



FUTURE OF WORK AGENDA

A Free Monthly Newsletter
April, 2006
www.thefutureofwork.net/

THIS MONTH'S HEADLINES

Click on any Headline to go to the full story.

1. **[FROM JIM AND CHARLIE](#)**

This is our personal note welcoming you to the April 2006 issue of *Future of Work Agenda* and setting our theme for the month. This month we celebrate our **Fiftieth** (that's right!) issue of the newsletter with a call for a management revolution (and that's no April Fool's joke). And our monthly rant zeroes in on national energy policies just as gasoline prices are going through the roof once again.

2. **[ANNOUNCEMENTS](#)**

Come to Philadelphia for the CoreNet Global Summit and watch the Jim and Charlie show – another panel discussion on the intersection between corporate facilities management and economic development. We've also got some news about the *World Congress on the Future of Work*. And, as always, the *Future of Work* program continues to seek new members.

3. **[FEATURE ARTICLE: SQUARE PEGS AND ROUND HOLES](#)**

We've been complaining recently about our own sense of being overloaded, if not overwhelmed, with work (of course, as we always say, it sure beats the alternative). More importantly, we've been recalling some conversations from the *2005 World Congress on the Future of Work*. While we don't have literal quotes, a basic and recurring theme was that the way large corporations are operating today is injurious to our health (mental, physical, and spiritual).

4. **[BEST OF THE BLOG](#)**

This section provides you with brief summaries of several recent notes we've already posted on the *Future of Work* weblog. In each case we also include a live link to the original post on the blog. And we encourage you to become a regular reader of the blog, where we are posting notes, case studies, and links to other important websites almost every day.

5. **[IN OUR HUMBLE OPINION: DRIVING ME CRAZY](#)**

We end each issue of *Future of Work Agenda* with a personal perspective – our chance to comment on issues and developments in the world of work that we find important and interesting. This is our "editorial" page, where we enjoy offering our opinions and predictions about what's happening (or should be happening) in the world of work and beyond.

THE FULL STORIES

1) **From Jim and Charlie**

Can you believe it? We can't: this is our **fiftieth** (count 'em, fifty!) issue of *Future of Work Agenda*. That's over four years of good fun, thought-provoking articles and rants, and plenty of push-back from you, our global community of friends, colleagues, critics, and bystanders. We considered producing a gold-covered, bound commemorative volume, but frankly we've got far more productive things to do (just kidding; we can't ship a bound copy through cyberspace anyway).

We're certainly eager to get to newsletter #100, but that's clearly a long ways off at the current pace of 11 issues a year. But, like you, we're just trying to get to the future, so we'll keep plugging away. And we hope you'll stay with us.

Enough self-congratulations (well, it sure beats self-flagellation). This month we've taken a hard look at our day-to-day work habits and asked a very profound question: how come we're working so hard? It sure seems that with all those digital tools and infrastructure we ought to be feeling a whole lot more productive than we are.

And as we thought about it we recalled our conversations with many of you last spring at the 2005 [World Congress on the Future of Work](#). There the delegates all agreed that life in 21st-century organizations can be downright frustrating, demeaning, and even dangerous to mental health, family life, and careers.

So, in our feature article, [Square Pegs and Round Holes](#), we take a look at what's going on and why current organizations and management practice just don't fit the realities of the workplace. We end by calling for a revolution. And that's not idle talk.

We then move from challenging the way organizations are managed to challenging the way our national energy policy is defined and implemented ("[In Our Humble Opinion: Driving Me Crazy](#)"). Please read the rant, and send us a note either challenging or (preferably) praising us. We want to hear from you because we worry sometimes that no one is listening (not really, but if we can work the guilt trip, we're happy to do it).

And as always, of course, we're pleased to bring you our regular [Announcements](#) and [Best of the Blog](#) sections. We continue to believe that you'll find ideas and information here that you just can't get anywhere else.

So, on to the rest of the newsletter. Enjoy! And please [let us know](#) what you think.

