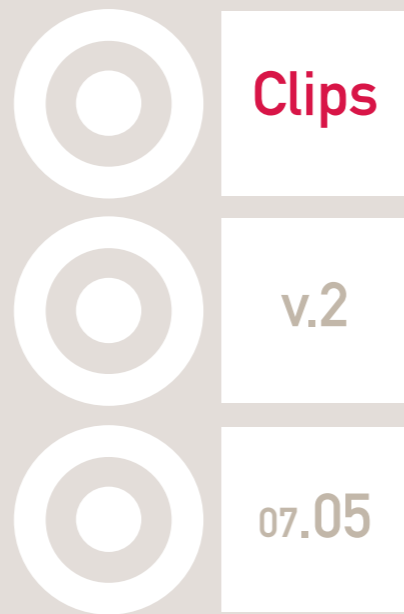


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Is Your Office Working?

1

Tony Horden.

- *Journal (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK); Feb 16, 2005, p36.*

SUMMARY:

Many firms are now enhancing their profitability by identifying inefficient occupational practices and office layouts and taking steps to employ solutions that reduce costs and increase productivity. This article points out areas of potential problems, ranging from building floor plans to the choice of office furniture, office partitions, power networks and environmental controls. Examples are given of simple strategies to ensure that time and energy are not wasted and that solutions are flexible enough to accommodate change and promote a positive workplace culture.

Panel Discussions.

2

Mark Rowh.

- *Office Solutions; Jan/Feb, 2005 v22 i1 p26.*

SUMMARY:

Panel systems have been the cornerstone of office work environments for decades. The New York Times has noted that they are back in demand as a troubled economy has made workers feel lucky to have a job at all. This article claims that these systems never really went out of style. Rather, new products offering beauty, flexibility and office space efficiency are simply expanding their already sizeable marketshare.

Although the dominant trend in office design is still open configurations, lower-height panels and desk-based systems offer a lighter, organic look, with individual offices with panels or partitions standing as "territory markers" and easy-access points to information and co-workers.

The world-wide trend toward space-saving solutions [and attendant real estate cost savings] is also fueling the popularity of panel systems. Manufacturers have added personal storage space features as well as power and wire management solutions to support wireless and mobile communications setups.

Helping to make cubicles less Dilbert-esque is new systems furniture with a broader range and mix of wood, metal, fabric, glass, textures and colors. The results, according to the author, are work environments that help "distinguish a company's brand personality," and yet are flexible and varied enough to be personalized to fit the user. The author believes that these strengths make it likely that panel systems will continue to play a major role in office design well into the future. He predicts that designs will become more flexible and attractive. The open-plan office will continue to evolve, making greater and greater use of color and new materials to let in more natural sunlight, absorb sound and support evolving communications and technologies.

(continued on page 4)



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(continued from page 3)

The article ends with a suggestion that readers check out “Cubicle Wars” at www.gloovie.com. This site allows users to customize animated digital scenes with new text and photos of coworkers. Once finished, gloovie.com will send you the URL of your individualized “Cubicle Wars” site by e-mail so that you and those with whom you share the URL information can view the result.

3

Designers Can Cut Down Stress.

David Spittles

- *Evening Standard (London)*; Dec 13, 2004, p68.

SUMMARY:

Workplace stress has reached epidemic proportions and is thought by many to be the main cause of office productivity loss. The good news: this article claims that there is a growing body of evidence that good workplace design can have a positive impact on this situation. The British government is enough of a believer that they have begun rewarding businesses that adopt “healthy architecture” and create offices that promote both physical and mental wellbeing.

This article notes that complete office redesigns aren’t always necessary. Some simple steps that are encouraged include providing ergonomic furniture, installing individual climate controls and creating a stress-free space where employees can escape the immediate scene of stress for even five minutes.

Lifestyle offices are also discussed, ranging from club-type bars on premises to a basketball net where employees can leap up and down to combat stress. “Hub” environments are also encouraged – departure lounge-type areas with juice bars and/or gallery spaces where staff can relax or meet clients.

The article ends with the author bemoaning the continuing rise of stress levels. He talks about the new 24 hour economy leading to the overlap of work space and social space and remarks that even sleep areas are being introduced into some offices.

4

It Pays To Go Green.

Lim Lay Ying.

- *New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur)*; Feb 26, 2005 p9.

SUMMARY:

This article notes the recent push towards green design, construction and maintenance, attributing much of the impetus to surveys showing significant long-term savings due to reduced energy costs.



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Among the findings discussed: green buildings in the U.S. consume 30 percent less energy than their conventional counterparts and comfortably offset their higher construction costs over a two-year period by savings from lower running costs.

