# Gen Z’s rise in ‘polygamous working’ disrupts traditional job loyalty amid economic pressure



In today’s rapidly evolving job market, stories of unconventional work arrangements are becoming increasingly common. Take, for instance, the case of 24-year-old Charlie, who masterfully navigates the challenges of a competitive workforce by secretly juggling two full-time jobs. While many of his peers struggle with job hunting, often facing rejection from AI-driven application systems, Charlie's experience has propelled him into a lucrative salary bracket, earning over £80,000 a year while managing both roles from the comfort of his flat in central London.

Charlie's journey is emblematic of a broader trend among Generation Z, who are increasingly adopting what is termed ‘polygamous working’ or ‘polyworking.’ This trend reflects a mindset that sees employment as something to be optimised rather than a conventional loyalty-based relationship with a single employer. In the face of stagnating wages and soaring living costs, particularly in urban centres like London, many young professionals are tempted to "hack" their careers by maximising their income through multiple job offers—a proposition Charlie found himself embracing when he received concurrent job offers in software development.

The rise of this phenomenon is underscored by a recent report from McKinsey, which found that about 5% of typical American firms’ workforces are engaged in this practice, dubbed ‘double-dipping.’ While some view this dual employment as an entrepreneurial spirit, it raises ethical questions surrounding transparency and loyalty. The landscape of work is shifting; allegiance to one company is increasingly seen as outdated. Instead, today's young workers often ask, "What's in it for me?"

Yet, the excitement of this “hustle culture” masks underlying anxieties. Charlie admits that while the thrill of managing two high-pressure jobs can be exhilarating, it cultivates an atmosphere of panic and opportunism. He meticulously crafts schedules to sidestep overlapping commitments, often utilising distinct workspaces and technological tools to maintain the facade. In some online spaces, particularly on platforms like Reddit, communities dedicated to "overemployment" have flourished, sharing strategies and resources among a growing membership that reflects the increasing acceptance of polyworking.

Amidst this backdrop of dual employment, other youngsters are exploring different avenues, such as ‘quiet quitting’ and ‘task masking,’ both coveted strategies that allow individuals to retain jobs while exerting minimal effort. The urgency for a sustainable work-life balance—from those who choose to ‘work smart’ to those who prefer to ‘work little’—illuminates a generational shift. As young people voice their entitlement to flexible work arrangements, the once-straightforward exchange of time for remuneration has transformed into a negotiation for autonomy and fulfilment.

Reports indicate that Gen Z workers, particularly those aged 16 to 24, face an unsettling unemployment rate exceeding 14%, creating a climate in which unconventional work tactics are not merely advantageous but, for some, indispensable for survival. In an age where traditional markers of success seem increasingly unobtainable, the aspiration to maintain one's mental health while building a career underscores a yearning for a meaningful work-life harmony.

Complicating this landscape is an alarming rise in reports of entitled behaviour among younger employees. Surveys reveal that many employers have doubts regarding the preparedness of new Gen Z hires, with a majority expressing dissatisfaction with their professionalism. Stephen Evans, chief executive of Learning and Work, warns that without careful guidance, this pattern could lead to a generation that feels disoriented and underutilised.

Amid this cacophony of conflicting attitudes, Charlie's secret is one of dual aspiration—finding financial stability and personal fulfilment in an otherwise rigid employment structure. As polygamous working raises eyebrows and ethical concerns from employers, its implications may profoundly alter corporate culture and expectations moving forward. The world of work is undoubtedly shifting, with a new generation navigating its complexities by rewriting the rules, one dual job at a time.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 6
3. Paragraphs 2, 3, 5
4. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4
5. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4
6. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 7
7. Paragraphs 2, 4, 6

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14720749/sneakily-juggling-two-WFH-jobs-hacking-workplace.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/e3349ea5-50f7-447b-b466-750e038f706b> - This article discusses the rise of 'polygamous working,' where individuals secretly hold multiple full-time jobs simultaneously. It highlights the challenges and ethical concerns associated with this practice, especially in the context of remote work. The piece also touches upon the emergence of workplace terms like 'quiet quitting' and 'task masking,' reflecting a generational shift in work culture and attitudes among younger employees.
3. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/some-employees-are-destroying-value-others-are-building-it-do-you-know-the-difference> - McKinsey's report identifies 'double-dippers'—employees holding multiple jobs simultaneously without employer knowledge—as a growing phenomenon, comprising about 5% of the workforce. The study examines the impact of this behavior on organizational performance and offers strategies for companies to address the challenges posed by such employees.
4. <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/gen-z-now-polyworking-because-130347397.html> - This article explores the trend of 'polyworking,' where individuals, particularly from Generation Z, hold multiple jobs at once. It examines the motivations behind this practice, such as financial necessity and the desire for flexibility, and discusses the implications for work-life balance and productivity.
5. <https://insights.talintpartners.com/us-report-reveals-the-generations-most-likely-to-work-two-jobs-at-once/> - A study analyzing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that individuals aged between 25 and 54 are most likely to work multiple jobs, with 5,441,000 people in this age group holding two jobs simultaneously in 2023. The report also highlights the prevalence of this trend among women and the potential risks associated with poly-employment.
6. <https://allwork.space/2023/10/welcome-to-the-age-of-polyworking-the-multi-job-revolution-led-by-gen-z/> - This article delves into the rise of 'polyworking,' particularly among Generation Z, where individuals hold multiple jobs simultaneously. It discusses the benefits and challenges of this trend, including increased flexibility and income, as well as potential issues like burnout and decreased productivity.
7. <https://www.fastcompany.com/91014703/why-poly-employment-may-be-2024s-next-big-work-trend> - The article examines the concept of 'poly-employment,' where individuals hold multiple jobs at once, and its growing prevalence among younger workers. It discusses the sectors most affected, the demographics involved, and the reasons behind this trend, such as financial necessity and the pursuit of diverse experiences.