[RETURN TO HEADLINES](#)

2) ANNOUNCEMENTS

I'd Actually *Rather* Be in Philadelphia – for the CoreNet Global Summit

(with apologies to W.C. Field). Hear Ye! Hear Ye! The Charlie and Jim Show will be coming to CoreNet once again. We're doing another version of our ongoing conversation about the intersection between corporate facilities management and local economic development, this time focusing even more on alternative and shared workplaces (we call them "Third Places" – those of you who know us know what we're talking about) as an important component of a workforce/facilities locational strategy.

We're very pleased that **Mark Gorman**, Director of Global Real Estate for Nortel Networks, will Moderate the panel as he did in Las Vegas back in October 2005. And we'll be joined by **F. James Hettrick**, Director of Information Services for the City of Loma Linda, California (and a founder of the [U. S. Connected Communities Association](#)) and **J. Scott Golan**, CEO of Cincinnati-based [Property Advisors](#), a real estate and facilities investment firm.

Our panel discussion, officially called "Distributed Work at the Intersection of Corporate Real Estate and Regional Economic Development," will take place on Tuesday afternoon, April 25, from 3:00 – 4:40 PM. We promise a stimulating and provocative conversation with some intriguing new case study stories. Y'all come see us!

For more information about the CoreNet Global Summit, go to:

http://www2.corenetglobal.org/summits_events/philadelphia_2006/program/agenda.vsp

Update on the *World Congress on the Future of Work*

The World Congress on the Future of Work will not convene in 2006. For a variety of reasons (not the least of which is the limited "bandwidth" of the World Congress leadership team), we have opted not to hold the World Congress during 2006.

This is not to say that we are short of ideas, issues, and opportunities. The future of work remains a vibrant and dynamic image floating just beyond our grasp (as it should). We are out in the world creating the future of work on a daily basis right now, and it's all happening just a bit too quickly at the moment - even for us. Right now we're just plain running too fast to slow down and talk about it. But stay tuned: we're going to have a whole lot to report on come Spring 2007.

***Future of Work* Continues to Seek New Members**

Future of Work offers several levels of membership that depend on your status and needs: *Individual and Small Business*, *Corporate*, and *Implementation Partners*. We also offer special discounts to nonprofit, educational, and public sector organizations.

These membership programs are described in more detail on the [Future of Work website](#), or feel free to [contact us](#) directly for more information about fees and benefits.

All *Future of Work* members are now listed on the *Future of Work* website, in the [About Us/Members](#) section. We encourage all our readers to consider joining the community.

Please [visit our website](#) and apply for membership today.

[RETURN TO HEADLINES](#)

3) FEATURE ARTICLE: *SQUARE PEGS AND ROUND HOLES*

By Charlie Grantham and Jim Ware

One size misfits all.

We've been complaining recently about our own sense of being overloaded, if not overwhelmed, with work (of course, as we always say, it sure beats the alternative). More importantly, we've been recalling some conversations from the *2005 World Congress on the Future of Work*. While we don't have literal quotes, a basic and recurring theme was that the way large corporations are operating today is injurious to our health (mental, physical, and spiritual).

What's going on?

Well, we may have figured something out. In process of cleaning up a very messy workspace recently we rediscovered the October 3, 2005, issue of *Business Week* that contained a very provocative cover story called "[The Real Reasons You're Working So Hard . . .](#)"

And that article got us thinking a whole lot more seriously about that "injurious to our health" perspective (unfortunately, thinking seriously about the workplace doesn't happen often enough these days, because, well, we're working too hard).

You know what it's like – catching up on voice mail during the morning and evening commutes; logging on to check email before breakfast and after dinner; responding to Instant Messages from colleagues on other continents and in weird time zones at all hours, and participating in global conference calls at midnight, 4 AM, and just about every other hour of the day and night. And everyone we know complains about being too darned busy to think.

We've all got tools (PC's, PDA's, the Internet, WiFi, cell phones, Treos, Blackberries, iPods, etc, etc) and software (Google, Yahoo, NetMeeting, WebEx, Skype, Groove, Mapquest, Google Earth, spreadsheets, word processors, etc., etc.) that allow us to reach out and touch just about anyone or grab any data we need, anywhere, any time. And we use those tools 24x7 to connect with colleagues, friends, and family no matter where on the planet they – or we – are. Weren't they supposed to *help* us be more productive?

