What The Best Do Better

By Anna Wells, Editor, IMPO

When it comes to e-mail, I'm a sucker for a good subject line. One of the more recent to hit my inbox attracted my attention with this: Why Good Old-Fashioned Hard Work is Back in Vogue!

The e-mail is pitching editorial coverage for Jon Gordon and his recently released book "Training Camp: What the Best Do Better Than Everyone Else." If this doesn't sound enough like an action film title, here's how the trailer might begin: "If you think you're already working hard at your job," says Gordon, "think again."

It's this blanket, unwarranted criticism that makes me continue reading. If I were one of those desk jockeys glued to ESPN.com, I'd just laugh it off—but I've had too many 7 a.m. conference calls and Sundays in airports to find validity in this statement. So just how hard should I be working, Mr. Gordon?

Here are some of the book's suggestions:

- Burn the midnight oil: "Come into the office an hour early a few days a week to get ahead … if you like to make it home for dinner with your family each evening, spend an hour or two catching up on work at night once the kids are in bed."
- Be willing to bear the load: "Continually compare yourself with those around you. Are they working harder than you? If the answer is yes, then you have some reevaluating to do."
- Be a penny-pincher and a pitcher-inner: "Roll up your sleeves and start helping out with the little things around the office, like taking out the trash or cleaning up on Friday afternoons," suggests Gordon. "Volunteer to stay late to stuff envelopes or get the filing caught up so that there isn't a need to add a part-time intern to the payroll."

The press release's closing line makes me swallow my gum: "Make sure that when others are sleeping, you are working."

I think that I understand Mr. Gordon's recession strategy here, so let's get down to business: Tell your son or daughter that you'll be missing the remaining soccer games in this season because you'll be busy with a shop vac, getting to those coffee grounds in the corners of your office break room kitchen floor.

Mr. Gordon's suggestions come from a good place. I get it—the economy sucks, and

hanging onto your job right now can be like struggling to gain a foothold on very tenuous ground. Still, I find his analysis of today's business conditions theatrical and downright dangerous.

To suggest that back-biting competition over who can sleep the least and work the most is the new norm is yet another over-dramatization. Aren't there other ways to remain a valuable team member without giving up your life?

I guarantee it. In fact, the last thing we need right now is a nation of workers on the proverbial hamster wheel, trying to stave off stress- and fatigue-related medical issues while still putting in a solid 14 hours per day. Please, *please* continue to sleep and take vacation days, and spend time with your families. If you have some more constructive ideas for how to better contribute to your companies without giving up your health and happiness, e-mail me so we can share them with other readers: anna.wells@advantagemedia.com [1].

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