

Murray Hill Institute

Women Transforming Culture

Newsletter
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Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Having balance in one's life where there is time for work, family, cultural development and relaxation has often been perceived as "the impossible dream." In a world where there never seem to be enough hours in the day to do what needs to be done, work-life balance has been a luxury. However, with the recent slow-down in the economy, people are re-discovering the people and the world around them. The present-day circumstances are leading them to re-evaluate priorities and make life-style changes that include time for things other than work. These changes, in the long run, can contribute to a person's overall well-being. In this issue of our Newsletter we offer some perspectives on the topic of work-life balance and how certain individuals have managed in their circumstances.

We are happy to welcome our new Executive Director, Rosemary DellaMarco. Rosemary has been a long-time supporter of Murray Hill Institute, and having recently retired is now able to dedicate time to developing and promoting our programs. Having worked in financial services and banking for over 25 years, Rosemary brings extensive and valuable experience to her new position. We are happy to have her on board. Alice Trimmer, who served as our Executive Director for the past two years, has resigned owing to her increasing responsibilities at the Rosedale Center in the South Bronx. Alice remains active in Murray Hill Institute as a member of our Board of Directors.

We always look forward to hearing from our readers. I assure you we take your comments and suggestions seriously. Frequently they provide ideas and material for future Newsletter articles.

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. McGarry
President

Feature Article

Staying Connected: Burden or Blessing?
An Interview with Teresita Abay-Krueger

The progress in technology that has occurred over the past several decades has rapidly changed the pace and mode of working in nearly all fields. The ability to connect with one's colleagues at any time or place has the potential to free one from the constraints of a fixed work schedule, but at the same time poses new challenges to maintaining a reasonable work-life balance. As the boundaries between "at work" and "not at work" become less defined, it is all too easy to lose sight of the importance of the person over productivity.

In an interview with Alice Trimmer, of the Murray Hill Institute Board, Teresita Abay-Krueger, Technology Marketing Manager, Software Group, IBM Corporation discusses her own experiences with the borderless workplace and comments on the changes introduced by technology from a cultural and historical perspective. She also gives some tips on how to clarify expectations regarding one's own availability.

1. In what ways do technical innovations have the potential to erase the boundaries between work and personal life?

Advances in technology have created a lot of the issues in and around work-family balance these days. To place this in some historical perspective: since the invention of the computer chip in 1965, the capability of transistors has evolved to the point that handheld devices such as the I-Phone or BlackBerry have as much or greater capability in processing power than the entire North American Defense Command had back in the 1960s. This has placed quite literally a whole world of information into the palm of one's hand, and these devices have great implications for work-family balance today. By having this device, anyone can reach me at any time: they can communicate with me via voice, via text, or send all kinds of content in the form of web pages, photographs, or any other type of information that can be carried digitally. Anyone with a device like a laptop and connectivity can reach anyone, anywhere, at any time, and one can work in this way with any number of people at once.

2. How can the end-user (in this case, the employee) control the tendency to intrusiveness that technological devices can create?

It is question of knowing when we have enough information for what we need. In our world today there is a kind of craving or need for information that can sometimes be so overwhelming that it overruns our day. It is up to each person to evaluate when and to what extent you really need that connectivity, and to what extent are you truly dependent on the technology to accomplish what you need to do.

With the help of technology, we are now capable of working from anywhere at any time: we are no longer tethered to a particular physical location to get our work done. This undoubtedly provides flexibility, for example, for a working mother who needs to be home with children for whatever reason. This flexibility is very advantageous for working parents today, and brings a lot of reassurance that they can still be productive and in touch with their work group using the capabilities that the technology provides.

But on the other side, at what point do you decide when this technology needs to be turned off to attend to one's other roles as mother, spouse, community member? The simple answer is: "just turn it off," but other conditions can make this difficult, especially in our current economic situation where workers are under pressure to demonstrate their increased value and productivity to avoid being squeezed out of a weak labor market. The situation is akin to thinking that you can never leave the office: with technology, people can literally always be "In." This can lead to a temptation to never turn off whatever device is keeping you connected, for fear that you will miss out on something, or from thinking that you need to constantly demonstrate your productivity.