Additional areas of “green” savings are explored and intangible benefits are highlighted in studies that show that more natural daylight results in greater job satisfaction, less stress and better health. Views of water and green spaces positively affect employee health by lowering blood pressure and reducing pain and stress.

The article provides examples of successes from the UK to China, and discusses several U.S. “green” sites, including the award-winning Pittsburg convention center. The work of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is discussed, with 137 new buildings in the U.S. certified by them and 1,700 U.S. buildings registered for future evaluation.

Realigning the Culture.

Gordon Wright.

- *Building Design & Construction*; Jan, 2005 v46 i1 p26.

SUMMARY:

When electronics retailer Radio Shack realized that the predominantly enclosed-office layout of its headquarters building was incompatible with its emerging corporate objectives of collaborative teamwork it took decisive action and moved its headquarters from two 19-floor towers to a low-rise campus a block away with a virtually 100 percent open plan.

This article reveals that the company evaluated interior layouts by setting up an “Idealab” outfitted with one closed office and 15-17 workstations, covering an area of about 25 percent of a typical office floor. Input from this laboratory was used to guide the final layouts of various departments within the company.

Among the insights gained was the desirability of interactive spaces adjacent to elevator lobbies to encourage employee interaction. Additionally, lighting fixtures, raised-floor systems and other components were evaluated. The cost of the prototype was \$400,000 but it enabled the company to avoid over \$1.5 million in unnecessary costs.

The company also hired a consultancy that specializes in workplace design to help plan the new headquarters. The consultants used surveys and focus groups to collect opinions about working conditions in the old headquarters and insights into what would prove more productive in the new one. The result was a work environment that reinforced Radio Shack’s corporate objectives, a more efficient work flow, boosted productivity and very pleased managers and employees.

6 Taking Culture On Board.

- *The Gold Coast Bulletin*; Feb 12, 2005, p. 183.

SUMMARY:

This article is essentially a review of consultant Carolyn Taylor's new book "Walking the Talk," in which the author stresses the role of corporate culture as a source of competitive advantage. She recommends investing in one's corporate culture and defining and developing it to attract and keep the right employees, foster positive workplace practices and ultimately directly impact the firm's bottom line. This "culture management," she notes, is "the newest management discipline."

Culture is viewed here as a new opportunity and "one of the last sources of competitive advantage." Ms. Taylor's book is a guide to understanding and implementing cultural change to capture and exploit this situation. Acquiring a handle on one's culture and developing an effective program of cultural management is seen as a 2-5 year project requiring a plan whose ultimate objective is to create a set of values in employees that will positively influence their behavior and ultimately the way the company is perceived by the market.

The book provides implementation guidelines and a way to initially assess whether such a step is needed. She estimates the annual cost of a three year program at about \$1,000 per employee per year.

7 House Training: Now, Employees Get Brand Boost.

Brian Steinberg

- *Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)*; Jan 18, 2005, p.B1.

SUMMARY:

A good and effective company culture can be an important competitive advantage but a poorly managed program can be perceived as a counter-productive cult-building effort. This article discusses a number of successful culture-building efforts, from Mars, Inc.'s Masterfoods (Pedigree Dog Food) with an employee handbook titled "Dogma" to champagne brand Moet & Chandon with coffee table-size employee guides covering everything from brand colors to letterhead look. The key ingredients to a culture-building program are discussed, but organizational communications specialists warn that splashy internal communications efforts have to be done carefully, with an emphasis on entertaining employees, not selling them.

Not surprisingly, a number of advertising agencies are beginning to offer internal communications services to help companies build their brands internally, as well as externally. Their workshops and workbooks are designed to help client employees feel passionate about their companies and the product/services that they provide.

Real Lives: Work It Out: In A World Where We Are Increasingly Defined By Our Work, Why Do So Many Of Us Have Such A Poor Understanding Of Office Politics? 8

Jenni Russell.

- *The Guardian (Manchester, UK)*; Jan 26, 2005, p. 6.

SUMMARY:

This article explores the hidden rules of organizational cultures and office politics. As the author notes, "We go into workplaces with any number of preconceptions about other people's motivations and values, and we're often shockingly slow to adjust our assumptions in the face of reality."

The organizational rules of a number of workplaces are examined, from advertising agencies and finance companies to multinational organizations and governmental civil service. The author illustrates her points with interesting real-life incidents involving people she has known. She finds that women get the politics of the workplace wrong much more frequently than men. She attributes this to the fact that women are "less attuned to power relationships, and less concerned by the exercise of power than men are." Their teamwork, openness, empathy and conscientiousness are seen as praiseworthy, but are the opposite of the single-mindedness, calculation and status-consciousness required to succeed.