Yet it feels as if we're just spinning our wheels – and fighting bureaucracy.

Here's a couple of disturbing facts from the *Business Week* article:

- More than 31% of college educated males (in the United States) are logging 50 or more hours of work a week, up significantly since 1980 (but most people we know would love to slow down to just 50 hours a week)
- 40% of American adults average less than seven hours of sleep a night on weekdays
- 25% of executives at large companies report that their primary communications tools – email, voice mail, meetings – have become completely unmanageable
- Nearly 40% of those executives also report spending a half-day to a full-day a week on meaningless communication

There's something really strange about the cultural norms in the workplace (at least here in North America) that drive this kind of behavior. If we're so successful, how come we're not "taking" all the increased productivity of the last two decades and "investing" it in more leisure time? After all, the French and Germans take about six weeks of vacation a year; why can't we?

The core message in the *Business Week* article is that the underlying cause of all this wheel-spinning is the gross misfit between current organizational structures and processes, on the one hand, and the way most of us actually work (and need to work), on the other. Read that sentence again, slowly; it's a really important insight.

Here's the point: large organizations – both businesses and public sector agencies – are just about as archaic and obsolete as the dinosaurs we often compare them to. And they get in our way - literally. We are convinced that the organizational, procedural, and process misfits that dominate our economy in 2006 are slowly but surely destroying our productivity, our effectiveness, and even our good will.

Peter Drucker, always ahead of his time, had this to say about the corporation way back in 2001:

"For most of the time since the corporation was invented around 1870, the following five basic points have been assumed to apply:

- The corporation is the "master," the employee is the "servant." . . .
- The great majority of employees work full-time for the corporation. The pay they get for the job is their only income and provides their livelihood.
- The most efficient way to produce anything is to bring together under one management as many as possible of the activities needed to turn out the product.

- Suppliers and especially manufacturers have market power because they have information about a product or a service that the customer does not and cannot have, and does not need if he can trust the brand. This explains the profitability of brands.
- To any one particular technology pertains one and only one industry, and conversely, to any one particular industry pertains one and only one technology. “

(from “[Will the Corporation Survive?](#)”, *The Economist*, November 1, 2001)

As we’ve already said, we all know in our guts that virtually none of that is true anymore.

Unfortunately, it’s a whole lot easier to change individual and small group behaviors than it is to drag formal procedures, processes, and management practices into the 21st century.

As the BW article puts it:

“The problem, in a nutshell-to-go is this: Succeeding in today’s economy requires lightning-fast reflexes and the ability to communicate and collaborate across the globe. Coming up with innovative ideas, products, and services means getting people across different divisions and different companies to work together. “More and more value is created through networks,” says John Helferich, a top executive and former head of research and development at Masterfoods usa, a division of Mars Inc. . . .”

In other words, we need to work horizontally across both internal and external organizational boundaries (to say nothing of physical geography). But our whole concept of how to organize work and staff projects is built around an outdated and very counterproductive view of the organization as a legal entity that you are either fully inside of (as an employee) or outside of (as a contractor, customer, supplier, or simply as a non-employee). And every organization chart we’ve ever seen highlights all the vertical lines of authority while virtually ignoring the horizontal flows of information and work processes that actually make things happen and produce value.

The hierarchical model of organizational structure and functional authority is built on the premise that the world is stable and that the best way to improve productivity is to drive variations out of the process: do it the same way over and over, and over again. Fine-tune it, replicate it, master it through repetition, and don’t let anything change.

That view of the world is after all what the whole Quality movement and it’s successor, Six Sigma, was built on. And for some processes, that is a wholly appropriate way to manage.

The other core (and equally questionable) assumption that dominated the industrial model of organization was that the “higher” you were on the organization chart, the more you knew, and the more you should be consulted before any decisions are made and implemented.

We all know darn well that the world (at least a large and growing part of it) just doesn’t work that any more. But dealing with those realities makes a lot of people very uncomfortable. So (we believe) many managers and even senior executives stubbornly cling to those old, and clearly inaccurate, assumptions that Drucker described, even

when they too “know” in their hearts that those assumptions aren’t valid any more. The trouble is, they just don’t know what else to do.

