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H.R.H. The Power Dress

Some of the most authoritative women in global business and politics are choosing structured dresses over suits. Why that's less regressive than it sounds

By KATHARINE K. ZARRELLA

POWER DRESSING at the workplace has mercifully evolved since 1988's "Working Girl," in which Sigourney Weaver weathered Wall Street in heinous, shoulder-padded blazers. Back then, female office-wear mimicked masculine codes in an effort to level the professional playing field, but today women enjoy more flexibility. And lately, female trailblazers—both real and fictional—have been forgoing suits in favor of form-fitting, no-nonsense dresses. Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg wears them to Davos; Laura Dern stalks around in them in HBO's hit "Big Little Lies" as tech exec Renata Klein; and politicians on both sides of the aisle, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, have adopted them as their Capitol Hill uniform. The power dress—as seen on this fall's run-

ways from brands as varied as Acne Studios, Brandon Maxwell and Prada—shares little DNA with the Little House on the Prairie-ish, fanciful frocks you've been spotting by the beach all summer. Rather, it's a streamlined shift that projects self-assuredness. "The typical power dress is something that has coverage and is relatively fitted...something that is really smart-looking [in which] you come across as professional," said Elizabeth von der Goltz, the London-based global buying director for e-tailer Net-a-Porter. For those in the know, the term immediately conjures Roland Mouret's Galaxy dress, a prototypical power piece whose popularity has held strong since its fall 2005 debut. With a figure-hugging silhouette and pronounced cap sleeve, the Galaxy is lined with sculpted "power-mesh" fabric which, Mr. Mouret says, "supports you from the inside and makes you feel really at Please turn to page D2

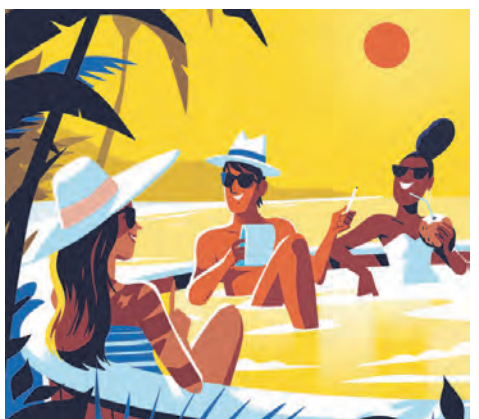
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THE WORK ISSUE | STYLE & FASHION



21ST CENTURY WOMEN

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MCCABE; EVERETT COLLECTION (LOUIS-DREYFUS); ALAMY (MARGOLIS); DAVID GIESBRECHT/NETFLIX (WRIGHT); GETTY IMAGES (1)

Power dresses in the wild, clockwise from top left: Julianna Margulies as Alicia Florrick on 'The Good Wife'; Oprah Winfrey; Anna Wintour; Julia Louis-Dreyfus as Selina Meyer on 'Veep'; Angela Bassett; Laura Dern; Robin Wright as Claire Underwood on 'House of Cards'; Gemma Chan; Halle Berry; Nancy Pelosi; Meghan Markle; Katie Couric; Sheryl Sandberg; Victoria Beckham.

The Strong, Stylish Type

Continued from page D1

ease." The Galaxy is crafted from wool felt—a traditionally masculine material—to add weight to its hourglass shape.

"A power dress has a sense of poise to it. It can go from day to night, makes you feel confident, and allows you to take ownership of your femininity," said Zac Posen. "It needs to have a fabric that holds your body and makes it feel secure," continued the New York-based designer, who contends that his boardroom-ready sheaths are "leading the numbers" for both his eponymous line and the Brooks Brothers collection he designs. It's that buttressing sense of security, perhaps, that makes women feel strong in these garments—there's something to be said for wearing a dress that envelops you sleekly and completely. Unlike a suit or other multipiece outfit, there's no pulling or adjusting.

A recent report shows women make up more than 50% of the college-educated labor force. It feels stale and predictable for women, as the educated workplace majority, to conform to a male-crafted image of authority. "We're seeing a change in what the perception of an executive looks like, what a leader looks like. And these days it can be a woman in a dress," said New York-based Arielle Patrick, 30, a senior executive in financial public relations. "I think the reason power dresses have come into the fore is because we are moving away from women feeling that they need to behave or look like men, in a traditional sense, to be taken seriously." She admits the meekly conformist suits her mother bought her when she got her first job have collected dust. "I feel more powerful [in a dress]. In a pantsuit, I've always felt that I was mimicking an image of what an executive looks like. Like I was pre-

tending. Whereas when I wear a dress, I feel as if I'm integrating my personal style with who I am as a professional."

Women are now more confident in the workplace, and that allows for fearless self-expression, argues real estate mogul and shrewd "Shark Tank" investor Barbara Corcoran. "With confidence comes freedom," said the 70-year-old businesswoman, who wears dresses "nine times out of 10." Ms. Corcoran suggests that women in senior positions in particular are apt to "let it rip" in designer dresses "because they've been liberated." (Nancy Pelosi exemplifies this fierce forthrightness.) And when Ms. Corcoran faces the cameras, dresses give her that extra boost. "For the last season of 'Shark Tank,' I had two pantsuits that were fabu-

female autonomy has played a role in the look's ascent. "I have a confidence in where I am professionally. If men would take me more seriously in a pantsuit, I don't give a s—."

Zac Posen calls that zealously indifferent attitude "self-ownership" and sees it as key to the professional woman's romance with the power dress. In the past, his dresses were more evening-oriented. But today, "they're about making the deal, passing the bill and becoming president. There's something incredibly powerful about being able to wear a dress in the first place." So: no more dark-suited wallflowers slouching around a room's perimeter, hoping to blend in. Mr. Posen's clients gravitate toward dresses with considered cuts, strong lines and a bit of stretch.

tones, and by designers like Victoria Beckham and Narciso Rodriguez. "I really wanted to move away from that traditional skirt or pantsuit. So Julia and I discussed making the dress her new uniform," said Kathleen Felix-Hager, the show's costume designer since season three. "Women who are in the spotlight don't have to be men. I like the idea of the dress because it's feminine, but you can still command authority. Those two things can coexist in the same person...and I do notice that a lot of politicians are now wearing more dresses," she said. Whether the 2020 female presidential candidates will choose to take cues from a ruthless fictional character remains to be seen: In the debates so far, most have still defaulted to blazers, with the notable exception of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (who dropped out of the race this week).

The sleek power dress is a blank canvas, lending itself to whatever message its wearer wants to project. Nipping one with a belt, as Ms. Louis-Dreyfus did on "Veep," defines it primly. Heels, often seen on Ms. Corcoran, add a traditional formality that flats can't. Mrs. Pelosi often garnishes her dress with statement earrings, conveying originality. And some women favor bare, barre-class-sculpted arms (despite Ms. Corcoran's admonitions to the contrary). Kathryn Bigelow, director of "The Hurt Locker," often wears strong, sleeveless columns for events.

The power dress is gaining ground, although some feel its moniker should be left behind with perms and blue eye shadow. "I really understand now it's not power dressing; it's equal dressing," said Mr. Mouret. "It's women showing that they can be equal to men but they don't need to wear suits." The public relations executive Ms. Patrick is particularly averse to the phrase. "I think it's similar to my least favorite term, which is 'girl boss.' There's this implication that the dress is lacking power, so you need to add the word 'power' to it. It's just a dress, right? What's powerful is the woman in it."



The power dress is gaining ground, although some feel its moniker should be left behind with perms and blue eyeshadow.

lous...but I didn't perform as well. And you know why? Because I didn't feel as powerful. I was conscious of it, and I didn't repeat the looks. I went right back to dresses."

"I feel stronger and less encumbered in a dress," agreed 50-year-old Juliette Kayemm, the Cambridge, Mass.-based CEO of Grip Mobility, former assistant secretary at the Department of Homeland Security and CNN analyst. She made the switch from pantsuits five years ago when she realized dresses folded more easily into suitcases for travel, and because they are just one piece, requiring less outfit planning. "The truth is I like one-zip-on, one-zip-off—it's just that easy," she laughed while flipping through her wardrobe, which currently encompasses about 18 power frocks at varying price points by brands ranging from Zara to Zac Posen. She, too, thinks legitimate

Ms. Von der Goltz noted dresses with sleeves, or sleeveless dresses purchased with tailored jackets, are particularly popular on Net-a-Porter.com—which she attributed to chilly office air conditioning. Ms. Corcoran has another take on why sleeves sell: "Sleeveless just doesn't look dressy enough next to a man in a suit. To me, that looks like a junior executive trying to look sexy...When it comes to business, sexy is absolutely the wrong message no matter what your level. Everybody focuses on 'God, she's hot,' versus, 'God, she's smart...'It shows a lack of judgment." There are limits, apparently, to this move toward self-governing femininity.

On HBO's sitcom "Veep," which recently came to a close, Julia Louis-Dreyfus played egomaniacal VP-turned-POTUS Selina Meyer, who favors dresses—often in red or jewel

POWER PLAYS / EIGHT FORMIDABLE CONTENDERS FROM THE FALL RUNWAYS AND RECENT COLLECTIONS



THE LADYLIKE ONE (SANS THE BROOCH)
Dress, \$2,145, Dolce & Gabbana, 212-897-9653



THE SOMEWHAT DARING LEATHER ONE
Dress, \$3,980, Bottega Veneta, 212-371-5511



THE SLEEK REESE WITHERSPOON-ISH ONE
Brandon Maxwell Dress, \$1,795, nordstrom.com



THE FASHION-FORWARD ONE
Dress, \$4,180, Prada, 212-334-8888

THE RADICAL RED ONE
Dress, \$2,490, akris.com



THE STRICT, TAILORED ONE... WITH A TWIST
Dress, \$1,975, Alexander McQueen, 212-645-1797



THE ONE WITH A PINCH OF PIZZAZZ
Narciso Rodriguez Dress, \$1,995, Bergdorf Goodman, 212-753-7300



THE 10 DOWNING STREET-APPROPRIATE ONE
Dress, \$690, goatfashion.com



BRYAN GARDNER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS (AKRIS, ALEXANDER MCQUEEN, NARCISO RODRIGUEZ)

THE WORK ISSUE | STYLE & FASHION

A Question of Time

What does your watch communicate about your workplace status? A fair bit—even in the age of Apple Watch and casual everything



POWER FOR EVIL In 'American Psycho,' Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) wore a Rolex Datejust 16013.

PHOTO: BRYAN GARDNER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (WATCHES)

BY JACOB GALLAGHER

AN OLD WORKPLACE adage says you shouldn't wear a watch that's fancier than your boss's. For Tony Traina, 27, an associate lawyer in Chicago, however, it would have been difficult to find a more casual timepiece than the \$399 Apple Watches his firm's higher-ups tend to favor. He didn't bother. As a watch-lover, he ignored protocol, showing up at work in a \$1,500 mechanical watch by German brand Nomos Glashütte. But it barely went noticed.

