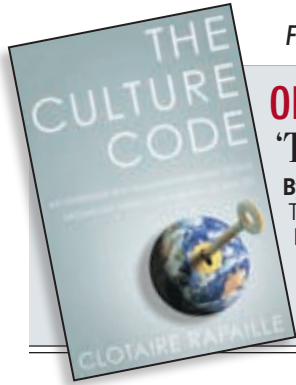


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ONE GOOD BOOK 'The Culture Code'

By Clotilde Rapaille (Broadway Books, 2007, paperback, \$14, 205 pages)

The author, a marketing expert and psychologist who has helped sell everything from coffee to the PT Cruiser, argues that every culture has a subconscious and archetypes that drive our behavior and shape our buying choices. The Culture Code aims to explain Americans to themselves, everything from why we buy big cars and how we choose our leaders to why we make friends easily but often don't keep them for a long time. — *Staff report*

Cocaine use declines in work force

Recent workplace drug-test data shows a 15.9 percent decline in the number of positive results for cocaine during the first six months of 2007 nationwide as compared to the same period in 2006, according to Quest Diagnostics, a company that performs employee drug tests.

Positive drug test results for cocaine showed double-digit declines in every region except the Midwest, where it declined 9.5 percent, according to "The Quest Diagnostics Drug Testing Index: Cocaine Use Among America's Workers — A Special 2007 Mid-Year Report." The greatest decline was in the New England area.

"While it is too soon to point to a trend, the significant decline in positivity rates in different workforce categories and across regions may suggest that our nation's workers are choosing not to use cocaine or that they lack access to the drug," said Barry Sample, Ph.D., director of Science and Technology for the Employer Solutions division of Quest Diagnostics. — *Staff report*

WATER COOLER

Learning communication a big part of first job

If you're a college graduate making the transition from sweat pants to suits, prepare to collide head on with your baby boomer bosses.

Your expectations for your new job could prove wildly different from your employer's, according to business etiquette expert Mary Crane.

» **Connect with your co-workers.** You may be used to communicating by e-mail or instant messenger, but boomer bosses expect face time, Crane said.

» **Study the culture of your organization and adapt your dress and communication style.** You might be able to get away with sneakers at Google Inc., but not at a law firm.

» **Beware of your personal electronic devices,** the downfall of many a Generation Y-er. If a boomer sees you bobbing your head to your iPod as you work, he'll think you're slacking.

Interviewers need to sell job to the interviewees

Two out of three applicants turns down a job offer as a result of an interviewer's bad behavior, according to Rich Wellins, senior vice president of Development Dimensions International.

Among the most commonly cited interviewer misdeeds are withholding information about the position, showing up late, being rushed or unprepared, asking questions unrelated to the job and turning the interview into a cross-examination, he said.

With the war for talent in full swing, interviewers should be promoting their business to attract the best candidates, Wellins said.

Survey puts numbers on what men think about their work

Here's a quick snapshot of men's thoughts on their professional pursuits, according to an upcoming survey in the September issue of Men's Health magazine.

A full 60 percent of men said they work 41 to 60 hours per week, while 82 percent said they take work-related calls after hours. At the same time, 24 percent said they spend half of their day or less actually working.

Employees feel more entitled to breaks during work hours because they're tethered to the office round the clock, said David Zinczenko, Men's Health editor-in-chief.

Among the survey's other results: 70 percent of men said it's important for their work to have social value, but only 37 percent say their jobs do. — *AP*

Paying tuition benefits firms

Extended-learning offers are a perk for employees and a boon for the business

By Joyce M. Rosenberg

With the start of the school year not far off, employees of small businesses might have a hankering to take some courses. And company owners might want to think about paying for them to take some classes — the learning may help their careers and in turn, help the business retain its best workers.

Many companies are willing to pay for courses that will help employees upgrade their skills or learn new ones. Others go further, making tuition reimbursement an employee benefit that even covers courses not directly related to the job.

"For me, it's really straightforward: We value the employees we have here," said Kyle Corkum, president of Landquest, a land development company in Raleigh, N.C. "We're not interested in having people come and go like a revolving door. We're trying to upgrade the capability and knowledge of our people."

Landquest is paying for a staffer to take a preparatory course for the Law School Admission Test, and it is paying undergraduate tuition for another employee. Its director of philanthropy is taking business writing and literature courses at company expense.



