

## 90-hour work week debate: For or against? From Samir Arora, Harsh Goenka to Rajiv Bajaj, India Inc experts pick sides

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90-hour work week debate: From Samir Arora, Harsh Goenka, and Devina Mehra to Rajiv Bajaj, India Inc stalwarts have given their take on the current heated debate on work-life balance.



90-hour work week debate: After L&T chief advocated for a 90-hour work week, market and industry experts from Samir Arora, Harsh Goenka to Rajiv Bajaj picked sides for or against. (Image: Pixabay)

**90-hour work week debate:** After [Larsen & Toubro \(L&T\)](#) Chairman S N Subrahmanyam sparked an online debate by advocating a 90-hour work week and suggesting [employees should even give up Sundays](#), D-Street analysts and industry experts have picked sides for or against the notion. From Samir Arora, Harsh Goenka, and Devina Mehra to Rajiv Bajaj, India Inc stalwarts have given their take on the current heated debate on work-life balance.

While Devina Mehra, Rajiv Bajaj and Harsh Goenka went against the [L&T chief's remark of working 90 hours per week](#), Helios Capital's Samir Arora supported the idea of putting in long hours at the workplace, especially in the beginning or initial stages of the career, across most of the sectors. Here's what industry experts feel about the current 90-hour work week debate:

### India Inc stalwarts on the 90-hour work week debate:

#### Devina Mehra on 90-hour work week debate-

Devina Mehra, chairperson, managing director and founder of First Global advocated against the 90-hour work week. Mehra said, "After the comments by the L&T Chairman, on how he would like employees to work 90 hours a week and essentially hates the thought that they have any life at all outside work, let me repeat this as politely as I possibly can.

..."This type of recommendation of working for 'nation-building' or 'company building' is bunkum and makes absolutely no sense," she said.

According to Mehra, research shows that increasing the number of work hours beyond a point (and certainly that point is far before 90 hours) substantially reduces productivity. The human mind (or body) is simply not capable of focused, good-quality work for that long—at least on a regular basis.

"Not to [speak of the toll it takes on physical and mental health](#). Anecdotally, I remember from my days in Citibank, which had a late working culture (barring exceptions like Aditya Puri, who left at 5:30 sharp), many officers would while away time, say from 3-6 p.m. and then get back to work again to show their bosses that they were at the desks till 8:30 or 9," said Mehra.

According to the market expert, she avoided a dysfunctional work culture when she became an entrepreneur. As an employer, her focus has been on output rather than face time at work. "I have had very good colleagues who would try to leave by 6 p.m. every day and still be productive, whereas others who stayed late would while away time with frequent smoking breaks, talking to girlfriends etc," she said.

Mehra added that most people, including the person making this recommendation, have families, including children. This type of working hours recommendation assumes that the man (it is almost always the man) is working around the clock while his wife is taking care of the home and children.

More important, all data shows that no country has moved from low income to middle income without very substantial participation of women in the work force. So, if the aim is to build the country and its economy, we need to attract more women to the workforce, not less. Hence, the 90 hour week is not the prescription that will take the country to the next level.

"This much is basic, but there is a deliberate blindness to this among even well-educated men!," said Mehra. "While I do not believe in long hours in office necessarily, the fact is that if you want to really be skilled in something like equity research or any other real knowledge area you need to put in those 10000 hours of work to really learn the skill.

This means reading books, maybe doing courses from universities in your own time and so on. Without that you would not be at the cutting edge. So at the very least in the initial years you would need to put in the hours which may not be in office but on learning," concluded Mehra.

## **Samir Arora on 90-hour work week debate-**

Helios Capital founder Samir Arora also waded into the '90-hour work week' debate. "Yes. In the beginning one has to work harder than others to learn, get noticed and get ahead. In my first job after IIM, I worked in Delhi where my hours were routinely from 9 AM to around 10 PM and about an hour each way for travel.

I enjoyed it a lot but still sought a job with more sane hours," Arora recalled. [The IIM graduate](#) said he had eventually transitioned to a new job where people worked from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and often "started thinking about leaving" an hour early. "It was so boring that I went back to my earlier firm once again," he added.

Arora also noted that he truly enjoyed working with Alliance and Helios in more recent years — so much so that he did not "count it as work 95 per cent of the time". "Bottom line: It is not right to say that the CEO/promoter is working 70 hrs because he is the owner and gets paid much more etc. You have to ask, why that person was able to become CEO or First gen promoter or whatever in the first place. Your choice," he added.

## **Deepak Shenoy on 90-hour work week debate-**

Capitalmind founder and CEO Deepak Shenoy has shared his own thought-provoking take on productivity and work-life balance. In a post on X, Shenoy shared his experience of working as an entrepreneur, often clocking over 100 hours a week. However, he points out that the real "work" often happens in just 4-5 hours a day.

His post likely hints that it's not about the number of hours worked but about the intensity and focus during those hours. Shenoy also challenged the [conventional notion of enforced work hours](#), arguing that motivated individuals will naturally work hard without the need for strict time.

"I've probably worked 100 hours a week for nearly all my working life, but most of that was as an entrepreneur. You don't have to enforce working hours. People who are motivated will work happily. In any case, most real work happens in 4-5 hours a day, but you don't know when that happens," Shenoy's post on X read.

"I still find it difficult to call meetings as work but it takes more energy than what I call work. At some level this working x hours argument is ununderstandable to me. When I play, I will play hard. When I work I'll work hard. I suggest you find your rhythm, and I hope you find success in that; major economic rewards will come, sometimes now, sometimes later, to people that don't watch clocks," said Shenoy.

## **Rajiv Bajaj on 90-hour work week debate-**

Rajiv Bajaj, Managing Director of Bajaj Auto said that what matters is quality of work, not hours. "Let 90 hours start from the top," said Rajiv Bajaj in an interview with CNBC-TV18. Further stating that the bottleneck is always at the top of the bottle, Bajaj urged leaders to rethink their strategies, improve decision-making, and empower employees to achieve better outcomes.

## **Harsh Goenka on 90-hour work week debate-**

RPG Group Chairman Harsh Goenka also expressed his concern about the idea of working 90 hours a week following the L&T chairman's comments on work-life balance. Goenka stated that with such a practice, why not rename Sunday to 'Sun-duty' and make day offs a mythical concept.

"90 hours a week? Why not [rename Sunday to 'Sun-duty' and make 'day off' a mythical concept!](#) Working hard and smart is what I believe in, but turning life into a perpetual office shift? That's a recipe for burnout, not success. Work-life balance isn't optional, it's essential. Well, that's my view! #WorkSmartNotSlave," Goenka said in a post X.

## **L&T Chairman Sparks 90-Hour Week Debate**

A video of Subrahmanyan calling for staffers to work 90 hours a week if they have "to be on top of the world" has sparked heated debate on social media platforms. The clip re-ignited the work-life balance debate that enveloped Infosys founder Narayan Murthy's calls for a 70-hour work week last year.

"What do you do sitting at home? How long can you stare at your wife, and how long can the wife stare at the husband? Get to the office and start working. If I can make you work on Sundays, I will be happier because I work on Sundays," the L&T chairman could be heard saying in the now-viral clip.