In the past, one's shoes, one's suits and, yes, one's watch spoke volumes about one's place at work. Even though some believe status watches still send signals, today's office has drastically evolved: CEOs wear sneakers and tell time with their smartphones; many people work remotely; wristwatches are less commonly remarked upon.

"You're more likely to get comments on a new iPhone" than a new watch, said Ryan Cecil Smith, 33, a designer at an animation studio in Los Angeles. In January, he purchased a Rolex and braced for snipes from his Apple Watch- and Casio-wearing co-workers, but so far no one has even acknowledged the pricey timepiece.

Often, wrist real estate that once held introductory-level luxury timepieces like Tag Heuers is occupied by smartwatches—which themselves quietly telegraph modernity, youth, humility, tech-smarts. Most of Matthew Marcus's millennial co-workers at NCC Media, a TV-advertising sales company in Bethesda, Md., wear Apple Watches. "They kind of treat it as an extension of their phone," said Mr. Marcus, 30, who is an outlier with his no-texting, no-emailing Grand Seiko watch.

Fans of status watches, however, still subscribe to the view that their timepieces can skew impressions. Kevin Weinman, 34, a CFO for a lux-

ury retail company in New York City, believes his 18-karat gold Rolex GMT Master II "creates a better perception of experience and authority," that matches his executive title.

When Mr. Weinman was undergoing multiple interviews for a posi-

In more traditional workplaces, the idea that a high-end watch reflects one's place in the hierarchy persists.

tion at a startup, he swapped that flashier watch for quieter options including a vintage Rolex Datejust. "I was very conscious of not wearing extremely expensive watches during the interview process...I didn't want to seem as if I was priced out of a competitive compensation package."

Griffin Caprio, 39, a founder of a podcast production company in Chicago, similarly changes his watch depending on whom he is meeting with. If he's facing a potential investor, he skips the eye-catching green Rolex. Instead he'll wear a watch from "under the radar" brands like local Chicago brand Oak and Oscar or a Glashütte Original which is actually more expensive than his Rolex but "is not as known to as many people outside of the watch industry." Mr. Traina, the lawyer in Chicago, speculated that, at his firm, people don't wear "flashy" watches in front of clients "for fear of them wondering where all of the money they're spending is going."

But there is more-objective evidence that status watches can cause waves. Mr. Caprio once worked as an engineer at software and technology companies, where he discovered that curious co-workers were googling his watches and learning that they went for five figures. "You al-

most kind of want to hide a watch a little bit," said Mr. Caprio, who felt his colleagues looked down on watch collecting as a "stupid" way to spend money.

The idea that a watch reflects one's place in the hierarchy definitely persists in more traditional workplaces. Myles Fennon, 40, a commercial real-estate broker in Manhattan, noted there are certain watches, including a ceramic Rolex Daytona and an Audemars Piguet Royal Oak, that his co-workers buy when they're thinking, "I just made a lot of money, I'm going to go light some of it on fire." He prefers more-discreet watches "a couple layers deeper" than the common Rolex, like a modern Tudor Blackbay stainless-steel sports watch. He can recall a recent deal with three other brokers who all wore various Daytonas (which can retail for \$10,000 and up): "On the elevator ride down I was like, 'Sorry I didn't get the memo that it was Daytona day.'"

WRIST MANAGEMENT / FIVE WATCHES THAT SPEAK MORE LOUDLY THAN YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE



For the sporty striver who may or may not have kayaked to work
Apple Watch Series 4, \$399, apple.com



For the discreet cubicle drone with tastes beyond
Timex Grand Seiko SBGE205, \$5,400, Seiko, 212-355-3718



For the low-key lawyer
NOMOS Glashütte Tangente Neomatik 41 Update Ruthenium, \$4,100, London Jewelers, 212-381-9455



For ABC Guy (Always Be Closing)
Rolex Cosmograph Daytona, \$12,400, Tourneau Time Machine, 212-758-7300



For the richer, more original ABC Guy
Patek Philippe Nautilus Reference 5711, \$79,000, Michael Ashton, 212-517-6655

Sirs, Cover Those Mankles

Cropped men's pants are now ubiquitous, but that doesn't mean that highwaters belong at the office.

Ray A. Smith begs men to conceal their ankles

WHEN I WORE an ankle-baring suit to the office, a colleague joked, "It looks like you're wearing your little brother's suit."

I tried to laugh it off but to be honest, I was already self-conscious about strolling the cubicles in cropped pants in such a conservative midtown-Manhattan workplace. Although I didn't get around to trying the trend until 2013, it can be traced back to New York designer Thom Browne's signature look—shrunken suit jacket and highwater pants—which he introduced in 2001. The prescient style was derided then as too Pee-wee Herman-ish, but mainstream retailers eventually adopted it and, by the time I bought my J.Crew iteration, at least slightly cropped pants were reassuringly commonplace. They still are, but many professionals doubt their appropriateness, as evidenced by my co-worker's jab. Contrasted with the traditional suit's staid full-panted look, the sight of your colleague with highly visible ankles is jarring.

Look, we get it, men once wore their dress pants way too long. The more fluid pants of 1980s and '90s suits often pooled around men's shoes, and Mr. Browne was attempting to redress that sin. Julie Rath, a New York City image consultant, feels we've overcompensated, though: "While we have moved on from the puddling-pant look, some

guys in offices are taking it too far, baring mankle [read: male ankle] for everyone's viewing displeasure."

For clients who want a more current look, Ms. Rath recommends slightly higher pant lengths (subtle break—just over the shoe), but ensures that no one ever reveals "any mankle whatsoever" at the office.

Go too cropped, and you risk raising eyebrows. "I think it's more of an out-of-office look," said 33-year-old Vikas Mohindra, a senior financial adviser at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management in New York. Though his workplace has become more casual, for many men that just means ditching the tie while still encasing yourself in a suit. Abbreviated trousers "start to push the boundaries of becoming too fashion-forward," he said. "You lose a little bit of the business professionalism."

The look is also a no-no in Jonathan Thomaston's office in Nashville, Tenn. "We're a business-casual office, but still more conservative than not," said the 33-year-old trust officer. He thinks the style might be more acceptable in creative fields than in finance. "Similarly, what works in Los Angeles may not work in Nashville," he said.

Even if you're a Los Angeles-based, multi-hyphenate creative, you might want to consider limiting cropped pants to weekends. Offices and mankles don't mix.



DAVE URBAN

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP

Taking Sides on Off-Sites

For some, a getaway with colleagues is the rare chance to deepen professional ties and revel in a free trip. For others, its obligatory 'fun' and round-the-clock awkwardness. We sink deep into the debate



THE FIRST TIME I heard the term was when a co-worker shrieked 'Off-sites are awesome!' on hearing that our staff would be undertaking a two-day company retreat at Mohonk Mountain House, a resort in New York's Hudson Valley. The goals: brainstorming and bonding. I cringed at the thought of being cooped up with rah-rah types brown-nosing the boss, of being obliged to make "whoop whoop" sounds at every turn. I'm happy to report my stoked associate was right: Our off-site was awesome, a way to disrupt the office hierarchy and connect on a personal level, despite the awkward bonding exercises prescribed by a peppy facilitator. (One assignment was to draw a picture reflecting our personality type. Mine looked like an alien stick figure with a bad bob.)

Nowadays, off-sites have evolved beyond the cursory meeting-in-the-day, carousing-at-night model into team-building life experiences in destinations chosen to impress. "People want to stay at the hot hotels, especially the younger crowd who love getting asked to a weekend to Cabo," said Stacy Small, CEO of Los Angeles-based Elite Travel International, who has planned corporate programs at Maui's Ritz-Carlton Kapalua and Montage Los Cabos in Mexico.

Bragging rights have a new angle too. "It's less about getting a splashy entertainer or pouring on the Champagne and more about planning activities to do together," said Troy Haas, CEO of Brownell, a travel agency in Birmingham, Ala., which has designed corporate

incentive programs for 35 years. Today's getaways focus on creating trust, he said. "Getting people off site with their [bosses] builds strong relationships if you do things together—especially out in nature." One group experienced falconry in Ireland, said Mr. Haas. "When there's a bump in business, that relationship building helps individuals get through the ups and downs together."

At my off-site in Mohonk, no birds of prey swooped in to teach us trust, but we achieved a lively camaraderie while trooping en masse around the lake. My bragging rights from that trip? I met my best friend and still wear the olive fleece I got in the welcome bag.

With loftier budgets, team building might involve skidding up a glacier together in Banff, Alberta or participating in an "Amazing Race"-style competition with vintage cars through Napa Valley, Calif. But it is not just about adrenaline and spoiling people, said Jack Ezon, founder of New York City-based Embark Beyond, a firm that arranges bespoke travel for financial services groups. "We introduce cultural experiences, especially to younger staff, taking them to vineyards, doing art tours, going on a safari—activities their clients normally do," said Mr. Ezon.

Sometimes bonding is a mere subway ride away. Thera Clark, sommelier at the Beatrice Inn, in Manhattan, suggested a staff trip to Coney Island to chef/owner Angie Mar. Ms. Mar brought beers and funnel cake; the team rode the Wonder Wheel together. What's not to love? —Donna Bulseco

IN SMALL COMPANIES, there are random duties that accrete to people whether they like it or not: Marsha keeps up with tech, Owen plans baby showers. At my firm, I'm the Off-site Guy. I know of no secret locations ("I swear Worcester is better than Vegas!"). I bring no experience as a camp counselor ("and now my favorite trust fall, the Tibetan Cloud!"). There is nothing in my job duties that would suggest that orchestrating off-sites should be added to them. I was just unlucky to have done it 15 years ago and no one will end my misery. And while not every event at every off-site I've planned has stunk, certain inextorable facts make them hard to love.

Activities that are enjoyable at, say, a bachelor party—driving fast cars, parasailing, those weird antigravity tunnels—are best done with your real friends. Some folks are tempted by a related line of logic: People like to drink a lot, people like to dance, your colleagues are people, so at the off-site, your colleagues should be drinking a lot, dancing, or both. This is a stupid idea—but not an uncommon one. "There have been plenty of events where I've had to address [drunken] behavior," said Shay Hurst, an Atlanta-based senior vice president of human resources who has facilitated dozens of off-site meetings, "People are having a good time, they don't have the family responsibilities and they partake more than they should." Chris Hunsicker, an executive coach in Salt Lake City, Utah, dis-

penses one crucial bit of wisdom that we'd all be wise to remember: "There's always the group of people who go back to the bar after dinner... and that's where things go wrong. It's like what your mom said: Nothing good happens after midnight."

