

# WESTCHESTER COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

ALL ABOUT BUSINESS IN NEW YORK'S GOLDEN APPLE

## VIEWPOINT

### 24/7 work week hovers on horizon

By GEORGE RUSSELL

Westchester's business community is not in a 24/7 work mode — yet — but we're also no longer in a 9 to 5, Monday through Friday world. Business owners and their employees work past dinnertime, on weekends and often into the early hours of the morning. And more — much more — pre-9 a.m. and post-5 p.m. working hours are in our immediate futures.



Russell

The interesting thing about this phenomenon is that it's not bad news. It's good news. Really! It means there is enough business out there to warrant more than eight hours of work per day and that we have the freedom and flexibility to choose our hours whether we work 20, 40, 60 or more hours per week.

Most importantly, expanded work days represent a trend that promises good things for the area's economy and residents. So those organizations that feel wedded to Monday-Friday, 9 to 5 work habits would be wise to think about a divorce. And those service providers that can help businesses adjust to a 24/7 environment should anticipate great demand for their assistance.

Just look at the reasons for keeping the wheels of commerce grinding before and after traditional working hours.

First is the emergence of Westchester as an international business hub. With business partners, clients, prospects, information sources, investment choices, suppliers, etc. in different time zones, we have numerous reasons for communicating around the clock.

Second, there are the hectic work weeks that make it difficult to assemble busy executives. Hence more weekend and weekday evening seminars, conferences and teleconferences.

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Third, is the 24/7 capability of modern technology. Why wait until tomorrow to disseminate important information when you can reach out and touch someone immediately? This ability to communicate whenever the need arises also necessitates having staff people on hand to assist in videoconferencing, transmitting, receiving, etc.

Fourth is the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy. In the former, businesses needed their people in the same place at the same time, generally for eight or nine hours per day. In today's service and technology-enhanced

economy, people can work from scattered locations at scattered hours.

Finally, we're in an environment that welcomes, if not, embraces change. If we don't adapt we will surely go the ways of companies that were Fortune 100 entities in one decade and out of business the next.

Office centers with locations in other parts of the world can provide as little or as much space as clients require when doing business in distant sites. My 18 years as an owner-manager of office centers in Westchester convince me there is very little a flexible operation can't provide clients if given several hours warning. I'm equally convinced that a 24/7 environment will produce side benefits besides bottom-line growth.

From a stress point of view, a longer work day allows executives to ease pressures by stretching "compacted urgency" time periods. It also removes the guilt — and hesitation — about addressing personal matters such as caring for a loved one, seeing a doctor, etc., on "company time" because people know they can "play catch-up" later in the day, week or weekend. And from an employment point of view, expanded hours will be a boon for the elderly, people with disabilities and teenagers who seek jobs of less than eight hours' duration.

In short, longer days and weeks will be accompanied by many gains spreading across industry and population sector lines.

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