It is getting increasingly common that people do not take their allotted vacation time: workers are willing to forfeit their vacation time in order to stay connected. Although with the appropriate technology, one can work from anywhere as long as there is an internet connection and telephone, the problem becomes: work is all that you may end up doing.

3. What has been your experience as a result of 24/7 availability?

For the past 10 to 15 years, as a working mother, I first worked in a traditional office or research lab. But for the past couple of years, as a result of working from home, I find that I spend more hours “at work” working from home than I did when I was in the research laboratory. Why?

First of all, I can still collaborate with people from my home: through web casts, they can see me face to face, so isolation from my work group and colleagues is really not an issue. Working from home, I don’t have to worry about travel—including the daily commute, which can be very time-consuming. I can dedicate that time to productive work on behalf of my job. I can still effectively collaborate with people—one can get a team of people together very quickly via instant messaging and web casting—a team that can number 100 at a time rather than the 10 or 12 one might deal with in an office environment.

Secondly, technology enables me to quickly and easily use time to my advantage. Time as a resource is not recoverable. With the use of a lot of these devices I can use any amount of my time, be it 9 to 5, weekend, evening, vacation—to accomplish a set of tasks and meet the outcomes I want. It also enables me to provide a level of assurance immediately to my colleagues that such-and-such a task can be accomplished in a timely way.

One of the more difficult questions is: When do I decide that this technology has become too intrusive? You struggle at times with the idea that “I can be everything to everyone at all times,” and it can become difficult to let go of this idea. The reality sets in when you

try to set some clear and concise boundaries about your work load with your peers. Make clear what level of expectation you can meet, and pursue an agreement with your peers regarding what their expectations are regarding your productivity. This is not unlike the type of discussion that would take place in a traditional office environment, but such a conversation would typically take place face-to-face. Without this face-to-face setting, you need to be even more clear and definitive about your expectations because you are relying on a certain level of trust. They can’t see you and they need to understand what those parameters are.

4. How can you establish reasonable boundaries to disconnect when you need to? How do you convey these boundaries to your work group and to your manager in a positive way?

This is a question that all kinds of think tanks and organizations are trying to get a handle on. All of technology has the power to elevate the human person, but it can just as well become degrading by putting ourselves in a constant cycle of work. We need to understand and recognize that the false sense of comfort and convenience technology may provide can also entrap us.

Instant messaging and similar technologies can enable us to immediately engage one’s co-worker’s availability—by whether they are online or not, whether they have a “do not disturb” or “I am available” notice posted on their interface. This can help delineate for oneself and one’s co-workers when you are actually “on-call” and when you are not.

5. To what extent do the goals of the individual, those of the workplace, and

those of the general culture interact in creating expectations of productivity? How does an individual analyze their own goals and motivations in order to create a sane and realistic work schedule for themselves?

Well, we all need to put the brakes on somewhere. I often go back to this idea that ambition is a good thing to the extent that it can drive me to stretch myself a little more towards accomplishment. Most organizations genuinely want to nurture creativity and resourcefulness in their employees and work to enable employees to function as best they can.

Everyone operates at different levels, and people can make all kinds of differences in community, family life, workplace, country. But you need to understand yourself and how much you can capture and impart those talents under the best conditions possible. This involves choosing the right venues and projects that you can excel at and driving towards excellence as you accomplish those. Work with your peak times and in your peak situations insofar as possible.

Women Transforming Culture: How They Do It *Bringing Organizational Skills Home* By Mary Hunt

Time crunches and juggling responsibilities seem to be the norm for almost every woman you talk with today. Particularly in times of economic uncertainty we all want to maximize resources, not the least being the precious resource of time. As a management consultant I work with women striving for the elusive goal of work-life balance. While trying to be effective in the workplace, securing and advancing their careers, many are

dissatisfied with the little time and energy left over. Professionally successful, smart women often feel “out of control” with what is most important in their lives—their homes and families.

