

CAREER

GEN-Z EMPLOYEE DIARIES

I got into corporate...and I hate it

CORPORATE BADDIE AND CORPORATE SADDIE

What do a job posting on LinkedIn that matches your qualifications and a profile of a potential date have in common? You immediately romanticise the hell out of it and form an idealised version of them in your head because it sounds really good on paper. Bonus points if it is a multinational corporation (MNC) or a globally recognised organisation (the romantic equivalent would be *jamai bideshe*). But we are here to give you a harsh reality check: dream jobs don't exist, and neither does *The One*. You only start spotting the red flags once you've actually spent time with them.

When you are a student, you may find yourself scrolling on social media, looking at posts announcing a new job, humblebragging about a promotion, or showing off some shiny accolade. Or you may be consuming interviews of famous professionals, aspiring to be like them, wondering when you will be able to reach those heights.

Let's assume you've earned a coveted spot at one of the best MNCs in the country. Life is good. You're earning well. The work is enjoyable. If you thought gracefully tackling your tasks and hitting every performance indicator meant your work was done and dusted, we urge you to think again.



ILLUSTRATION: MONG SHONIE

Through a very well-crafted employer branding strategy, this company has gaslit people into believing that it is a certified “great place to work”. You’ll see social media flooded with clips of book clubs, potlucks, and special events where the workplace transforms into a playground of sorts. However, there can sometimes be too much of a good thing.

This is a company that treats extracurricular activities like a matter of national security. Too seriously. Every cultural programme has to resemble an Oscar-winning production, and there are a **lot** of cultural programmes. It doesn't matter if you couldn't care less about the performing arts. Turning down the opportunity to perform, for any reason other than religious ones, is practically a crime.

It's fun when you actually want to jam with work friends and try out a new dance routine, but it's another level of absurd when you're told – last minute – to cobble together a medley of performances and have to spend your hard-earned weekend getting together to rehearse. The horrors of mandatory music and dance classes after school will come back to haunt you.

The ECAs don't stop there. There are countless other things you are expected to do in the name of engagement and fostering team spirit. I have spent the entirety of my undergraduate life avoiding joining a university club or even walking past those rooms, but the irony of fate persists.

On the flipside, the Gen-Xers and Millennials who are not in constant fear of youngsters overshadowing them are too

overzealous about milking the fervour of youth. They treat every Gen-Z within arm's reach as an idea factory, forcing them to regurgitate ideas to revamp the company and its processes. It's all fun and games and pretty slide decks until they start taking you to upper management meetings and putting you on the spot to provide a “fresh perspective” into matters beyond your comprehension.

What do we know about anything? We only just graduated.

Let's pivot to another scenario, imagine you're working for another MNC: a shiny Software as a Service (SaaS) start-up. This company seems like the run-of-the-mill start-up with the fancy perks and work-life balance, and life is good for a while when you first join, but soon enough, cracks start to show in this glamorous facade.

This company used to pride itself on flexible working arrangements and the work-life balance it fostered in its culture – offering unlimited paid time off (PTO) packages and allowing employees to work from anywhere up to 45 days in a calendar year. Sounds amazing, right? Out of nowhere, though, Human Resources sends everyone an email stating that the unlimited PTO package will be discontinued next month, citing misuse.

Then, to make things worse, employees are required to show up to the office a minimum of three days a week moving forward. Now this understandably causes a stir, with everyone wanting some transparency on the decision. How does HR respond? They call a town hall meeting and guilt-trip everyone by pointing out that we have the most public holidays of all the operating regions, and we should be considerate of the problems the company faces due to the number of days off we take, and we should all be team players and just suck it up.

But the company still offers a flexible working setup, even without the unlimited PTO; that's a win, right? The main reason the company offers a flexible setup is due to the bizarre work hours they require their employees to work. Over half the office works in alignment with international hours, namely from 2 to 10 PM local time in Bangladesh, a horrible time slot that eats up your whole day, and leaves you no wiggle room for a social life. And let's be honest, everyone

ends up working a couple of hours overtime, and in these cases, you work all day, and even into the night, with many people logging off closer to 3 AM than 10 PM.

Okay, fine, at least there's a swanky, cutting-edge office with catered lunch to return to. Turns out, when designing the layout, form was prioritised over function. More space was allocated to areas for lounging and games than for actual workstations, resulting in a daily fight for seats to sit and work at. Furthermore, the anthropological makeup of the workplace means that baddies will be seated next to coders who forget to put on deodorant, leading to a workplace more tense than your family getting ready to go to a wedding reception. Ultimately, it becomes a place where you can neither relax nor get work done.

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It seems like there's a farewell happening every other week, leading to a huge commotion that eats up a couple of hours of productive working time. But if you complain about this, you are practically shunned for being a downer and exiled as a social pariah. So, the next time you see a reel of a special event, know that no one actually had fun, but was administered – by brute force – to people who just want a paycheck.

So, if you haven't been able to read between the lines so far, let me spell it out for you. All that glitters is not gold. The grass isn't always greener on the other side. The IBA person in your friend list may be glamming it up on their stories, but it is more likely that they are crying themselves to sleep. There is more to life than corporate jobs, and maybe you should just get that STEM degree instead.

Corporate Baddie is still clocking in, serving looks, and complaining every single day.

Corporate Saddle is now funemployed, spiritually aligned, and living proof that you can quit your job and still complain about it everyday.