The author believes that intelligent people can end up working in environments whose values don't match their own because the explicit values of organizations often have nothing to do with their real values – and may even be the opposite of them. They are slow to recognize they're in the wrong place because they are change averse and often don't want to admit defeat. In such situations the author believes that staying longer or working harder to get one's true worth recognized is futile.



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9

The Toxic Workplace.

Katherine Macklem.

- *Macleans (Toronto)*; Jan 31, 2005, v118 i5 p.34.

SUMMARY:

Human resources experts are finding that businesses can wreck havoc on their workers by creating what HR literature is now calling the "toxic work environment." The leading ingredient in this mixture is stress, brought on by company cultures that pursue short-term profits over the company's own long-term health. The author believes that the shrinking window available to today's CEOs to make their mark, CEO ego and remuneration too closely linked to quarterly profits result in what one expert calls "an absence of humanity in the workplace," where pressure and relentless demands become "the trademark of a toxic company." Such a scenario soon yields such tell-tale signs as harried looks and curt conversations replacing thoughtful, rich discourse.

The author believes that mega-mergers and globalization only exacerbate this problem, creating a vast, impersonal environment where recurring waves of layoffs have left the survivors with workloads that are simply not feasible over the long haul. Recent surveys have begun to quantify the costs of this, including rising absenteeism and falling productivity. Companies are happily becoming aware of this whole phenomenon and the article notes an increase in the number of consulting practices devoted to identifying and weeding out toxic leaders.

The article offers readers a list of symptoms of a toxic company and discusses assessment tools developed to help identify toxic leaders. In the end, the author notes that culture matters and is often set by the person at the top. A healthy culture is a great competitive tool; an unhealthy culture is corporate suicide in tumultuous times.

10

An Affinity For Success.

Jannette J. Witmyer.

- *Essence*; Mar, 2005, v35 i11 p. 160.

SUMMARY:

Workplace competition is tough enough without infighting between coworkers. This article suggests ways for colleagues to more effectively interact with each other. The author's focus is on developing a proactive support network in the workplace – an "affinity group" – that can be used to empower its members. The best of such groups welcome and mentor new staff, aid in career planning and goal-setting, and host career and personal development workshops and technical forums.

The author offers advice to women interested in organizing an affinity group, warning that it's not for the faint of heart. She suggests that a core group meet off-site to create a strategy, develop clear objectives, communicate its purpose, and identify how it will help both its members and the company. Development of a "sponsor" in senior management is identified as critical to gaining a budget, space, access to resources, and time for meetings.



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For Some Companies, Dog Days Are Key To Success.

Alan R. Earls.

- *The Boston Globe*; Dec 12, 2004, p.G1.

SUMMARY:

The need to combat stress in the workplace has led a number of companies to adopt some rather unique programs. A growing number of these have found that talented people working hard, long hours can quickly decompress by having their pets close at hand. This article highlights a 2001 survey conducted by the American Pet Product Manufacturers Assn that found that having pets in the office created a more productive work environment among 73 percent of the participating companies. The survey further showed that workplaces with dogs, cats, small animals, birds and/or fish showed a 27 percent reduction in employee absenteeism. With 62 percent of U.S. employees owning dogs, this phenomenon appears to have great potential. In 1999 over 300 companies participated in an international "Take Your Dog To Work Day" sponsored by IAMS Dog Food. By 2003 that number grew to more than 5,000 companies.

The article refers to a number of studies showing the stress-reduction effects of pets and a number of company owners are quoted praising the results of allowing pets in the workplace. The article ends with a discussion of useful rules that help to minimize potential problems.

11

12 Second Annual World Congress On The Future Of Work To Focus On “Making It Real”; Will Provide Real-World Toolkit To Delegates.

- *PR Newswire*; Feb 14, 2005, p1.

SUMMARY:

Future of Work is an organization of business executives and managers interested in the future transformation of the work environment and “reducing the cost of workforce support while enhancing both individual and organizational productivity.” Delegates to its Second Annual World Congress will meet April 26-28 in Philadelphia. Their focus will be on moving from broad concepts and visions to specific actions management can take to make the future of work real in their companies.

Discussion subjects will include topics like collaborative technologies, evolving corporate culture, trends in workplace design and HR practices in an independent environment. The focus will be on developing tools and practical advice for transforming organizations in an era of rapidly changing technology, corporate cultures and business practices.

This article details the costs of attendance and the range of pre-conference workshops that can help to bring attendees up to speed. The conference is co-sponsored by the General Services Administration, Herman Miller and Francis Caufmann Foley Hoffman Architects, Ltd. Information is available at http://www.futureofworkcongress.net/congress_workshops.php.