Some businesses are paying for employees to attend classes. The payments may help companies retain their best workers. — Getty Images file photo

Human resources professionals say that paying for employees' courses is a great motivator and retention tool for all companies, so a small business that offers tuition reimbursement will make itself more competitive when it comes to attracting and keeping good workers.

Beverly Kaye, an employee retention consultant in Sherman Oaks said research has shown that one of the top reasons why workers stay with their companies is they're learning and growing on the job. Taking courses helps that process along.

Kaye suggests owners take the initiative and offer tuition reimbursement to staffers rather than waiting for workers to request it; employees will appreciate the goodwill behind the offer.

"It loses some of its panache if you

wait for them to ask," Kaye said.

And don't presume to know what kind of course is right for a given staffer. Don't assume that a graphics designer, for instance, should only be taking a computer graphics course.

Tuition reimbursement isn't the only way to help employees learn; some businesses offer onsite learning.

Alfred Portale, owner of the upscale Gotham Bar & Grill in New York, has arranged for classes to be given at the restaurant, including English classes for workers who wanted to improve their language skills. Portale has also paid for individual language classes for some employees.

He also offers culinary education classes, including a wine program planned for later this year. — *AP*



HARVEY MACKAY
GETTING AHEAD

Don't let slumps keep you down in the dumps

Read the sports pages on any given day, and you'll likely find a hard-luck story about some player or team experiencing the worst slump in years. But slumps aren't confined to sports — they're on the front page and the business section.

The housing slump is big news right now. A slump on Wall Street is bad news for businesses. Aside from a few blockbuster movies this summer, entertainment reporters will talk about the box-office slump.

Politicians know their electability diminishes with a slump in approval ratings, and a slump in voter turnout usually indicates an apathetic or disgusted electorate. Dejected singles bemoan their dating slumps.

And as bad as all that can be, I still have a soft spot for even the most overpaid pro athletes. How exactly do they cope with their extended failures getting splashed across the papers and blogs?

Sluggo Hank Aaron said, "My motto was always to keep swinging. Whether I was in a slump or feeling badly or having trouble off the field, the only thing to do was keep swinging."

Robert Bly, author of "The Copywriter's Handbook" and "Write More, Sell More," developed a three-part strategy for overcoming slumps:

1. Do something.
2. Do more.
3. Keep doing it.

Bly adds this corollary to #3: Evaluate the results of each effort, and do more of what is working and less of what is not working.

If you're in a sales slump, get back to the basics. Look at your goals and see if you have been really following your plan to achieve them. If you haven't been completely true to plan, fix it. If you have, then you need a new action plan.

Mackay's Moral: A slump may bring you down, but you have nowhere to go but up.

Harvey Mackay is the author of five New York Times best-selling books, including the No. 1 best-seller, "Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive." Reach him at harvey@mackay.com

TECHNOLOGY

High-tech tools can hinder communication

By Susan J. Bethanis

Technology has forever changed the way humans interact, communicate and work. We can now 'ping' a co-worker in China, send a proposal to Europe, and respond to urgent e-mails — all while being stuck in traffic! These incredible technological advancements allow us to remain informed and 'in the loop' at all times. But at what cost does our desire for "instant access" come?

People are simply becoming overwhelmed with information. Spending your entire morning cleaning out your inbox adds stress to an already hectic day. Technology

should be used to enhance human communication, not to replace it.

Here are three simple keys to ensure that technology is helping effective communication.

1. Smoke screen: Don't hide behind technology. Sending an e-mail or leaving a voice message when you know someone won't be there only complicates things. Instead, use e-mail for logistics and to help set up a phone call or in-person meeting.

2. Vary your medium: Today's workplaces are extremely diverse. Differing cultures, skill sets and age groups require that information be delivered in a variety of formats. Make sure to promote communication that reaches all employees — not just the tech-savvy.

3. Be clear and concise: In order to be effective, e-mail and virtual correspondence needs to be clear and concise. Clarify the W's (who, what, where, when and why).

Don't let technology become your Achilles' heel. Instead, use it as a bridge to enhance effective communication in your workplace.

Susan J. Bethanis is Founder/CEO of Mariposa Leadership Inc., a 14-person San Francisco-based leadership coaching firm in its 10th year. She is the author of Leadership Chronicles of a Corporate Sage (Kaplan Publishing, 2004), which was voted a 2004 Top 10 Business Book by CEOrefresher.com. Reach her at (415) 861-5900, or sueb@mariposaleadership.com. www.mariposaleadership.com.