Another reason to hate off-sites? People complain. A lot. Participants mope most frequently, said Ms. Hurst, about glitchy tech and lousy food. But, in my experience, some people find fault no matter what. At every company retreat, I have an out-of-body experience in which I make fun of the loser who planned it, only to realize it's me. I've had to accept the fact early and forever: Cool Guys never change. You could arrange for them to tandem hang glide with George Clooney and Charlize Theron, and the Cool Guys would still insist that work events are lame-o.

There are about four activities that actually work. After many off-sites, I've found that the ones people hate the least are those that would most appeal to 12-year-olds: dodgeball, go-karts, Ping-Pong, cornhole. Everyone can participate. Everyone can mock everyone, either for being bad ("You're holding the paddle upside down, Greg") or being good ("Does Jose have a Ping-Pong coach?"). These aren't Bucket List experiences, so no staffers wish they were doing them with their college roommates. And you might even have so much fun that you'll forget, briefly, that you enjoy your colleagues most back at the office, when they are actually productive adults. —Gary Sernovitz

WHY I LOVE THEM

WHY I HATE THEM

WORKAROUNDS / FIVE RESORTS THAT BEAT YOUR DREARY CONFERENCE ROOM—RANGING FROM FAIRLY AFFORDABLE TO TRULY BUDGET-BUSTING

**Borgo Egnazia, Puglia, Italy**

Situated in the seaside city of Savelletri di Fasano, the luxury hotel's limestone villas, spa and Michelin-starred restaurants nicely deliver on atmosphere and amenities. But it's the activities on-site and nearby that make it impressive, said Embark Beyond's Jack Ezon, who took a private equity group of 180 there two summers ago. There was a vintage-car road rally in the village square, day trips to vineyards and an archaeologist-led tour of Bronze Age tombs. Borgo's chefs also did a cooking contest with teams that were orchestrated "to mix it up, so staff and leadership could make connections across the normal work hierarchies," said Mr. Ezon. *From about \$300 a night, borgoegnazia.com*

**Adare Manor, Limerick, Ireland**

Your corporate clan receives the aristocratic "Horse and Hands" welcome at the gates of this neo-Gothic Manor House, with skilled riders and well-behaved canines beckoning (and barking) them in. A gracious formality defines the property. It sits on the scenic Wild Atlantic Way, with 830 acres of manicured parkland that includes a championship golf course, site of the Ryder Cup in 2026. One glance at the chandeliered meeting rooms, kitted out to host small teams or groups of up to 440, show the boss was serious about boardroom bonding. Together time is equally impressive: fly fishing, archery competitions or whiskey tastings. *From about \$360 a night, adaremanor.com*

**Montage Los Cabos, Mexico**

"Cabo has put a lot of money into upgrading infrastructures, so the better highways, airport and convention center make it a place that works for high-end incentive-type trips," said Elite Travel's Stacy Small. Small helped organize a recent trip that brought some 40 top producers (and significant others) to this resort on Santa Maria Bay. While poolside cabanas and mezzal tastings are as big of a draw as the plentiful meeting and event space, the field trips tend to be crowd-pleasers too. Team-building, says Ms. Small, works particularly well over the farm-table-fare at Flora Farms, in the foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna Mountains. *From about \$625 a night, montagehotels.com*

**Blackberry Mountain, Walland, Tennessee**

The new sibling of Tennessee's re-owned resort Blackberry Farm spans 5,200 acres in the Great Smoky Mountains and boasts "lavish cabins and cottages" (not an oxymoron here). But luxury takes the form of wellness pampering: yoga at sunrise with epic views of the mountains; hikes on the Roaring Branch trail to a waterfall, canoeing or shooting clay pigeons. "There's an emphasis on outdoor experiences, from rock climbing and mountain biking to fly-fishing and foraging," said Anthony Giglio, a wine expert who recently conducted a wine tasting "with a competitive edge" at the resort. *From \$1,045 per night, blackberrymountain.com*

**Farm at Cape Kidnappers, North Island, New Zealand**

Set on 6,000 acres of pasture in relatively remote Hawke's Bay—a four-hour drive from Wellington, the closest international airport—the Farm at Cape Kidnappers has a name that suggests somewhere Captain Jack Sparrow might convene an off-site for his mates. But this luxury lodge, with its 22 suites and four-bedroom cottage, holds treasures more suitable for head honchos (like hedge-fund manager, philanthropist and owner Julian Robertson) on a retreat: a par-71 golf course with ocean views, sourced-on-the-spot seasonal cuisine, and treks in a Mad-Max-like Can-Am across rugged terrain. *From \$1,350 a night, robertsonlodges.com* —D. B.

THE WORK ISSUE | ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

Cabin Fever

U.S. airlines are starting to reclaim some of their lost luster—but only certain business-class fliers benefit

By BARBARA PETERSON

FROM THE OUTSIDE, the Airbus A321 parked at LAX's Terminal 4 one day last spring looked no different from any of the thousands of narrow-body planes that trudge along on U.S. airlines' milk-runs around the country. But this was American Airlines Flight 2201, bound for New York's John F. Kennedy, and inside the plane's slender form, it had all the trappings of an international flight: enclosed suites in first class, a business class with sleeper seats, Champagne and fresh-brewed espresso on demand.

These unexpected perks have been increasingly showing up in the front of the plane on some domestic flights, with even a low-cost airline

The new cabins conjure a long-ago time. 'Less mass and more class.'

like JetBlue getting into the act. It conjures a long-ago time when airlines offered transcontinental passengers niceties like sleeper berths, piano bars and genuinely restaurant-style meals. "They're going for less mass and more class," said Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst at Atmosphere Research, noting that many of these flights are via single-aisle jets.

But here's the rub: Only certain planes and a handful of routes offer the souped-up cabins, mainly flying out of major international hubs like New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta and San Francisco. That's partly because U.S. airlines have

been prodded by their foreign-flag competition to up their game on domestic flights that might connect with overseas jaunts. "It's to give the business traveler a more consistent experience," said Mr. Harteveltdt, pointing out that it can be something of a shock to go from a true business class to a ho-hum domestic equivalent. Here, a few of the planes and routes that adhere to the trend—the cream of the domestic crop:

THE AIRCRAFT American Airlines Airbus A321

The Cabins Flagship First and Business Class

Routes New York to Los Angeles and San Francisco, Miami to L.A. over Christmas holiday weeks

Points of Distinction The entire plane only has 102 seats versus 180-plus on a normal A321 layout, with a genuine First Class where you can stretch out in one of 10 sleeper pods. There's an espresso machine to help jolt you awake, post-nap. The Business Class cabin accommodates 20 lie-flat beds, and 36 economy "extra" seats with extra legroom and complimentary cocktails. And premium passengers can feast on curated chow from Hawaiian chef Sam Choy.

THE AIRCRAFT Delta Boeing 757/767, Airbus A330

The Cabin Delta One

Routes New York, Boston and Washington to the West Coast, Atlanta to Honolulu

Points of Distinction A hybrid of first class and business, Delta One cabins can be found on some single-aisle 757s and several wide-body models on flights from key business markets on the East Coast to the West Coast. They have many of the same perks you'd find on a long-



SMALL WONDER
A handful of new premium-class cabins hark back to the more inviting days of travel.

THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

haul flight across the ocean, with cocoon-like seating, designer sheets and Tumi amenity kits, plus it still has widescreen seat-back entertainment for those who prefer not to fiddle with their devices.

THE AIRCRAFT JetBlue Airbus A321

The Cabin Mint

Routes Transcontinental routes and select Caribbean routes

Points of Distinction The introduction of the Mint cabin in 2014 gave business travelers a reason to defect from the major airlines to this lower-cost alternative. It comes with 16 6'8" lie-flat seats, including sev-

eral rows with enclosed "Mint Suites." Trendiness abounds, with eats from hot spot Saxon & Parole in Manhattan's East Village, wines from Napa and fresh espresso via Brooklyn's Roasting Company. It's offered on cross-country routes—including one of the newest destinations, Seattle. JetBlue doesn't have airport lounges, but Mint customers get expedited airport security and checked-bag handling.

THE AIRCRAFT United Boeing 757/777

The Cabin Business Class

Routes Newark to Los Angeles

and San Francisco, Boston to San Francisco

Points of Distinction United, like Delta, has a mix of narrow- and wide-body jets on its marquee domestic routes. If you're sitting up-front on a 757-200 from Newark or Boston to L.A. or San Francisco you'll be on its latest iteration of what used to be called "p.s." service, with a capacious business class sporting 28 lie-flat seats. The 6 feet of sleeping space comes with Saks Fifth Avenue bedding and Cowshed toiletries, the same amenities you'd find on the airline's longest international flights.

POP THE QUESTION

Ever Had a Business Trip From Hell?

We asked three typically unflappable road warriors to describe a work trip that went absurdly awry



Richard Holden

Vice president, product management at Google, overseeing travel tools

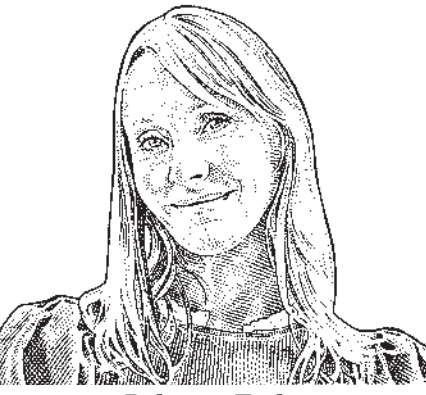
On a flight from San Francisco to Montana, the pilot announced the landing gear was stuck and we had to circle back for an emergency landing. Flight attendants began flipping through instruction manuals, striking fear in all of us. My first reaction was to move to the exit row, knowing if we had to get out fast, I wanted to control the door. I sat next to an off-duty flight attendant who kept saying "I don't want to die." Meanwhile, I'm going, "Everything is going to be fine," trying to convince myself. It was like that scene from "Airplane!"—"Get ahold of yourself!" As one wheel goes down, the plane shudders. But then it stopped; we're told to exit and leave everything behind. This was pre-cloud: My life was on my laptop, so sure enough, I went down the chute with my two arms embracing it.



Martine Assouline

Co-founder of Assouline publishing house

Before I went to Cuba, a friend said "Go to El Pescador for dinner, you won't regret it!" No one seemed to know its whereabouts, until a concierge found us a driver who proclaimed, "I always bring VIPs there!" The drive was long and harrowing, and we started to get a bit worried, then very worried. The car stopped in the middle of nowhere in a wild stony parking area; there was not a person in sight. The driver pointed at [a building] and what seemed to be a door. We felt so confused and uncomfortable, especially having our associates with us. Still, I knocked. A woman greeted us and led us to an empty room with one table. "I will bring you dishes one after another and you will only say stop when you are done," she said. The fish was the best we've ever had.



