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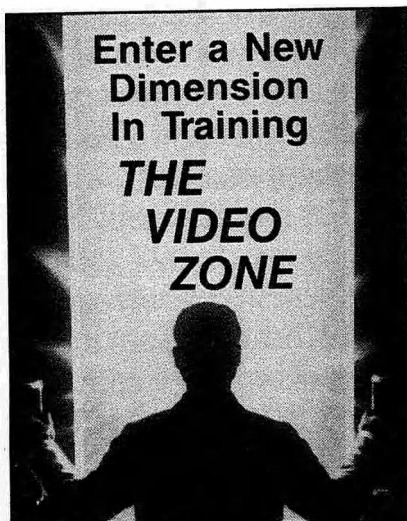
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# n Practice



## Half of You Are Burned Out

Nearly one half of all American workers may suffer from severe burnout, a disabling reaction to stress on the job that can lead to marital and family discord, insomnia, fatigue, drug and alcohol abuse, and other problems, according to the results of a three-year study published in the November 1985 issue of *Corporate Commentary: A Worksite Health Evaluation Report*.

The burnout study of employees in both the public and private sectors was lead by Robert Golembiewski, a University of Georgia research professor who found that, on average, about 45 percent of employees in the 18 organizations surveyed suffered from severe burnout. Since many of the organizations surveyed are considered "model places to work," Golembiewski concludes that burnout may be even more prevalent among the general working population.

An employee's personality appears to have little bearing on whether he or she will succumb to burnout, the research found. The single most important factor, it turns out, is the supervisor's management style. Employees at greatest risk are those in jobs that lack

clear roles and goals, offer little supervisory support, standards of performance, or group cohesiveness, but which have high pressure to produce.

Also in the November report are the promising results of a five-year study by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Indiana which found that its worksite health promotion program actually reduced employee health care costs by a dollar and a half for every dollar invested in the program, after an initial, short-term increase in health care costs.

A growing number of American companies are setting up worksite health promotion programs to reduce the high cost of health care and improve the health and well being of their most valuable resources—their employees.

To encourage more companies to systematically examine what works and what doesn't in their worksite health programs, *Corporate Commentary* (a journal devoted solely to evaluating such programs) asked experts from around the country to explain in clear, easy-to-understand terms how to develop the most appropriate evaluation strategy for a particular company. Their articles are included in a special section, "Blueprints for Evaluating Health Promotion Programs."

*Corporate Commentary* is published quarterly by the Institute on Organizational Health within the Washington Business Group on Health. For information, call Robert Rosen, editor, or Barbara Armstrong, associate editor, at 202/547-6644.

## Getting Employees Involved

Employee involvement programs are both desired by workers and are seen to have positive consequences when introduced, according to data obtained from the 1985 National Survey of Employee Attitudes conducted by Sirota and Alper Associates, Inc., and co-sponsored by *Business Week* magazine.

"We were surprised at how important employees think these programs are," admitted Chairman David Sirota. "We found higher morale among employees in those companies that have programs. They definitely influence attitudes—being involved has a strong positive effect.

The study defined employee involvement programs as formal efforts by an organization to obtain the ideas of employees for purposes of performance improvement.

Overall, 51 percent of the respondents said their organizations have suggestion programs, and 33 percent said their organizations have participative programs other than suggestion programs (for example, quality circles, employee involvement teams, and gain sharing).

Sirota notes that "of the respondents whose organizations have participation programs, fully 90 percent believe the programs are a 'good idea.'

"And of the respondents who indicated they work for organizations without programs, the vast majority—84 percent—say they would like to participate in such programs."

An annual telephone survey of a representative sample of the U.S. civilian workforce, the study measures employee attitudes toward 25 key dimensions of worklife satisfaction which relate to performance and a variety of issues of current importance. Additional information can be obtained by writing Sirota and Alper Associates, Inc., 1641 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10128.

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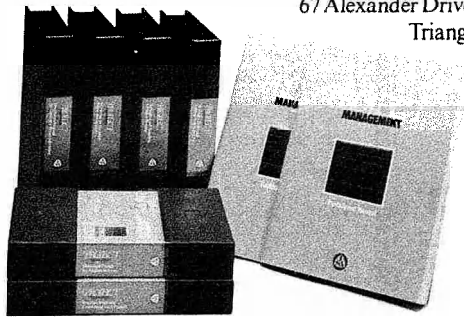
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## Tips for Successful Writing

From *Survival Writing: Staying Alive on Paper*, © 1986 by Stephen D. Gladis. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa.

- **Know what you want**—Take a moment before you begin and reduce your writing purpose to a simple sentence: "I want this customer to know that our company is sorry for our mistake," or "I want our manufacturer to know that we are angry he missed our deadline because it cost us money." By doing this, you will clarify your purpose and stick to the mission at hand. This purpose sentence serves as a guide for your rough outline and gives direction to your communication.
- **Remember that the reader doesn't have much time**—Business people are pushed for time. They have many and constant demands placed on them. Don't contribute to their stress by drafting a communication that requires a \$100 investment for a 10-cent problem. Keep your writing clear, direct, well-organized, and short.
- **Lead with the main point**—Lead with your strong point. Don't make the reader go on a treasure hunt to find your gem. Don't bury the main point in the middle of a paragraph or the reader might miss it. To discover what your main point or main sentence is, read a paragraph. Now decide which sentence would be the last one you would toss out. That sentence is your main point for the paragraph.
- **Make writing easy to read**—Make your writing pleasant to read by using some simple techniques: indent main points in a paragraph; underline for extra stress; use lists and bullets; don't fill the page with typing—use white space to rest the reader's eyes (for example, skip lines between paragraphs); use subheadings to break space and ensure clarity.

