

## Let sleeping 'B people' lie

*A good chunk of the workforce doesn't perform well from 9 to 5*

**D**o you prefer quiet mornings and active evenings? Do you think life is too short for traffic jams? Are you at your most productive after 10 a.m.? Then you might just be a "B person."

Unfortunately, society is arranged around "A people" — also known as the early risers. Most jobs are adapted to A people. But there's a move to change that. B-Society's mission is to change the structures, in the labour market and society at large, so those who are genetically predisposed to wake and work later fit in.

B-Society is going to challenge the nine-to-five society and its lack of respect for the day rhythms of B people. It wants to create a more flexible society that accommodates and accepts B people.

B-Society was founded in 2006. I came up with the idea for the society while working on my PhD in work-life balance. My work is based on the conflict between the industrial and the innovation society, where we are now fighting in vain to get the old industrial structures to fit into the innovation society's completely different demands.

### The difference between A and B

B people have a clock gene typically lasting about 25 to 27 hours, whereas A people have one that runs for about 23 hours. Estimates peg about 15 per cent to 25 per cent of the population as B and about 10 per cent to 15 per cent as A. The rest of the population are more or less either one or the other, or something in between. B people find it easy to stay awake at night, preferring to go to bed around 1 a.m. or 2 a.m., but have difficulty waking in the morning, not feeling fully awake until after 10 a.m. A people are the opposite. They love the mornings but collapse in front of the television at 10 p.m.

There is an enormous waste of resources in society because of the "morning lark" organization style with rigid office hours. Much of the work being done today is, and will continue to be, carried out independent of time and place. More and more people can work anywhere at any time, and more and more work is invisible in the process of production.

It is unproductive for B people who are



### ■ GUEST COMMENTARY

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dealing with knowledge, creativity and innovation to be at work at 8 a.m. B people are not present mentally at this time, since their productivity peaks in the afternoon and in the evening. There are different rhythms for different people, and recognizing this is good for the economy in an innovation-driven society.

### 9 to 5 an industrial relic

If countries and employers claim to live by innovation, creativity, concept development and thinking activity, they also have to design individual working and living situations that match the altered working processes. The nine-to-five society is a relic from the industrial age and an impediment to modern working life. The agricultural society was for A people only. During the industrial society there was only room for those who could work on time, marching to the collective beat. In the innovative society there is a need for both A people and B people. It no longer matters when you get up for work. Now you can work at the right time for you.

People have individual rhythms — some prefer working in the morning, some in the afternoon, in the evening or at night. The global job market needs people to work around the clock, not just nine to five.

Employers have to realize knowledge work and creative work is flexible and can be executed anytime and anywhere in the world.

The workplaces of the future are combining flexibility, productivity and quality of life. They have an appreciation of different kinds

of work rhythms and life rhythms and they reflect this in their work culture. Furthermore, they design individual work times, work areas and work rhythms that suit each individual talent.

### Be productive instead of busy

When B people's work rhythms are considered at the workplace, their productivity and quality of life are increased, which can increase productivity for the entire organization. A B policy strengthens a company's ability to attract and retain B employees who are looking to work and live in a B rhythm.

Furthermore, institutions have to keep up with the times. B-Society wants to reinvent institutions and structures and create a new daily rhythm in schools and other institutions as an alternative to the current rhythm of "early at work and early at home." B-Society is working for the establishment of day nurseries, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as well as universities that open between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m.

B-Society wants to initiate a social change all over the world and the B-model can be a solution to stress and infrastructure problems and is a way to combine productivity and life quality. We have to change the society so it fits its people instead of placing people in old agricultural and industrial structures. This can be a social change that will benefit both individuals and societies.

### B-certified employers

What can employers do to help, and to tap into this talent pool in a time where skilled labour is at a premium? B-Society has started a B-Certification of employers that respect the working rhythm of B people. B-Certification will enable B people to navigate the labour market and find workplaces that have actually implemented flexible working hours and that respect and accept the life and work rhythm of B people.

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