13 Facing Forward; Office-Furniture Companies Embrace Recyclable Designs As More Consumers Go Green.

Rebecca Smith.

- *Asian Wall Street Journal*; Mar 4, 2005, pA5.

SUMMARY:

There is a growing trend among a range of manufacturing companies of designing furniture, carpet and other office furnishings so that parts can be recycled several times and manufactured in ways less harmful to the environment. The author points to architect William McDonough and his chemist partner Michael Braungart as leaders of the movement and their 2002 book, “Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things” is identified as the manifesto for the “green” industrial designers.

The U.S. Green Building Council, a Washington D.C. nonprofit coalition of builders, manufacturers and public agencies promoting energy-efficient buildings estimates that \$5.8 billion was spent on green buildings in 2004, a 34 percent increase over 2003.

The article gives readers a number of examples of companies that are in the forefront of this movement. There is office furniture manufacturer Steelcase, that buys wood for desks from farms practicing sustainable harvesting techniques. Steelcase’s “Think” chair can be disassembled with basic hand tools and its parts recycled. Another example cited is Shaw Industries, the biggest carpet manufacturer in the U.S., whose entire \$150 million a year carpet tile business consists of material that can be recycled.



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14 Office Chair Ergonomics.

Trevor Schell.

- *Northern Ontario Business*; Dec, 2004, v25 i2 p27.

SUMMARY:

Full Text: Copyright Northern Ontario Business Dec 2004.

In almost any aspect of daily life, people spend a great deal of time sitting down. Consider the following when choosing an office chair:

Seat height: The chair must not be so high that tissues in the back of the thigh are compressed and that the seat front edge does not reduce blood supply to the legs. This means that the front edge of the seat should be a bit lower than the distance from the floor to the underside of the thigh when seated.

Seat width: Fit is achieved when the seat width is wider than the width of the hips. This feature is important in ensuring that the worker will have flexibility to adjust their posture to relieve postural loading.

Seat depth: The back of the knee has relatively sensitive skin and little padding over the tendons, nerves and blood vessels; as a result, the seat depth should be slightly shorter than the worker's upper thigh.

Seat angle: The seat angle should allow users to vary their posture forward and backward. This aids in ensuring good blood flow and to reduce loading on the spine and trunk muscles. It should also be lockable in various positions.

Trevor Schell is an ergonomist with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc., Sudbury Clinic.

15 News Round-Up: Leaning Room Only In The Office Of The Future

David Smith.

-- *The Observer (London)*; Jan 27, 2005, p6.

SUMMARY:

This article concerns a new piece of office furniture from Sweden that went on show in January at a "Workplace of the Future" trial at the British Library in London. The "Lean Back" is a seven foot wooden plank with cushioned upholstery for the back and a base for the feet, set at a gentle angle that recreates the sense of leaning against a wall.

Ergonomics experts note that sitting all day puts weight on the bottom of the spine rather than on



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the legs, causing long-term strain in the back. With the "Lean Back," people don't have to spend time to find a chair, sit down and get settled. The "Lean Back," according to its British manufacturer, gives users the benefits of standing up while giving them a rest.

Jobs & Money: Work: Computers That Really Are A Pain In The Neck: Laptop Use May Be Causing Serious Long-Term Back And Arm Problems.

Sean Coughlan.

- *The Guardian (Manchester, UK)*; Dec 18, 2004, p17.

SUMMARY:

Bringing a laptop home can mean less commuting and more convenient hours but it can also mean hunching hours over a screen too low, and using a keyboard designed for size, not comfort. This article points out the serious, long-term damage of a wide-range of ergonomically incorrect practices involving PCs and laptops. Research has shown that stress only aggravates these adverse effects. People overwhelmed by their work and unable to cope with the rising pressure are more likely to develop the type of pain associated with the overuse of computers.

The author provides readers with a number of practical ways to avoid the painful back strains and repetitive-strain injuries (RSIs) that are identified (along with stress) as the most common workplace health hazards. He acknowledges that computer use – particularly laptop use – will be unlikely to decrease because of the convenience and independence they give us. He believes that "the challenge will be whether when we can work at any hour, we're also able to switch off."

Shedding Light On Bad Air

Lydia Dumyn.

- *OH & S Canada*; Jan/Feb, 2005, v21 i11 p48.

SUMMARY:

This article brings to light a McGill University study on how UV light in ventilation systems reduces the mold and bacteria there that could otherwise lead to "sick building syndrome" and its attendant symptoms of headaches, nasal congestion, respiratory problems and on the job fatigue.