Rebecca Taylor

Founder and former creative director of her namesake fashion brand

In my 25 years of traveling, perhaps my funniest disaster happened on a trip to a textile fair in Paris. As a fashion designer, I've eschewed the limelight and love how travel provides anonymity...the way a business trip without my family or work associates lets me forget about myself and soak up my surroundings. So I was in Bon Marché, gathering inspiration and shopping, and a woman came up and said, "Excuse me, are you Rebecca Taylor?" And I said, "No, I'm not," but she persisted. "Are you sure?" "Yes, yes I'm sure," I countered, huffily. Then she reminded me she interviewed me the year before. I still remember the look on the woman's face and how I got in so deep denying who I was. I felt sheepish the whole trip. —Edited from interviews by Donna Bulseco



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THE WORK ISSUE | ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

Poolside Office? It's a Few Taps Away

These digital tools help roving desk jockeys find covetable workspaces, from meeting rooms to hotel cabanas, in scores of cities

By Sara Clemence

BUSINESS TRAVEL has many, many downsides: barbaric jet lag, cramped seats, cacophonous hotel rooms, delays when it comes to flights, trains, rental cars. But one aspect of working on the road has gotten an upgrade in recent years: Thanks to clever new apps and websites, you can now efficiently find a place to park with your laptop. Whether you're looking for a half-day hotel room to bridge the gap between checkout and takeoff, a private seat to record your podcast or a poolside space with high-speed Wi-Fi, these apps can pump up your productivity, pleasurably.

GET A DESK FOR THE DAY

Miss your open-plan office? Several apps have popped up to fill empty spaces in co-working spots. Consider downloading more than one, since they tend to have different strengths and cover different locations. The app Croissant might be the most affordable. Its basic plan, at just \$39 a month, secures you 10 hours a month at a rented desk, in dozens of cities, from Los Angeles to Bucharest. LiquidSpace offers a choice of open-plan desks, private offices and meeting rooms in hundreds of U.S. cities, as large as New York and as small as Homewood, Ala. Prices vary; in Boston, for instance, a day pass starts around \$20. ShareDesk offers unusual geographic scope, claiming to have 4,500 locations in 440 cities across the globe. getcroissant.com, liquidspace.com, sharadesk.net



DEEP THOUGHTS Daycation lists hotels like COMO Metropolitan Miami Beach where day pass holders can email dictatorial memos poolside.

BOOK A BED IN A PANIC

HotelTonight isn't the only platform that lets you book an urgent, last-minute hotel, but its prices often beat those of other booking apps and sites. Though you can book as much as a 100 days in advance, it's especially handy when you have a sudden change of plans or a late-night flight and your hotel can't offer you a later checkout time. Just watch out for the taxes and fees that get added to the total; they can be steep. hoteltonight.com

BROWSE THE MEET MARKET

Finding an affordable meeting space away from home can be challenging. Currently operating in a half-dozen major U.S. cities, London, Toronto and Montreal, Breather lets you easily book a meeting pod, conference room or seminar space by the hour. The workspaces are customizable, and you can add on amenities such as a projector, flipboard or webcam. *From \$30 an hour, \$150 a day, breather.com*

REPOWER BY THE HOUR

Competitors DayUse and HotelsByDay let hotels generate revenue with empty rooms, while giving travelers a place to sleep off a redeye, take a pre-meeting shower or practice a presentation in private. HotelsByDay covers 520 cities, mostly in the U.S.; DayUse is more international, serving 23 different countries. Check both to give you the widest choice; their inventories don't necessarily overlap. *From \$39 for six hours, dayuse.com and hotelsbyday.com*



A BETTER BUSINESS CENTER TSH Collab Amsterdam West, a co-working space and hotel in the Dutch capital, where you can rent a hot desk or conference room via the Croissant app.

PLUG INTO CAFE SOCIETY

You can get the upsides of camping out in a cafe—like local flavor and access to a good pour-over—without having to worry about sluggish Wi-Fi or a dearth of outlets. WHA by Work Hard Anywhere pinpoints laptop-friendly public spots, including coffee shops and libraries, around the world. Crowd-sourced ratings detail the availability of parking, internet, power and seating. *Free, available for iPhone, workhardanywhere.com*

POOL YOUR RESOURCES

There are worse things than answering email from a poolside lounge chair or cabana. Daycation lets you buy day passes to resorts in several U.S. and Caribbean destinations. In Miami Beach, the luxury options include the pools at the COMO Metropolitan and the Fontainebleau hotels. Cabanas are available at some locations, for an additional charge. Pro tip: Use Daycation to upgrade your trip when you've been booked into budget digs. *From \$15 a day, daycationapp.com*

In Pursuit of the Expertly Packed Suit

The head butler at the Raffles Singapore on how to proficiently stuff business attire into a wheeled bag

WHEN PACKING precious garments, tissue paper is your secret weapon. "You're always trying to minimize creases," said Grace Kiong, head butler at Singapore's storied 132-year-old Raffles Hotel, which reopened this month after a two-year renovation. It's where the Singapore Sling was first slung, and where butlers have been unpacking and packing guests' luggage since the days of corsets and morning coats. The Raffles staff includes some 20 butlers, who, be-

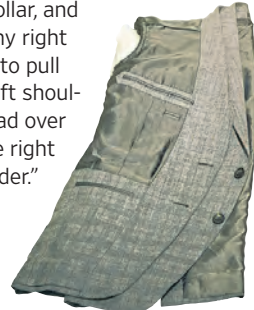
yond folding guests' unmentionables, provide in-room check-in, run errands (when you anxiously require *two* backup phone chargers) and memorize guest preferences for everything from vegan snacks to pillow firmness. Ms. Kiong, 34, began her training at Raffles 15 years ago, and is deadly serious about negotiating a suit into a confined space without wrinkles. The keys, she says, are planning, patience and strategic padding. —*Debra Kamin*

Follow These Six Steps to Crease-Free Business Travel

1 Place the pants in the bottom of the bag first, before any other clothes. Position the waistband toward the wheels. Drape the legs out over the suitcase's other end. The edge of the suitcase should hit where the knees of the pants are. Do not fold the pants.



4 Hold the jacket up by the collar, turn one shoulder inside-out and tuck the other one into it, so the suit is folded in half, lengthwise. "I keep my left hand on top of the collar, and use my right hand to pull the left shoulder pad over to the right shoulder."



2 Pack your clothing on top of the pants. "I don't fold until all the other clothes are there," said Ms. Kiong. The legs are now folded up, pouch-like, over the pile.



5 Crush several pieces of tissue paper. Stuff them inside the sleeves and shoulders. "For a gentleman's jacket, you use more tissues than for a petite jacket," Ms. Kiong said.



3 Roll a lint roller over the jacket's front and back. Ms. Kiong then ensures there is nothing left in the pockets that could create furrows or folds. "Sometimes I do find money," she said. "We place it in an envelope for safekeeping." She once found \$2,000 in cash in a pocket.



6 With a carry-on bag, the jacket needs one more fold, horizontally at the waist, before it's placed inside. (With full-size bags, no extra fold is needed.) Use more tissue paper to avoid creases across the back. Whatever the bag's size, the jacket always sits on top, where it can't be crushed by shoes or toiletries.



Suitcase, \$765, rimowa.com; Suit, \$3,495, Ermenegildo Zegna, 212-421-4488.



CARLA FRIENTES

Rut-Busting Getaways

'Holidays' in Havana, Marrakesh or Copenhagen designed to teach you to work smarter

THE DESTINATIONS ARE photogenic and the lodgings are indulgent, but don't call the "Bring it Back" experiences vacations. Designed by luxury travel outfitter Black Tomato with professional and personal growth in mind, the seven trips each come with a distinct purpose. In Copenhagen, you'll spend time with executives and journalists who advocate for the country's famously healthy work-life balance, sharing Danish strategies you can apply to your own too-work-y existence at home. "We have always encouraged our clients to travel with intention," said company co-founder Tom Marchant. "We wanted to take it a step farther and explore how it's possible to truly return transformed." Those who want to "shape and grow" their business can pursue insider tips in the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik. Creatively blocked? Head to Morocco where you'll meet the director of an innovative architecture firm and take guided trips to Marrakesh's souks and design district. Or book the trip to Cuba to visit with artists and art institutions, with the express purpose of igniting your own creative drive. blacktomato.com/us/bring-it-back —*Matthew Kronsberg*

EATING & DRINKING



Snack Smarter

The 3 p.m. slump is real. Soar right over it with some leading-edge noshing

BY ELEANORE PARK

THE HUMAN BODY is a clock, reliably marking time in physical pangs. Take the particular sluggishness and waning of attention that occur each day around 3 p.m., midway between lunch and dinner: That's our internal alarm screaming for snacks.

But why settle for pedestrian pretzels or ascetic granola bars scrounged from the vending machine next to the conference room? With some foresight, superior homemade snacks will leave you feeling far better.

You don't have to get too elaborate; it's a primal urge we're responding to here. Show-ering rosemary and spices over almonds, hazelnuts and pecans transforms the usual nut mix into a zippy, protein-packed handful of mental clarity. A little additional chopping and a dollop of herbaceous green goddess dip replace that sad baggie of baby carrots with delightful desk-side crudité. You'll find options at right for every day of the week. The recipes come together quickly the night before or even the weekend prior. Then, just wait for the craving to strike.

1

Crunch Time Seeded Date-Nut Bars

Total Time: 3½ hours (including cooling time)
Makes: 8 bars

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt ½ cup coconut oil and let cool. In a small bowl, cover 5 ounces dates (about 7 large dates) with boiling water. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit until soft, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, lightly grease an 8-by-8-inch square pan with more coconut oil. Line pan with parchment paper, leaving generous overhang on two sides. // In a large bowl, combine ¾ cup pumpkin seeds, ¾ cup sunflower seeds, 1 cup mixed sesame seeds, ¼ cup poppy seeds, ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon cinnamon. Drain dates and remove pits. In a food processor, combine pitted dates, cooled coconut oil, ¾ cup nut butter, 1 ta-

blespoon ground flax seeds and 3 tablespoons honey. Pulse until smooth and well combined. Transfer date mixture to large bowl with seeds. Use a rubber spatula to mix ingredients together. Transfer mixture to prepared pan and smooth top with spatula. Bake until nuts are toasted, about 10 minutes. Cool completely on a wire rack, about 1 hour. Cover and chill at least 2 hours. Cut into 8 bars. Bars can be made 5 days ahead and kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

2

Frisk Factor Spiced Nuts

Total time: 10 minutes
Makes: 3 cups

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. On a baking sheet, combine ¾ cup pecans, ¾ cup almonds, ¾ cup walnuts, roughly broken, ¾ cup hazelnuts and 2 sprigs rosemary. Toast until golden, about 7 min-

utes. Transfer nuts to a large bowl while still warm. Add 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, ½ teaspoon togarashi, ¼ teaspoon ground coriander, ½ teaspoon ground cumin, ½ teaspoon ground fennel, ½ teaspoon cayenne, ½ teaspoon red chile flakes and ½ teaspoon flaky salt, crushed between fingers. Toss until well-combined. Season with more salt to taste. Transfer to an airtight container. Nuts can be made up to 4 days ahead and kept at room temperature.

