



“Apparently we shouldn’t be doing our jobs for the money, but for the sheer pleasure of it”

Sali Hughes on why we’ve had to put up and shut up at work

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I never imagined I’d one day write anything in defence of Chris Moyles. Especially following

another of his bullish on-air rants. But last month, when he complained to his 7.8 million Radio 1 listeners that he hadn’t been paid in months, I found myself nodding in support. ‘If they can’t be bothered, why should I?’ he shouted, before describing the BBC employee who’d persistently failed to deal with the matter as ‘a moronic div’. The papers were predictably outraged.

But as a freelancer, I feel some empathy towards Moyles. He’s been getting up at 5:45am each morning for two months, for no payment. His £650K salary is neither here nor there. In principle, he’s been working for free. Would you? And, more to the point, could you bite your tongue?

I’m currently waiting on £6,000 in unpaid invoices, some from as far back as March. This has been the norm for two years, since the recession hit. Workers without contracts are one-man bands. We have few rights and are given every impression that we’re of the lowest priority – find me a freelancer in any profession, and I’ll show you someone who speaks to accounts more than they do their own spouse.

Even my friends in steady jobs are struggling. Scared to leave on time, unable to claim for all the extra work they’re doing to fill the gaps in a skeleton staff. Each engages in the ludicrous dance of waiting for the first colleague to get her coat and go, so she can safely leave 20 minutes later without appearing to be the weakest



down a Chilean mine. But why should loving my job mean I should also be happy to wait months while my money earns a smidgen more interest for shareholders? And why should my friends feel so ‘grateful’ for being in possession of a job, when they sacrifice almost every waking hour to it? When we’re honouring our half of the bargain, so too should our employers. If we don’t do our work, we don’t get money or respect. So if we don’t get money, realistic workloads and decent working hours, why should we work?

Yes, Moyles misjudged how sympathetic listeners would feel, given that many are struggling to find work and keep a roof over their heads. A celebrity who works three-to-four hours a day, bleating when low on cigar and brandy money is unlikely to garner much pity. And to use the airtime we as licence payers grant him, on which to air his grievances rather than entertain us, is self-indulgent. But just as Moyles may be showing his listeners a lack of respect, so too is any employer stalling on payment for work delivered in good faith. And that, sadly, is part of a much more common and accepted rudeness.

Of course, unlike Moyles, most of us don’t have the option of publicly shaming our employers, and if we did, we’d surely be given our P45s and quickly shown the door before any large cheque appeared. Moyles, having received full payment and an apology, is now putting the rant down to the emotional fallout of a recent break-up.

But for the rest of us, the everyday battle continues. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I must call accounts.”

Next week: author
Grace Dent

LOVE CATALOGUES

NOTHING GIVES ME GREATER PLEASURE THAN A GOOD CATALOGUE. OR A BAD ONE. I’LL POP ON THE KETTLE AND BINGE ON ANY CATALOGUE WITH PURE JOY. I MIGHT SCREW A PLACARD TO THE FRONT DOOR: JUNK MAIL PLEASE.

link and risk being replaced by someone for whom evenings and weekends are dispensable luxuries. It’s as though at the dawn of recession, business decided to change the rules without telling us, and we had no choice but to swallow them.

Chris Moyles’ schtick has always been hinged on his being the voice of the common man, airing what the bloke down the pub would say over a pint. And any bloke who was working unpaid, or being stonewalled by his employer, would have plenty to say

about it. And so should we all. But we’re too scared to take grievances further than the watercooler, in case we acquire a reputation for being poor team players or being ‘uncommitted’.

Our career-centric culture has created this strange, unspoken belief that we shouldn’t be doing our jobs for the money, but for the sheer pleasure of it. Don’t get me wrong – like Moyles, I adore my job and feel fortunate to do what I always dreamed. I get to sit at home and write in pyjamas. I work hard, but I’m hardly

HATE SEXIST TV PANELS

IMAGINE TURNING ON THE TELLY TO SEE JO BRAND, SANDI TOKSVIG, JOSIE LONG AND ONE MAN ON THE QI PANEL. IT’D NEVER HAPPEN, BECAUSE ONLY ONE WOMAN IS ALLOWED TO BE FUNNY AT A TIME. SWITCH OFF THE SEXISM!