The many factors contributing to poor air quality in buildings are discussed here, from chemical contaminants to biological organisms. So too is the basic mechanism by which UVGI (ultraviolet germicidal irradiation) destroys these harmful organisms. The article ends by bemoaning the fact that few industries are making use of this natural sanitizer.

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18 Unhealthy Side Effects Of Workplace Changes; Downsizing, Stress Leave Many With Little Time For Nutritious Meals.

Chelsea Lowe.

- *Boston Globe*, Feb 6, 2005 pG1.

SUMMARY:

This article addresses an all-too-common trend – stressed workers lacking time and knowledge making bad food choices. Corporate downsizing and a sluggish economy have only made matters worse. A recent survey done by Steelcase, Inc. discovered a phenomenon dubbed “the disappearing lunch hour,” which by 1996 had shrunk to an average of 36 minutes, with more than half of respondents taking less than half an hour. All too often the result is people too busy for breakfast or lunch and overindulging in take-out for dinner.

The effects of bad nutrition on productivity have been pronounced enough that many companies are hiring nutritional consultants and making vast changes that promote healthy lifestyles and nutritious workplace eating. Some companies are adopting corporate-wide policies covering what foods and drinks are served in the workplace. Other companies are switching meeting food options from soft drinks and pastries to fruit and bagel slices. Still others choose to subsidize the more healthful entrees at employee cafeterias. Even office vending machines are becoming more healthful.

This article includes a number of suggestions for concerned companies. In the end, however, one expert fears that bad eating habits are symptomatic of fatigue, and, if left to their own devices, employees will only improve their eating choices once work life becomes more manageable.

19 More Area Firms Paying Employees To Relax; Yoga, Meditation Seen As Health Care Boons.

Annys Shin.

- *The Washington Post*, Mar 3, 2005, p. T12.

SUMMARY:

Today, more and more companies are jumping onboard the wellness bandwagon and providing employees stress relief in the form of yoga classes. One of the first companies to do this was Tower Cos, which has built a reputation for developing “green” office buildings with recycled materials. Twelve years ago it began offering employees free meditation classes. This article provides a look at several large organizations in the Washington D.C. area that have developed free or subsidized yoga programs for employees, including Discovery Communications, the National Park Service and Eileen Fisher, Inc.



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The author also looks at the return on investment for these programs. In 2002, the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine published a report that showed the wellness program developed at Coors Brewery Co. produced a return of \$6.15 for every dollar invested. The return enjoyed by Steelcase, Inc. was \$5.80 for every dollar spent, while Equitable Life Insurance received a \$5.52 return and Travelers Corp. received a \$3.40 return.

People Get Stress Relief Express-Style: On-The-Job Massages And Boardroom Yoga.

Deirdre McMurdy.

- *National Post (Ontario)*, Jan 15, 2005 pIN.1.Fr.

SUMMARY:

In our Type-A culture everyone talks about stress but no one wants to spend more than fifteen minutes relaxing before moving on to the next project. The result, according to this article, is a booming market in teaching stress management skills.

The multi-billion dollar costs of stress are well-documented, as are the better than three-fold increase in stress-related absenteeism, the 40 percent of job turnovers due to stress and the 60-80 percent of on-the-job accidents that are stress-related. In the face of these numbers some companies are offering employees everything from on-the-job massages and yoga sessions to off-site counseling.

The article pays tribute to the Husky Injection Moldings company of Aurora, Ontario, which offers daycare, a healthy food cafeteria, a wellness center complete with a naturopath, massage therapist and chiropractor, and a fitness center offering daily tai chi and yoga class.

Even more interesting than the range of classes is the return on this investment – a rate of absenteeism 40 percent below the national average and workers’ compensation claims that amount to one-fifth the national average. Notes the director of human services there: “The paycheck will always be a motivator, but we also want people to feel like they are part of something meaningful.”

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21

Shh! I Can't Hear Myself Think

Stephanie Shittaker.

- *The Gazette (Montreal)*; Jan 15, 2005, pB.5.BRE.

SUMMARY:

Managing workplace noise can be a challenge in today's modern offices. Loud voices, people walking by, pagers, intercoms, and telephones all take their part in the concert. While usually not dangerous to hearing, such noise can be a distraction and contribute to the growing levels of stress present in the workplace.

This article suggests that companies ask their employees what they need and then create the environments that respond to those needs. Flexible spaces are the key, with the ability to divide group spaces from individual workspaces. While faxes, printers, photocopiers and other noise-producing machines should be isolated from work pods, the importance of open-concept offices for facilitating communication makes a certain level of noise unavoidable. In the end, some workers will need headphones and CD players but most simply "need to talk to each other and work out any problems in a group."