3

Umami Bomb Popcorn

Total time: 5 minutes
Makes: 13 cups

In a large pot over high heat, melt 3 tablespoons coconut oil. Once melted, heat for 1 minute. Add ½ cup popcorn kernels and cover. Cook popcorn, shak-

ing pot frequently, until popping noise has ceased, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Add 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, ¾ teaspoon kosher salt, 1½ tablespoons sumac and 1½ tablespoons nutritional yeast. Toss to combine.

4

Deskside Crudités With Green Goddess Yogurt Dip

Total time: 5 minutes
Makes: ¾ cup

In a blender, combine ¾ cup Greek yogurt, 3 tablespoons chopped chives, ½ cup roughly chopped mint, ½ cup roughly chopped basil, 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice and ½ tablespoon fish sauce (optional). Blend at high speed. Add water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and process, scraping down sides as necessary, until consistency is very smooth. Season to taste with salt.

Serve with cut vegetables such as carrots, radishes and cucumbers.

5

3 p.m. Party Mix

Total time: 1 hour
Makes: 7 cups

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk together 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar, 2 tablespoons hot sauce, 1 teaspoon kosher salt and 1½ teaspoons onion powder. Add 1 cup Annie's Cheddar Bunnies, 1 cup wasabi peas, 1 cup sesame sticks, 2 cups mini Triscuits or torn Triscuits, 1 cup cashews and 1 cup pretzels. Use a rubber spatula to combine until ingredients are coated evenly. Transfer to a baking sheet and bake, turning halfway through, until dry and toasted, 1 hour. Party mix can be made up to 5 days ahead and kept in an airtight container at room temperature.

CANDY CONCIERGE

Five-Star Chocolate Bars

Our panel of pastry chefs applies meticulous attention, precise technique and top-shelf ingredients to making desserts. But like anyone, from time to time they require a quick pick-me-up during the workday—the kind you can grab at any CVS and tear into on the spot. Who better to turn to for a recommendation when your blood sugar plummets and a candy-bar break is called for?

Milky Way Midnight

Nick Montgomery of Konbi, Los Angeles



'The dark chocolate and different nougat are definitely an upgrade from the regular Milky Way. Bitterness from the dark chocolate helps to balance out all the sweetness. (Though a Butterfinger ties for favorite because of the texture.)'



Oh Henry!

Akira Akuto of Konbi, Los Angeles



'My favorite candy bar is an Oh Henry! The combination of crunchy peanuts, caramel, fudge and chocolate is tough to beat for me. It has to be at room temperature, though—absolutely not good frozen!'



Twix

Belinda Leon of B. Patisserie, San Francisco



'I love the chewy caramel and shortbread cookie in Twix. I like to eat all of the chocolate off, then eat the caramel and cookie together. It's a childhood thing. I prefer to eat all candy bars deconstructed. I do the same with Kit Kats and Snickers.'



Skor

Kristen Murray of Maurice, Portland, Ore.



'My great-aunt used to treat me to a See's Candies chocolate-caramel lollipop; Skor is like an elegant version. I'm a sucker for the buttery flavor and brittle texture. And it's the perfect size. I've never been a fan of huge bars.'



Take 5

Kelly Fields of Willa Jean, New Orleans



'A Take 5 candy bar is layered with pretzels, peanut butter, caramel, peanuts and chocolate, so it's that perfect blend of salty and sweet and has a really fun texture to eat.'

—Edited from interviews by E.P.



THE WORK ISSUE | EATING & DRINKING



JANICE CHANG

ON WINE / LETTIE TEAGUE



How to Keep It Professional When the Wine Starts Flowing

I'VE READ LOTS of rules regarding proper workplace etiquette but have found surprisingly little guidance relating directly to drinking wine in a business setting (apart from "Don't drink too much"). While wine at a working lunch or corporate event might be a minefield for the inexperienced or the overindulgent, it can also be a great social tool and even a potential bridge between colleagues. With that in mind, I adapted some common rules of business etiquette to include corresponding wine advice and asked a few businesswomen and men to share their thoughts on workplace wine etiquette.

'Build relationships.'

Good business etiquette is the art of building good relationships, whether with a colleague, boss or client. Wine can help foster a connection—especially, it seems, when the wine is Cabernet Sauvignon. Gino Perrina, chief investment officer of Laird Norton Wealth Management in Seattle, Wash., recalled a business associate who introduced him to Quilceda Creek Cabernet Sauvignon while celebrating a deal. Mr. Perrina

loved the wine, and now every time he drinks it he remembers both the associate and deal. Bill Furtkevic, vice president of marketing for Party City, forged a bond with his then-boss, former executive chairman Gerald Rittenberg, thanks to Cakebread Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley. Mr. Furtkevic now collects the wine as well.

Wine at a working lunch or corporate event can be a minefield.

'Be prompt.'

Showing up on time for a meeting or interview is obviously smart; less obvious, perhaps, is the need for speed when ordering a glass or a bottle of wine at a business meeting or meal. Yet there are few things more irksome to fellow diners or colleagues than someone who dawdles over a decision between Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc, or worse, asks the waiter to pour a taste of each one.

Decisiveness when choosing a bottle for a group of business contacts will likely endear you to them. They probably just want wine in their glasses so they can concentrate on the real business at hand.

Before an important dinner, I always look at the wine list online or call or email the sommelier to discuss a few choices. Jay Hack, senior partner at the New York law firm Gallet Dreyer & Berkey told me that he does this too, though he added a cautionary note: "You rarely know if the sommelier is good unless you have been to the restaurant before." Because Mr. Hack is a serious oenophile and wine collector, he is often asked to recommend wines for the business dinners of other colleagues or clients. "If I can't look at the wine list beforehand," he said, "I will give them a list of wines that are usually fairly priced—Côtes du Rhône, Gigondas, white wines from Greece, anything from Ridge Vineyards or an off-brand Barolo that has at least 10 years of age."

'Don't overshare.'

Revealing too much about your personal life can be considered un-

professional if not downright unseemly in a business context. When it comes to wine, this generally means bragging—how many bottles you have in your cellar, how much you paid for a particular wine. I've been on the receiving end of this sort of boasting, which seems especially common among lawyers I've met. My friend Richard Feldman, a New Jersey-based litigator who is, thankfully, not given to this sort of bragging himself, speculated about why others might do it. "Lawyers are schooled to rate everything," he said. "It's in their professional DNA." Richard actually does like to boast in one respect: about how little he spent on a wine. (He's particularly partial to cheap Barolo.)

'Don't be a complainer.'

Nobody likes a workplace whiner, and that certainly applies to oenophiles at working meals. Maybe the wine list is lousy, or his or her chosen wine turns out to be the wrong vintage or out of stock. I've dined with wine whiners, and their chronic dissatisfaction can envelop the table like a cloud. It might be

because the waitress brought flutes and not Burgundy glasses along with the Champagne, or because the red wine was too warm or the white too cold. (Full disclosure: I once had a hard time getting over the fact that my table's bottle was placed in a bucket on the other side of the room, not next to the table.)

Sharon Love, CEO of TPN, a New York advertising and marketing agency, dines out a great deal on the clock and has more than a few stories, good and bad, involving clients or colleagues and wine. She recalled a dinner that included an important client and representatives of an ad agency whose "very senior" partner ordered all the wines and then proceeded to reject each one he'd ordered with a "dramatic sour face." The client finally suggested everyone order cocktails instead.

'Show interest in others.'

Successful business people let clients or colleagues know that they matter. In a wine context, that translates to small, thoughtful gestures such as filling someone else's glass before your own. I've dined with quite a few selfish pourers over the years who help themselves to the bottle before serving or even offering the wine to anyone else. It's not hard to imagine how such me-first drinkers treat colleagues in other work situations.

A close second in terms of rudeness are the men who hijack the wine list at a business dinner—and it's almost always a man. Ann Piccirillo, a New York human resources executive, has rarely attended a business dinner where a man *didn't* take over the list. A former boss even insisted that the wine be an Italian red because that was what he wanted—never mind that not everyone else did. A far better role model was another former boss (a woman). "She asked everyone what they wanted and always ordered both a white and a red," Ms. Piccirillo recalled.

'Be judicious.'

This rule is especially important when it comes to wine. Ms. Love even teaches a class for agency personnel called "Everything Matters" that touches on this subject. She discusses appropriate alcohol consumption at work-sponsored events and notes that while drinking has long been part of the culture of the advertising and marketing fields, it is no longer acceptable to drink to excess. We're a long way from the "Mad Men" era.

Ryan Sutton, Boston-based district president for Robert Half Technology and the Creative Group, the executive search firms, would counsel job seekers to abstain from drinking altogether in an interview, even if it takes place in a restaurant. While wine might seem like good "conversational fodder," Mr. Sutton advised that the focus should remain on "the position, roles and responsibilities, culture and fit."

► Email Lettie at wine@wsj.com

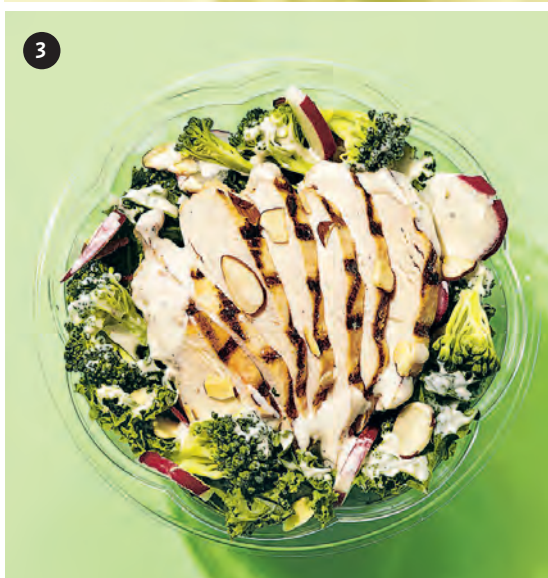
The Salad Habits Of Highly Effective People

With these tactics in your back pocket, stride up to the salad bar and build a better bowl

BY LUNCHTIME on a hectic day at the office, decision fatigue can weigh heavy. Like swimming through the thousands of TV shows and movies on Netflix, browsing the superabundance of ingredients at a salad bar will frequently feel like more of a burden than a bonanza. With a line snaking out the door, add performance anxiety to the list of salad-bar-related syndromes.

