



FUTURE OF WORK AGENDA

A Free Monthly Newsletter
May 2007
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 May 2007 issue of *Future of Work Agenda* and setting our theme for the month. This month we bring you an important story about “media-savvy” workers and offer some advice for coping with the ever-faster pace of life that the “new media” is forcing us all into.

2. **[ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF WORK](#)**

Fast Company has just recommended our *Future of Work* blog as “one of the best.” CoreClarity, *Future of Work* member Candace Fitzpatrick’s firm, has a new website, and a ton of new business. WDC will making several public appearances/presentations over the next several months – and we’re always seeking new members.

3. **[FEATURE ARTICLE: MEDIA-SAVVY WORKERS: A NEW FRONT IN THE WAR FOR TALENT](#)**

A new front in the War for Talent is opening up. Tens of millions of people adept at using interactive technology and media are set to join, or are already in, the workforce – bringing expectations, skills, and ways of working that will revolutionize the workplace. Those organizations that can inspire the passion and harness the skills of these “media-savvy” workers will have an edge over their competitors. Here’s why.

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 on a regular basis.

5. **[IN OUR HUMBLE OPINION: FOLLOW THE RULE OF TWO](#)**

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

So it’s May already. Around here that means we finally get to enjoy the flowers spawned by all those April showers (actually, here on the West Coast, we’re getting increasingly worried about a drought). And it also means we’re just back from a whirlwind week of speaking, greeting, meeting, and eating at the CoreNet Global Summit in Denver and IFMA’s Industries Forum in Atlanta.

We're also reeling just a bit (in a very nice way) from *Fast Company's* recent [endorsement of our blog](#). Not only are we very pleased and flattered, but our "hit rate" has just about doubled in the last three weeks. And while that's terrific, it does mean we're feeling the pressure to keep producing new blog posts worth reading. Yikes!

Whew, it's really time for a rest – but no such luck for us weary travelers, writers, advisors, researchers, and gurus (we've never forgotten what Mike Hammer told Jim many years ago: "Call yourself a guru, because it's a lot easier to spell than 'charlatan'"). We do try to stay humble.

We've actually got a whole of lot other stuff happening right now too. Fortunately, most of it is really, really exciting. Stay tuned here in future months for more details, but it's becoming increasingly clear that more and more organizations are finally waking up to just how strategic workplace design really is (and by "workplace," we always mean the broader *work environment*, not just the physical facilities).

To be a tad more specific, we've been talking recently to a large global organization that is fully committed to making its work environment a critical component of its workforce attraction, retention, and engagement strategies. Now that's pretty exciting, and it's leading management to take an up-close and personal look at just about every aspect of where their people work, how they interact with each other, what kind of food is available in the company cafeteria, what kind of exercise and "lounge" facilities are available – and what kinds of new ideas and new products are produced in what kinds of workplaces. We're hoping we'll be able to share more of that story with you in the near future.

We're also launching a collaborative research project with our *Future of Work* corporate members, focused on identifying the linkage between workplace design and employee engagement. It's been a long-sought-after but highly elusive connection for a long time. We can't guarantee we'll be able to pull it off, but it's an investigation that all our members are highly interested in.

And as another example, consider what's happening in West Michigan, where as we've mentioned before we're deeply engaged in helping local leaders transform a whole regional economy by acting as if people mattered. That's right, the [West Michigan WIRED project](#) is actually working on making the region an attractive place to live, work, raise kids, and participate in community activities.

That's a whole different ball game than simply recruiting another ball bearing factory or big-box retailer in order to create new jobs. And the reason we're involved is that the WIRED leaders recognized from the get-go that having attractive yet low-cost workplaces throughout the region is an important part of making the area attractive to the "location-neutral" workers, entrepreneurs, and "free agents" who will drive the next-generation economy.

Yes, Virginia, workplace matters. And speaking of Virginia, there's another State that gets it – in a big way. We're currently in communication with several public officials in northern Virginia and the DC metropolitan area who are leading the way towards making "telecommuting" and mobile work the rule rather than the exception. We're working with [NoCommute.org](#) and the Virginia Governor's Office to convene a meeting of thought leaders and active practitioners from all over the country in early June. Our mutual goal is to take Distributed Work to the next level. (If you're

interested, give us a shout – we just might be able to get you seat at the table for what promises to be an important and highly stimulating opportunity to impact the future of work.)