Lowell Bryan, a McKinsey & Co. director, put it this way in the BW article:

"Professionals are still being managed as if they were in factories, in organizations designed to keep everybody siloed. At less well-run companies, you're struck by how frustrated people are. They work like dogs and are wasting time."

It’s the need for review and approval that slows organizations down, and creates situations where front-line workers are just going ahead and making the decisions they know are required (and correct), in spite of the formal procedures they are expected to follow. But they also know they’re doing the “wrong” thing by circumventing those formal processes and risking censure from above if things don’t turn out the way they are supposed to. Unfortunately, this new reality just makes cynics of us all.

For most of us, that’s not really news. But no one we know has really figured out what to do about it (other than fleeing corporate life as fast as they can). How many times have you complained about working too many hours, spinning your wheels, going “around” the system, being stymied by the bureaucracy, and not knowing what “those guys” in the executive suite expect of you?

Even though WDC is a small business, we’re also struggling and constantly feeling behind the 8-ball (why did it take us almost six months to read the darned article about why we are working so hard?). But at least we’re beginning to understand just how profound this misfit between formal management practices and the way most of us need (and want) to work really is.

And while we don’t know the answers yet, we’re growing more and more confident that at least we understand what the important questions are.

Here’s the most shocking factoid of all to emerge from the Business Week article: in spite of all the organizational “flattening,” business process reengineering, downsizing, and cost-cutting of the last two decades, managers today, in 2006, make up a **bigger** proportion of the workforce than they did fifteen years ago!

We’ve got to ask the question: what in blazes are all those so-called “managers” **doing** all day? With a higher and higher proportion of self-directed knowledge workers producing the innovation and intellectual property that drives our economy, and with more and more of those knowledge workers working remotely, what is there for managers to do (other than slow things down and gum them up)?

Well, the good news in all this is that most of the successful knowledge workers we know simply ignore the hierarchy and formal procedures and go get the job done (the best definition we’ve ever heard of the difference between professionals and blue-collar workers is that blue collar folks “do what they are told” while professionals “do what is needed.” Maybe that’s overly simplistic, but it makes an important point that too many middle managers still don’t get. The awful truth is that most professionals today don’t need a manager to “tell them what to do”).

And now we're seeing a virtual explosion of new hardware and software applications that help those professionals find the people and the information they need to be successful – without going through any formal channels, asking permission, or needing much training. Just think of the collaborative tools we are learning to rely on: wiki's, blogs, collaborative online databases, virtual meeting rooms and distributed editing tools, open-source software, and even open-source management philosophies.

And if you haven't gotten familiar with the open-source movement, you should. It's a powerful alternative way of getting things done, and we see it as far more aligned with the information economy than are the more hierarchical, traditional approaches we've been dumping on here.

As a way to get started, we heartily recommend reading Stephen Weber's excellent book, *The Success of Open-Source*, which we reviewed in these pages almost two years ago, in June 2004 (you can access the review by clicking [here](#)). And for another insightful and more current book see *The Power of Many*, by Christian Crumlish (reviewed in February 2005 – available [here](#)).

The open-source movement is a really important development because it is re-inventing the way knowledge gets created and shared in a meshed network, rather than a hierarchical, command-and-control context.

Randy MacDonald, senior vice president of human resources at IBM, said this recently about the management and organizational revolution that's already underway:

“. . . if you go back in history and think about the fall of the Roman Empire, I think this set of years that we've experienced in the last 10 or 15 may actually be characterized as the fall of the traditional business empire and the rise or the emergence of collaborative and virtual empires around the world.

You know, [it's] kind of a sound bite that maybe not everybody gets yet, but as I look at the industrial powers as we knew . . . know them, or, knew them, it really should be, I don't think they exist as powerfully as they would have thought they would have been 10 years ago.”

Source: see “[IBM and the Future of Work](#),” a podcast; a transcription is also available, at: <http://www.ibm.com/investor/viewpoint/podcast/pdf/27-03-06-1.pdf>.