22

To Avoid Volatile Chemicals, Check Greenguard's Ratings.

- *The Washington Post*; Feb 26, 2005, pF.05.

SUMMARY:

Companies are becoming more aware of the issue of indoor air quality and are increasingly looking for building materials and furnishings that emit low levels of volatile organic chemicals (VOCs), unstable compounds that off-gas into the air. One place to find information about low-emitting products is the website of the Greenguard Environmental Institute at www.greenguard.org. This organization tests the emissions given off by building products, furniture, draperies and carpet and certifies the ones that meet its emission standards, a combination of standards set by the EPA, the State of Washington and several European governments. Greenguard tests for some 65 chemical compounds, including human carcinogens like formaldehyde.



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Telework.

Carole Kanchier.

- *The Vancouver Sun*; Feb 19, 2005, pG3.

SUMMARY:

A study by the Employment Policy Foundation (EPF), a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, has found working at home to be an increasingly urban phenomenon. Nearly one in six individuals works from home at least once a week. Thirty percent are self-employed, but 17 percent telework as part of an agreement with employers. EPF predicts that telecommuting will become even more popular as work-home balance conflicts worsen and advances in computer technology networking improve.

The many benefits of teleworking are discussed here, as are the steps that need to be taken by managers and employees – regular conference calls, project updates, intranet connections, etc. – that help to ensure a positive and productive result. Tips are provided to help readers in convincing employers to allow telework.

The article also addresses the potential for self-employment and home-based businesses. The advantages and drawbacks are discussed and tips for successfully working at home are provided.

23

Corporate Culture Can Be Maintained At Home.

Michael Crom.

- *Gannett News Service*; Jan 20, 2005, p1.

SUMMARY:

This article offers some fast tips on how a person working from home while recovering from surgery can remain connected to co-workers and clients. Among the suggestions:

- **Keep focused** – work from a room with minimal distractions that allows no activities (TV, Internet play, etc.) that you wouldn't do in the office.
- **Keep structured** – keep and maintain daily or weekly schedules of needed accomplishments complete with deadlines.
- **Stay connected** – using your phone, fax and e-mail so you won't feel out of the loop upon your return.

24



25 Microsoft's Festival Of Future; A Clock That Tracks People, And Other Gee-Whiz Projects.

Kim Peterson.
- *Seattle Times*; Mar 3, 2005, pE1.

SUMMARY:
This article provides readers with an overview of the offerings shown at Microsoft Techfest, an annual science fair for Microsoft employees of the most futuristic ideas coming out of the company's research division. The Techfest is designed to expose employees to what everyone in the far flung company is up to.

- Among the more interesting concepts being cooked up by the Microsoft labs:
- A clock with locations instead of numerals and a hand for every family member that points to where they are based on transmitter chips in their cell phones.
 - Devices that allow people to remotely browse digital photos on personal or office PCs using SmartPhone cell phones.
 - Devices that can remotely command a PC to send photos to another device.
 - A program that can personalize a Web search based on e-mail messages and other documents stored on a PC. [For example, if you're interested in blackbird wireless devices and have pictures and/or e-mails concerning them, your search for "blackbird" won't include results like "The Maltese Falcon."]
 - A way Microsoft's Outlook e-mail program could categorize messages based on the user's relationship with the sender – ideal for someone returning to the office from a long roadtrip or vacation.

26 Wireless Workplace Goes On The Road: Hands-Free Phones.

Warren Webb.
- *National Post (Ontario)*, Feb 18, 2005, pDT.25.

SUMMARY:
Bluetooth is a technology protocol that enables a host of electronic devices – PCs, laptops, PDAs and mobile phones – to securely and wirelessly communicate with each other. Business people can update their e-mail, coordinate their schedules and access address books when in the vicinity (nine meters) of their computers. More importantly, it allows hands-free use of mobile phones through



the car's audio system. Additional benefits range from remote payments for gas, tolls and parking to conveniences like remote starting of air conditioning or heaters to ipod or mp3 music streaming into the car audio system.

Now that manufacturers like Acura, Chrysler and BMW are offering affordable Bluetooth options, the protocol is enabling a truly mobile technology. This article explores a number of current options and packages available and offers insights into where Bluetooth is headed in the near and not-so-near future.

Logitech Introduces ViewPort AV100 For Business Desktop Video Communications.

27

- *Business Wire*; Feb 7, 2005, p1.

