

# Working Life

## WORKING LIFE CLASSICS

Once again, it's time for a medley of "Working Life" classics that you've come to know and love. You have, haven't you? We'd be so disappointed if by now you didn't know your "Workaholics" from your "True Tales."

### Work/Health Alert

*Sit-tation serious....* A Moscow newspaper recently reported that a Russian businessman who had died of mysterious causes was, in fact, killed by his office chair. It seems that the chair was discovered to be highly radioactive—with about 1.5 million times more radioactivity than is found normally in the environment.

### True Tales From the Workplace

Viewers of the television show *Dateline* recently saw the story of a woman—a Ms. Poppy—who was perusing the classifieds in her local newspaper when she spotted a want ad for a receptionist.

It just so happens that the ad was placed by her boss—let's call him Mr. Snake-in-the-Grass—and the advertised position was the woman's current job. So, she ran an ad of her own in the next edition of the classifieds: "Dear Mr. Snake-in-the-Grass. I quit. Ms. Poppy."

### Workaholics

Perhaps you think that a lot of lawyers are interested only in whip-lash injuries and palimony suits? Well, think again and key in "ohm" 400 times on your laptops.

The International Alliance of Holistic Lawyers—based in Middlebury, Vermont—believes that people who have been harmed in auto accidents and similar mishaps have a right to have the "balance in their lives" restored—apparently through litigation.



### Top Ten

Despite the protests of NBC executives, David Letterman retained the rights to his nightly "Top 10" when he moved to CBS. So, we guess that it's OK to keep ripping it off. So, we will.

According to the International Facility Management Association, here are the top 10 complaints of office workers:

- ▶ 10. uncomfortable chairs
- ▶ 9. inadequate parking
- ▶ 8. slow elevators
- ▶ 7. small work areas
- ▶ 6. too few conference rooms
- ▶ 5. poor air quality
- ▶ 4. poor janitorial services
- ▶ 3. not enough filing space
- ▶ 2. too cold in the office
- ▶ And number 1. too hot in the office.

### Quote of the Month

"Creative minds have always been known to survive any kind of bad training." (Anna Freud)

*Things are not what they seem—hot chairs...musical desks...and busy, bombed-out employees.*

### Boomer Backlash

The United States Surgeon General's Office, *Prevention*, and other sources say that in the 1980s, 50 percent of Americans worried about their weight. Almost half were committed to staying fit through exercise. And only 25 percent smoked.

Now that we're well into the nineties, more than 50 percent of us don't care a fig about maintaining our weight. Only a third exercise regularly. And more of us smoke.

Just say no.

### Bye-O-Sphere

Say goodbye to your cozy office and desk. The Big Blue may be setting a precedent.

At IBM, some employees don't know where their desks are until they report to work each morning. For instance, sales executives punch their names into a central computer, which tells them which anonymous cubicles they're assigned to for the workday. When each person arrives at the desk *du jour*, he or she finds a telephone, a jack for a laptop, and a plastic tray with a highlighting pen and a stack of Post-It notes. That's it.

The idea is to impel employees who are supposed to get close to the customers to be more mobile. The message is, "Don't get too comfy and complacent."

IBM freely admits to creating a "warehouse" effect intentionally. It has closed many of its spiffy city offices with windows and other amenities, relegating staffs to huge, empty buildings in the sticks.

To help dispel the impersonal nature of the bare-bones digs, employees are encouraged to display family photos and other personal items in common areas. At one IBM facility, employees were permitted at least to call the corridors their own by choosing "street" names such as Main Street and Gilligan's Aisle.

### Getting Global

*If you knew Sushi....* Overworked Japanese office employees can find little time for socializing. And the Japanese culture traditionally discourages women and "salarymen" from initiating dates directly. Hence, the Happy Propose Club.

Members pay about \$100 to join

and \$150 for each introduction to someone who has caught their fancy. Typically, the men want to meet flight attendants and office receptionists whom they've encountered on business trips; women are interested in their tennis and golf instructors.

—*Reported in Fortune.*

### Factoid of the Month

*Salaryboys....* Among 25-year-old men in the United States, seven out of 10 still live with their parents, according to a study at Ohio State University.

### Sweeper Madness

Microsoft founder Bill Gates became so addicted to the video game Minesweeper that he forced himself to take it off his personal computer, reports the *Washington Post*. Nevertheless, Minesweeper and Solitaire are still preloaded onto Windows software, which is used on 80 percent of the world's newer PCs.

According to media reports, mostly men employees—from boisterous brokers to easygoing editors—are hooked; Minesweeper's hidden bombs are just too hard for the lads to resist.

Women do play, too, of course. One fervid woman player/worker says that every time she looks at the wall tiles in the office bathroom she can't keep from mentally grouping them into "winning patterns" a la Minesweeper.

Computer-game addicts have found ingenious ways to hide their habits from their employers. A "boss" key causes the computer to switch immediately from a game to something that looks like work. For example, in the popular computer game Tetris, pressing the "escape" key instantly displays a bogus spreadsheet on the screen.

None of this escaped the notice of Gates. Microsoft has introduced a new package of games aimed at "loosely supervised executives" in their mid-thirties who have a college education and spend a minimum of four hours a week playing video games. So far, more than one million copies have been sold. And look for re-releases of the old Atari games—with flaws and all—for nostalgia buffs.

Time for an intervention?

### Job Seekers Say the Darndest Things

Resumania has reached epidemic proportions, according to the firm Accountemps. Here are some real-life excerpts from real people's resumes.

- ▶ "I am a rabid typist."
- ▶ "I attended college from August 1830 to May 1984."
- ▶ "I can deal with customers' conflicts that arouse."
- ▶ "I have an ability to meet deadlines while maintaining composure."
- ▶ "I'm a quick leaner."
- ▶ "I seek challenges that test my mind and body because the two are usually inseparable."
- ▶ "Here are my qualifications for you to overlook."
- ▶ "Hope to hear from you shortly."
- ▶ "My ability to complete projects on time is unspeakable."
- ▶ "I have insufficient writing skills, and my thought processes have slowed down some. If I'm not one of the best, I will look for another opportunity."

Time for a spellcheck?

### What's in a Name?

The neat thing about starting your own company is that you can give yourself any title you like. Here are some appellations a few entrepreneurs and other businesspeople have bestowed upon themselves:

- ▶ CPU. Central processing unit of a North Carolina design studio.
- ▶ Chief Margin Defender. Founder of a software company.
- ▶ Chief Margin Maker. A "director of sales" at the same software company.
- ▶ Chief Code Defender. A "computer programmer" at guess where?
- ▶ And our favorite, Head Buckaroo. Top gun at a business-card manufacturing firm.

—*From Inc. magazine.*

*Special thanks to Erica Gordon Sorohan for her many contributions to WL. Next month, we follow up on some past WL items.*

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