Oh, and then there's this month's newsletter. We think (no, we *know*) you'll find it interesting and stimulating in its own right. And we say that largely because our feature article this month ("[Media-Savvy Workers: A New Front in the War for Talent](#)") comes not from us, but from our good friend and colleague **Tony DiRomualdo**.

Tony recently completed a fascinating research project on behalf of [QuestG](#), a research and consulting firm focused on exploring the impact of the media- and Internet-savvy workforce on business. There's truly a revolution underway, and its being led by, of all people, gamers and other techies who understand and leverage the power of the Internet and interactive media at a level that very few of us older folks can even begin to appreciate. We hope you'll find it as intriguing a piece of research as we have.

And for some point/counterpoint, we offer our monthly rant ("[Follow the Rule of Two](#)") for those of you who (like us) are feeling the pressures of the "need for speed" that so many people seem to have succumbed to. We're incredibly frustrated by how many folks – even those we consider good friends with good intentions – just can't find the time to reply to phone calls, emails, or even instant messages.

There just doesn't seem to be time to get anything done any more. Which we find pretty puzzling. It feels a little like what Yogi Berra once said about Mama Leone's restaurant: "No one goes there anymore – it's too crowded." In this case, it's "No one gets anything done any more – they're all too busy." Well, even we feel that way sometimes, so we've developed a new diagnostic instrument (The "Acme Business Worthiness Scale") to help everyone sort out the important from the merely urgent. Hope it helps.

And as always, of course, we're also pleased to bring you our regular [Announcements](#) and the [Best of the Blog](#) section summarizing our most recent posts on the [Future of Work blog](#). 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.

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2) ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF WORK

***Fast Company* Endorses *Future of Work* Blog**

We're very pleased that **Michael Prospero** of [Fast Company](#), who writes "Cube Talk" for the magazine, has identified our blog as one of the best blogs (other than *Dilbert*) for finding news and views about workplace culture.

The [May issue](#) of *Fast Company*, now available on newsstands and online, included this (on page 37 of the print version – the online version is also available at [this link](#)).

THE FUTURE OF WORK WEBLOG

WHO WRITES IT: *Jim Ware, co-founder of Work Design Collaborative.*

THE SKINNY: *Wow-someone who actually refers to his "Web log." How quaint. But Ware's views are forward-looking. His main beef: Business still doesn't use technology productively. "How come," he asks, "distributed work is still the next big thing?"*

Quaint indeed! we're just a couple of guys trying to sort out where the world of work is going - and enjoying every minute of learning and teaching about new technologies, new workforce interests and values, new workplace designs, and how they combine and intertwine to change the very nature of work, let alone where and how we get it done.

By the way, our views on why distributed work is still the next big thing are available free in our white paper titled, curiously enough, "[How Come Distributed Work is Still the Next Big Thing?](#)"

News from Candace Fitzpatrick, President and Founder of CoreClarity

(Editor's Note: CoreClarity is an individual and team coaching firm that focuses on helping people discover and leverage their personal strengths. We at Future of Work have benefited enormously from the insights that Candace has helped us develop about ourselves).

Greetings from CoreClarity! I am pleased to announce our redesigned web site is up and running - you can find us at www.CoreClarity.net.

I am also pleased to announce that we have set the facilitator training schedule for the rest of 2007. For more information and to register for any of the events, go to: <http://www.coreclarity.net/pages/TrainingEvents.html>

We continue to work on creating new content, improving our products and production site, developing the company infrastructure, delivering programs for clients, and training new facilitators and coaches.

We have also been busy with our work with the Del Norte School District in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Two weeks ago we were there to meet the kids and celebrate the third successive reporting period where the majority of children in the 6th grade made the A/B honor roll - with the remainder having high or solid C averages.

The class continues to fulfill their own Declaration of Interdependence which outlines what they must do to ensure that no child is ever left behind in the 6th grade at Del Norte Middle School. We've literally been five minutes ahead of the kids since they were assessed for their talents in August. The program has grown organically and we've learned so much from them in a short period of time.

The 7th grade class was assessed last month and the 5th grade class will go through the assessment in May in preparation for the entire middle school being talent-based for the 2007-2008 school year. The CoreClarity Education Division will be announcing more updates on the Rising Star and our Adopt-a-District programs soon.

