

## News You Can Use

by Haidee Allerton

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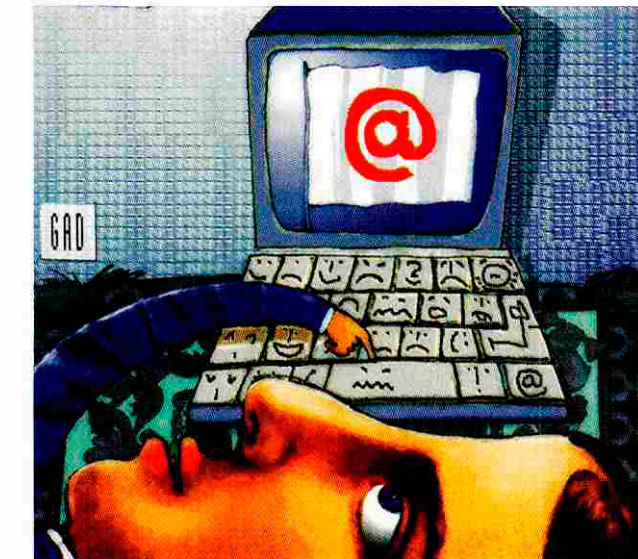
**H**ERE'S A HEADS UP if you're involved in e-mail exchanges with any Japanese. Your smiley-face U.S. Internet symbol does not translate, according to a *New York Times* article by Andrew Pollack.

Japanese online users have developed their own set of symbols—or *emoticons*, as they're known—that reflect their culture.

For example, ^\_^ is a Japanese smiley face, compared with the U.S. version :-). A Japanese woman's electronic smile is ^\_^ with a dot because in Japan, it's still considered impolite for women to show their teeth when they smile.

In fact, when some Japanese Internet users tried to incorporate western symbols into their electronic communication, many other Japanese found them "inscrutable."

Now that they've developed their own *kao maaku* (face marks), Japanese on-



line users tend to use such symbols more often than westerners, perhaps because their written language is based on pictograms and other visual characters, says Pollack. Another reason for the popularity of such symbols may be that in the Japanese culture, people are reluctant to express their feelings in words, tending to rely more on facial expressions.

An often-used mark in Japan is ^\_^; It depicts a cold sweat, which is deemed less offensive than the western sign for anger :-||

Most personal computers in Japan are equipped to handle the input of intricate characters. Users enter words phonetically or in English letters, and the PCs convert the text to *kanji*. With some programs, a user can type *niko* (part of the Japanese phrase for smile), press a key, and the smiley face mark appears.

\*^o^\* (exciting)

### PPAD POWER

**D**URING the past year, the Policy and Public Affairs Department of the American Society for Training and Development has been lobbying with others to reinstate a key tax provision for ASTD and its members.

Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code, also known as Employer-Provided Education Assistance, let employees exclude from

their taxable income up to \$5,250 for nonjob-related, employer-provided educational assistance.

When Section 127 expired on December 31, 1994, thousands of people with tuition costs paid by their employers faced having to treat that money as income on their tax returns.

ASTD members, Congress, stakeholder groups, and ASTD's Policy and Public Affairs Department were instrumental in having Section 127 reinstated as part of the Minimum Wage Bill, signed in August by President Clinton; 800,000 people will benefit.

### B-SCHOOL GETS AN E

**T**HE NEW DEAN of Harvard Business School, Kim B. Clark, surprised faculty members by sending his first message to them via e-mail, something his predecessor had never done, reports *Business Week*.

That was just the first signal of Clark's \$11 million high-tech initiative to transform Harvard B-school and establish it as a leader in information technology.

Already, 92 percent of exams are being conducted on computers, and the school is using multimedia technology to revamp its hallmark case-study method. The goal is to produce 500 online cases over the next five years. That is likely to revolutionize the way business is studied in B-schools and corporate training programs across the globe; Harvard sells nearly five million case studies a year to outsiders.

## How To

2

Chronic lateness *does* count. It can strain relations with co-workers and even jeopardize careers.

Here are some tips adapted from *At Your Best* (a work-health newsletter published by Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania) to overcome a late habit:

**Identify what's making you late.** Keep a "time diary" to track where your time is going and where it's being wasted.

**Become a realist.** If you know that it takes 20 minutes to get to work and you spend five minutes picking up a coffee and donut on the way, then you need to start for work 25 minutes before you're due.

