

“996” SYSTEM: RECIPE FOR SUCCESS OF CHINESE ECONOMY

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Резюме – в научной работе рассматриваются преимущества использования системы “996” на ранних этапах развития экономики, и ее минусы в долгосрочной перспективе, и путь правильного использования системы “996”.

Resume – the research paper deals with the advantages of using the “996” system in the early stages of economic development, and its disadvantages in the long term, and the way to properly utilize the “996” system.

Introduction. We believe that only hard work can guarantee success. The problem is that there are only 24 hours in a day. So all ambitious people have to sacrifice rest for work or study. China has been particularly successful in this, with one of the fastest growing economies in the world over the last thirty years

The flip side of this success is that many Chinese do not live in the traditional “8-5-5” – a work schedule from 8am to 5pm, five days a week – but in the “9-9-6” – a work schedule from 9am to 9pm, six days a week.

Main part. It can be explained by the fact that competition for a place under the sun is very fierce in China. The competition for good places in universities is so strong that many applicants go crazy even before they take their exams. If you do not get the highest score, if you do not get into a good university, you are doomed to a low-paid job for the rest of your life.

In other words, the 996 culture in China is a kind of continuation of the struggle for “survival” in the career race. To get a job in top companies like Alibaba or Tencent and establish yourself there means not only financial well-being, but also social recognition. In addition, if you do not work 12 hours a day, hundreds of thousands of competitors will [1].

Fans of the 996-labor philosophy (mostly owners of large companies) insist on its positive impact. If it were not for recycling, which became the norm in the early 2000s; there would be no Alibaba, no Huawei, no Xiaomi, and no Chinese economic power. There are far fewer such optimists among rank-and-file workers, and in their eyes, 996 is not a recipe for success, but a path to a hospital bed.

For example, Alibaba CEO Jack Ma said, “I consider the “996” concept a huge blessing. We do not need people who want to work 8 hours comfortably. How can we achieve success without putting in extra effort and working extra hours?” But Brandwatch's Chief Engineer, James Stanier believes otherwise, namely that: “996” is a culture of wasted potential, where employees either feign business, waiting for the opportunity to leave, or simply drive themselves into the grave [2].

Because of general working class resentment, the Tang ping (translated as Lying flat) movement emerged. It was born in April 2021. It was launched by a post titled “Lying apartment is justice” on the Chinese search engine Baidu. The

user who published the post believed that: the point is to earn the necessary minimum, and just ignore all the social pressures, career ladder, overwork, stress and so on. This is the answer to the Chinese phenomenon dubbed “ants in pants” or the “996” cult of the socialist construction and reform period: working 9am to 9pm, 6 days a week [3]. Chinese millennials believe that no matter how hard they work under the current “996” system, no matter how hard they try to save money, buy a house or car on credit, get married and have children, they cannot make themselves happy through it. They ask the question: is there a better resistance than “lying flat”? Because of all this, we can conclude that the 996 system has allowed China to show fantastic economic growth rates and maintain them [4]. However, at the same time it has caused public resentment. It follows that the “996” system will be good for the rapid development of the economy, but after that we should move to the “955” or “855” system, which is ideal for the welfare of the people and the maintenance of the economy.

What is happening in China now is a typical conflict of a capitalist economy that should be solved by the state. At the very least, it should force companies to pay generous extra for recycling. Moreover, what is remarkable is that China has such laws, but in fact, they are not enforced. There is too much competition for a place in the sun. If you start pushing for rights, you will be dismissed for formal reasons and someone else will be hired who is ready to “dig their nose into the ground”. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of Chinese continue to live in the 996 regime, which is becoming the norm.

Moreover, the Chinese in large IT companies are worried that it will get even worse, and that “996” will be replaced by “715” – working 7 days a week, 15 hours a day. Others are even talking about “007” – no, not that agent, but a 24/7 schedule [5]. By the way, some people really do work that hard.

Conclusion. In China, working in IT companies is considered very prestigious and highly paid. It is not easy to get a job there, and the best thing you can do for your career and resume is to gain experience by working non-stop and grabbing all the tasks. Those who are not suited to this can get a job with a more relaxed schedule, but consequently the pay will be less. Nevertheless, here everyone must decide for himself to work more for the sake of career advancement and to ensure his welfare in the future or to live today according to the principle of “lying flat”.

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