WDC and *Future of Work* Activities

Jim and Charlie have just returned from the CoreNet Global Summit in Denver, where we organized a panel discussion at focused on the work we've been doing with the WIRED West Michigan project. The panel, which also included **Len Pilon** of Herman Miller was chaired by our good friend **Mark Gorman** of Nortel Networks, focused on the challenges of transforming a regional economy and the skills of its workforce. We humbly believe our ideas were very well-received by an audience composed about equally of corporate facilities and location strategists, on the one hand; and economic and community developers, on the other.

We were also featured speakers at the [IFMA Industries Forum 2007](#) that was held in Atlanta, Georgia, May 2-4. Our topic there was "Corporate Agility," which of course is the title of our new book, co-authored with **Cory Williamson** and due to be published in August by the American Management Association.

Jim will join **Jill Duncan** of Herman Miller at a workshop being sponsored by Herman Miller at [NeoCon](#), the commercial furniture extravaganza held every year at the Chicago Merchandise Mart. Jim and Jill will be presenting on Tuesday, June 12.

We are also very pleased to announce that Jim and Charlie will be featured speakers at the [IFMA World Workplace Conference](#) in New Orleans, October 24-26.

***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.

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3) FEATURE ARTICLE: MEDIA-SAVVY WORKERS: A NEW FRONT IN THE WAR FOR TALENT

by *Tony DiRomualdo*

A new front in the War for Talent is opening up. Tens of millions of people adept at using interactive technology and media are set to join, or are already in, the workforce – bringing expectations, skills, and ways of working that will revolutionize the workplace. Those organizations that can inspire the passion and harness the skills of these "media-savvy" workers will have an edge over their competitors. Here's why.

Until recently, workers of all levels could gain access to the most powerful computers, the fastest network connections, and the most sophisticated applications of information technology only at work.

No more.

Now, a large and growing number of people across the age, gender, and socio-economic spectrum own or have access to all manner of gadgets, gizmos, and Internet services that far exceeds, in variety and sophistication, much of the technology they use at work. Increasingly, it is these experiences using technology outside of work – e.g., playing online games, engaging in social networking, collaborating on projects – that are shaping the standards of what workers expect to use on the job.

The good news is that the knowledge and skills that workers are gaining outside of work can be put to good use on the job. The bad news is that few organizations yet recognize, or are doing anything to engage and leverage, the skills of media-savvy workers.

Research recently conducted by a team of researchers and thought leaders brought together by [QuestG](#) suggests that the emergence of the media-savvy workforce may be a golden opportunity to transform organizational culture and performance that many companies seem to be missing so far.

Ready or Not, Here They Are

QuestG has just published the findings of a year-long research study called the “Media-Savvy Workforce and Learning Project.” It links together two often-discussed but rarely associated trends - the changing demographics of the workforce and the growing proliferation and use of interactive media such as social networking services like [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#) and on-line role playing platforms like [World of Warcraft](#) and [Second Life](#).

The QuestG study collected comprehensive data on the workplace expectations, learning habits, and personal technology usage of close to 3000 workers. Analysis of this data strongly suggests that the exploding use of interactive media and dramatic differences in the attitudes and technology skills of these workers are combining to create the conditions for the transformation of business and work as we know it.

“Media-savvy” individuals were identified from this global respondent base by measuring how frequently they used over thirty different personal technologies and Internet applications. A majority demonstrated at least moderate media-savvy skills (regularly using 11-15 different technologies and applications), while almost a third were classified as “high media-savvy” (regularly using 16 or more different technologies and applications).

Sending Up the Stereotypes

Our research identified some significant and rather counter-intuitive findings about media-savvy workers:

It's not only the young that are media-savvy.

Nearly half of respondents under 30 years old were high media-savvy – no surprise there. But here's the shocker: one third of respondents 30-45 years old and one fifth of those over 45 placed in the same high category. This is a very important finding because it challenges the conventional wisdom that only the young are adept at using the new technologies. And it means that a significant number of media-savvy workers are already in the workplace.

Media-savvy workers are more learning-oriented.

Media-savvy workers spend up to 80% more time than their low media-savvy co-workers on different types of learning activities in and outside of work; and up to three times as many find electronically-enabled ways of learning like Internet searches, computer simulations, and on-line courses valuable. They are also more likely to want their learning to be fun and entertaining; to choose what, when, and where they learn; and to favor learning through experimentation.

