



Side Hustle Culture: Extending Our Working Hours to Keep Up Appearances

By Nick Kossovian

I'm sure you're aware of all the side hustle evangelists online touting that everyone should have a side hustle, peddling their "side hustle formula" and "get-rich-quick" schemes. They portray having a side hustle as a glamorous pursuit of ambition, masking the fundamental motivator: additional income to keep up appearances.

Having said this, I can't make this assertion without acknowledging that the workplace has become an existential nightmare.

AI, automation, and robotics eliminating jobs, social media's emergence and CEOs creating headline-making layoffs every time the economy sneezes are partially fueling the side hustle culture; however, these aren't the primary reasons for the trend. The reason is the implied social contract—never promised—of working 40 hours per week in exchange for enough money to live on defaulted long ago. Nine-to-five has become an existential nightmare.

Many millennials and Gen Zs, enough for employers to make sweeping generalizations about their work ethics, have come to feel that nine-to-five offers little in return for all the demands they feel it places on them. Putting in an eight-hour workday, plus commute time, is unappealing—downright distasteful—when carrying the sense of entitlement narrative "I'm better than this." What is appealing is the "Image is everything" lifestyle social media influencers and marketing propaganda promote.

Having a second, sometimes third, job to supplement one's income to pay the bills and make ends meet has always been common. However, our consumerism—bills—have dramatically changed since the advent of the Internet and social media. Today, our consumerism revolves around looking rich and impressing. What ends—what bills—are those with a side hustle trying to meet? Based on my observations, I'd say that most people who claim they have difficulty making ends meet prioritize having the latest iPhone, wearing designer clothes, and living in a house larger than they need over being prudent with their money.

Most North Americans could downsize their lifestyle by half and live far more comfortably than most worldwide. Contrary to our first-world lifestyle, characterized by financial waste and its multitude of negative environmental impacts, according to the World Bank Group, half of the global population lives on less than \$6.85US a day. Westerners live a lifestyle most of the world's population doesn't come close to living.

Easy access to credit makes it possible to make \$60K a year and appear, by your spending, to make \$120K a year. However, credit requires interest-bearing repayment. Instead of cutting back on using credit (read: downsizing your lifestyle), many start a side hustle—Grind! Grind! Grind!—to keep their facade of prosperity visible.

Thanks to constantly evolving psychologically penetrating marketing techniques and social media, a godsend to marketers, keeping up with the Jones has never been more prevalent.

Apart from lottery winners and those who received an inheritance, rich people are rich because they've adopted the habit of prioritizing saving and investing BEFORE spending. (Paying yourself first, while not sexy, is stoic money management advice that, when followed, significantly benefits your financial health.) Your only glimpse of the rich is how they spend money on things you wish you had. Unseen: Most of their income goes towards savings and investments. They only spend a portion of their income. Many people have a hard time managing their money because they copy the spending style of those with money rather than how they earn and manage their money.

Many will cite that the side hustle culture offers an opportunity to "pursue one's passion." What does this even mean? Is making money from one's passion a requirement? A person who says they're passionate about ceramics certainly doesn't mean they're passionate about spending several hours a week researching social media trends, handling paperwork, and marketing their hand-made pottery business.

Turning your hobby into a side hustle is turning your hobby into work. Furthermore, if the money generated from that work is to help finance keeping up appearances, is it still a work of passion?

We need three things to survive: food, water, and protection from the elements (shelter and clothing). Everything else exists for comfort; hence, most things only exist for us to buy and for someone to make money. The side hustle culture trend didn't arise out of survival necessity, to make financial stability (read: savings, investing) fashionable or because people have become more ambitious. It emerged because someone saw, and many others followed, they could profit from our fear of how others will judge our lifestyle.

Ultimately, the side hustle culture reflects a broader societal problem: our obsession with appearances and materialism. Our pursuit of material wealth comes at the cost of being trapped in a cycle of consumerism, constantly chasing the latest trends and accruing debt. Our respective finances and the environment would greatly benefit from starting and embracing a new trend that celebrates contentment and financial prudence over keeping up appearances. Let's call it aligning your lifestyle with your income.

Nick Kossovian, a well-seasoned veteran of the corporate landscape, offers advice on searching for a job. You can send him your questions at artoffindingwork@gmail.com

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SAFE STREETS ACT

By Dale Jodoin

In a significant legal development, the Ontario courts have partially overturned the Safe Streets Act, specifically targeting provisions that have long been a cornerstone in regulating public solicitation. The court struck down sections related to "aggressive solicitation" and location-based restrictions, such as near ATMs, public toilets, and transit stops, deeming them unconstitutional. These sections were criticized for violating the freedom of expression and the presumption of innocence.

The ruling has not completely dismantled the Safe Streets Act. Certain elements, like the ban on stepping onto roadways to solicit funds from drivers and engaging in solicitation aggressively, still stand, highlighting a compromise between public safety and individual rights.

However, this decision stirs a complex debate about the impact of panhandling on local businesses and public safety, particularly in downtown areas. Before this ruling, it was rare to enforce the now-overturned restrictions rigorously, yet they offered a sense of security to businesses and pedestrians. The presence of panhandlers around sensitive areas like banks and businesses historically created a tense atmosphere, with incidents of aggression when panhandlers were refused money. This, understandably, sparked fear and discomfort, contributing to a perception of insecurity that could drive businesses out of downtown cores.

Critics argue that the relaxed restrictions may lead to a "free-for-all" situation, where increased panhandling could negatively affect local commerce. Business owners, who contribute significantly to municipal taxes, feel particularly aggrieved. They argue that their taxes help fund social services that assist the homeless and other vulnerable populations, yet their businesses suffer from the very issues they help address.

Furthermore, the economic strain on everyday citizens is palpable. With taxes rising to accommodate social programs and the cost of living increasing, the public's capacity to give charitably is stretched thin. The frustration is evident as people feel pressured into giving directly on the streets, while also contributing through taxes. This scenario creates a double-edged sword: there is a desire to help those in need, but resentment builds as personal financial burdens grow.

The court's decision has opened a can of worms regarding the balance between individual rights and community welfare. The question arises: were the judges and policymakers out of touch with the daily realities of downtown businesses and safety? The original intent of the Safe Streets Act was to protect both the public and the vulnerable, yet its partial repeal raises concerns about whether true balance can be achieved.

As Ontario grapples with these changes, the future of downtown safety and economic stability hangs in the balance. It remains to be seen how this decision will affect the dynamics of charity, business, and public welfare in the long term. For many, this ruling is not just about constitutional rights but also about maintaining a quality of life that keeps downtown areas thriving and safe for everyone.

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