

Mime Patrol

In Bogota, Columbia, cars once zoomed through red lights and used sidewalks for parking. Injuries and deaths were frequent. People risked their lives just trying to walk to work. But now, Bogota drivers observe pedestrian crossings. They stop at red lights. Sidewalks are no longer parking lots. How did those changes occur? Stricter laws? More severe penalties? Nope. Bogota mayor Antanas Mokus had the city hire mimes, lots of them, to go into the streets and model good driving behavior.

The white-faced, white-gloved mimes approach a vehicle breaking the law—such as parking over a pedestrian line—point at the car, point at the line, point back at the car, and playfully mimic backing up until the driver—with onlookers gathering—backs up. The mimes then gesture exaggerated thanks and encourage the crowd to applaud.

Pedestrians began mimicking the mimes to “speak up” for their rights silently, with humor. Drivers can correct mistakes without feeling embar-

rassed and without invoking a machismo test of wills. The streets of Bogota are much safer now.

Contributed by Annette Simmons, Group Process Consulting; www.groupprocessconsulting.com

Maybe They Thought He Was a Mime

A proofreader at a New York publishing firm sat slumped over his desk for five days before the 23 workers with whom he shared an open-office space noticed that he was dead. The 51-year-old man, an employee of 30 years, apparently had a heart attack at his desk on a Monday, but no one noticed there was anything amiss until Saturday when an office

cleaner asked him why he was working on the weekend. He didn't answer, of course. His boss later commented, “George was always absorbed and kept pretty much to himself.”

Source *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*

Working Like a Dog

It was getting difficult to talk on the phone at work with all the barking in the background. People's allergies were kicking up. And roaming packs were begging for scraps in the cafeteria. The workplace was going to the dogs.

Now many once pet-friendly companies in Silicon Valley—such as Excite@Home and Apple Computer—no longer allow dogs at work. Says a spokesperson for a software firm in Sunnysvale, California, “When companies grow...they require policies that will benefit everyone.”

One Sacramento firm did decide to keep its original dog, a Jack Russell Terrier, as a mascot but has sent the others home due to the “unruly behavior” that pack animals tend to exhibit.

Ruff.

True Tales From the Workplace

Recently on a business trip to Germany, two colleagues and I—none of whom speaks German—stopped at a bookstore to get a map. While in the store, one of us sneezed, and the woman behind the counter said, “*Gesundheit!*”

My colleague turned to me with a look of relief and said, “Thank goodness! Someone here speaks English!”

Sent by Rod Henshaw of United Blood Services of Arizona

Do You Have a True Tale From the Workplace?

Tell us actual stories that happen at your work, and we'll mention you as a contributor to Working Life (or grant you anonymity, if you prefer).

Just email Haidee Allerton at worklife@astd.org or write to me at *Training & Development*, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.

Fame can be yours!—or a place in the Working Life witness protection program.