

BostonWorks

VIEW FROM THE CUBE

One job is not quite enough for about 8 million of us

By David Whitemyer

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I am a Multiple Jobholder. That's what the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls me. My wife just thinks I'm fidgety.

Here's how my day starts: At 6:30 a.m., I find myself squished between two other subway passengers. I'm on my way to my job — well, one of my jobs. I'm a full-time manager at a design firm. I'm also an adjunct professor in the architecture department of a local college. And I am a freelance writer.

I've got about 30 minutes to reach my stop, 30 minutes to finish some work for an upcoming article, 30 minutes before I get to the North Annex Building, where I'll be teaching. My youngest son was up most of the night with a fever and I really need some coffee, but with a notebook balanced on one knee, a pile of printouts on the other, my backpack between my calves, and a pen in my mouth, there's no room to safely hold a cup.

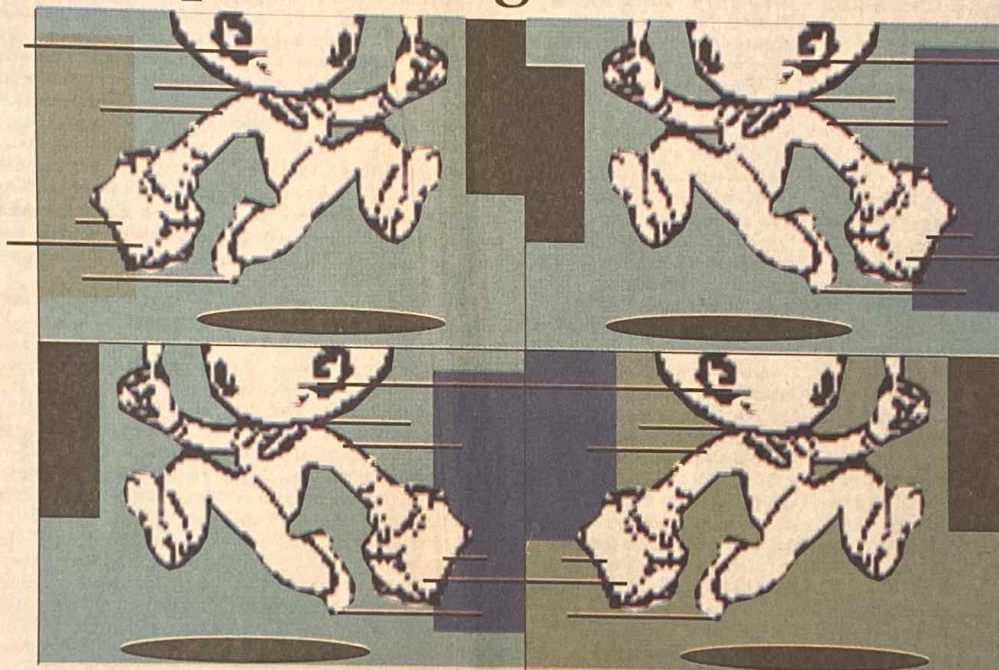
I am one of the more than 8 million Americans who work more than one job, according to the BLS. Their statistics reveal the majority of us are well-educated, having completed at least a four-year degree, and we are financially secure.

Some of us don't really need the money. We just can't seem to sit still. Moonlighting is our passion.

The subway is running a bit behind schedule. It looks like I won't get to class until after 7 a.m. My students arrive at 8, so I'll have just under an hour to review my lecture notes and photocopy the day's assignment. I'm usually the first professor in, so there won't be any coffee made. Making it will eat up another five minutes of my prep time, so I pass.

After class I've got a 20-minute subway ride during which I can grade a few papers before reaching my full-time office, at the design firm. I'll arrive about two hours later than everyone else. Still no time to stop for coffee.

For those of you keeping track, I have three jobs. (Four, actually, if you count those picnic tables I sometimes build for local day-care centers. Or maybe five, if you consider that architectural model I made for a friend.) These are all activities



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that provide me with income. They are also activities that keep me very, very busy, because, you see, I am Multiple Jobholder, and we are a busy lot.

If I love this hectic lifestyle so much, then why don't I just quit my day job and become a full-time freelancer? You know, increase the multiple to get an even bigger rush? It's simple. I'm not a risk taker. I don't gamble. I like a comfortable crutch. I'm a conservative guy with a pulse that never stops racing. Driving fast and parachuting out of a small plane are fine, but I would never risk next month's paycheck. I like having the security of a full-time job.

There are many reasons people take on second jobs. There are those who need the money to keep their families clothed and fed, or maybe to save for college or retirement. Others may be building up a resume, adding professional experience while on personal time. Some might be testing the waters of an alternative career

without wanting to risk the safety of a current position. Then there are those with a driving need to fill every spare second doing something productive. That's me. It's in my blood. Blame my parents.

Besides extra income, having more than one job gives me other rewards. Teaching a few times per week adds some variety to my otherwise routine office job. Writing articles gives me a chance to research and learn about new things that I don't get to know in my other jobs. Having a bunch of jobs provides me with opportunities I wouldn't normally get in my simple nine-to-five life. It keeps my brain oiled.

But having numerous jobs also comes with its share of challenges. With a wife, two kids, some pets, and a house, I have a fair number of personal responsibilities. I have to balance time between my fidgety extracurricular activities and my family. And I count on their understanding when

my extra jobs take time away from them. When I leave the house before the sun comes up so that I can get to class early, it means that my wife spends more time flying solo with our high-energy boys.

Losing time with my family is a drag. I also lose out on the other little things I enjoy, like reading, watching "The West Wing," and, well, drinking coffee. In some lucky instances, I've been able to turn a hobby into money, like the occasional piece of woodworking that I sell to a friend of a friend. But for the most part, I've lost those precious few moments on the subway where I'm alone and can rush through 20 or 30 pages of a good novel. Instead, I need that time to grade papers or write essay drafts.

When those precious moments do arise, I treasure them all that much more. Forty minutes cooking an artistic meal. An hour building blocks with one of my children.

My family is cooperative. But they still think I'm crazy. I can't stop moving.

My friends think I'm crazy, too. They'll ask how my online book sales are going. (OK, I guess that's job number six.) They'll say, "Gosh David, where on earth do you find the time?" I'm not really sure. Like everyone else, I only get 24 hours per day.

Some companies have moonlighting policies. Mine doesn't. But to make my jobs work, I'm compelled to clear it with my boss since we are a small firm and he is, after all, the man that signs my most important check and provides my family with health insurance. I'm fortunate, because my boss has been very flexible.

My co-workers have also been understanding. They don't seem to resent my late arrivals. And I tend not to slack off when I'm there.

I've read that people with multiple jobs are often more effective in their day jobs because they work harder to keep up, and they're better at time management.

I make sure that my other jobs don't threaten my full-time gig. I can't live without it.

This is how my day ends: When evening comes, I leave work and rush off to pick up my oldest son from school. On our walk to the subway, we stop at Dunkin' Donuts for a treat. He gets a munchkin. He tells me a funny story about something that happened on the playground, and for the first time that day, I'm concentrating on just one thing: him. And, I finally get my cup of coffee.

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