

# It's about besting your work colleagues

READING "All work and no play" (*The Star*, Dec 4), I felt deeply sorry for the workers who were forced to put in the extra hour by inconsiderate bosses.

As described by economist Tim Harford, working is like a tennis tournament. Bosses pay people based on their relative performance. A limited fund is set aside for the game. You need to beat your colleagues in order to win the prize.

There are few winners; a champion and a few runners-up. If you are lucky enough to join a good company, probably there is a third category of winners.

Company A may put aside a certain sum for salary increments at the end of the year.

Of course, not everyone will share it equally. The top 20% will probably enjoy a 10% salary adjustment and

the next 20% probably 7%.

The subsequent 20% will enjoy the median, which is 5%, and finally the lowest 40% will be allocated less than 5%.

Therefore, the better you are relative to your colleagues, the more you will get. No matter how good the whole team is, the reward system means you need to beat the others.

On overtime claims, some consider that as a reward for the lazy and incompetent. It is not uncommon to encounter situations where employees purposely delay work during office hours.

They will then seek permission from their supervisor to work overtime, to get a slightly higher pay cheque at the end of the month.

However, this is not entirely their fault. Some employers pay peanuts to their non-executive employees

but expect them to work long hours.

I admire a friend of mine who works in a renowned multinational corporation. He is allowed to work at home as long as he gets the job done.

He is even allowed to work in his hometown (Sibu, and his company is in Kuala Lumpur) thanks to the sophisticated hardware and software architecture the company has invested millions in.

"This will be my lifelong career!" was his remark.

As stated by former Singapore prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, a reward system which provides equal opportunities for individuals to perform and progress is important to optimise their productivity.

A leader in an organisation must know how to boost the morale of

the workers. Poor leadership is one of the main reasons for a stressful work place. Leaders who do not know how to reward capable subordinates create frustration among the good performers.

Due to lack of resources and opportunities, some choose to become employees instead of employers. Many are very capable in their scope of specialty. Their contribution should be treasured and they deserve a fair appraisal at the end of the day.

And to the bosses and managers out there, when you next want to call a meeting 15 minutes before people go off, please think of the poor girl waiting for her mum and dad at the baby sitter's house.

**EPT,**  
**Seri Kembangan.**