**Stay focused.** Each day, set priorities—and follow them.

**Get organized.** Eliminate clutter, and create a storage system that lets you find things easily when you need them.

**Plan to be early.** For you, "just enough time" may not be sufficient. You may find that arriving early is easier than being on time.



5

## TRAINING MAKES STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

**E**X-JUNK BOND king (deposed) Michael Milken is now investing in training. His partnership with Lawrence J. Ellison recently paid \$169 million for a 50.1 percent share in the CRT Group—a provider of computer training near Liverpool, England—reports the *New York Times*.

The Los Angeles-based partnership, Education Technology, was formed last January with an investment of \$300 million from Milken and Ellison, president and chief executive of the Oracle Corporation, a technology firm based in Redwood City, California.

In *Fortune* (September 30, 1996), Milken says that people wanting a variety of different jobs in their lives will “feed the growth of the human capital industry,” predicting that retraining, temporary labor, and workforce education will become vertically integrated.

## TEAMS RULE

**T**EAM-BASED work and organizational structures are more important than ever, according to the 1995 *Training & Development* Reader Survey and other sources.

So, here are some “rules for fast teams,” from *Fast Company* magazine. The tips—based on principles developed by Cambridge Technology Partners in Cambridge, Massachusetts—can help create team spirit and speed up projects.

**Let the project team make its own rules.** People need a say in how to work together. So, set norms for such items as “core hours” (work only) and fun time.

### Speak up early and often.

Try a two-minute rule; no waiting more than two minutes before asking for advice.

**Learn as you go.** At the end of each project phase, spend half a day assessing the team’s work. These “sunset reviews” should involve all team members and some company veterans.

**Fast has to be fun.** Keep the team pumped. Have team outings during off-hours, create a database of team members’ favorite ice-cream flavors—in other words, bond.

*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 NYCUC@astd.org.*

## COVEY ON TRUST

**S**TEPHEN COVEY, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, challenges training professionals to take a lead role in rebuilding trust in organizations shaken by downsizing.

“In this tremendously turbulent world, there has to be a consistent voice representing the building of trust,” says Covey.

“There are two sources of building trust,” says Covey. “The personal relationships between people and organizational relationships.” He likens trust to a “contract” that can either be embellished and strengthened, or weakened and broken.

“With downsizing taking place everywhere,” says Covey, “the contract

seems to be broken, and people feel betrayed.”

In order to begin rebuilding a lost sense of trust, training professionals must start at the personal level and seek to widen their spheres of influence, advises Covey. Only then, can they attempt to generate a larger sense of trust in their organizations.

Covey also refers to “an emotional bank account” in which a person’s perceived level of trustworthiness either accrues or diminishes based on 10 criteria.

They include

- ▶ seeking first to understand rather than be understood
- ▶ keeping promises instead of breaking them

▶ exhibiting honesty and openness rather than manipulating people.

However, Covey warns, there are deep, traditional pockets that resist trust-building efforts and other attempts to foster organizational change.

“Unfortunately, the new rules of the global economy are going to force that kind of weakness to the surface,” he says, “and may even jeopardize the viability of an enterprise.”

The Covey Leadership Center in Provo, Utah, offers video-based courseware on building trust and other principles in corporate settings.

(Contributed by Tom Barron, editor of *Technical & Skills Training* magazine, published by ASTD.)

## Trend Watch

**A** SMALL COLLEGE in Florida is suddenly selling training courses that anyone on the Internet can take. Of such stuff, trends are made.

The University of North Florida in Jacksonville, is offering five online courses: Improving Customer Service, Reducing Resistance to Change, Leader’s Guide to Shorter and More Productive Meetings, Improving Personal Performance, and Coping With Workplace Stress: The Stress-Food Connection.

Users can log on, take a course, and receive a printed and personalized score sheet.

The courses are fully interactive, with search capabilities enabling participants to seek additional information relevant to a course. Users control the search mode, returning to the scoring mode when they think they’ve learned the lesson and are ready for testing. The system—developed by Stonybrook in Mount Juliet, Tennessee—“bookmarks” users’ stopping places, and returns them automatically to the next learning frame when they restart the course.

The university’s adult education extension offices keep master copies of participants’ grades. Courses cost \$69 per student.

For more information, call UNF at 904/646-2690; e-mail unfce@unf.edu.