Maybe the most fundamental question that every CEO needs to ask is, how can I ensure that all those people in “my” organization who are making hundreds of thousands of decisions every day, in far-flung places and often without direct supervision, are making the “right” decisions?

The way industrial corporations dealt with that challenge of control was through strict, tight procedures, policy manuals (“Thou Shalt” and “Thou Shalt Not”), and close-in supervision by front-line supervisors. In today's world, where semi-independent knowledge professionals are making those decisions on their own all day long, we believe the only way to get “control” is to ensure that your employees *understand* what you need, and why; and – more importantly – to *want* what you want.

That's why the notion of employee engagement has become so important. It's no longer a matter of telling employees what to do. The only way to succeed today is to let them know what you need, give them reasons to "buy in," and then get the hell out of their way.

So we think it's way past time for a genuine revolution in management practice and organizational design. We remember that President John F. Kennedy once observed that, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable." Enough said.

Please direct your comments and questions to comments@thefutureofwork.net. We'd love to publish your reactions and suggestions.

[RETURN TO HEADLINES](#)

4) BEST OF THE BLOG

Here's a small sampling of excerpts/lead-ins from our recent weblog posts. Please get in the habit of reading the [Future of Work weblog](#) regularly – bookmark it, or if you have an RSS news reader, subscribe to it. And please contribute as well. We're more than happy to reprint your stories, or to consider featuring you as a Guest Writer. We believe we're creating a unique knowledge base of what's going on out there today, and what's going to be going on tomorrow. If you want to learn about the future of work, [our blog](#) is the place to go (along with this very newsletter, of course). Just click on each headline below to visit the full original blog post.

[A Hidden Benefit of Work at Home](#) (March 1)

The *New York Times* today has an engaging story about how work-at-home programs are enabling disabled individuals to find gainful employment ("[Computer Technology Opens a World of Work to Disabled People](#)"). For people who cannot easily travel to corporate offices, or who are severely handicapped, the Internet and PC technologies have been a true godsend. . .

[The Next Generation Workplace](#) (March 2)

My good friend and former colleague Tony DiRomualdo is making great strides with his "Next Generation Workplace" research. I just received his latest newsletter, which is also posted on his blog ("[What Makes a Best Place to Work?](#)").

Tony begins with a question: What makes a great place to work? . . .

[Changing Residential Patterns](#) (March 8)

As part of our continuing exploration of changing patterns of work and living, we try to track where the population in general is choosing to live - partly because that's where they're going to want to work too.

So I read with interest a story in today's Sunday *New York Times* ("[Empty Nesters Find 2nd Perch in New York](#)") about how more and more "empty nesters" from the 'burbs are

buying or renting "pied a terre's" in New York City (actually, I guess it's supposed to be "pieds a terre," but that sounds really snooty to me). . .

Slivercasting (March 11)

When blogging isn't enough...you too can be a TV star (or a producer, which may be even more fun). One of the newest developments in cyberspace is what the New York Times has called "slivercasting" - an Internet-based streaming video "narrowcast" aimed at a small, niche audience. . .

Still More on Pandemics and Business Continuity (March 16)

The *New York Times* weighs in on the challenges of maintaining business continuity in the face of a flu pandemic with an excellent story in today's edition: "[Is Business Ready for a Flu Pandemic?](#)"

It's worth reading carefully - and thinking about even more carefully.

It's All About the Talent (March 25)

We've been saying for some time that the United States faces a major talent shortage over the next decade (see "[Closing the Talent Gap](#)," from the [January 2005 issue](#) of *Future of Work Agenda* for just one example) - and we're not alone either (for example, firms are beginning to rehire laid-off workers because they can't find anyone else; see "[Oh, never mind: Firms rehire staff](#)" from the March 15, 2006, issue of [CNNMoney.com](#)).

RETURN TO HEADLINES

5) IN OUR HUMBLE OPINION: DRIVING ME CRAZY

Commentary by Charlie Grantham and Jim Ware

A little drip here, a little drip there and pretty soon you have a puddle.

Well we're going to try it again. After the response we got to our February rant on "edumacation" (It's Time to Start Over) we can't resist going for the jugular.

