

News You Can Use

by Haidee Allerton

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JUST IN-TIME NEW JOB

REMEMBER "Hot New Job Titles for Trainers (and Others)" in the July issue of *T&D*? Here's one we missed: century conversion expert.

According to Cleveland-based Christian & Timbers, many U.S. companies are searching for such experts to make sure that the automatic date feature in computers will show the year 2000 after December 31, 1999. Sound simple? Not exactly.

As of now, computer systems older than 10 years (of which there are a lot) will turn to 1900 at midnight before the turn of the century. If the computers aren't programmed for the proper date change, millions of people won't receive paychecks and bills won't go out—just to name a few glitches.

The demand for century conversion will create more than 1,000 new managerial positions and 10,000 total new positions, says Christian & Timbers.

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TRAINING SWEEPSTAKES

ED MCMAHON won't show up on their doorsteps, but more than 500 businesses can win money for training in the Quill \$200,000 American



Dream Business Scholarship Sweepstakes.

The contest is to celebrate Quill Corporation's 40th anniversary. Quill president Jack Miller started the company with a \$2,000 loan from his father-in-law.

"We've discovered firsthand that continuous learning and employee training aren't luxuries but necessities," says Miller.

Prize recipients can use the grand prize of \$25,000, five first prizes of \$10,000, and 10 second prizes of \$5,000 to pay for business-

related education, academic scholarships, training, or training materials.

Forty third prizes are 25-inch combination TV and VCR units; 500 fourth-prize winners will receive gift certificates for training and personal development.

Write to: American Dream Sweepstakes, Quill Corporation, 100 Schelter Road, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-3621. Or, call 800/789-0056.

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NEW NUMBERS

EMPLOYERS IN 1995 spent \$55.3 billion on training in the United States, according to new figures released by the American Society for Training and Development—an increase of 20 percent since 1983.

Of the \$55.3 billion, \$26.4 billion was spent on direct training costs; \$28.9 billion on such indirect costs as wages and benefits for employees while they're in training.

The new numbers are based on information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Household Education Sur-

vey, and a survey conducted by the ASTD Benchmarking Forum.

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STAY TUNED

THE FUTURES GROUP (in Glastonbury, Connecticut) and New York-based Organization Resources Counselors are conducting a study to identify future business environments.

The scenario-based study, "Working for the Future: Human Resources in the 21st Century," is designed to help senior HRD executives test the validity of their current strategies against a wide variety of possible global economy scenarios.

The study will explore these issues:

- ▶ the effects of organizational structure on employees
- ▶ future workforce demographics
- ▶ the effects of technology and globalization on the workplace
- ▶ intellectual-capital needs
- ▶ the role of leadership style in organizations
- ▶ the impact of trends in a service-based economy.

The study is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

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OUTSOURCING MADE EASIER

MANAGERS can help prevent morale problems when outsourcing by involving the HR department early on to address critical people issues and help select the external providers by reviewing their HR policies, practices,

REALITY CHECK

SINCE THE PASSAGE of the Americans With Disabilities Act in 1990, two-thirds of disabled people are employed—the same percentage as before the act, which aims to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



and performance.

It's also important that a good culture match-up exist between an organization and any external provider. To ensure that, the organization should take a snapshot of its own culture and establish criteria for "best fit" with a provider's culture.

And don't forget to inform employees that outsourcing is in the offing and to keep them informed with regular communications. (From the Outsourced Logistics Report, *Washington, D.C.*)

QUICK TIPS

HERE ARE SOME tips for making work less stressful, from Steelcase in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

- ▶ If your workload is too heavy, ask for more flexibility in scheduling and pace. Discuss priorities regularly with your boss.
- ▶ Seek training or advice to deal with your most stress-

ful work situations.

- ▶ When working on large projects, define milestones to provide a sense of accomplishment along the way. Make daily to-do lists; you'll experience satisfaction as you check off each completed item.
- ▶ If possible, work in different settings—such as, at home and in the office library, conference room, or cafeteria.
- ▶ Group administrative tasks together, and tackle them at periodic intervals instead of letting them pile up.
- ▶ Establish a confidante outside of your circle of friends at work to discuss stressful events and possible positive actions.
- ▶ Attend and initiate social get-togethers with co-workers.
- ▶ Be aware of and respect others' work styles and patterns.
- ▶ Organize your work so that you don't sit for ex-



tended periods.

- ▶ Personalize your work area with things associated with pleasant memories or feelings—such as, family photos, vacations shots, and other knickknacks. But don't overdo; that can be distracting.

forts as they drive a stake through the heart of the old division of labor.

"An information economy means that more members of an organization must be able to know more, learn more, and do more. The changes will happen in the next two or three decades. It won't be pretty; there will be grief."

Zuboff went on to explain that technology doesn't ease the intellectual burdens of knowledge work; it just illuminates information. Only when someone does something with information does it acquire value—which Zuboff says is learning, the "new form of labor."

"The agony and ecstasy of work define the heroics of humanity."

Sources include USA Today 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.

How To

Some people receive 50, 100, and even 500 e-mail messages a day at work, according to Ernst & Young's Center for Business Innovation in Boston. One executive who returned from a vacation to find 2,000 e-mails just erased them all, figuring that the important ones would be re-sent.

But at some high-tech companies, employees brag about the size of their e-mail log, known as technomachismo.

A few companies are taking corrective action, such as shutting down e-mail for four hours a day. Others are charging business units user fees for e-mail.

To manage your e-mail volume, try these tactics:

- ▶ Set aside a particular time—for example, one hour each morning—to deal with e-mail and voice mail.
- ▶ Log on to your computer from home late at night or early in the morning to get a jump start on your messages.
- ▶ If you're really inundated, try leaving your mail system full so that no new messages can be left.
- ▶ And try not to invite useless e-mail by clogging other people's boxes with jokes, offers for concert tickets, and other nonwork-related messages.

Trend Watch

- ▶ The National Information Infrastructure Copyright Protection Act has been introduced in both the Senate and House, with sponsorship from both sides of the aisles.

The aim is to protect the online work of creators, authors, and artists (and to protect organizations that depend on the sale of creative work) from copyright infringement and content theft.

The bill's full text is available on the Internet at <http://www.iitf.doc.gov/>.

- ▶ Employment agencies are seeking to match skilled high-technology workers with short-term jobs. Some of the workers have permanent jobs but go on temporary assignments elsewhere. Microsoft, in particular, employs a lot of short-term workers in such positions as project manager, editor, proofreader, marketing coordinator, and sales representative.

LAGGING ECONOMY

THE INFORMATION economy is here. Or, is it?

"The information economy doesn't exist yet," said Harvard Business School professor Shoshana Zuboff at ASTD's International Conference in Orlando, Florida, last June. In a plenary session, Zuboff said that its arrival has been slowed by people's ambivalence about work and hierarchical management structures.

Zuboff also said that when the information economy does become a reality, training and development professionals will play a part in it happening. They will champion learning, empowerment, and change ef-