

Twin timing, moonlighting: blight or alright?

Board Leadership Center (India)



A hybrid work from home (WFH) model has sharply induced moonlighting, and gradually, it is also now leading to compliance concerns within organisations. This sparked a debate around whether this is the future. With some companies allowing their employees to take on side hustles and some considering it as cheating, moonlighting seems to have bisected long-established traditional technology companies and new-age ones. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, when the world shifted offices to the living rooms, it also led to many employees, some in the IT industry, to take up side gigs for making some extra cash but as per the employee contracts, most of the traditional organisations in India forbid taking up external work on monetary terms.

In addition, HR maestros have also attributed moonlighting as one of the key causes that is deterring employees to come back to offices. In fact, in a survey conducted by the Financial Express*, 42 per cent of the participants of the survey said they would consider changing their jobs or even quitting if they were not allowed to work from home.

From an organisation's perspective, the word 'moonlighting' conjures up an image of deceit, cheating, huge loss of ownership and confidentiality. However, it hides a deeper reality of entrenched social inequalities and henceforth, the ever-increasing desires and appetite demands of a consumer economy.

* Less than 1 percent techies want five day work week | Financial Express



What exactly is moonlighting?

A practice where an employee works for a second job or multiple side gigs outside their regular working hours under certain conditions for an additional income is known as moonlighting. It may be defined as the practice of working for another organisation while committing oneself to one company as primary workplace typically without the employer's knowledge.

The moonlighting debate!

Pros:

1. Monetary benefits
2. Can help in getting better job prospects
3. Side gigs help in brushing up on skills.

Cons:

1. Lead to possible conflict of interest in concurrent active jobs
2. Loss of productivity in active jobs. People may get distracted while working for their primary job by tasks associated with their other position, reducing their on-the-job productivity
3. Breach of data security and confidentiality.
4. Perceived loss - While one employer invests in trainings and upskilling, the other reaps benefits without any investments.

Boardroom questions on moonlighting:

1



What is our company's legal stance on moonlighting and how does it support our ethics, objectives and reputation?

2



Are there any specific policies that our organisation might highlight regarding the nature of agreements that our employees can enter during and post-employment with the firm?

3



What are the different kinds of employee contracts that our organisation is currently signing and are there any policies on dual employment that our organisation emphasises upon?

4



Do current employee contracts permit dual working / moonlighting?

5



What is our company's strategy to manage moonlighting? Will our organisation engage in precautionary/recurring processes to identify any moonlighting cases within the organisation?

6



How will we respond when there is a breach and we have not done the right thing?

7



If we consider the economic climate of developed nations like USA, UK for the last 20 years, there's a strong pre-supposition that moonlighting is here to stay in India as well, whether companies like it or not. How do you think will our organisation manage it in the future, keeping in mind the employee centricity as most of the employees are in favour of moonlighting and monetising their skills/talent?

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30 years
and beyond

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