

Just Another Day at the Office

By Paul Sullivan

6:00 a.m. - Clock radio goes off. Lead news story reports that overseas markets have crashed. Retirement plan should be worth about 25 percent less by 5:00. Plan to work another couple of years to recoup.

7:00 a.m. - Jump in car and head downtown. Stress management class has taught me to stay in right lane and drive the speed limit. Today only half a dozen drivers signal me I'm number 1.

7:30 a.m. - Enter building. Strong odor coming from lower level. Is it from the redecorating project that just ended? No - further checking reveals that coffeepot was left on all night. Odor of burnt coffee and paint a pungent combination.

7:32 a.m. - Open my office door. At least a dozen faxes have come in telling me about toner cartridges at unbelievable prices.

7:33 a.m. - Pick up phone to check messages. It's dead.

7:35 a.m. - Call telephone repair service on cell phone.

7:36 a.m. - 8:14 a.m. - On hold.

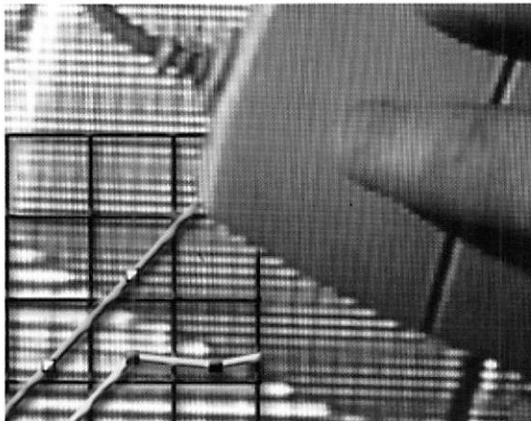
8:15 a.m. - Finally get through. It's the wrong number.

8:20 a.m. - After reaching proper person, am told service will be repaired by 5:00 on the next day. I calmly explain to person on other end this is a business and phone service is crucial. They say they'll try to have it repaired by 4:30 the next day.

8:21 a.m. - Phone rings, having mysteriously begun to work again. Wrong number.

8:22 a.m. - Start up computer. Strange message on screen says something about an illegal operation (please, not in a law office). Reboot.

8:30 a.m. - Open e-mail; 55 new messages, 25 of which are from people telling me about what's really important - friends, love, etc. - and asking that I forward the message to 10 other people. Feeling warm and fuzzy now,



If you run the business side of a law practice, you've probably had a day or two like this one.

and make note - take some time this week to tell staff how much I appreciate them. The other messages are from toner companies wanting me to buy their cartridges at unbelievable prices.

9:00 a.m. - Secretary calls. Says she's lost all her computer files. I ask her if she's logged into the network. She's worked here for 10 years - asks, "What network?" Make note - reconsider telling staff how much I appreciate them.

10:00 a.m. - Mail delivered to my office. Ten catalogs from toner cartridge companies and a really confusing notice from long-distance carrier.

10:01 a.m. - Call long-distance carrier.

10:01 a.m. - 10:35 a.m. - Push buttons in long-distance carrier's voice-mail system to connect to real person.

10:36 a.m. - Talk to real person. They have no record of our being a customer.

10:45 a.m. - Call from secretary. Copier has jammed. Go to investigate and find that copier has followed Darwin's law. It has evolved from a copier to a shredder.

10:50 a.m. - Place service call on copier.

10:50 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - While on hold, check Internet and discover stocks are down 35 percent. Make that three years.

11:01 a.m. - Speak with copier representative. Advised it may be tomorrow because their main serviceman is off today.

11:10 a.m. - Receive notice from partner that "receipts" are very good today.

11:25 a.m. - Receive call from secretary who just started last week. Wants to discuss raise. Tell

her I'll get back to her.

11:45 a.m. - Receive call from independent survey company about computer usage in the law firm. Say it will take only a few minutes. I'm busy - can't talk. I suggest they call back at 3:00 a.m. on December 25.

11:50 a.m. - Receive call from toner cartridge company. They have this unbelievable deal. I tell them we use typewriters and carbon paper.

12:00 Noon - Hear stampede-like sounds. Realize it is staff going out the door for lunch.

12:01 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Everyone thinks I'm at lunch. Take no calls and finally get some work done without interruptions.

1:00 p.m. - Check voice mail; 15 messages, 14 are from toner companies selling cartridges.

1:30 p.m. - Just advised by records room that a new file came in and we may be suing one of our clients. They want to know if it should be opened up anyway. I ask, "What do you think?" They respond, "Hey, that's why we called you."

2:20 p.m. - Receive a call from senior partner. He wants to redecorate the entire office because his wife was in over the weekend and has some decorating ideas. Told him I'd get back to him.

2:30 p.m. - Receive a call from secretary. It's too cold at her desk.

2:31 p.m. – While I'm checking thermostat, another employee in same area says it's too hot.

2:35 p.m. – Receive a call from senior partner. Someone is in his parking spot.

2:40 p.m. – Go out to investigate. While looking in the window of illegally parked car to see if it belongs to a client before I have it towed, I am approached by a huge creature asking what I'm doing with his car. I look him straight in that eye in his forehead and explain that he is illegally parked and will be towed if he parks here in the future. He says, "I'm sorry, sir. It won't happen again."

2:45 p.m. – Once inside, check all body parts just to be sure.

3:25 p.m. – Check closing stock prices. Make that four years.

3:30 p.m. – Receive notice from accounts receivable. All receipts were duplicate payments, and we're sending the money back.

3:55 p.m. – Partner calls in panic. Has to submit his fantasy football picks via Internet by 4:00 p.m. and his computer is locked up. Tell him to reboot computer and suggest next week try connecting at least by 3:50 p.m.

4:05 p.m. – Receive a computer message from the network server indicating a fatal error has occurred and the server will shut down in five minutes.

4:06 p.m. – Go to computer room and restart server.

4:10 p.m. – Server successfully restarts.

4:11 p.m. – Check voice mail. Have 23 messages indicating server is down.

4:30 p.m. – Hear stampede-like sounds. Realize it is staffers who leave at 4:30.

4:31 p.m. – Paged by receptionist. Incoming client has been trampled by outgoing staff.

Confirmed – no staff appreciation

memo this week.

4:45 p.m. – Partner appears in my office. Needs letter out by 5:00. His secretary is gone.

4:46 p.m. – Locate available secretary to complete letter.

4:50 p.m. – Frantic call from secretary. Printer won't print.

4:51 p.m. – Check printer – cartridge needs replacement. Partner asks if we price shop for printer cartridges.

5:00 p.m. – Hear more stampede-like sounds. Realize it's the rest of the staff leaving for the day.

5:00 - 6:00 p.m. – No calls, no interruptions, no people in the office. Extremely productive time.

6:00 p.m. – Walk toward door with partner. He again suggests redecorating the office. Tell him it was completely redone over the last month. He looks around and says, "Wow! I didn't notice until now."

6:00 p.m. – Jump in the car. Stay in the right lane and drive the speed limit. I learn I'm still number 1 with some drivers. ■■■