

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette®

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## Take a break

It's a new year and many of us are staring at a delicious new slice of vacation time. But will you have (or make) time to use it in 2005?

If you're a woman in the corporate world, using vacation time can be an even dicier proposition than it is for men. Many women are worried about keeping pace, moving up, battling gender barriers, balancing vacation time with what they already must take for children, et al.

It needn't always be thus, argues Mary Lou Quinlan, a former advertising executive who wrote "Time Off for Good Behavior: How Hardworking Women Can Take a Break and Change Their Lives," which is being released this month.

The book, which tells of Quinlan's decision to take a five-week break from her job, also covers the experiences of 37 other women professionals who decided their working lives required a break.

"When you're working really hard, it's not easy to see just how stressed you are," she writes.

## Employer resolutions

Nearly every organization strives for, or at least contemplates, improved employee morale and loyalty.

Randstad North America, the Atlanta-based subsidiary of Dutch staffing company Randstad NV, compiled a list of employer resolutions to help achieve these goals. The tips were culled from a survey of 2,639 employees and managers last year.

\* 401(k) contributions: When asked their preference, 64 percent said they'd prefer to have their 401(k) accounts funded instead of big raises or bonuses when business is good.

\* More flexibility: Offer time when needed. Forty-four percent of workers said they wanted to be allowed to work from home when they need to do so, and 52 percent want a job that does not interfere with their family and personal lives.

\* Beneficial benefits: Nearly three-fourths, 70 percent, said a decent insurance/health benefits package is the prime consideration when weighing whether to stay or quit.

\* Please be honest: A huge majority, 86 percent, said they'd prefer to work for a boss who focuses on ethics over profitability.

## Papering our office

A little document clutter goes a long way -- especially in an office setting.

As e-mails and other electronic data proliferate, many office workers are compelled to punch the print button, resulting in reams of paper that help to fell forests but do little in the way of common sense.

A University of California study from Berkeley found that in 2002, the world's offices used 43 percent more paper than in 1999, according to office products firm Esselte, based in Stamford, Conn. The company says its own research found that the typical U.S. office worker consumes 200 sheets of paper each day.

All that paper increases office chaos -- you lose things more easily -- and reduces efficiency.

"By overlooking the importance of getting organized, many companies are missing out on gaining a competitive edge on their competitors," said Magnus Nicolin, the company's president and chief executive officer. "The amount of time lost and waste generated by American businesses as a result of disorganization is staggering."

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