Think of things you've read that appeal to you. Save those examples and study them, and use the devices you like in them.

- **Keep the reader's needs in mind**—If you want your writing to be understood, keep the reader's needs, demands, concerns, and point of view in mind as you write. Avoid unfamiliar language or terms, and address questions you know the reader will logically have about your subject. In short, follow the golden rule of writing: help the reader in ways that you would want to be helped.
- **Speak directly to the reader**—To avoid stilted and formal language that can put the reader off, pretend that you are speaking directly to the reader. A dictaphone or tape recorder may be useful. Be careful, however. Don't forget to edit your conversation strictly, since speech can be too informal, too chatty, and too sloppy.
- **Don't overwrite**—Consider the impact of the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble of the Constitution, the Lord's Prayer, and the Gettysburg Address. All of these written pieces are short but powerful. Don't be afraid to cut.
- **Keep it simple**—Never use two words when one will do. Never use a paragraph when a sentence will do. Always strive for brevity and simplicity.
- **Don't write alone**—always get someone else to criticize your writing objectively before you submit it. The more you work with your writing the less objective you become, so ask someone else to read specifically for clarity and accuracy. The only thing better than one person editing is two people editing.
- **Avoid injecting your opinion**—Stick to facts in a business writing. Rarely does the reader want your gratuitous opinion on a particular matter. Deal with facts and avoid the unmistakable mark of egotism in your writing.
- **Avoid qualifiers and vague modifiers**—Don't use modifiers that almost say what you want when you can find ones that are exact.
 

<i>Close</i>	<i>Exact</i>
The shirt was very expensive.	The shirt cost \$300.
The train was very late.	The train was 4 hours late.
- **Don't use cliches**—Worn-out expressions can wear a reader's patience thin. Avoid hackneyed phrases and use direct, fresh language:
 

<i>Trite</i>	<i>Natural</i>
First and foremost	First
All around the mulberry bush	Everywhere
- **Avoid exaggeration**—Avoid the superlative when you write. The greatest, the worst, the prettiest all leave you open to exception. To avoid arguments from the reader, avoid overstating your position.
- **Sum it up**—The last paragraph should summarize what you've been discussing. It should tell the reader what you want done or what you will do.

## Surveys of Note

Sometimes it seems as if this department could be constructed entirely from the organization- and job-related surveys to be found quoted in a single edition of any daily newspaper.

Sometimes the surveys are worthy of a trainer's interest, sometimes not. The following surveys reported in the New York Times bear more than passing mention:

■ According to the results of two surveys conducted separately by two management recruiting firms—Egon Zehnder International and Gilbert Tweed Associates, Inc.—top managers are expressing “the need for more overseas management experience, more foreign language ability, more succession planning, and much greater interest among dismissed or retired managers in returning to the corporate environment.”

■ In a survey of incoming college freshmen, the Higher Education Research Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles, found that an all-time high number of students intended to major in business. At the same time, interest in these areas is plummeting: computer science, data processing, computer programming, and, of course, literature, history, and foreign languages, areas quite familiar with dropping interest rates.

Unscientifically comparing the results of these surveys of people at opposite ends of the business career track shows that students with degrees in foreign languages (assuming the degree means proficiency) may have as good a chance of getting on the fast track in business as their peers holding business degrees.

Another fact worth mentioning: Surveys previously reported in these pages indicate that businesses persist in looking for job candidates with well-rounded undergraduate backgrounds. This may be because—no matter what the academic specialty of the year might be—there's always an abundance of over-specialized graduates who may know, for example, how marketing is done but may find it hard to learn how the companies in which they've gotten their first jobs market.



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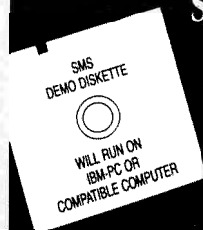
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## In Practice

### Are You in a Pit-Or a Pothole?

Whether you're an overworked manager, stressed-out employee, or a beleaguered example of today's corporate paladin—the entrepreneur—you may have wondered from time to time whether there's more to life than a paycheck. If you think there isn't, the problem might not be that you lack imagination (although this may be the awful case) but that your life lacks balance between the need for freedom and the need to bring home the bacon.

Author Eileen McDargh defines a job as "what you do with your paycheck. Work is what you do for a life.

"The ultimate task is to make 'work' and 'job' synonymous."

Clearly a proposition easier said than done, but one that McDargh tackles in a lucid, if sometimes too conversational, manner in her new book, *How to Work for a Living and Still Be Free to Live* (1985: Reston Publishing Company, Reston, Va.). "The essence of successful living," she observes, "is balance: a delicate juggling act of putting intellectual, material, physical, emotional and spiritual ingredients into our lives." If you already have those elements, fine. McDargh can help you get the most out of each. If you're missing some of those elements, it may take some doing, since the book is more about balancing what is already there than it is about creating a spiritual life, say, or an interest in nuclear physics out of whole cloth.

Still, of the flood of books addressing what appears on the surface to be a major workplace problem, McDargh's book is good place to start if you want to begin to do something about your particular case of job burnout.

Please send items of interest for *In Practice* to Robert Bové, Training & Development Journal, 1603 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

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