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WHAT'S OFFLINE

Brains (and the Lack Thereof)

By PAUL B. BROWN

SUPPOSE you are actually smarter than the person who signs off on your paycheck? What do you do?

"If you are, in fact, brainier than the person you work for — and let's face it, this does happen — you have two problems," Judith Sills writes in Psychology Today.

The first is staying out of your own way. If you think you are smarter than your boss, you may be tempted to dismiss all of his ideas out of hand — and that can be dangerous, because he could have one or two ideas that make sense. And your resentment for having to work for someone whom you consider a dolt is likely to become apparent, which definitely won't help your career.

The second problem, of course, is no matter how much smarter you are than your boss, you need to forge a good working relationship.

Ms. Sills, a psychologist, offers some specific tips:

¶"Never ever, ever gossip about your dopey, incompetent, limited dullard of a supervisor."

¶Work to offset his weakness, trying to leverage this for "a tiny share of the public credit." Ask to do a small part of his presentation — that you created — or be acknowledged as a co-author of a report you wrote for him.

¶Subtly give your boss a "menu of ways" to compensate you for all your extra effort.

You are, of course, hoping he is going to be smart enough to act on your suggestions.

THE QUESTION Investors typically want to know if the company's board is smart enough to protect their interests.

One simple way to tell, says Robert H. Rock, is to see if before every board meeting the directors ask: "Is this the day we fire our C.E.O.?"

Mr. Rock, writing in Directors & Boards, says the question gets to the heart of a director's job.

"The most important decision continually facing a board is whether the top leadership, particularly the C.E.O., has the strategic vision and personal capacity to drive the company forward," he writes.

Mr. Rock, who is president of the investment firm MLR Holdings, says the board's annual assessment of the chief executive usually focuses on how well he (and the company) performed in the previous 12 months.

That evaluation, he writes, is "very important, especially for determining bonus awards, but it often fails to address the more important question: namely whether the company has the right leader to create its future."

And that is why before every meeting, directors need to ask the question that Mr. Rock said he first heard posed by Robert K. Mueller, once the chairman of the management consulting firm Arthur D. Little: "Is this the day we fire the C.E.O.?"

TIME-SHARING TRUTHS It might be the pitch from Disney, Marriott or Hyatt that grabs your attention. Or it could be that you fall in love with the place where you always vacation. In either case, this summer you might start thinking about what it would be like to join the 3.9 million Americans who own a time share.

Think again, writes Brett Graff in Ladies' Home Journal.

While it is true that you could spend less money over time compared with going to hotels, there are still plenty of drawbacks to consider.

In addition to being locked into going to one place (although swapping may be possible), and being forced to pay escalating annual maintenance fees and property taxes, the biggest liability is that time shares rarely appreciate and are often sold at a loss in the secondary market. In fact, pitching a time share for investment purposes is now prohibited in most states, unless the company is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Mr. Graff writes.

Although Mr. Graff does not put it this way, if you invested the average $17,500 spent to purchase a time share, it would generate $1,400 every year (at 8 percent) to help pay for your annual vacation — and you would still have the $17,500 in principal.

FINAL TAKE Just to take us full circle, here is something to think about before showing up your superior. Essence reports a recent survey by the American Payroll Association shows that "74 percent of respondents would experience difficulty if their paychecks were delayed just one week." PAUL B. BROWN