

# Working Life

by Haidee Allerton

## TRUE TALES FROM THE WORKPLACE

*Lost and found....* We think that we may have located the hapless rodent dispatched by employees of a Roy Rogers fast-food restaurant in Washington, D.C. (See last month's "Working Life.")

Shortly after the dispatching, the patron of another Roy Rogers nearby reached into her bucket of batter-dipped chicken, pulled out a morsel, and bit into something with tiny teeth and little paws. Call it, "batter-dipped mouse." Hardee's—the parent company—offered the woman a \$25,000 settlement; she refused, saying that she has suffered eating disorders and insomnia since the incident.

Enjoy your meal; sleep tight.

## SABBATICAL 3.0

Each year, Microsoft techno-giant and iconoclast Bill Gates spends time alone in a cabin "thinking." He brings along a lot of canned food.

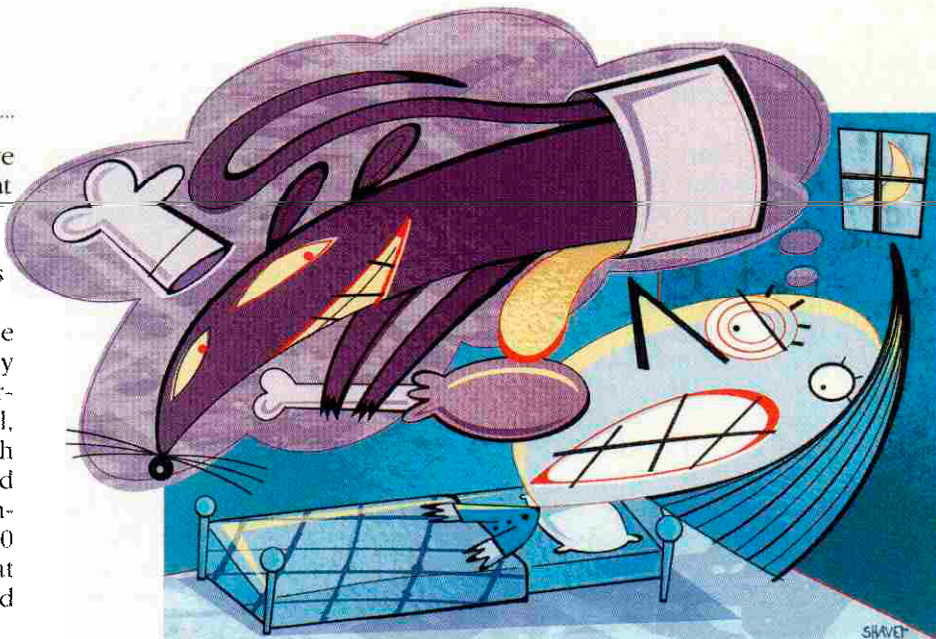
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## UPSIZING IN A DOWNSIZING WORLD

When Malden Mills—a textile factory in Lawrence, Massachusetts—recently burned to the ground, workers thought that they'd lost their livelihoods forever. They figured that the 70-year-old owner would just "pack it in." But CEO Aaron Feuerstein assembled the several hundred employees and told them that he would rebuild the factory and continue to pay their salaries and benefits for at least another month. Later, he extended the offer.

Feuerstein's gesture has garnered letters of admiration, a phone call from President Clinton, and thousands of dollars in donations for the temporarily laid-off workers. Asks a perplexed Feuerstein, "For what? Doing the right thing?"

Feuerstein, who has no plans to re-



tire, jogs five miles every other day, works 10 to 12 hours at the mill, and—like many corporate executives of the fifties and sixties—naps every afternoon in his business suit.

## ANOTHER SIDE TO DOWNSIZING

The same year that AT&T laid off 40,000 workers, AT&T CEO Robert Allen received \$16 million in salary and stock-option compensation. Said Allen, "I deserve every penny."

## A TWO-MINUTE WARNING

Most executives spend about two minutes or less reviewing job applicants' resumes. So, how do you make a quick and favorable impression?

Accountemps chairman Max Messmer, author of *Job Hunting for Dummies* (IDG Books Worldwide) recommends the following:

- ▶ Don't use gimmicks, bright colors, or fancy designs.
- ▶ Print your resume on white or neutral letter-size paper in an easy-to-read typeface.
- ▶ Proofread your resume and ask someone else to proofread it.

▶ Avoid irrelevant personal information such as your age, height, weight, marital status, and hobbies.

▶ Don't lie or exaggerate your accomplishments.

▶ Emphasize accomplishments that had a direct effect on your previous employer's bottom line, including cost savings, increased productivity, and improved sales.