Interactive games are setting a higher standard for corporate e-learning experiences. The study showed strong parallels between what people say the characteristics of their best learning experiences at work are, and what they value most from playing online role playing games. These factors included interaction with others to share experiences, interactive content, engaging challenges, immediate feedback, learning from peers, learning by doing, and immersion into an environment via role playing.

Corporate learning executives have a huge opportunity to harness the power of interactive media and the unconventional learning styles of media-savvy. This means making e-learning offerings as engaging and interactive as electronic games. Standard e-learning approaches are a total turnoff for this group.

Media-savvy workers are the least happy with the IT they use to do their jobs.

Depending on age, they are up to three times more likely to believe their job performance is inhibited due to a lack of suitable technology, with the youngest the most dissatisfied with the IT they use at work. Many also believe their technology at home is superior, and they often choose to work there to circumvent hardware, software, and security restrictions.

This finding suggests that IT departments need to rethink their IT design, provisioning, and access policies. Does this mean letting workers use and do whatever they want? Of course not – but many IT executives and staff need to stop viewing media-savvy users as nuisances, and even enemies, and start proactively forging close working relationships with them. The media-savvy represent a core group of “lead users” that can be a valuable resource in identifying innovative and productive ways of using new interactive technology for the benefit of the entire business.

The media-savvy are also some of the organization's most performance- and learning-oriented workers. Understanding how technology can be used to enhance their productivity stands to reap large bottom-line benefits and can pave the way for more effective uses of IT to increase the productivity of the whole organization. Improving knowledge worker performance is now critical in the current business cycle, where the productivity of high-value intangible assets – especially people – is a key business performance measure and success factor.

Senior Leaders Take Note

The double whammy of increasingly powerful and pervasive interactive media and changing workforce skills and attitudes challenges corporate leaders to adopt new business and management models that harness the power of the new technology and the advanced capabilities of workers. The responsibility for dealing with these changes goes beyond just IT and learning organizations.

Victory in this new theater of the talent war requires a total organizational commitment. HR leaders will need to direct the redesign of the entire work experience to better match the workplace preferences, learning styles, and performance needs of media-savvy workers. And business unit heads and CEOs will need to champion the transformation of their business and organizational models to attract, leverage and retain this high performing, motivated and skilled segment of the workforce.

As usual, your comments and reactions are more than welcome. And as always, please send your thoughts to us at comments@thefutureofwork.net.

Tony DiRomualdo is a researcher, author, consultant and founder of [Next Generation Workplace](#). He is also the Managing Director of QuestG's Global Media-Savvy Learning Program where he leads the firm's global investigation of the Media-Savvy in the workplace.

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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.

[New Perspectives on Collaboration](#) (April 1)

*Future of Work member **Russ Eckel's** very useful new blog, [Generations@Work](#), on Saturday included some wonderful insights about collaboration ("[Attention, Collaborators](#)"). He's not talking about collaboration *tools*, but about the very nature of collaboration itself. . . .*

[Pay Attention to the New Field of "Service Science"](#) (April 2)

The *New York Times* last week (March 28 to be exact) carried an interesting story about the newly emerging field of "Service Science" ("[New Effort to Tap Technology to Aid the Service Economy](#)").

As the article points out, technology has had a huge (and generally positive) impact on manufacturing, raising productivity, eliminating difficult and unpleasant human activities, and helping to create and produce wholly new products. But there hasn't yet been a comparable technology benefit in the service industries (and jobs). . . .

[Shorten That Commute!](#) (April 3)

My good wife **Cindy**, always on the lookout for news and ideas related to the future of work, caught an interesting note in last week's *Time Magazine*, which features a "[Global Warming Survival Guide](#)" section.

The Guide, which is well worth reading all the way through, includes one suggestion (out of fifty-one) focused on how to reduce your own and your employees' commuting time and cost ("[13. Let Employees Work Close to Home](#)"). . . .

[The Welches Don't Know Jack](#) (April 11)

Note: This blog post broke all of our records for "hits" in one day – more than five times our previous high. I may have spoken a bit strongly here, but I just couldn't resist.