Yet we continue to fall into line at the Sweetgreens, Chop'ts, Whole Foods and corporate cafeterias of this world, and the available toppings, dressings, varieties of roughage and species of protein only proliferate. (Tri-color quinoa, anyone? How about some za'atar croutons?) What you need is a solid salad strategy. The combinations at right consist of ingredients found at most salad bars. If an element happens to be unavailable, simply swap in a close cousin. (No pickled red onions? Introduce another sort of pickle, or even raw onions.) Think of the guidelines provided as the salad-bar equivalent of TSA PreCheck, skipping you straight to the part where you actually enjoy your lunch.

—Eleanore Park



1. Use a classic salad as a boilerplate. When you hit the salad bar at peak lunch rush, don't reinvent the wheel. Take an iconic salad formula like a Niçoise and tweak it mildly.

Try: spinach, arugula, shredded Brussels, flaked salmon, bleu cheese, hard-boiled egg, olives, cornichons, red-wine vinegar and olive oil.

2. Secret weapon: scallions. Among the ever more outré options at most salad bars, fresh herbs remain conspicuously absent. Chopped scallions, an unsung salad-bar hero, serve the same purpose herbs would, brightening lackluster greens while contributing subtle savory notes. **Try:** kale, cabbage, chopped scallions, pepperjack cheese, pickled red onions, pumpkin seeds, tortilla chips, avocado and chile-lime vinaigrette

3. Scoop up a superfood. Demand for variations on the kale Caesar shows no signs of slowing at most salad chains. Give this go-to a boost with that ever-present brassica, broccoli. The tiny but mighty veggie adds textural oomph to a mouthful of leafy greens and also delivers protein, fiber, antioxidants and more. **Try:** kale, broccoli, chicken, radishes, sliced almonds and Caesar dressing.

4. Cue the crunch. Why sequester crunchy ingredients to a cameo on top of the salad? Even out your ratio of greens to other elements, and integrate the two throughout to add dimension to your salad. **Try:** bell pepper, chopped romaine, cucumber, shredded carrots, marinated tofu, sunflower seeds, cherry tomatoes and sesame dressing.

DESIGN & DECORATING



1. FIND A SHADY SPOT

The knotty imperfections of a burl-wood lamp contribute organic charm, while a white linen shade “adds scale and romance, and [mellows] the harsh light of bare bulbs,” said Ms. Brock. Get your own luminous lumber with a Madrone Burl Lamp, \$350, *Art of the Burl*, (707) 943-3047



2. GET SHELF HELP

A backless walnut bookcase doesn't block natural light coming through the windows, but it does provide partial privacy when Bryce Brock and her husband, who are both early risers, need a little solo time before they've finished their coffees. Hide or peek with the Noir Bauhaus Bookcase, \$3,683, *interiorhomescapes.com*



3. DISPENSE WITH DESKS

To give herself room to spread out her landscape-architecture plans, Ms. Brock conscripted a modest dining table, one with the white surface she has long preferred. “It makes everything feel cleaner,” she said. Modern Expandable Dining Table, from \$699, *westelm.com*



4. HOP IN THE SADDLE

Tawny brown leather scoop chairs that swivel are both spy and ruggedly tactile. Since she shares the space with her husband, Ms. Brock also wanted to balance out pale pink pillows elsewhere in the room “with the more natural, masculine feel of leather.” Pivot from the expected black mesh seat with the Carine Brown Leather Office Chair, \$699, *cb2.com*



ANATOMY LESSON



5. DON'T OVER-HUE IT

Woven-reed planters in muted colors let the room's fauna appear to sprout from the reclaimed-wood floor. Bright ceramic pots would delineate and remind you you're indoors. Get the effect with a Collapsible Rice Belly Basket Planter, from \$20, *connectedgoods.com*



6. SHOW AND TELL

“A desk is such a good opportunity to say something about yourself,” said Ms. Brock. “Mine has a very collected, layered, story-of-my-life look.” She points to a monogrammed pencil holder, actually a lacquered-glass paintbrush pot that she bought from a store in her hometown of Thomasville, Ga. Alphabet Brush Pot, \$48, *pen-treath-hall.com*



7. PUT A LID ON IT

The pair displays trinkets that compliment their professions—horse-crab shells, rocks, driftwood—while disguising what doesn't. The leather letter box holds keepsakes. Try this case: Midcentury Brown Leather Marco Tadini Vanity Case, \$1,911, *1stdibs.com*



8. FILE THIS UNDER FUN

The powder-coated steel filing cabinet practically disappears under her desk and against white-washed walls. Poppin, the company that produces it, “does a great job of making all the necessary evils of an office feel fun and streamlined,” said Ms. Brock. Send that gray-green denuded behemoth to the basement with the Stow 3-Drawer File Cabinet, \$249, *poppin.com*

Business Call of the Wild

In decorating a home office for herself and her husband, a landscape architect naturally wanted to bring the outdoors in

By TIM GAVAN

IF THE NATURAL state of man is to frolic, carefree and naked, through the forests, it's no wonder we balk at the high-stress confines of the modern office cubicle. When planning their workspace at home, landscape architect Bryce Brock and her forester husband, Seth, wanted to create a fresh, unrestrictive aesthetic—the sort of home office in which our most primitive selves might happily scrutinize spreadsheets.

“Our house backs up to Bloody Marsh on St. Simons Island in Georgia, so when we look out past our backyard we see marsh grass and cedar trees and oaks,” Ms. Brock

said of the view from the double desk—left side for her, right for him. “We wanted to bring those colors inside and make the room as light and airy as the view.”

To bring the landscape in without creating counterproductive distractions, Ms. Brock relied on neutral earth tones and an abundance of soothing white. She paired touchably organic elements, like a cowhide rug and woven planters, with harder-nosed minimalist workplace staples like a sleek, well-camouflaged filing cabinet. A large bookcase full of greenery and family photos provides some healthy separation for the spouses without alienating them completely.

Here, a breakdown of the components.

Switch Hitters

These double-duty light fixtures free up valuable real estate on your desk



From left: Symfonisk Table Lamp with WiFi speaker, \$179, *IKEA U.S. stores*; Suyo Table Light by McKay Nilson, \$168, *gantri.com*; Light Rods LED Wireless Charging Table Lamp, \$199, *westelm.com*

TOO MANY CHARGERS and tchotchkes can lead to a very disheveled desk. To thin the crowd, designers are delivering lamps that shed light, and then some.

Binder clips, highlighters, even a plant can be housed in the hollow of Suyo Table Light's blobby bottom. The lamp, which industrial designer McKay Nilson 3D-prints out of corn-based material, comes in three colors: coral, gray and white (shown).

West Elm's Light Rods LED Wireless Charging Table Lamp, handsomely finished in brass, is ideal for those who would welcome another charging device but not its cable and plug. Just lay your phone on the fixture's base, fitted with Qi inductive charging tech-

nology, to fill up your battery while you work by the light of the bulb.

“[The LED] allows the design to be slim and modern,” said Ana Jones, lighting designer at West Elm, who noted the bulb will last about 25,000 hours.

A partnership between Sonos and IKEA yielded the Symfonisk Table Lamp with Wi-Fi Speaker, which plays music while casting light from the blown-glass globe. Said Stjepan Begic, product developer at IKEA Home Smart, “We wanted to combine light and sound into one product in helping declutter the home with fewer devices and cords.”

—Haley Velasco

EVOLUTION

A Spin on a 1920s Cabinet

A newly colorful container from Konstantin Grcic for Magis encourages you to swivel while you work



THEN



NOW

When not in use, Eileen Gray's 1920s cabinet appears to be a smooth, undisturbed unit, its straight lines finessed into a pleasing curve at one end. When opened, it performs an elegant choreography, each drawer swinging out elegantly from the frame. The wooden cabinet, designed by the pioneering Irish designer and architect's famed E-1027 villa in the south of France, epitomized her design ethos: modernist but not machine-like. Its four drawers, contained within a white-painted body, pivot outward to reveal their contents, creating a new dynamic between user and object: not the abrupt pull that traditional drawers require but a smooth, quiet, serpentine glide.

German industrial designer Konstantin Grcic's 360° Container for Magis, set on multidirectional casters, moves Gray's design toward an even freer form. Its five drawers swing in a full circle around the aluminum tube that acts as its spine, the cabinet's shape continuously recreated by its user. Mr. Grcic wanted it to be playful and friendly, whether in a workspace or home, he said. The compartments don't “need as much attention” to open as a conventional drawer does. A gentle nudge will expose their cargo. The lightweight injection-molded plastic is pigmented—in five “off tones,” from bordeaux to the green above—so scratches will barely show. \$649, *Herman Miller*, 212-318-3977 —Rebecca Arnold

E. MARTIN BRAMM/STYLING BY ANNE GARDENIS

PAUL COSTELLO (OFFICE); GARDNER BOYCE (LAMP)

© CMAA/INAM/DIST. RMN-GRAND PALAIS/ART RESOURCE, NY (THEN)

THE WORK ISSUE | DESIGN & DECORATING

Once Upon a Job...in Hollywood

Most standard-issue workplace furniture is less than motivating. That's why it behooves you, when outfitting a home office, to seek inspiration outside the corporate world. To that end, **Ingela Ratledge Amundson** revisits six iconic films that elevated the 9-to-5 environment. Which aesthetic—and corresponding desk—suits you best?



The nearly 200 colorways of Muller Classic Line Desk TB229 include rose and pearl green. \$3,373, umodern.com



The Arciniega Glass Writing Desk spans 48 inches, a bit less imposing than Ms. Priestly's, \$600, jossandmain.com

'ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN' Whistleblow while you work! In the 1976 political thriller, Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman, above) toiled at utilitarian tanker desks while unearthing the Watergate scandal. "That desk represents ethics, high moral standards and doing the right thing—everything that's classic about not just the press but America itself," said Los Angeles production designer Jon Hutman ("Something's Gotta Give," "Unbroken"). This contemporary version, constructed of sheet metal with a high-gloss acrylic finish, "feels every bit as current today," Mr. Hutman said. "It's solid, timeless and beautiful—it would fit right into a home that's a bit industrial and streamlined."

'THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA' As the sublimely imperious high-fashion magazine editrix Miranda Priestly, Meryl Streep didn't suffer fools—or common clutter—gladly. "A desk with a glass top and no drawers broadcasts that you have nothing to hide," Mr. Hutman said of the character's elegant workmate. (Translation: major power move.) A similar model by Arciniega, featuring a polished stainless-steel sled base and tempered-glass top, should appeal to those who recognize that minimalism is always en vogue. "This says, 'I like straight, clean lines and uninterrupted air,'" said Austin, Texas-based production designer Bruce Curtis ("Fast Food Nation," "Parkland").



The Catalina Desk by Copeland Furniture, made in Vermont, includes a drop-down keyboard tray. \$2,468, lumens.com



Adico's 296 Bauhaus Desk, manufactured in Portugal, has been in production since 1950. \$1,585, dykeanddean.com



'THE MAN IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT' The 1956 drama chronicling the plight of Tom Rath (Gregory Peck, standing) was ahead of its time. A World War II vet, Mr. Rath is confronted with the true cost of the American dream when he lands an all-consuming job at a (nicely appointed) television network. But in 2019, you needn't sacrifice work-life balance to earn a spot behind this black walnut desk; a discerning eye will suffice. "The sophisticated midcentury style and rich wood grain details would be a good fit for people with a taste for the finer things and an appreciation for Scandinavian design," Mr. Curtis said.

'WALL STREET' This 1987 flick was chockablock with garish, era-defining displays of wealth and excess. Still, ruthless financier Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas, right) proved that status symbols can be tasteful as he gleefully raided corporations from behind a tubular steel Bauhaus desk. "It's a beautiful, important piece of industrial design that makes you feel like a badass," said Mr. Hutman. Ditto for this rendition, handcrafted with a lacquered black MDF body and tabletop, which—at 55 inches long and 27.5 inches deep—is scaled for these downsized times. "It would work in a tiny apartment," Mr. Hutman said.



Waterfall edges on Arteriors's Victoria Desk maximize the glint of the lacquer, \$4,825, arteriorshome.com



The 'ears' of the Babar Cabinet are corkboards. \$6,500, Harry Rocking Stool, \$940, [Kenneth Cobonpue, 888-889-9005](http://KennethCobonpue.com)

'THE HUDSUCKER PROXY' The 1994 Coen Brothers comedy was a searing sendup of big business and blundering tycoons in late-1950s New York. Although the movie met with mixed reactions, there's no arguing that its period sets—a homage to Tinseltown's lushly glamorous Golden Age—were a visual feast. "That Art Deco conference table is pure opulence," Mr. Curtis said. This more attainable solid walnut Victoria Desk offers "a well-appointed contrast of lacquer, wood and [antique] brass," he noted. "Plus, the curved corners can go either masculine or feminine."

'TARZAN' Granted, the feral hero—who's swung through numerous celluloid incarnations (here, Johnny Weissmuller plays the titular role in 1932's "Tarzan the Ape Man")—has never been relegated to pushing pencils. And for those of us striving to navigate the modern jungle with a like-minded philosophy, there's this desk alternative, woven from rattan to resemble the texture of elephant skin. "It's a whimsically fun statement piece," Mr. Curtis said. Even though it's "still functional," it's fantastical. In other words: less monkey suits, more monkey business.

PHOTOEST (WALL STREET); ALAMY (THE MAN IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT); EVERETT COLLECTION (4)

FLOWER SCHOOL

The Seeds of Labor

Floral designer **Lindsey Taylor** builds a bouquet inspired by men at work



MEREDITH HEUER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FLORAL STYLING BY LINDSEY TAYLOR, (ARRANGEMENT), GETTY IMAGES (INSPIRATION)

THE ARRANGEMENT

WITH HIS PAINTING "The Floor Scrapers," French Impressionist painter Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894) entered the Salon of the French Academy of Fine Arts in 1875. Its depiction of laborers stripping a Parisian floor was deemed too crude and was rejected by the Salon, which still lauded historical and mythological subject matter. (It was accepted the following year). But the painting's celebration of working hard seemed a fitting inspiration for a work-issue floral arrangement.

I started with a brown ware ceramic jug, suitably heavy and humble. I found a match for the chocolate and taupe tones of the floor and men's trousers in seed heads of ornamental grasses and crocosmia. They droopingly echo the graceful arch of the workers'

arms and backs as they remove varnish from the boards of what's said to have been Caillebotte's studio. Sprigs of light blue Russian sage pick up the wall color.

When working with seed heads, I limit myself to no more than three varieties, and add in a few fresh flowers to ensure the arrangement looks modern and intentional rather than like a forgotten mess. To represent the workers' fleshy tones, I chose the popular dahlia 'Café au Lait,' nestling in a smaller dark burgundy dahlia as contrast. Arranging seed heads requires as much mastery as arranging fresh flowers—and, as I plucked and prodded, I liked to think I was honoring the skill of Caillebotte's workers, even if some contemporaries found their efforts less than sublime.

Dahlias and seed heads capture the moody grace of Gustave Caillebotte's 'The Floor Scrapers' (1875)

THE INSPIRATION



GEAR & GADGETS



JULIEN PACAUD (COLLAGE), SON OF ALAN (LINE DRAWING)

The Coffee-House Rules

As more of us brazenly turn local cafes into home offices, etiquette demands that we're on our best behavior

By Aaron Stern

THE ROMANTIC notion of cafes filled with budding novelists is now extinct. In its place? A zoo full of laptop monkeys hunched over keyboards, grunting as they bang away at reply-all emails, not magnum opuses.

Thanks to relaxed corporate cultures and improved mobile technology, more people are working remotely. According to a 2016 Gallup report, an estimated 31% of Ameri-

cans spent 80% or more of work hours toiling away at home. And with all the distractions modern homes throw our way, more business is now being done in the cozy confines of American coffee shops.

Unfortunately, many who work in cafes lack the self-awareness to mix well with other patrons. "I feel like we as a society haven't developed enough etiquette about working from public spaces and using technology in public spaces yet," said Hailley Griffis, head of PR for Buffer, a San Francisco software company

whose 90-person workforce has no physical office. "And it's still kind of confusing for some people."

To help alleviate some of that confusion, we've drafted this set of guidelines with input from coffee-shop owners and workers who labor in cafes around the U.S.

RULE 1 Work only where and when you're wanted. Ask first.

While many cafe owners are happy to fill their seats with latte-bingeing workers during off-peak hours, not all places are so welcoming. Do your

research before you head out—and understand that how wanted you are can fluctuate day to day, or even hour to hour. "Calling ahead is great," said Kayla Blincow, co-owner of Seattle's Preserve and Gather, where there's no Wi-Fi to exploit.

Those who've spent the morning staring at laptops should be ready to pack up when a rush of nonworking patrons arrives, explained Annette Bruno, owner of Brooklyn's Fare & Folk. "There should be something inside you"—a conscience, perhaps—"that triggers you to think...Maybe this is when I leave."

RULE 2 Buy first, sit second.

It's a coffee shop, not the Oklahoma land rush. Don't put your bag in one of the last empty seats if there's a line at the register when you walk in. Either wait your turn or find another spot to do your business.

"It's rude. People in front of you should technically have claim to a seat that's open when they're done getting a drink," said Anne Mercer, who has grappled with this etiquette point from both sides of the counter, having worked as a barista and as a freelance copywriter who often holes up in cafes.

RULE 3 Buy more than one small black coffee during a stay.

Some say ordering drinks or food once an hour is good. If you're worried about cost, consider that spending, say, \$10 per day, five days a week over a month will cost around \$200. Compare that to \$400, the cost of the cheapest monthly WeWork access in Manhattan—which only gets you a communal "hot desk," not reserved office space.

"You have to recognize that peo-

ple are running a business," said Diana Sfera, a marketing consultant who often works from Fare & Folk.

RULE 4 It's not actually your office, so only take up one space.

Don't commandeer communal tables, don't bring too many gadgets or spread out your papers. Don't recreate your ideal work station. Instead, confine your belongings to a single seat and keep your setup simple. "Just have some situational awareness," said Bo Nelson, co-founder of Thou Mayest Coffee Roasters in Kansas City, Mo.

Ms. Griffis has seen people bring two laptops with stands, an external keyboard and a trackpad to create a dual-monitor setup. Ms. Bruno had one regular at her other Brooklyn cafe, Henry's Local, who brought in his iMac desktop computer when his Wi-Fi went out at home.

RULE 5 Don't take work calls. Ever.

Subjecting fellow patrons to your dial-in conference calls is rude and awkward. But Skype calls are much worse. "I've seen people take video calls from coffee shops, where I've turned around and been able to see myself on their screen," Ms. Griffis said. "It's always a little wild."

For loud talkers on work calls, Tim Coonan, owner of Big Shoulders Coffee in Chicago, said he'll often politely ask them to step outside to have those conversations. "They're controlling the room too much."

RULE 6 Have basic empathy for employees and other patrons.

As we all learned in kindergarten, leave a place cleaner than you found it. "Treat [our shop] like your own space," said Mr. Nelson. "If we're accommodating and hospitable and open up our doors, don't stick little daggers in our backs."

Don't ask baristas to watch your stuff while you go to the bathroom. That's not their job. And, lastly, don't be weird about outlets—if there aren't enough and you're running low on power, find somewhere else to work. Like maybe your home.

Persona Non Grande

Every cafe has 'that guy'—who spreads out his gadgets, bellows at his phone and buys just one small black coffee all day. A field guide:

He Builds a Workstation

"How can I manage all my super-important spreadsheets with one puny laptop? I need a full-size keyboard to type, and a 22-inch screen to see all my tabs."

He Takes Every Outlet

"Yes I do need all these plugs. Isn't that self-evident? No, I can't briefly unplug my printer. Maybe you should've arrived a tad earlier."

He Shouts Into his Phone

"Bob! Can you hear me, Bob?! Sorry, but the jerks in this cafe are so noisy and rude I can barely concentrate. Bob?!"

He Asks for Free Refills

"Mind giving me a warm up, kid? I've been here so long that my \$1.50 drip coffee is practically ice cold. A croissant? Oh no, I ate before I came."

He Leaves a Mess

"Why should I have to clean all this up? It's not like I work at this coffee shop. I'm a paying customer!"

Dear Colleagues: Pretend I'm Dead

You're finally going on vacation and you don't want to be bothered. Can a strongly worded out-of-office reply truly set you free?

DURING MY WEEKLONG summer vacation to London, I set an out-of-office reply to alert anyone who dared contact me that, fingers crossed, I'd have "limited access to email."

But I knew I would be Instagramming. Constantly. Anyone who saw my posts would realize I had unlimited access to the internet, so I added a hopeful disclaimer: I'd still be reachable for "emergencies only."

It didn't work. Despite my strict, almost forbidding OOO email reply, I fielded upwards of 50-plus follow-ups and even some nudging texts while I was gone. My colleagues knew that today's "always on" smartphone-connected work culture compels one to respond to an email wherever one is.