As promised last month we're focusing on energy for this rant. After all, the big Pooh-Bah says we're addicted to oil (that's "earl" in West Texas, you know). So get ready for another wild ride. Just cinch up your lap belt, turn off all electronic devices, and place your seat-back in the upright position. Comfy now? Of course not, because you only have 14" of space between you and the guy with chronic halitosis in front of you.

Many of you are new readers and some of you have extremely short memories – but we won't go there. So let's first reintroduce our little cast of rant column characters. They will be chiming in this month with half-witted observations, outrageous statements, and totally (how else can we say it?) stupid ideas. Sort of sounds like a randomly-selected talk show now, don't it?

First there is our resident trouble-maker based ever so loosely on the radio show character "Earl Pitts." "Wake up 'Uhmerika!'" (If you enjoy banging your head against the wall, then go have a look-see at <http://www.earlpitts.us/content/earlBio.php>.) However, our legal-eagle friends who have miraculously managed to avoid being peppered with bird shot (which is another whole rant on why booze and bullets don't mix, but we're ain't goin' there either), inform us that we need to rely on a different character to avoid being dragged into court. So from now on our resident red-neck will be known as Buford T. Hogslop.

Next up is good ol' Maynard. Maynard just isn't the brightest bulb on the porch, if you get our drift. Maynard represents that 35% of the US population who haven't got a clue about reality. Guess where Maynard likes to shop? And then there's ol' Cooter the blue tick virtual dog. Cooter's job is to sniff out trends, edible road kill, and approaching in-laws.

So here we go. Lights, camera, action. Cooter enters stage left (that's a deliberate stage direction), chomped down on a virtual edition of "The Minnesota Daily" (<http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2006/03/10/67575>). Buford grabs the paper away from Cooter, wipes off the slobber, and reads (yes, he's actually capable of reading, or as he puts it, litrit):

"This insatiable appetite for petroleum has at once inflated the material affluence of the U. S. middle-class and become an Achilles' heel that is leading our nation headlong toward its final demise. As demand for oil exceeds production, soaring energy costs will render the global economy's transportation infrastructure useless and create the conditions for a widespread financial collapse that might well make the Great Depression look like a picnic by comparison."

(we recommend reading that at least twice) Good kookamunga what's going on? Buford allows that maybe this energy thing is getting out of hand. So he sends ol' Cooter back out into Googleland to get a few facts. Now this is a minor miracle 'cause Buford doesn't know squat from facts; he doesn't read newspapers 'cause he has neighbors to tell him what's going on. But what the hey, let's humor the dog. And we find:

- Though accounting for only 5 percent of the world's population, Americans consume *26 percent* of the world's energy. (*American Almanac*)
- In 1997, U.S. residents consumed an average of 12,133 kilowatt-hours of electricity each, almost *nine times* greater than the average for the rest of the world. (*Grist Magazine*)
- Total U.S. residential energy consumption is projected to increase 17 percent from 1995 - 2015. (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*)
- Among industrialized and developing countries, Canada consumes per capita the most energy in the world, the United States ranks second, and Italy consumes the least among industrialized countries. (we love this statistic—take that Hooserheads)
- America uses about 15 times more energy per person than does the typical developing country.
- The United States spends about \$440 *billion* annually for energy. Energy costs U.S. consumers \$200 billion and U.S. manufacturers \$100 billion annually.

(Source: <http://www.solarenergy.org/resources/energyfacts.html>)

Now things are heatin' up (Get it? it's a joke – "heatin' up."). Maynard wanders in, takes a look, and offers up:

"Hey, that's 'bout what Iraqistan costs. Now, figure me this: we spend \$440 billion on energy, we spend 'bout the same amount to corral access to more energy, but we ain't got squat back?"

Maynard might not be too bright (sorry, folks, can't help the energy puns), but he's got it right this time. This way of living ain't sustainable! Don't have to worry about going to hell in a hand basket, because at this rate we won't be able to afford the gas.

But wait: it gets better. The people who are spending the money to get the energy market all sewn up are guzzling the gas faster than anyone. You can't help but get that ol' picture of someone way out on a tree limb sawing off the branch close to the tree trunk. Think about it: the guy's on a limb facing the trunk and sawing the limb between him and the tree. Come on folks, lighten up; Maynard actually did that once.

