is true.

The thing is, Japanese don't see work like westerners.

I recently read an article in Japanese about French the "way of working" (which is quite the exception even among westerners, I agree).

Broad generalization ahead alert

Basically the author argued that the biggest difference between the Japanese worker and the French worker is that most French see work as a life "chore" you have to do, but your whole life doesn't revolve around it. Of course, some people like it more than others, but that is not really the point. Once the shift is over (generally around five or six PM), people would go out and do some shopping and sip wine, gather with buddies and sip wine or just go home and spend time with family (and sip wine). Once work life is over, your private life takes over.

For a lot of Japanese, there is not such a clear distinction between work life and private life. Working is basically your life.

Chatting is work, drinking with your colleagues is work, smoking with your boss is work. With such a mindset you're bound to have long working hours.

Sometimes, it's about finding the perfect word for an email or the right way to write it. Because yes, although "お問い合わせ" and "お問合わせ" or "お客様" an "お客さま" basically are the same words, you need to take care of the ease of reading, the kanji/hiragana ratio and the general flow of the sentence. And don't get me started on "how many characters should you put in a new line?"

Although those are actually very nice and considerate rules to the client, and I believe they are actually important for, say, a press release, it's just *uber* unproductive when it comes to an email for your colleague or boss.

I'm not saying it's bad, and you eventually get used to all of the above (contrary to popular belief, this is not only difficult for foreigners but to every young worker, Japanese included), I'm just saying a "Hi, here is the report, kthxbye" would be a bit easier and more productive sometimes.

[Shibui Yusuke's](#) comment on meeting is also true. It is, perhaps, from a westerners point of view the pinnacle of non-productivity.

We tend to think about meeting as the place where stuff gets done and decision are made, but that is not the case in Japan. It's more about talking about a lot of things at the same time. None or few decisions are made there.

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meeting room.

But all of the above is important because work is like a big family. You can't just come in at 9AM, do your job and leave at 6PM. Interaction is important and too often, people who do no work but stay late are more praised than people who do exemplary work but leave at 6PM. Yeah, life is unfair.

Fortunately this is slowly changing.

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Shibui Yusuke, cloud, docker, deep learning and robot

Updated Jul 22

Yes, it is true. The most non-productive thing is meetings. Busy people gathered us just to chat and nothing get decided with no output and no action item. Lots of times, no goal or end time is determined before the meeting, so it won't last until somebody senior feels tired chatting.

If you have a chance to have business with Japanese company and they ask you for a meeting, be sure to ask for time schedule, agenda, purpose, and if the meeting really productive.

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Eddie Landsberg, Professional Jazz musician and music clinician (1999-present)

Answered Jun 4

In Japan it is important to come in on time and be the last to leave. Your work place is a second home. As you age, you move back away from the front desk (dealing with the public) towards jobs that involve less meaningful work. Your colleagues are an important part of your social circle... in essence your life. — Chats can also serve other purposes, including consensus building. For example, before meetings you exchange ideas and agree to everything first. Some of this is done informally.

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