

Beat the 'moan-day' blues

A contagion is on the loose that's potentially career-damaging, writes **Amanda Horswill**

MONDAY morning at 11. It's after the obligatory caffeine hit, the early-morning 'I-did-this-on-the-weekend' gossip and the horrid weekly staff meeting where you are handed far too much work for one person.

How do you feel?

If this is when you secretly dash off a few online applications to job ads, you could be suffering a very modern affliction — Mondayitis.

Dr Glyn Brokensha analysed when most people applied for jobs via his online recruitment management service Express and found the largest number — 20 per cent — was made on a Monday. His website allows employers to aggregate online applications and keep track of the recruitment process.

"Most activity on Monday is just after 11am, which would suggest that employees are feeling even more glum after a morning meeting and looking for a change in their working environment," Brokensha says.

"Often we see a peak just before Monday morning meeting time and then a bigger one just after."

He puts it down to Mondayitis.

"It's that sense of 'Oh, God, it's not Monday again'," he says.

"Most of the time the feeling does not come from the job; it comes from the person doing that job."

"What happens is first they are discontented with their personal situation — and that may or may not include their work situation — and that is projected on wherever and whomever they happen to be with,



and on a Monday morning that is people at work. And it is just as possible they project on to their family and friends on the weekend."

He says that negative projection gets worse as people make the transition from a weekend at home to a desk at work.

"Monday is a good focal point that makes people recognise we don't really control our lives — we rent out

our time to employers," he says.

"On Monday, it comes into sharp relief that we give up control of our lives between 9am and 6.30pm, or whatever, and that we do it voluntarily in exchange for a salary."

"Mondayitis is a disconnect between what we want to do and what we have decided we must do. In some ways we delude ourselves into thinking that we don't have to do that."

The delusion lasts the morning, prompting many people to apply for new jobs out of sheer hopelessness or as an escape. Problem is, he says, if the reason behind the persisting Mondayitis is not discovered, the worker will just transplant their affliction to their new job, and the cycle of dissatisfaction-application-new job will repeat itself.

Employees can counter those negative feelings by taking control (see box right). He says positive reinforcement is helpful, such as making a list of your blessings, including why you like your job. If that doesn't work, he says deeper investigation is warranted.

But watch out, Mondayitis is contagious. Like the proverbial rotten apple in a barrel, a depressed worker can bring the rest of the team down. Bosses can help to counter this effect.

So, should all bosses bring in cake for Monday morning tea?

"If that comes from a genuine desire to connect with people who report to you and to support them then great, bring cake, people will see it for what it is," he says.

"But if it only comes out of some cynical desire to manage production, most people these days will see straight through that and it will have a counter-productive effect."

"Employers have to recognise their employees as people first and workers second. (Website company) Google does that brilliantly. It looks for ways for people to be people and harvests the result. Everyone tends to respond better when we are treated as human beings."

He says higher-placed executives seem less likely to suffer from Mondayitis — they have Sundayitis instead. The peak time for applications for management and executive roles is Sunday night.

"People at that level tend to go: 'OK, so what is it that I want to do with my life,'" he says. "That is a good question to ask yourself all the time."

Modern warfare

MORE people apply for jobs on a Monday than any other day of the week. The cause has been put down to Mondayitis — the horrid feeling that makes going to work on Monday an absolute chore for some people. Here's a list of ideas that might help.

BREAK IT DOWN

Are you sure of your true feelings? Use logic to tackle the problem. Ask yourself: Am I applying for a different job because I hate my current one, or because I hate having to work at all? If you think your job is OK, then try to determine what patterns lead you to feel the way you do on a Monday morning. If you really do hate your job, perhaps it's time to look at your options, retrain or start applying for a new role.

CREATE AN ANTIDOTE

If it's not your job and it is just your state of mind causing your Mondayitis, remind yourself why you work. Do you do it to create a financially stable environment for your family? Are you working this job to lay a solid foundation for your career? Whatever it is, create an antidote in the form of visual reminders. For example, bring photographs in to work of things you love from home and tape them up around your desk. If you can't have these visual cues on display, perhaps tuck a picture inside your desk drawer, or put an image on your mobile phone screensaver that you can peek at when you need to.