

## Working Life

by Haidee Allerton

### WORKAHOLISTICS

Employees who listen to music through headphones at work are more productive and enthusiastic—and less interested in changing jobs—than workers who don't listen to music, according to a study at the University of Illinois.

### AT CROSS PURPOSES

In a lawsuit against his former employer, Anheuser-Busch, Jesse Williams said that the company supplied him with the monthly employee allotment of four cases of beer and then fired him for alcoholism. The company says that it fired Williams for putting down its products in public.

### GO FIGURE

New technology has made it possible for us to span the globe, tap the extraordinary minds of the world, and soak up knowledge just by pressing a few computer keys. So, how do we use this great power? According to the Internet search engine Infoseek that directs Net surfers to Web pages, these are the top 10 people that they want information about (with apologies to Letterman):

10. model Patricia Ford
9. "Superman" actress Teri Hatcher
8. Sharon Stone
7. Demi Moore
6. Madonna
5. Brad Pitt
4. Anna Nicole Smith
3. Cindy Crawford
2. Jenny McCarthy
1. "Baywatch's" Pamela Lee.

### MORE RESUMANIA

Accountemps founder Robert Half shares with us another strange-but-true collection of excerpts from actual resumes. Don't try this at work:



► "I saw your ad on the information highway and came to a screeching halt."

► "Enclosed is a ruff draft of my resume."

► "Accomplishments: Completed 11 years of high school."

► "It's best for employers that I not work with people."

► "If this resume doesn't blow your hat off, please return it in the enclosed envelope."

► "Let's meet so you can 'ooh' and 'ahh' over my experience."

► "You'll want me to be Head Honcho in no time."

► "As indicted, I have over five years of analyzing investments."

► "Am a perfectionist and rarely if ever forget details."

► "If you hire me away from this nightmare, you'll save me thousands in therapy."

### YIN/YANG ECONOMY

For every dollar an American man makes, an American woman earns 72 cents. Still, that's up from 64 cents about 10 years ago. Progress, though women also lag behind men in saving for retirement. When women do learn about financial planning, they

tend to research their investments more carefully than men, balance them better, buy stocks less impulsively, and hold onto them longer—taking advantage of big profits. In fact, of those Americans who have more than \$600,000 in assets, 42 percent are women. Yet, 74 percent of the elderly poor are women.

Go figure.

### UNTRUE TALES FROM THE WORKPLACE

Perhaps you've strayed just long enough from work-oriented use of the Internet to catch a few Netmyths—urban myths that circulate in cyberspace. You know, sort of like the stories we used to tell at sleepovers or around a scout campfire about the woman who had roaches living in her beehive hairdo and the American tourist who brought back a tiny dog from Mexico and discovered that it was a sewer rat.

A current Netmyth concerns a man who tried to commit suicide by jumping from a 10th-floor window but was killed by a gunshot from the ninth-floor window in the building. The story goes on to say that the shooter was a man who often threatened his

wife with the unloaded gun, only this time it was loaded by their son who wanted to trick his father into killing his mother because she had disinherited him. Despondent because the plan hadn't worked, the son tried to commit suicide by jumping from the 10th-floor window. Good story, but not true. In fact, Don Harper, past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, says that he made it up for a speech, just for entertainment value. From there, the tale made its way into electronica.

Experts say that such stories bypass the usual filters of the printed medium and gain a certain credibility through rapid exposure online. In response, several newsgroups—such as alt.folklore.urban—have appeared to debunk urban legends. For example, Albert Einstein did *not* do poorly in school, but fluorescent lamps *do* light up when held near a high-voltage line.

You heard it here.

## THE OTHER WORK SHIFT

So, how many times during your daily commute do you use a time-honored hand signal to let other commuters know just what you think of their driving? Or, do they gesture pointedly in your direction? Why not avoid the surefire things that upset other drivers?

According to a 1996 survey by Market Opinion Research—based in Farmington Hills, Michigan—here are the top things that drivers do that irritate other drivers, in order of most annoying to less annoying:

- ▶ Cut another driver off.
  - ▶ Don't use signals.
  - ▶ Tailgate.
  - ▶ Drive too slow, especially in the fast lane.
  - ▶ Drive too fast.
  - ▶ Use a cellular phone.
  - ▶ Run red lights.
  - ▶ Change lanes too often.
- Have a nice day.

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

One visit to a recent exhibition at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., and you might think that your job isn't so tough after all. Among the rules that 19th-century factory workers had to put up with were mandatory 60-hour work weeks and the loss of a full day's pay for every minute late to work. Supervisors held absolute power, backed by company goons who were armed. In 1886, railroad robber baron Jay Gould boasted, "I could hire half of the working class to kill the other half."

## THE DOCTOR IS ONLINE

Seeking psychological counseling online isn't new. Shrink Link, for example, offers consultations for a fee. But psychologist Leonard Holmes of Newport News, Virginia, says that you pay for his service only if you find it helpful. The main site is <http://www.psychology.com/holmes.htm>. Holmes cautions that the sessions aren't therapy. Sometimes, people just want an expert opinion on a problem or issue in their lives.

Holmes also has a Web site on growing hardy palm trees in cold climates. The address is <http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/1811>.

## MUSAK, MUS-ICK

Here are the top five all-time favorite, music-on-hold selections, according to a survey of AEI Music Network programmers:

- ▶ 1. Don't Worry, Be Happy
- ▶ 2. I'll Be There for You
- ▶ 3. Good Vibrations
- ▶ 4. Make Me Smile
- ▶ 5. Take It From the Top.

## FACTIMES AND FIGURETTES

More than half—53 percent—of "technically challenged" managers polled by Office Team say that they learn technical skills from their administrative assistants.

## THE NOT-NOW GENERATION

About 20 percent of Americans procrastinate in their personal lives and at work. Combine that with employee cutbacks, and you've got a productivity problem, according to *Human Resource Manage-*

*ment News*. The article quotes psychologist Jane Burka, who says that procrastination encompasses broad behavior, including fears of success, failure, separation, attachment, and authority. Perfectionism can also be a factor. Men tend to put things off to rebel against authority; women do it out of fear of success.

It's pointless to tell a procrastinator to "get organized," says *New York Times* reporter J. Peder Zane. But he does offer these tips for people who tend to put off until tomorrow what they can do today:

- ▶ Cry uncle. Overcome your fear of telling the boss you can't do everything. It's better to do three things well than five things poorly.
- ▶ Reward yourself. When you meet a deadline, give yourself a gold star. When you fall short, penalize yourself.
- ▶ Seek help. Talk with family members, friends, or professional counselors to help clarify the underlying problems and make them manageable.

Later.

Resources include the Washington Post, Washington City Paper, Self, and People.

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