## FACTURES AND FIGURETTES

Women who perform mentally challenging work are half as likely to die from a heart attack or stroke as women whose jobs don't stimulate them, according to studies at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

## DE FACTO LIFE

"Office romances are booming," says psychologist Richard Levin, chairman of Work/Life Enterprises in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Levin says that the workplace is a "de facto" social spot, a hub of activity in people's lives. Men and women work long hours and don't have the kind of leisure time that they used to.

"The chances of meeting someone special at work are far greater than ever before."

Though companies tend not to condone office romances, many have lightened up. Levin recommends these do's and don'ts:

- ▶ Do be discreet. Forego displays of affection in the workplace, even in the parking lot. Try telepathing your physicality, and wait until later.
- ▶ Don't concoct elaborate ruses. Don't lie about your romantic vacations or whatever; just don't talk about them at work.
- ▶ Do separate your work from the relationship. Keep phone calls, e-mail messages, and visits to the other person's work area to a minimum.
- ▶ Don't get involved with someone who is accountable to you or to whom you're accountable.
- ▶ Do discuss personal matters outside of the office. Make a pact with your significant other not to work out personal issues on company time.
- ▶ Don't even think about it in a small company. If your company has fewer than 20 employees, forget it.
- ▶ Do stoke the relationship. Just because you have to be discreet, that doesn't mean you can't be romantic. Sending flowers, notes, or secret glances can keep the fires burning.

### WORKAHOLISTICS

Fear of falling (read: failing) is a fairly widespread psychological phenomenon among successful executives, according to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* by John Rau, a former bank executive and now dean of Indiana University's School of Business. Rau recommends that stressed executives reduce their fear of falling by writing their obituaries.

Rau says to go beyond accomplishments, successes, and organizational positions and instead concentrate on character, doing useful things, and being a good partner or friend. "When the trapped feeling hits, take it out and read it." The idea is that the

executives will focus on what's really important and start living the way they want to be remembered.

Rau also suggests that anxious executives perform some nonwork avocation at least once for pay, live well below their incomes for at least three weeks, and spend some time with people who "pursue satisfaction through ever-changing possessions and status symbols."

### CYBERCITIZEN

Back in March, Neal Berry was homeless, making do in a tent by the side of the road in a little town in California. But he did have a \$2,144 laptop, \$500 modem, and \$350 cellular phone. Berry works as a shipping clerk, but he lives on the Internet, spending up to 12 hours a day cybersurfing using a high-powered battery. He says that he doesn't have an apartment because at his salary of \$1,000 a month, rents are too high—and that he's too shy to meet people other than through his computer.

Berry says that he's not a hacker, though he admits to "knowing more than most people." His mother says that he unscrewed his crib when he was only three years old.

Not long ago, Berry met a woman on-line who invited him to live with her and her mother in Oregon. He accepted the invitation and hopes to find a job in computers and even rent an apartment. He says that if he ever owned an apartment building, he'd charge tenants only enough to pay the bills. "Landlords are too greedy," says Berry.

Berry's address is shyent@bbs.an-nex.com.

### REINVENTING THE WHEELS

You won't mind traveling on your next business trip by bus if it happens to be the Work Station QMC, recently rolled out by the Blue Bird Corporation of Macon, Georgia. The QMC is

outfitted with plush leather sofas, axle-to-axle carpeting, a bathroom, and a kitchen area with a sink, refrigerator, and microwave. Other standard equipment includes two TV sets, two VCRs, and a stereo system. Fax machines and cellular phones are available.

The QMC is being marketed directly to corporations. A sales pitch is that downsized firms may want to ferry their executives in something less ostentatious than a limo or Lear jet; the QMC still looks like a bus from the outside. So far, Blue Bird has received three orders. The QMC costs from \$240,000 to \$260,000; a smaller model, the Q, starts at \$215,000.

According to an article in the *New York Times*, the Allen-Bradley Company bought a Work Station Q to transport customers from area airports to its headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The company uses the travel time to conduct meetings with clients, even making on-board presentations. A limo service in New Jersey rents its Q to corporate clients for movable meetings and, just recently, to motor people to a corporate-retreat weekend.

### THE NOT-SO-FRIENDLY SKIES

Airborne assaults are up, according to an article in the *Washington Post*. That is, airline passengers are increasingly attacking flight crews, sending some to the hospital. For example, the number of assaults on United Airlines crew members has almost doubled in the last two years. In one incident, a Saudi princess began choking a female flight attendant because she didn't serve a drink fast enough. Another time, a passenger told to quit smoking in a lavatory punched a copilot.

Experts attribute the rise in such incidents to passengers' work stress.

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*Sources include* Self, People, and the Washington Post.