

PC POTATOES

Sending e-mail to co-workers instead of walking to deliver the messages can contribute to a weight gain over time, according to the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention. The reduction in energy is equivalent to 1.1 pounds of fat. Over 10 years, that could increase a person's weight by 11 pounds.

SCROOGE ALERT

Companies make a big mistake when they eliminate holiday parties and other employee perks to cut costs, says Don Kennedy, author of *175 Ways to Advance Your Career* (SuccessBooks) and a former manager with the Successories chain of stores selling motivational items.

"Employees that don't feel appreciated will eventually go to another company," says Kennedy.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CENTURY

Tsutakiyokomatsu Asaji, Japan's oldest active geisha, died recently at age 102.

Contrary to popular belief, geishas are not prostitutes. They preside at business and social functions pouring sake, reciting poetry, and singing traditional songs.

RETIREE OF THE MONTH

Since retiring, Joe Cerce of New Jersey spends his days sitting in a lawn chair in his front yard waving to passing motorists—from sunrise to sunset.



When he waves, drivers honk. Joe's neighbors are... well, annoyed. They want Joe to stop this practice. But evidently, drivers now honk so that Joe will wave. The town's mayor even honks. Joe has had heated exchanges with his neighbors, and there is a lawsuit about a scuffle.

Meanwhile, Joe is still waving.

TRUE TALES FROM THE WORKPLACE

Being let go is bad enough, but here are some how-people-got-fired stories (from *Fortune*) that may inflame you:

▶ A man was told to fire his own father. Later, both the son and his mother were also fired from the company.

▶ A supervisor called together the waitresses in his charge to announce that someone was stealing. Then, he said he'd fire them one-by-one in alphabetical order until the guilty party confessed. (The

company was later found guilty of causing employees emotional distress.)

▶ A systems engineering manager was laid off on "Take Our Daughters to Work Day," a day designed to promote self-esteem in young girls. After the dismissal, the man and his eight-year-old daughter were escorted from the building by a security guard.

▶ A 30-year veteran of corporate outplacement witnessed a boss firing someone as he passed him in the hallway.

▶ A company issued a memo encouraging employees to increase their global competitiveness by taking a foreign-language course during a workday. Six months later, all of those that had taken the

company up on its offer and participated in the course were fired.

LAPTOP: A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

Men prefer to take their spouses with them on business trips; women would rather bring along personal items and their laptops, according to a recent poll conducted by American Express.

MUMFORD'S THE WORD

In *The Myth of the Machine*, published in 1970, *New Yorker* columnist Lewis Mumford, who died in 1990, warned that a dominant minority would manipulate global affairs and that in the information age, "man will become a passive, purposeless, machine-conditioned animal whose proper functions...will either be fed into the machine or strictly limited and controlled for the benefit of depersonalized, collective organizations." Prescient? Think Bill Gates, downsizing, and Internet addicts.

The *Lewis Mumford Reader* (University of Georgia Press), in which

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.

much of *Myth* has been restored to print, was released last year. In it, Mumford challenges the assumption (and many others) that technical advances equal human progress.

EEWWW, ICK, GROSS-ME-OUT

Hand salsa. The slimy substance left on a mouse or joystick after a fervid round of video-game playing.

Nachos, anyone? Latex, anyone?

HAVING A BAD MOOD DAY

Considering the previous item, is it any wonder that the average American worker is in a bad mood 110 days out of the year, according to an article in *Parade*. Only two percent are in a good mood every day.

POOR BABIES

Here's why executives are so cranky. These things cause them stress, according to a *USA Today* poll:

- ▶ office politics
- ▶ lack of security
- ▶ a stalled career
- ▶ number of assignments
- ▶ amount of red tape.

QUITCHERGRIPPIN'

You've heard it: Americans say that they are overworked and spend long hours at the office. *Au contraire*, say sociologists and other experts. Frank Stafford, an economist at the University of Michigan says, "There's a lot of whininess."

In fact, studies show that Americans are working on average 37-hour workweeks, six fewer hours than in the 1960s. What's working overtime is people's imaginations. Some people—women and parents of young children in particular—feel overworked because they have more roles to play.

TOP TEN

Here are the top 10 (à la Letterman) cracked computer passwords by type, according to *Wired*:

- ▶ 10. place names
- ▶ 9. *King James Bible* terms
- ▶ 8. uncommon proper names
- ▶ 7. computer-host names
- ▶ 6. male names
- ▶ 5. female names
- ▶ 4. common phrases
- ▶ 3. user and account names
- ▶ 2. common proper names
- ▶ and number 1. UNIX systems dictionary entries.

The reality is that some groups are working longer, others less. Women in their thirties and forties do work longer hours. People in their late fifties and early sixties tend to work less. The baby-boomers that complain *are* working longer hours, but not because of the times. They've just reached a point in their lives when people have always tended to work more hours.

Still, a fortysomething person now is working fewer hours than his or her counterpart 30 years ago. It's just that the pace of work and anxiety about work have intensified. And the rewards haven't kept pace with the pressures.

Feel better?

GOING-POSTAL RATE

Workplace deaths have declined six percent, the lowest level in four years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The decline would have been greater if not for the 120 government workers killed in the Oklahoma City bombing. That event accounted for 12 percent of the job-related homicides in the United States for the year.

The most dangerous occupation in terms of fatalities is the construction

industry, with more than 1,000 workers killed each year in falls, electrocutions, and vehicle accidents, according to a BLS survey.

Have a nice day.

NEW LINE FOR ONLINE

In the Paris haute couture collections for spring, designer Olivier Lapidus showed a solar-panelled jacket with a built-in plug that could *brancher* the wearer right into the Internet.

HELL-O?

Forgetful lately? Working woman? You may have *galzheimer's* (as in, the gals' version of Alzheimer's). That's when women that do too much forget much of what they're supposed to be doing, according to a story in *Fast Company* (October-November, 1996). In other words, their short-term memories are shot.

Says one working woman and expectant mother, "Not one woman I know remembers anything anymore." At work, she would call people and then forget who she was calling and why.

Lest we seem politically incorrect, *galzheimer's* isn't another term for "ditzy dame." It is an affliction among mostly successful career women, who do everything well so they try to do everything. The women of the 1950s and 1960s were busy, sure, but they didn't have e-mail to check, "play dates" to arrange, and aerobic classes to attend. They didn't have *Baywatch* or Martha Stewart.

So, what about forgetful men? One woman accused (by a man) of having *galzheimer's* because she forgot a lunch date, said, "Nah, it's just testosterone poisoning."

Sources include the *New Yorker*, *Washington Post*, *Washington Post Magazine*, and *Self*.