"Whether you set an out-of-office or not, you're responsible for the work and for knowing what's going on when you return," said "Leave Your Mark" career guide author Aliza Licht. "The point is, no one really cares that you're on vacation."

So what to do? Maybe I should have slammed the door, clarifying that I would not, under any circumstance, respond until my return, so do not write, call or text until then. "Perhaps it makes more sense to designate yourself as reachable or unreachable, to be clear about into which camp you fall," agreed

Jaclyn Johnson, founder of the careerists' platform Create & Cultivate, who said a firm black or white stance beats giving people the slightest opening. "How you do that can be symbolic of who you are as a professional."

Some people threaten to delete all emails upon return. Many deflect with a joke, but taking creative liberties with an OOO only works if you're high enough on the food chain in certain industries. "Stating you'll respond 'if you feel inspired' will likely be poorly received at a law firm or by your boss if you're entry-level," said Ms. Licht. "It comes down to anticipating who's receiving the message."

Others think that working a not-so-humble brag about, say, your "tightly scheduled tour of vineyards in Burgundy" into your OOO might convince people to leave you alone, or at least want to. For some recipients, however, "that's just too much information," said Ann Shoket, author of "The Big Life," a self-help resource for professionals.

If you can't totally excise yourself from the grind, or can't push your work off to a colleague, Ms. Johnson recommends selecting a window of availability each day to maintain some semblance of control over a vacation. Because let's be real, we can never truly sign off(line) anymore. —Allison Duncan



JAMES GULLIVER HANCOCK

THE WORK ISSUE | GEAR & GADGETS

By STEVEN MELENDEZ

Just Goggle It

Trying to protect your job amid the robot takeover? Don't reject tech—embrace it by strengthening ever-more-important 'soft skills' through virtual-reality training sessions

IF YOU WANT to avoid being replaced at work by a machine, the first step might be strapping one firmly to your face.

In a high-tech experience created by Los Angeles-based career training company Talespin, users are invited to don VR headsets and take on the role of manager. Their task: firing Barry, a simulated employee who hasn't been performing well. Barry isn't exactly a young man anymore and the prospect of suddenly being out of a job doesn't sit well with him. It usually doesn't delight his role-playing bosses either.

"Almost every single person we put through that experience had an emotional reaction," said Talespin CEO Kyle Jackson. "We've had people take the headset off saying, 'I just can't do this. I'm just too uncomfortable.'"

But as automation and A.I. replace more human workers, interpersonal skills that robots can't perform will increasingly be key to getting and keeping a job. Already, employers hiring college grads are looking for communication and teamwork skills even more than technical and computer skills, according to a study released late last year by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The hapless Barry is just a demo. But Talespin offers a whole cast of simulations, from difficult customers to would-be hires, that help managers practice potentially fraught conversations including performance reviews, sales negotiations and complaints. One program in development involves simulating job interviews to help workers involved in hiring overcome unconscious biases. It's part of a wave of digital tools designed to teach workers the social techniques needed to get ahead in the modern workplace.

So-called "soft skills"—the interpersonal talents workers use to close sales, appease frustrated customers or simply bond around the water cooler—are so far something that most humans grasp and machines don't. While A.I. has gotten more conversational in recent years, nobody's going to be asking Alexa or Siri to chair a meeting or win a big account any time soon.

The idea of studying social skills alone under a VR headset might sound counterintuitive, but tech de-



WE'VE GOT YOUR FEEDBACK VirtualSpeech's VR simulations help professionals gain comfort with public speaking, be it in the boardroom or while fielding reporters' questions. At the end of each session, goggled users see their ratings (shown here) on variables including eye contact, pace, hesitations and tone.

VICES are increasingly giving workers options to hone soft skills through digital interaction. Many of these tools even let users practice making eye contact with animated VR bosses.

"One of the dilemmas with training is you give them too much at one time," said Dennis Laker, an associate professor at Widener University's School of Business Administration. Digital training, on the other hand, lets workers practice at their own pace rather than cramming everything into a trainer's schedule.

Another VR training company, London-based VirtualSpeech (courses from \$50, virtualspeech.com), was inspired in part by co-founder and COO Sophie Thompson's struggles with public speaking while giving class presentations during her graduate

studies. "I wouldn't even order my own coffee at Starbucks," she said.

VirtualSpeech experiences let customers practice presentations in VR board rooms. They can also simulate television and radio appearances and even, in one media training scenario, deal with being backed into a corner by a scrum of eager reporters. If the users struggle at first, that's fine—they can just hit reset and try again.

"We focus on soft skills, because they're skills that you need to practice to get good on them," Ms. Thompson said. "But it's really rare to have the opportunity to practice these skills without there being any consequences."

Another VirtualSpeech offering preps users for job interviews, giving them automated feedback on pace, tone and eye contact as they answer questions geared toward a desired career path.

"You don't have to get your family or friends to ask you questions," said Ms. Thompson. "You can practice on demand."

VirtualSpeech's software supports stand-alone VR units like the Oculus Go (left, from \$199, oculus.com) and smartphone-inte-

grated units including the Samsung Gear VR (\$130, oculus.com). If you don't have access to a VR headset at home or in the office, VirtualSpeech offers Merge VR headsets, which work with an existing smartphone, for \$45.

Many VirtualSpeech courses also include basic VR training to help get past any initial awkwardness, although it's safe to assume co-workers may still tease you if they discover you pawing the air and shouting at virtual reporters.

If you prefer to practice socializing with the help of actual humans, some digital tools let you connect live for soft skills practice and advice. Everwise (geteverwise.com), with offices in New York and San Francisco, matches employees with mentors and helps them connect for training, said company president Colin Schiller. Toronto-based Prosper links customers with career coaches who can give them guidance via a mix of 30-minute video or audio sessions (from \$45, helloprosper.com) and text messaging.

"Members have unlimited access to be able to chat with your coach, so it's almost

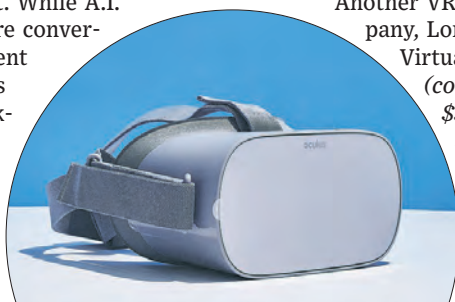
like you've got this support network in your pocket," said CEO Krystyn Harrison.

For those looking for an academic credential as well as training, a program in soft skills offered by the Rochester Institute of Technology through the online

VR and digital tools help teach the social techniques needed to get ahead in a modern workplace.

learning platform edX (www.edx.org) has drawn more than 357,000 total enrollments in courses like public speaking. A set of courses is available for \$265. The program lets even solo learners upload recorded speeches and presentations and collaborate with classmates across the internet.

With all your added skills, you might be heading for a nice promotion. Just don't mention it in front of Barry—he's had a rough day.



VIEW MASTERY

Career training can be done with VR headsets including the Oculus Go.

How to Watch 'The Office' at the Office

With Netflix Hangouts, you can furtively take in your favorite shows at work—with your boss none the wiser

AFTER A LONG hard day at work, there's nothing quite like sitting down, turning on the TV and zoning out to a bunch of people in glamorous "hospitals," "law firms" or "paper-supply companies" pretending to work.

NBC's long-running sitcom "The Office," set in the latter, was far and away Netflix's No. 1 most watched show in 2018, with fans streaming it for more than 52 billion minutes—or the equivalent of roughly 99,000 years—according to Nielsen.

Yet for some "Office" devotees, home viewing wasn't enough. Daniel Greenberg was caught by his bosses watching his beloved show at work more than a few times. So Mr. Greenberg—who creates viral apps as head of commerce for Brooklyn's MSCHE, including one that sends out fake late-night Snapchats to make you seem cool—worked with his team to create a platform where one could surreptitiously view Netflix at one's desk without fear.

"We had various ideas, like how to hide it inside of Slack or inside a spreadsheet," Mr. Greenberg said of the team's initial design, developed during a company hack-a-thon this summer. "The one we kept coming back to was Google Hangouts."

An upgrade of his creation is now available to everyone—something the woman being sued by Robert De Niro's company for bingeing 55 episodes of "Friends" at work definitely could have used. Once you download the free Chrome extension (netflix-hangouts.com), you can simply log in



SYNERGY Netflix Hangouts's video grid displays looped video of "co-workers" except in the bottom-right quadrant

to Netflix, push play on your favorite show and then click the extension's red icon on your toolbar. Instantly your screen will look like you're on a videoconference call—with the three of the screen's quadrants filled with looped videos of Mr. Greenberg or his friends, and the bottom-right spot strategically reserved for your show (as shown above).

"When your boss is walking by your desk, he or she is almost never actually looking at who's on the call," Mr. Greenberg explained. "If they just see that layout they won't

really stare at it too closely."

Not a fan of "The Office"? You can watch anything streaming on Netflix. Still, we suggest you stay away from flashy films like "Jupiter Ascending," a space opera that stars Channing Tatum as a half-man, half-canine who glides through the sky on sci-fi rollerblades. Though fun, it doesn't easily blend into an otherwise modern work setting. Also, avoid animated films and shows with nudity, and try to stifle your laughter.

It's best to seek out shows that feature mundane situations that are

brightly lit (as in an office) and feature a lot of close-ups, since that helps it appear as if the characters are staring into a webcam. Here, a list of other shows that you could covertly enjoy thanks to the app:

'Parks and Rec' Mundane setting, flat lighting, tons of close-ups. **'Mad Men'** Much like "The Office," but roughly 47% more handsome. **'The IT Crowd'** Less handsome, but almost exclusively set at work. **'Dogs'** You might get caught. But totally worth it. —*Matthew Kitchen*

The Next Episode

5 podcasts that help wage earners prepare for retirement

TO AGE WITH HUMOR On "Mid-life Mixtape," Nancy Davis Kho interviews fellow Gen-Xers about "thriving in the years between being hip and breaking one" with insight into what to expect as you grow older.

TO START FRESH "The stories on the 'Second Life' podcast are meant to remind us that even as one esteemed career ends, other exciting opportunities arise," said host Hillary Kerr.

TO FIGURE OUT YOUR FINANCES "My Next Move" host Michael Liersch shares actionable advice for learning how to be financially intentional in your twilight years, and for defining what success means to you.

TO GROW UP Mary Rogers's "Experience 50" focuses on midlifers "reinventing themselves because they just don't care what other people think," and helping them learn the stuff they should know by now.

TO STAY YOUNG "Forever35," hosts Doree Shafir and Kate Spencer explore how things like quitting coffee and clearing out closets take on new meaning as you age. —*Allison Duncan*