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Actually, PDD made last year's Inc. 500 list of America's fastest-growing private companies. Greene, who once toiled as a corporate drone in Chicago, has achieved the financial and personal independence she envisioned when she set up her own shop. "If you put the energy in to build a profitable company, why not be good to yourself and enjoy it?" says Greene, 41, who now devotes full weeks to her latest business venture—homebuilding. After renovating her own kitchen and bathrooms, Greene spotted an entrepreneurial opportunity in buying, rehabbing, then flipping domiciles. "The fact that some CEOs work 80 hours a week is mind-boggling," she says.

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So, do you really need to be at the office 24-7? "The most dominant myth of this society is the Protestant work ethic," says Al Gini, author of *The Importance of Being Lazy*. "Entrepreneurs say, 'This is my baby. I have to do this myself with huge amounts of sweat equity.' They're right, but there has to be some moderation." Gini advocates taking time to rest, recreate, and re-create, but if that only means a few days off, checking in constantly before plunging right back into an all-consuming schedule, what's the point?

Little—and in fact, workaholicism may impede growth. Kim Peterson, 39, president and CEO of Light Force Therapy in Elizabeth, Colo., says her company wouldn't be where it is today—12 employees, \$4.5 million in revenue—had she and partner-husband Doug continued on the 70-hour-a-week path they endured for three years since starting the company in 1998. "Time away from the office helps me devise better strategies," she says. The two-hour hikes she takes during the day spark her imagination and engender innovation, essential when your moneymaker is a therapeutic

medical device. As a start-up, the company commanded all of the Petersons' time. Along the way Kim realized that burning the candle at both ends was sabotaging long-term growth. "We were working too much to get where we wanted to go," she says. "The goal is to work smarter, not harder." Once she cut back on a grueling schedule, she was able to prioritize goals and concentrate on achieving them. She now puts in 30 hours a week.

The enticing irony of halving the workweek while increasing productivity sounds ideal, but it would come as a shock to the system for work junkies. Shedding hours over time is a better approach—a methadone program for the work-addicted—but it takes planning and letting go of control. "I've never had a problem delegating," says IT specialist David Hicks, CEO of Hicks Consulting Group in Lafayette, Calif. He has more than 150 employees yet puts in roughly 20 hours, which was part of the plan from the beginning in 1979. Hicks, 61, says the secret is building a company with competent, well-compensated staff. They feel valued and become loyal, which makes it easier to take one day off, then two, then three...

"The toughest part is feeling confident that skill sets have been passed along to others," says Hicks, who handpicks all sales and recruiting staff. Hicks's trust in his systems allows him time to sail, travel, road-bike 120 miles a week, and maintain the half acre of Primitivo grapes in his "hobby vineyard."

Hicks points out another unspoken reason some obsessive entrepreneurs put in mammoth workweeks years after the company is firmly established: greed. If the bottom line isn't the driving factor then those 80-hour weeks aren't necessary, and if it is, well, perhaps there are bigger problems. "If you're compulsive but not greedy, finding somewhere else to put that energy will lead to a more well-rounded, balanced life," says Hicks.

**CUSHY LIFESTYLE:** Lee keeps her company small in order to maintain a schedule that allows her to pursue personal interests.

Greed may be the primary motivator for the fictional Gordon Gecko, but in reality, there are plenty of go-getters who prefer free time to fat pockets. After less than a year, 27-year-old Kendra Lee recognized the beauty of working 25 hours at her PR firm, Lee & Co. in Santa Monica, Calif. She plans to keep her client list modest and annual revenue between \$150,000 and \$200,000. Lee decided this was the life for her after a stomach ailment was caused by stress from working for the Girl Scouts, no less.

She now has time to learn the ins and outs of the hospitality industry for her future plan to run a combination bed-and-breakfast and working ranch. Lee learned the PR game from a woman whose entire life revolved around the company and quickly realized that it's the work you do and not the hours it takes to do it that's important. "If you think you have more than one life purpose, I suggest trying out shorter workweeks for a month," Lee says. "I don't know what you couldn't get out of it."

Maybe that's just it, maybe you believe you have a sole purpose: work until you drop. Maybe you can't envision the great abyss of having nothing to do and all day to do it. As Greene says, "If you're bored, you're probably boring." Consistently putting in long hours can strain relationships, shorten lifespans, and create memories of a life spent working. Downshift and you've opened the doors to other worthy pursuits, like starting another company or just living the life you imagined. "I never," Greene says, "have bad days anymore."

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