Last budget year the Pentagon spent \$7.4 Billion of fuel, up from \$4.7 billion the year before. And they are just *now* getting upset. What about Buford, who is spending \$2.77 a gallon for gas now when it was \$1.90 last year? (*USA Today*, March 8, 2006).

We can't help it, but please go back to our April 2005 newsletter and read the column about what happens when gas hits five bucks a gallon ([What Will a World of \\$5 Gas Be Like?](#)). Hey folks, that light at the end of the tunnel is a locomotive lookin' to knock your sorry-butt SUV right off the tracks.

Okay, okay, what's the rant? In *Our Humble Opinion* (and oh so humble it is), the big problem is that we spend way too much energy moving around people with big Spandex covered butts in megaton vehicles from where they live to where they work (one person to a vehicle, by the way; have you ever noticed how few cars are actually in those High Occupancy Vehicle/Car Pool lanes?). The "solution" is as simple as this: **stop doing it**, it's stupid.

In 2001 we (the good ol' US of A) used 113 **billion** gallons of gasoline hauling ourselves around. Given a 3.5% average use increase and a 70% increase in price we're headed for stupidville at an ever-increasing rate of speed (or, as the fox in *Pinocchio* put it, "You're going too fast – and in the wrong direction.")

(See http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/rtecs/nhts_survey/2001/index.html for that data)

Give us a break here.

In *Our Humble Opinion*, we (the two of us) think we (all of us) can reduce this energy suck by at least 30% (that's 34 billion gallons of gas; or at today's prices \$94 billion somolians), without half-trying.

And we could damn near finance another whole preemptive armed incursion with that stash, mate (not that we're suggesting that, or anything; we're afraid someone will listen to us and think that's a good idea. Please, no!)

So what do we do? Cue the drum roll: how about moving towards an "alternative workplace strategy"? You've heard us rant and even rave about that idea before. **Move the work to the people instead of the people to the work.** Let 'em work out of their homes a couple of days a week. Wait a minute, no: **tell** 'em to do it.

That math is so simple even Buford can figure it out: two days a week **not** commuting is 40% fewer miles driven – to say nothing of saving time for doing somethin' useful instead of cruising up and down that old highway building up road rage about all those *other* crazy drivers (and hey, Bunky, road rage generates a whole 'nother kind of energy that should also be conserved).

And quit whining "If I can't see 'em, how do I know they're working?" Give it a rest, Fred! If on-the-spot supervision is still that important, set up workplaces in the neighborhoods that they can walk to, fer cryin' out loud!

Seriously, folks, if Buford and Maynard can get it, why can't you? How about a national crew-sade to rebuild our workplaces and work patterns. How about getting real about saving energy and finding alternative sources (like ethanol, wind, solar, and all those other ways of producing usable energy without depending on black goop buried miles and miles under the sand).

Got a better idea? Well, write in and tell us. We'll keep the light on for ya (couldn't help the parting pun), assuming of course that it's a low-wattage, energy-efficient bulb.

Please direct your comments to comments@thefutureofwork.net. We'd love publish your reactions and suggestions. And thanks for listening.

[RETURN TO HEADLINES](#)

This issue of *Future of Work Agenda* was produced by Jim Ware and Charlie Grantham of the Work Design Collaborative, LLC.

We encourage your comments, suggestions, and submission of materials for possible future publication. Please contact us at:

Charlie Grantham, charlie@thefutureofwork.net, +1 928 771 9138

Jim Ware, jim@thefutureofwork.net, +1 510 558 1434

To subscribe to *Future of Work Agenda*, [click here](#) and register on our web site. **Please pass this newsletter on to other interested individuals and encourage them to subscribe as well.** The newsletter is free, and will remain free as long as possible.

To end your subscription, send a message to newsletter@thefutureofwork.net and write Unsubscribe in the Subject line.

Copyright 2006 by the Work Design Collaborative, LLC. All rights reserved.

For republication rights, contact Jim Ware at jim@thefutureofwork.net.