SUMMARY:
Logitech, the world's leading manufacturer of web cameras, has brought to market its Logitech AV100, a product that gives developers a high-quality audio and video device that can serve as a foundation for a desktop video communications system. The AV100 combines a video camera, an integrated microphone with acoustic cancellation and a Bluetooth wireless headset into a single sleek console. There are only two buttons – one to launch the conferencing application and the other to block video and mute sound for temporary privacy during a conference call. The price, quality and ease of use makes video conferencing viable at the desktop. Combined with Polycom's PVS software (Logitech's "solution partner"), the system delivers TV-like video quality at 30 frames per second with H264 video compression and near-CD quality audio even over low bandwidth connections.

Logitech is also partnering with Radvision and VCON to deliver video conferencing solutions using the AV100 with its vPoint HD personal desktop video conferencing software and its Video PBX (Media Xchange Manager).



28 Check Point Safe Office 225U; This SOHO Firewall And Router Is Extremely Easy To Set Up And Can Service Small Companies And Larger Businesses Alike.

- TPC Magazine; Mar 22, 2005, v24 i3 p103.

SUMMARY:

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This SOHO firewall and router is extremely easy to set up and can service small companies and larger businesses alike. Simple slider controls and setup wizards allow even inexperienced administrators to deploy the device. An optional package of managed services includes Web filtering, e-mail antivirus protection (\$519 direct for ten users), remote logging, and dynamic DNS. And Check Point now has a wireless version (Safe@Office 424UW, \$1,999 list).



Six Ways To Shorten The Learning-Doing Gap.

29

Cal Wick, Kathy Granger.

- Electric Perspectives; Nov/Dec, 2004, v29 i6 p61.

SUMMARY:

There is no doubt that learning is critical to remaining competitive. According to Arie De Geus, then head of strategic planning for Royal Dutch Shell, "The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage." But while there is a direct relationship between the level of investment in corporate training and the level of productivity and profit, the high upfront costs involved make it imperative that such training quickly generate a high return on investment.

This article notes, however, that there is "a tremendous power loss between the classroom and the workplace." Research shows that every dollar spent on corporate training returns only between 15 and 50 cents of impact on business. While increases in productivity and teamwork are valuable, the authors stress that they must directly impact the on-the-job "action" applied to relevant work. To paraphrase the authors, "the learning gap must be closed."

The article lists six simple principles – the 6 D's – that can effectively achieve this closure:

- 1. **Define the outcomes in business terms** – This is a shared responsibility of management and trainers that explicitly states what employees will do differently or better and how this will be reflected in business results.
- 2. **Design the complete experience** – Powerful influencers on learning transfer include pre-course preparation, management support and other assistance lent to trainees in their application effort.
- 3. **Deliver for application** – A direct connection must be made between classroom theory and the job, with real business needs anchoring each topic and each topic illustrated by relevant examples.
- 4. **Drive follow-through** – People must be pushed across the learning-doing gap. Learning objectives must be treated as real business objectives – tracked, measured and evaluated, with periodic reminders for participants of their "developmental obligations." A follow-up forum "to draw out and consolidate the lessons of the experience" is vital.
- 5. **Deploy active support** – Managers should require learners to use their new skills immediately. They should actively endorse the training program and its goals and their performance evaluation should reflect this.
- 6. **Document results** – Management needs to track and assess results from training and development programs.

The article ends with suggested evaluation criteria.



30 Clearswift Survey Shows Personal E-Mail Use Threatens Company Productivity.

- *Business Wire*; Feb 15, 2005, p1.

SUMMARY:

Clearswift, a leading provider of content security software for e-mail and the Internet surveyed 4,500 respondents in the U.S., UK and Germany. They found that nearly 40 percent of workers spend an hour or more each day e-mailing friends and relatives or swapping jokes and pictures via the company e-mail system during working hours. The rest spend about half an hour each day. Only one in ten claims never to make personal use of the company e-mail system. In a typical 100-person company the survey shows about 1,700 working days each year are lost to personal use of the company e-mail – the equivalent to 7 fulltime new staff. American workers were the worst offenders.

The article notes that personal misuse of the e-mail system is only one of many abuses, including loss of confidential information, grounds of personal harassment, spam and viruses. It calls for companies to set ground rules on Web and e-mail usage through clear policies that ensure that office productivity doesn't suffer. Not surprisingly – given Clearswift's product line – the article highly recommends e-mail and Web security software. It also suggests companies set unrestricted access times during agreed upon periods such as lunch hours or before or after working hours.

31 Some Firms Trade E-Mail For Face Time; Companies Get Creative To Encourage In-Person Chats.

Stephanie Armour.

- *USA Today*; Dec 7, 2004, pB.1.

