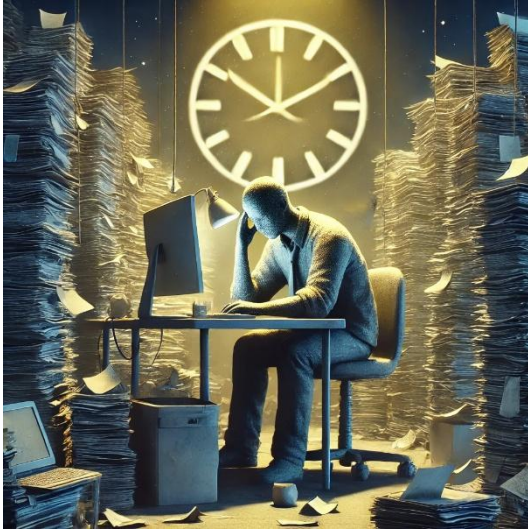


The 70 Hour Week – A Debate in Corporate India



The debate that refuses to die in Corporate India ... the 70 hour week, as prescribed by Mr. Narayanmurthy, founder of Infosys.

The Coherence perspective?

If it is worthwhile, people will do it anyway.

All of us have known jobs, missions or at least projects where 70 hours flew by without us looking at the watch or the calendar.

But can / should it be made a norm? Can it be done sustainably? Here are two scenarios that come to mind

1. Fired by an ideal:

Much is said about the work ethic of Singapore and Japan. In both cases, the people were fired by the commitment to building a nation but equally by leaders who they trusted to be fair and watch out for the interests of those who followed their exhortation. We suspect that motive is largely missing in India as of now, especially in business. We are a nation that gave a massive cut in corporate tax and now refuses to hold business accountable for reinvestment in employment or CAPEX. General salaries are flat while CEO compensation has increased by 40% and Corporate Profits have become 4X since the pandemic.

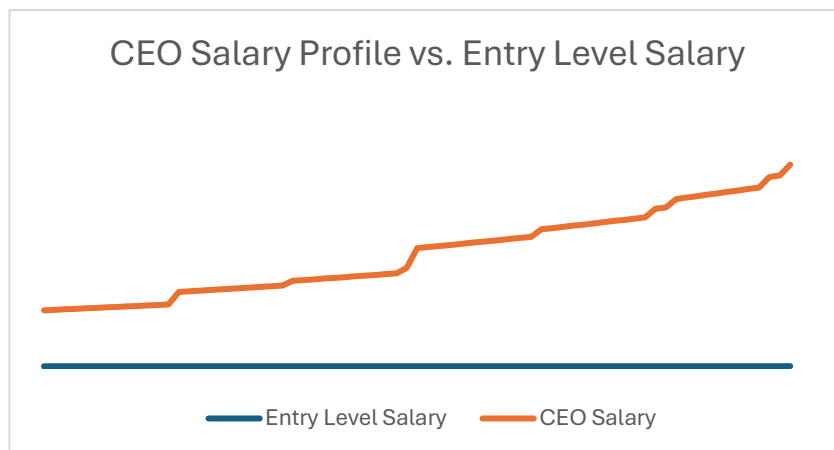
Helping build the wealth of those who are in the top 0.01% anyway is NOT an inspiring ideal. So, what is the ideal? Where are the leaders role modelling the ideal?

Explained: Companies made huge profits but salaries stayed stagnant | FICCI
<https://lnkd.in/gxdzMDjQ>

2. Equitable share of gains:

If not ideals, could there be equity? ...that the gains of hard work will be shared equitably? We do an exercise in some C-Suite discussions, asking executives to create a notional graph of CEO compensation vs. revenue and then on the same plot add an entry level salary (or even median organizational salary).

The default pattern looks something like below. The CEO salary is an outcome of Trigger based variable pay, stock options and annual increments based on market benchmarking, while the entry level is largely restricted to small annual increment (the line stays visually flat given the difference in scale of salaries).



It will be easy to see why some CEOs would love the 70-hour workweek while the entry level will not. This is especially true in organizations where there is no ideal to rally around.

Mr. Narayanmurthy kicked off this debate and he is on records saying that CEO compensation should be no more than 30- 40X of entry level salaries. Yet, at his own firm, Infosys, the multiple in 2023 was 677X.

Why is this not self-evident to the likes of Mr. Narayanmurthy? Have entrepreneurs entered an echo chamber where these inequities are not visible, much less spoken about?

A quick ChatGPT query would have you know that only 10-15% of human population has entrepreneurial traits and only 3-5% of them are actually engaged in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are likely working 70 hour weeks regularly.

However, to expect the rest of the population to willingly do so in the absence of Ideals and Equity may be myopic, and we dare say, selfish.