

Work Daze: Unwired!

by *Bob_Goldman*

It's a wonderful world in which we live and work, and if you don't believe it, just use your desktop computer to send a message to your laptop computer commanding it to call your PDA to forward a message to your cell phone.

Get the point? We may walk around with pockets and purses laden with electronic gizmos, but when it comes to trying to reach us, no one can touch us. Unfortunately, there's a problem with all this wonderful connectivity. It would be nice to stay in constant touch with friends and family, yet the person to whom we are most connected is our boss.

Historians are not certain when the first humans realized that all the wonderful gadgets they had been given made it possible to be contact anywhere, anytime. In my opinion, it was about five minutes after the first primitive cave dweller first powered up his primitive Blackberry - two clam shells connected by a string.

"Where's the Tyrannosaurus file?" he heard his boss roar, interrupting a blissful afternoon of hunting and gathering. "I need to know if these things are vegetarian or meat-eaters."

The first primitive cube dweller certainly had the same experience, and the same feelings, when an afternoon of field work at the Kit Kat Klub was interrupted by a series of increasingly urgent series of beeps and buzzes from the main office. The only difference was that the hot breath breathing down the cube dweller's back was a lot scarier than a Tyrannosaurus. Hey, a dinosaur is a pussycat compared with an enraged senior vice president.

The very mixed blessings of our weird, unwired world were brought to my attention recently by a survey conducted by Yahoo! HotJobs. According to the press release that reached me on my PDA during my after-breakfast nap, wireless devices like laptops, mobile phones and "smartphones" are "blurring the line between personal time and professional time."

By "changing the physical parameters of the workplace and extending the work day, professionals can work from anywhere and connect at anytime." And that, my well-connected comrade, is exactly the problem.

In perusing the survey results, what surprises me most is how few of us resent the intrusion into our personal space. I may be wasting my time spending my time off watching reruns of "The View" (the classic shows, before Rosie replaced Star), but it's my time to waste as I see fit. In the Yahoo! HotJobs survey of 900 "office professionals," only 26 percent expressed frustration because the wireless devices kept them on a permanent corporate leash. I guess the other 74 percent enjoy being pestered and pesterable 24/7.

These slaves to work not only need to get a life, they need to unplug themselves from the unwired world, so they can have one.

As if more proof was needed, the survey also revealed that 67 percent of the respondents "admitted using a wireless device to connect with work while on vacation." Now I know a week viewing cheese making demonstrations in the Wisconsin Dells may be less than riveting, but it beats the cheesy jokes of your boss during weekly staff meetings.

If you choose to unwire yourself and really unwind, Yahoo! HotJobs does have tips for you. Unfortunately, the authors of these tips also have jobs - HotJobs, presumably - and therefore do not understand the pressure under which thee and me operate. For example:

- Don't be afraid to say no.

Good idea. Try it this way: "No, it won't be any problem to write that report while I'm on vacation. No, it's no bother at all."

- Speak up.

You could try telling your boss you are overworked. No doubt, she'll have the perfect solution - unemployment.

- Plan fun and relaxation.

Instead of only using your PDA to plan your business appointments, remember you can also use it to schedule relaxation periods. Here's a fully balanced schedule for a successful professional: 5 a.m.-12 p.m. Work; 12:01-12:09 p.m. Eat leisurely lunch; 12:10-8 p.m. Work; 8:01-8:04. Relax and contemplate how lucky you are to have your job and your boss; 8:05 p.m.-2 a.m. Work; 2-5 a.m. Uncontrollable sobbing.

- Don't overbook.

Be realistic about taking on more work than you can handle. Find out your limit and then volunteer to do three times more. Sure, your family may squeal when you bring the office copying machine on your vacation instead of the Jet Ski, and OK, one of the kids may have to stay home to make room for the senior sales manager, but you'll be a hero when you return.

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