



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 4, 2021

## Software Company Prohibits Politics at Work — and 1/3 of Its Employees Quit

Perhaps there's something about the fraction one-third. That's how many angels are said to have followed Lucifer into Hell.

It's also the percentage of employees at a software company named Basecamp who recently quit after their boss told them they could no longer turn the workplace into a hell of political discord.

As the *New York Times* reported on April 30, "About a third of Basecamp's employees have said they are resigning after the company, which makes productivity software, announced new policies banning workplace conversations about politics."



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"Jason Fried, Basecamp's chief executive, detailed the policies in a [blog post](#) on Monday, calling 'societal and political discussions' on company messaging tools 'a major distraction.' He wrote that the company would also ban committees, cut benefits such as a fitness allowance (with employees receiving the equivalent cash value) and stop 'lingering and dwelling on past decisions,'" the paper continued.

"Basecamp had 57 employees, including Mr. Fried, when the announcement was made, according to a staff list on its website," the *Times* also informed. "Since then, at least 20 of them have posted publicly that they intend to resign or have already resigned, according to a tally by The New York Times."

While Fried's [entire blog post](#) is worth reading, the section on political discussion is particularly notable. He wrote:

### **No more societal and political discussions on our company Basecamp**

**account.** Today's social and political waters are especially choppy. Sensitivities are at 11, and every discussion remotely related to politics, advocacy, or society at large quickly spins away from pleasant. You shouldn't have to wonder if staying out of it means you're complicit, or wading into it means you're a target. These are difficult enough waters to navigate in life, but significantly more so at work. It's become too much. It's a major distraction. It saps our energy, and redirects our dialog towards dark places. It's not healthy, it hasn't served us well. And we're done with it on our company Basecamp account where the work happens. People can take the conversations with willing co-workers to Signal, Whatsapp, or even a personal Basecamp account, but it can't happen where the work happens anymore. *Update:* [David has shared some more details](#) and more of the *internal announcement on his HEY World blog.*

But Fried doesn't just want personal political beliefs out of the workplace. He's also taking the workplace out of employees' personal lives, as his blog section below explains:



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**No more paternalistic benefits.** For years we've offered a fitness benefit, a wellness allowance, a farmer's market share, and continuing education allowances. They felt good at the time, but we've had a change of heart. It's none of our business what you do outside of work, and it's not Basecamp's place to encourage certain behaviors — regardless of good intention. By providing funds for certain things, we're getting too deep into nudging people's personal, individual choices. So we've ended these benefits, and, as compensation, paid every employee the full cash value of the benefits for this year. In addition, we recently introduced a 10% profit sharing plan to provide direct compensation that people can spend on whatever they'd like, privately, without company involvement or judgement.

These policies reflect an earlier, more common-sense-oriented time. When my mother obtained one of her first jobs in the 1940s, her boss said, laying down the ground rules, "At home you do what you want; here you do what you're told."

She often quotes this as an example of a proper understanding of roles: Home is your domain.

Work is your *employer's*.

As to this, I once was discussing some political matter with a simpatico colleague, during my free time, at a business I was employed with for approximately 15 years. Well, a liberal customer must have somehow overheard the conversation because there was a complaint, and our boss instructed us to no longer have such discussions on the job. We didn't question his right to thus dictate. We didn't quit. Note, too, that even back then I was as deeply passionate about my beliefs as I am now.

In contrast, as journalist Rachel Bovard put it:

To be clear, all these people left Basecamp because the company decided it wanted to focus on building software instead of hosting one giant struggle session. <https://t.co/IW47MDG1IG>

— Rachel Bovard (@rachelbovard) [April 30, 2021](#)

Yet this is just a positive unintended (or intended?) byproduct of Basecamp's new policies, as cartoonist and writer Scott Adams points out:

In one of the greatest management moves of all time, Basecamp's CEO persuaded all of his most grindingly annoying employees to resign at once. <https://t.co/BUUhnfU691>

— Scott Adams (@ScottAdamsSays) [May 1, 2021](#)

This much reminds me of the casual friend who stopped contacting me and asking me to go out after I shared some ideas related to my Christian faith, ideas he obviously found bizarre. I wasn't upset. Rather, not only had I been true to myself, but I could be happy that someone I perhaps found a bit of a burden had decided to exit stage left.

That's part of the beauty of upholding proper standards or espousing correct ideas. If people accept them, they grow closer to Truth; if they don't, they move further from the Truth-tellers. If the latter, you don't have to reject them. They reject you. It's a win-win.

As for Basecamp's new policy, if every American corporation were to embrace it, "much of what is divisive in America would vanish instantly," [suggests](#) commentator Andrea Widburg. "We could drink or



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not drink Coke based on the flavor of its drink, not the flavor of its politics. The same would be true for any other products. We anxiously await word that other CEOs make the same decision.”

While I won’t hold my breath waiting, Fried wrote something else corporate American should ponder. “We are not a social impact company,” he stated. “We don’t have to solve deep social problems, chime in publicly whenever the world requests our opinion on the major issues of the day, or get behind one movement or another with time or treasure.”

No, corporate America doesn’t — especially since it’s more morally confused and effete than ever. As the Hippocratic Oath instructs, “First, do no harm.”



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