

Working Life

B O O !

It's the month of All Hallow's Eve. We don't know about you, but we're feeling slightly spooked and more than a little mischievous. There are some scary things going on in the workplace. Read on, if you dare.

True Tales From the Workplace

It was a dark and misty night. As I headed for the university newspaper office where I worked, I noticed an eerie ring of shimmering light around the moon.

Inside the office, I found a letter from the head of the University Necromancy Society complaining about the newspaper's discrimination against his organization—a society for wizards and warlocks. It seems we'd snubbed the group by neglecting to announce one of its meetings in our calendar section. We had thought the announcement was a joke.

The head wiz wasn't laughing. In the letter, he cursed the newspaper and put a hex on us. Inside the envelope we found tree bark, grass clippings, dried herbs, and what appeared to be dog hair. We had a good chuckle, tossed the packet onto the typesetting machine next to a radio and some old soda cans, and went back to work.

A few minutes later, the typesetter started spewing out garbled messages. The keyboard seized. The machine ate an editorial and translated headlines into hieroglyphics. Then the music from the radio turned to static, the fluorescent light overhead started strobing, and two of the soda cans blew their pop tops and spilled over.

At that point, a staff member entered the scene and surveyed the mayhem. She lifted the envelope from the typesetter to examine the contents. Immediately, the machine returned to normal, the radio static



Hal Mayforth

cleared, and the overhead light stopped pulsing. We gingerly placed the envelope far from the production room, and the rest of the night was uneventful—except for that weird ring around the moon.

— **Catherine M. Petrini**
Managing Editor
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Frightening Facts and Figures

Eau de Fries.... McDonald's recycles its used cooking fat into cosmetic products.

Down for the count.... More than 29 percent of men surveyed by *Men's Health* magazine have fantasized about committing acts of physical violence on their bosses.

Why Wait for Halloween?

Just a bunch of hotdoggers.... Some employees at Oscar Mayer like to dress up as ketchup bottles and drive around in 23-foot fiberglass wiener-shaped vehicles.

It's all part of the company's plan to promote meat eating. (Whew!)

"Bubble, bubble...toil and trouble." Poisoned fish, dog-hair hexes, and killer asteroids are just a few of our favorite things.

Heh, heh.

Six Wienermobiles travel the land, driven by pairs of recently hired college graduates who hand out wiener whistles and appear at events such as wedding receptions—at which the Wienermobile sports a “For Better Or Wurst” sign. At a preschool church picnic, one omni-bunsman amuses the kids by biting a happy face into a slice of bologna.

The job pays \$19,500, plus \$65 a day for food and lodging—if you can cut the mustard.

Employees From Hell

Organizational transitions have transmogrified some workers into Freddie Krugers straight out of “Nightmare on Elm Street.” Their motto seems to be, “Don’t get mad; get even.” They’re poisoning fish in the corporate fish pond, freaking out at business social events, and sending anonymous hate mail—just to name a few fiendish examples from Enterchange Consulting in Atlanta, Georgia.

And then there was the manufacturing manager who feared he was about to become a victim of downsizing and didn’t want to wait for his pink slip. Instead, he rowed a dinghy around a fountain below the office windows of top executives and flashed signs that read: “I quit.” The signs also baited his bosses with biting comments about their characters.

What drives these crazed employees over the edge? Excuse the mixed metaphor, but the final straw isn’t so much a particular change but a lack of communication between senior-level managers and affected employees, according to Enterchange.

Enterchange has more examples of employees getting a little dinghy, but we were too afraid to ask.

Federal Divestiture

It isn’t only private industry that produces weirded-out workers. At a large government agency in Washington, D.C., a disgruntled—make that, really mad—employee directed his anger at his boss toward an inanimate object. The malcontent—who was built like a Mack truck—strode into the men’s room, ripped a toilet out of the floor, and pitched it out the window.

And taxpayers footed the bill.

David Letterman, Eat Your Heart Out

Dave’s not on the air October 31, so we’ve got the lock on the top 10 things to fear this Halloween. Several items on the list come from worry expert Alan Caruba of the National Anxiety Center.

- ▶ 10. Generic worrying (also known as, “fear itself”).
- ▶ 9. UFOs (a perennial favorite).
- ▶ 8. Elvis sightings.
- ▶ 7. The proposed highway that’s supposed to go through Graceland, where Elvis is buried.
- ▶ 6. Traveling through Memphis.
- ▶ 5. Seeing a Tennessee hitchhiker who looks a lot like Elvis.
- ▶ 4. Killer asteroids.
- ▶ 3. Killer bees.
- ▶ 2. Killer tomatoes.
- ▶ And number 1. Moving to Alaska, only to find out that global warming is a hoax.

According to Caruba, most people love to worry and there are plenty of other people to encourage the prophets of doom and gloom. “This decade will be filled with ‘end of the world’ scenarios,” warns Caruba, who says that most apocalyptic predictions are based on bogus science.

“What’s important is to solve your own personal problems,” advises Caruba. “When you do that, you make the world a better place for yourself and for those around you.”

To purchase the center’s guides, “Finding Help: Overcoming Anxiety” and “Ten Secrets to Successful Problem Solving,” write the National Anxiety Center, Box 40, Maplewood, NJ 07040, or call 201/763-6392. The brochures cost \$3 each.

That Was No Ghost

Women workers at one organization repeatedly reported sightings of a male maintenance worker in the ladies’ restrooms. Neither security nor the personnel office could identify an employee who fit his description. Yet, the maintenance man continued to haunt the women’s washrooms.

The elusive Restroom Romeo—as he came to be known—would appear in a ladies’ room while women were using the facilities. He’d cheerily greet them and then go about his cleaning. He never caused any further harm, but he didn’t seem to realize that he

should come back when the washrooms were empty.

In one instance, he popped up in the stall next to one occupied by a woman and struck up a conversation with his neighbor—Was she married? Did she like working there? And so forth.

The hapless woman hiked up her pantyhose and made a hasty exit. And, eventually, so did the maintenance man. Personnel finally tracked him down through another employer in the building and fired him.

Trick or Treat!

You’ve been called to your boss’s office. You’re thinking raise, bonus, or pat on the back. Not! You’re fired.

Panic and fear set in. While in a state of shock, you may forget to treat the trick you’ve been played with the right tactics. Goodrich and Sherwood, a human resources firm in New York City, suggests that you ask your soon-to-be-ex-employers the following questions:

- ▶ Why am I being fired?
- ▶ Who will answer my phone?
- ▶ Whom shall I give as a reference?
- ▶ What reasons for the firing will be given to prospective employers who call?
- ▶ What severance pay am I to receive and how long will it run?
- ▶ Does my health coverage continue during my severance period?
- ▶ Is there any unused vacation, bonus, or sick pay due me?
- ▶ What is the status of my pension rights? Am I vested?
- ▶ May I use company office space, facilities, and a phone to look for a new job?
- ▶ May I have a written employment recommendation?
- ▶ Am I going to be provided with outplacement counseling?
- ▶ What is the final date of my employment?

Next month, back to normal.

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