Many of you no doubt regularly read "The Welch Way" column in *Business Week*, written by **Jack Welch** and his newish bride **Suzy**. Well, this week's column, titled "[The Importance of Being There](#)," makes me wonder whether it's worth paying attention to the Welches any more.

Their comments about "telecommuting" (such a 20th-century way of describing it) have just about convinced me that they are living in the past and are generally irrelevant to those of us who are trying to invent the future. . . .

[Some More Thoughts on Leading Remotely](#) (April 25)

Last week I posted a rather scathing commentary ("[The Welches Don't Know Jack](#)") on the recent *Business Week* article by **Jack and Suzy Welch** regarding whether leaders have to "be there" (in the office) to be effective.

The Welches argued that a leader has to "be there," meaning "in the office," to be effective. Their assumption was clearly that meaningful leadership requires face-to-face interaction. Now, I don't dispute the notion that forming solid relationships and influencing subordinates does indeed require some physical presence. But I argued then, and still believe, that the value of presence is overblown. . . .

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6) IN OUR HUMBLE OPINION: FOLLOW THE RULE OF TWO

Commentary by Charlie Grantham and Jim Ware

“I’d love to, but I just don’t have the time . . .”

Somebody wasn’t looking and hit the fast forward button, or so it seems. We’re back to the Dear Abby advice mode this month. We’ve penned something a bit humorous (or so we think), but with an – as always – ironic yet very serious point embedded. See if you can find the message this time.

What led us here is that it seems almost impossible to get just about anyone to respond to anything these days. So, first we’re gonna offer up a way to separate the idiots (we cleaned this thing up to get it past the censors, so we’ll use that term instead of a more accurate anatomical reference) from the few (*very few*) people you need to keep pursuing. And then, in our as-always Humble Opinion mode, we’ll offer you some road-tested rules of thumb (there’s a mixed metaphor for you) to get you away from the information fire hose syndrome (watch out - there’s another one).

You know how it is. Someone asks you to do something legitimate and you set off with the best intentions to make it happen. Well, guess what? That means you usually have to “collaborate” with someone else – someone who often doesn’t share the same sense of importance about the issue that you do. Now, if you both work for the same person, maybe it won’t be a problem. But, on the other hand. . .

So just where is this going? Stay tuned.

We’re (seriously) fed up to our gizzards with inconsiderate, impolite, and downright rude people who don’t answer reasonable questions (“I’ll have my people call your people”), don’t return phone calls (“My blivit-based multi-line re-router crashed”), ignore repeated requests for help (“I’m dying here: *please* throw me a bone!”), or just go completely radio silent (“Oh, I guess I forgot about your existence”).

Okay, so now that we’re really in rant mode, you all know who we’re talking about. Of course *our* questions are *always* legitimate, or so we’d like to think. It’s actually worth remembering once in a while that every request *you* make of someone else creates a new task and time commitment for them.

So come on, we’ll grant you that being busy is one thing. We’re all there all the time these days. But, hey, a simple, “I’m up to my tokus in alligators” would be really cool – and decent (especially if you ever think you might just ask us for help some day; it does work both ways).

So how is it that you sort out the people who are wasting *your* time because ***they don’t have anything better to do*** from those who are seriously overcommitted and can’t be much help even if they wanted to?

Here’s our free, time-tested, fully certified methodology:

The Acme Business Worthiness Scale

(Remove tongue from cheek and switch to deep, serious business voice here)

“Due to our recent increase in business opportunities we have now found it necessary to pre-screen potential clients and partners. Our research has shown conclusively that one Professor George Acme (don’t write in, for God’s sake; we don’t know who think this up. Maybe Buford?) has developed a highly reliable tool for assessing the potential for a successful business relationship. Please take a few minutes and complete this brief questionnaire and answer as honestly as possible. Please bring a copy of this to our first meeting –if there is one.

Thank you.”

