

Working Life

by Haidee Allerton

GET GLUM

Unhappy people do better work than cheerful ones, says Geir Kaufman, a professor of psychology at the Norwegian College of Business in Oslo.

His study shows that cheerful test subjects overestimated their own abilities and underestimated the complexity of the problems they were presented. They also tended to choose solutions that were obvious or simple. But the "glum," who were less confident, looked deeper and found more creative solutions.

In fact, Einstein said that he was in a sad mood the day that he thought of the theory of relativity. Kaufmann says, "There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that people do their best work while depressed."

But, Kaufmann cautions, employers shouldn't rush to try to create depressing work environments. Upbeat people are better at many tasks, including group brainstorming. "Studies indicate that it's important for people to be in the right mood for the tasks at hand."

TRUE TALES FROM THE WORKPLACE

A third-grade boy repeatedly tried to tell his parents that his teacher was "mean," but to no avail. So, he took matters into his own hands—specifically, by taking his bright-colored, plastic Fisher-Price tape recorder into school one day. The tape caught the teacher abusing and demeaning students verbally. The boy played the tape for his parents, who re-



ported the teacher's behavior to school authorities and played them the tape.

The teacher was relieved of her job.

DISK-DISC CONSULTANTS

Computer programmers and other techies work long hours hunched over their PCs. To help these pain-in-the-neck workers, many Silicon Valley and other California-based companies are making on-site massages available during the workday.

One massage therapist in particular delivers 20 \$15, 15-minute neck massages daily at Macromedia in San Francisco.

In fact, many of the masseuses are former techies. A therapist kneading the necks of employees at Sun Microsystems used to be an IBM man. Another left a marketing job at Apple to give massages at Cisco Systems in San Jose. For those of us

that work at less-New-Age-enlightened organizations, we can duck out of the office at lunchtime for a back or neck rub at Backrubs USA, located in many shopping malls.

OTHER PEOPLE'S INCOMES

Here's what some Manhattanites and others make, according to *New York* (September 23, 1996).

- ▶ Artist and gondolier, Central Park: \$10,000
- ▶ Don Imus, talk-show host: \$6,000,000
- ▶ Art director, *Bust* (a feminist zine): \$0
- ▶ Harpist: \$20,000
- ▶ Christie Hefner, chairperson and CEO, Playboy Enterprises: \$714,322
- ▶ President of Virtual Melanin (a Website-creation firm): \$30,000
- ▶ Professional hockey team goaltender: \$4,200,000
- ▶ Homeless man (collecting bottles and cans): \$12 a day
- ▶ Limousine driver: \$50,000
- ▶ Street corner hair-wrap weaver: \$156,000
- ▶ Park-based drug dealer: \$23,000
- ▶ President of the United States: \$200,000
- ▶ Police detective: \$141,506
- ▶ Topless dancer: \$39,000
- ▶ Kate Moss, model: \$2,300,000
- ▶ Demi Moore, actress (for *Striptease*): \$12,500,000
- ▶ Steve Martin, actor (for *Sgt. Bilko*): \$7,000,000
- ▶ Editorial assistant: \$21,000
- ▶ Cable guy: \$25,000
- ▶ Fruit-cart vendor: \$13,000
- ▶ Gas station attendant: \$9,360
- ▶ TV host David Letterman: \$14,000,000
- ▶ Robert Allen, chairman and CEO, AT&T: \$2,677,000
- ▶ Elementary school teacher: \$26,000
- ▶ City bus driver: \$52,000
- ▶ Shoe-repair store owner: \$15,600

FACTIMES AND FIGURETTES

There are 40 million electronic mailboxes worldwide, up from 12 million in 1990 and only 400,000 in the early days of electronic communication in the 1970s.

- ▶ Boxer and convicted rapist Mike Tyson: \$45,000,000
- ▶ Kane Schirmer, actor, model for romance-novel book jackets, personal trainer, and Ritz-Carlton running companion: \$29,714
- ▶ Panhandler: \$6 a day.

BEST AND WORST

Here are the five most expensive U.S. cities for business travelers, based on cost-per-day for food, lodging, and car rental:

1. New York \$357.72
2. Washington \$309.83
3. Boston \$266.42
4. Chicago \$260.51
5. Philadelphia \$252.02

Here are the five least expensive:

1. Biloxi, Mississippi \$144.21
2. Chattanooga, Tennessee \$148.42
3. Peoria, Illinois \$149.92
4. Springfield, Missouri \$149.92
5. Mobile, Alabama \$152.23.

Source: Business Travel News.

OFFSHORING

A burgeoning breed of "technosavants" have set sail to reside in Caribbean tax havens, leaving behind only their virtual identities, reports *Wired*.

They still work, via their laptops and other telecommuting technologies, and they bank online.

DIVISION OF LABOR

Nearly half of the women in the world age 15 to 64 work (45 percent). But they earn on average only 75 percent of what men earn for the same

SPELLING COUNTS

Two typos, and you're out! So says a survey conducted by Office Team, an administrative staffing firm based in Menlo Park, California.

The survey of a sampling of U.S. employers shows that most have little tolerance for typos on resumes. In fact, 76 percent said that they wouldn't hire a candidate that had two or more typographical errors on their resumes; 45 percent said that it would take only one typo to eliminate a candidate from consideration.

In fact, the Lexington, Kentucky school has a handbook on such policies, distributed to every tyke. Parents are asked to sign a form to confirm that they have explained the dos and don'ts to their children.

During his suspension, the smoocher missed an ice-cream party for students with good attendance.

NEVER APOLOGIZE, NEVER EXPLAIN

Is your boss in a snit because you lost a file at work? Well, so what. Here's how to handle him or her, according to some tongue-in-cheek tips from *At Your Best*, published by Rodale Press.

Bluff. The secret here is to react with surprise, even shock. Practice raising your eyebrows until they almost meet your hairline. *File? Are you sure you gave me a file? Me? You're sure?*

Do the two-step. Adopt a nonchalant attitude. *Oh, yes, I sent it to the accounting (marketing, sales, whatever) department through interoffice mail.* Now, the mailroom is to blame,

work, according to the International Labor Organization.

As for household chores, women spend 31 to 42 hours a week on them; men spend about five to 15 hours a week.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT BEGINS IN SCHOOL

By now, most of you have probably heard about the six-year-old boy that was suspended from school for sexual harassment because he kissed a six-year-old girl on the cheek in the classroom.

where harried people who can't defend themselves toil.

Emulate Honest Abe. Concede defeat. *I'm sure it's in that stack there somewhere. Let me get back to you.*

Be an opportunist. When all else fails, admit that you saw the file, had it in your hands, and then misplaced it. Then, proceed to blame that on the fact that you don't have the office furniture you need. *I can't believe this company doesn't provide employees with the proper tools to do their jobs. I mean, what does a file cabinet cost?*

MUTATIONS

In the past, organizations have been thought of as many shapes and structures, such as pyramids. Now, says an article in *Organizational Trends and Electronic Media*, they're being thought of as these entities:

- ▶ webs (instead of discrete units)
- ▶ jellyfish (instead of dinosaurs)
- ▶ central nervous systems
- ▶ intellectual holding companies (for electronically linked activities).

NEW BUZZWORD

Collaborative tools. They refer to computer-supported cooperative work among employees. Aka CSCW.

Sources include the Washington Post and The New York Times.

Send press releases or short articles on news, trends, and best practices to **News You Can Use**, Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. E-mail NYCU@astd.org.