SUMMARY:

Companies are drowning in non-spam e-mail which have tripled since 1999 to 11.9 billion a day. This article addresses the backlash that has resulted from companies wanting more face-to-face contact at work. Survey findings show two-thirds of employees leave multiple e-mail messages in different places trying to get quick answers, with 65 percent saying that their top complaint was delayed decisions because co-workers don't respond in a timely fashion. Among the interesting actions by fed-up employers:

- Chicago-based U. S. Cellular has banned most e-mails on Friday following a four-week test run of the program.
- California-based Veritas Software also initiated a Friday e-mail ban and is quoted lauding the increase in collaboration and team-building that resulted.
- Radio Shack's new Fort Worth campus has employee cubicles but it provides wireless Internet access in common areas to promote in-person contact.



Study Links Office Temperature To Keyboarding Performance.

32

- *Professional Safety*; Jan, 2005, v50 i1 p17.

SUMMARY:

Full Text: Copyright American Society of Safety Engineers Jan 2005

If your office is too cold you might not be typing as accurately -- or as much -- as you could be, according to a study evaluating the influence of indoor environmental conditions on worker productivity. Conducted by Alan Hedge, director of Cornell University's Human Factors and Ergonomics Laboratory, the study found a 74-percent increase in typing mistakes and a 46-percent reduction in typing output when office temperatures fell from 77°F to 68°F. The findings were presented at the 2004 Eastern Ergonomics Conference in New York.

The study investigated the link between changes in physical environmental conditions and changes in work performance. During the study, which was conducted at Insurance Office of America's headquarters in Orlando, FL, nine workstations were equipped with a miniature personal environment sensor for sampling air temperature every 15 minutes for a full working month. Researchers recorded the amount of time that employees typed and the amount of time they spent making corrections.

"At 77°F, employees were keying 100-percent of the time with a 10-percent error rate, while at 68°F, keying went down to 54-percent of the time with a 25-percent error rate," says Hedge. "Temperature is a key variable that can impact performance." An abbreviated version of Hedge's study is available at <http://ergo.human.cornell.edu>.

A study found a 74-percent increase in typing mistakes and a 46-percent reduction in typing output when office temperatures fell from 77°F to 68°F.



33 Benefits Can Help Employees Balance Their Lives.

Leslie Rose McDonald.

- *The Post-Standard (Syracuse)*; Feb 9, 2005, pC2

SUMMARY:

More and more companies are providing greater flexibility in their benefits packages to attract talent and to help meet the diverse and changing needs of their employees. Particularly pressing is the need for help in creating a better balance between work life and home life. This article calls for employers to view their employees as customers and to work hard to keep them. The author stresses the high value placed on flexible hours and alternative work arrangements like job sharing and telecommuting. Fitness and preventative wellness programs and educational development programs are also part of the picture, as are such convenience services as pick up and drop off dry cleaning, personal care services and roving mechanics. Companies are even encouraged to explore low-cost but meaningful benefits like negotiated group memberships, discounts and purchase programs.

The article points out that many of the increased costs created by these efforts become offset by lowered absenteeism rates, healthier employees and a more productive and motivated workforce that is less prone to leave the company.



75% Of Workers Are Considering New Jobs; Staff Ready To Fly The Coop?

Christopher Montgomery.

- *National Post (Ontario)*, Feb 18, 2005, pDT.25.

SUMMARY:

The Grand Rapids Press; Jan 30, 2005, p11.

A survey released late last year by the Society for Human Resource Management reveals that a steadily improving economy and job market has nearly 75 percent of U.S. workers considering switching jobs, potentially costing employers billions in hiring and training costs. This article points out that while pay, benefits and other economic factors influence the decision to change jobs, the relationships between employees and their supervisors remain one of the most important determinants on job satisfaction, reinforcing the old maxim: "employees join organizations but they leave managers."

The author believes that improving the employee-manager bond "is mostly a matter of avoiding common mistakes." Among these common mistakes:

- During economic downturns employees have fewer alternate job prospects and many employers respond by piling too many projects onto employees.
- Wrong assumptions can adversely affect such basic components of good employee-supervisor relationships as open communication lines, clear performance guidelines, rewards for good work and regular opportunities for advancement.
- The stress of cutbacks and added workloads all too easily lead harried managers to reverse the principle of "praise in public and criticize in private."

The author recommends that supervisors "climb back into the trenches with their workers and reconnect with them." It's all about communication. Creating an effective dialogue is more than simply doling out praise or reprimand. Managers must be willing to not only give feedback but to receive it, including suggestions and criticism. After all, strict hierarchical relationships were the norm when most jobs were industrial and employer-employee relationships were one-way. For knowledge-based, white-collar jobs rigid work rules must give way to more flexible policies, with sabbaticals, flexible schedules and a concern for a proper work/home balance replacing strict 9 to 5 (or later) norms.