I want to talk to you because:

- (5)___ I hope to establish a mutually beneficial business relationship
- (4)___ I'm curious about what you do
- (3)___ I sense you have business for me
- (2)___ I'm out to make your day miserable because mine is
- (1)___ I'd like to steal your ideas

People often tell me:

- (5)___ I'm a caring, thoughtful person
- (4)___ I'm usually a lot of fun to be around
- (3)___ Sometimes I can be difficult when I don't get my way
- (2)___ I'm a deceitful, hateful person
- (1)___ Nothing, because people don't talk to me

I usually return phone calls:

- (5)___ As soon as practical
- (4)___ When I can make the time
- (3)___ When I get the time
- (2)___ When the mood strikes me
- (1)___ Only if I think I can get something from you

I like situations where people are:

- (5)___ Mutually supportive
- (4)___ Negotiation is the norm of behavior
- (3)___ Things are fuzzy and confused
- (2)___ Potential for conflict is high
- (1)___ I can manipulate others

This is the best idea I've had:

- (5) ___ in five years
- (4) ___ since I focused on this issue
- (3) ___ since my mother/uncle/friend told me about it
- (2) ___ since Tuesday
- (1) ___ since my last visit to the little room down the hall

I get a kick out of:

- (5) ___ Times when people learn from me
- (4) ___ I can dominant the conversation
- (3) ___ Nothing in particular
- (2) ___ Watching people twist slowly in the breeze
- (1) ___ Putting the rope around their necks myself

I pay my bills:

- (5) ___ Within the contract period
- (4) ___ When I get the cash
- (3) ___ Sometime after the second invoice
- (2) ___ Only pay half
- (1) ___ Call my lawyer

Bonus question worth 5 extra points

- (5) ___ I have money
- (4) ___ I know someone with money
- (3) ___ I can find money
- (0) ___ Huh?
- (-4) ___ Would you lend me a buck for cabfare?

Scoring: Total up the number of points next to each question and enter the total here:

Your score can be interpreted as follows:

- 41-45 We can talk
- 29-40 We can talk, but you buy lunch
- 20-28 Please mail in, we'll call you
- 14-19 Definite idiot (or favorite orifice)
- 4-13 Beyond belief, should run for office

You think we're kidding? No way, Jose. Try it. The next five calls/emails you get, ring 'em back and casually slip these questions into the conversation. Then write the score down on your calendar and three months from now go back and see how reliable an indicator it is.

So what is this all about? Aside from the personality disorders, the need to have their medications adjusted, and just general crankiness, we think (In Our Humble Opinion, of course)

that a whole of people have just gotten so damn busy that the old norms of civility and courtesy have been blown away.

Why don't people behave in a more collaborative (or even just friendly) fashion? Well, maybe because they don't have the time, nor (in the Acme case above) the basic human inclination. You know, some people just get up in the morning and have a double portion of stupid for breakfast. Don't they realize that work is a collaborative endeavor (almost all the time, anyway)? That No One is an Island (to get literary for just a moment)?

Our Humble Opinion (one more time) is this: If we all sorted out (and ignored) the idiots who make such demands on our precious time, maybe, just maybe, we would have enough time and energy freed up to attend to the important things – and the people we care about doing business with.

First, clean up your calendar, and then get to work making yourself more effective. How do you do that? First, you've got to realize you can't do everything (no, not even *you*). And if something starts taking longer than some reasonable time, let loose of it.

Here's our guidelines:

- ◆ You've got 2 minutes to take action on immediate requests for your attention. If you can't handle it that quickly, then it needs to go to someone, or someplace else!
- ◆ You've got 2 hours (or less) to hold a face-to-face meeting. If it takes longer than that, you're not planning!
- ◆ You've got 2 days to respond to an electronic request. If you can't get to it by then, you're wasting your time and everyone else's.
- ◆ You've got 2 weeks to assemble a work team and commit to a plan. If you can't find the right people and the right plan by then, the project will fail – and it must not have been very important anyway.
- ◆ You've got 2 months to identify a business opportunity and test it with customers. If you can't do it by then, your competition can – and will.
- ◆ And you've got 2 years to do . . . nothing at all. If your static plans reach out years into the future, the world will have passed you by long before you get them done.

So now you know. When people don't get back to you, they are probably running on their own "Rule of Two" clock. You need your own Rule of Two. Remember that guy you've been yakking with about that neat business venture, only you've been talking to him for three years? Well, howdy, guess what? You are wasting **your** time, not his.

These aren't necessarily hard and fast rules. But try them and adjust them to your own rhythm. The first and last rules (two minutes and two years), however, will definitely put a hitch in your giddy-up if you don't adhere to them.

Okay, now we feel better. Have to go make some follow-up calls (getting out our Acme Business Worthiness Scale . . .). If you don't hear from us, at least now you'll know why.

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

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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:

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