

Work Day  
By Libby Znaimer

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President & CEO  
Atlantis Systems

Atlantis is a public company that builds mission-critical training systems for aviation. It had revenues of \$33 million in 2005.

**What are your key functions?**

I talk to staff, customers, and anyone else who's on site in order to evaluate our products and our projects. So, I spend half of my time on sales, ten per cent on mergers and acquisitions, 25 per cent with our employees, and 15 per cent with the board of directors.

**Hours of work per week:**

I work about 75 hours a week, starting at 7:00am, finishing at 9.30 PM. When customers are in town I take them out. Otherwise I go home for dinner and finish my work afterwards.

**How often do you take work home?**

Every single day! I spend about 2 to 4 hours a night.

**How many people work for you?**

We have approximately 240 employees; I have ten direct reports.

**What do you wear?**

I wear a business suit in the office - and a flying suit, with an intricately wired helmet, when I am at the "virtual reality" controls of our jet fighter or helicopter simulators on any of three continents.

**How much e-mail do you get per day?**

I get about 100 e-mails plus... 10% are Spam so I delete them.

**How quickly do you respond?**

That depends on the sensitivity of the situation. In some circumstances, immediately, in other circumstances the reply requires further discussion and due diligence. I find that it's dangerous to jump to conclusions in the complex electronic world in which we compete.

**How many phone calls do you get?**

On average I get about 40, and I take about 40% of them.

**How much time do you spend on your cellphone?**

I'm on the cell phone for at least 2-1/2 hours per day.

**What about your BlackBerry?**

I average 3 hours per day.

**Do you ever turn these devices off?**

Only when I sleep - and, if a deal is pending in Denmark, or Seattle, or wherever, I may keep it on all night.

**How many meetings do you attend?**

I have about five meetings per day. I learn by listening at meetings. The atmosphere of ones I chair is collegial, even if I make the final call.

**How often do you travel?**

I'm on the road half the time. This is because we have an important new operation serving the U.S. military in the "virtual reality" realm of flight training in Orlando, Florida, and big clients in St. Louis, Australia, England, Denmark and, of course, Canada. The last three cities I visited were Orlando, Ottawa, and Washington, D.C. We do a quarter of our business in the United States.

**What are the best and worst parts of that?**

The best part is face-to-face meetings, and an opportunity to close deals. It's exciting to show our Canadian innovations at the Farnborough air show in the UK, and the largest military simulation based show in Orlando called ITSEC. The worst part is being away from my family.

**Are you a workaholic?**

No. In my experience, workaholics are on the path to self-destruction, and they take others down with them.

**Does your family think you work too much?**

No, my family is willing to accept the rules of engagement and sometimes this is difficult, but they recognize the requirements and importance of the job and the commitment I have to it.

**Is your desk messy or neat?**

Neat. On it, I have The New York Times, The National Post, The Economist and several trade periodicals, as well as paperwork, pictures of my family, drawings and art from my children. I also have an autographed copy of Peter C. Newman's book about Canada's corporate titans, an autographed biography of Lennox Lewis, and material from The Institute of Corporate Governance for a course that I am taking.

**Do you clear everything off before leaving each day?**

Yes, because the balance of the workday load is taken home to complete at night.

**What's the best part of your job?**

This is my third turnaround situation, and I love being able to get a company back on track. When I took this company over two years ago, it was basically insolvent. In these situations, you often find the raw materials for success - the right people and technologies - are there, but haven't been assembled in proper manner to execute. I enjoy looking for things that other people miss, and finding another perspective.

**What's the most boring/worst part?**

The tasks associated with being a public company under the current requirements of Corporate Governance are onerous. I spend too much time meeting the needs of government functionaries.

**What's the best perk?**

In 2004, I had a tour of the plant where Boeing F18 fighters are assembled in St. Louis, Missouri. Security has become much tighter, and it would never happen today!

**What are your favourite places for lunch?**

Anywhere if it's to a customer's taste and any place the customer wants to go. I am a meat-and-potatoes guy, so I find that the classier a restaurant pretends to be, the less time you have to talk turkey, if you'll pardon the pun, with clients.

**Do you have hobbies, sports, or a fitness routine?**

I pump some iron, with a special focus on my midriff, twice a week, but, given my weight, that's not enough, so I am determined, somehow, to make it every other day.

**How many boards do you sit on?**

Six - The Softcare Corp, which is a mental health charity, The Ontario Aerospace Council, Atlantis Systems Corp., Atlantis Systems America, and two private holding companies. It takes 200 hours per year.

**What's your management philosophy or guiding management principle?**

Make sure that you are surrounded by the right people, that you are motivating people in the right way. I remember a story from the days when Apollo 11 was being prepared to travel to the moon. A man, an immigrant, was sweeping the launch pad with a cheap broom when a reporter asked him what he was doing. "I am helping to send men to the moon!" was his reply.