Women with great planning, decision-making and delegating skills at work seem to turn off a switch when they leave the office, feeling overwhelmed with handling their home lives. In an effort to address this gap, I suggest that they take a “professional” approach to caring for their own homes; helping them recognize that many of the skills that make them effective in the workplace can be applied at home with some natural adjustments. I dialogue with women of all backgrounds, offering educational resources that are practical solutions to a more peaceful, less frenetic home life.

Our homes are so personal that “one size” does not “fit all” and we need to discover what will work best for our own families’ needs. As a result, I focus on listening to individual needs, asking key questions and helping them identify realistic goals for streamlining their daily life at home. Changing the culture can be as simple as helping someone step back and see the lasting value of the apparently mundane challenges of the daily juggling effort; that the small changes that contribute to a more peaceful home environment are worthwhile; and that an optimistic, practical approach to the home and family side of work/life balance is as valuable as professional success.

Mary Hunt is the co-founder of HomeAdvantage Plus, a home management consulting company, and is Academic Dean at Lexington College in Chicago.

Do you have an experience you would like to share about changing the culture in your workplace? Email us at info@murrayhillinstitute.org

Cultural Corner

Why Book Clubs Matter

By Rosemary Kite

If I were to ask 50 women today what their favorite book was as a child, my hunch is that all 50 would be able to tell me in a heartbeat. Each one might even recall where she was when she read it, how old she was, or the lesson she learned from it. Now, imagine that I ask you what your favorite book as an adult is. Or when was the last time you read a really good book? You've already lived through your share of book reports, summer reading lists, and more college reading than you care to recall. But ever since you've started your career, life has become more complicated. Reading, even if it has once been a favorite pastime, has somehow slipped by the wayside. You might pick up every magazine you can get your hands on, but a book symbolizes a serious commitment. Maybe when you retire you can get back to your passion for reading.

That might only be true if you never join a book club, or better yet, start one of your own. Book clubs not only enable you to read more, they "give you permission" to relax a little, enjoy some quiet time, and learn to discuss topics other than the market or a bailout of one kind or another. By making a commitment to yourself (and your book club friends) to read a book a month, you are also committing yourself to your own cultural enrichment and opening your mind to a world of insights and information on topics that you never dreamt could appeal to you.

Book clubs have the added benefit of helping you develop or deepen social bonds by turning acquaintances or colleagues into friends. By challenging you intellectually, not only to understand and appreciate given works, but also to discuss them effectively, you can overcome timidity and improve your communication skills.

Start looking around for an already existing book club that might interest you. Check your place of work, local library or neighborhood center, church or synagogue.

What about a book club of your own?

If you are not able to locate an existing group that has a schedule that works for you, or that has interests similar to your own, dare to be creative and break new ground. Start by defining the parameters for your own book club, such as style or genre of books, frequency or length of meetings, book selection process, or discussion guidelines. You might decide to set other parameters of your own choosing as well, such as whether refreshments will be served, and other considerations, for example, whether only books available in paperback will be discussed, to keep costs down. Remember, the main purpose of your book club is to create an atmosphere that is conducive for discussing the chosen books.

For the next step, you might talk to two or three friends. Tell them of your desire to start a book club and ask them if they would like to give it a try. Share with them the parameters you've already considered. Ask them for their ideas, and also whether they have friends who might be interested in joining the group. Aim for a starting size of between three to ten people. Once you have the fundamentals in

place, you are ready to select some titles.

One way that I have found helpful is to make a list of five or six books for consideration. These might be well-known classics that I somehow missed along my way, or other titles that I've been wanting to read for a long time. I might add one or two titles on topics of general historic or cultural interest that I think could have a broad initial appeal. I don't put them in any particular order, but I write the title, author and perhaps a very brief description of the book and circulate this list via email or otherwise to those who have expressed interest in the book club. Ask everyone to add any other titles they would like to read and return the list to you. This is not the time to "vote" on the titles. Upon receiving everyone's recommendations, a new compiled list goes to each one so that each prioritizes that list according to her tastes. After this final review, the top one, two and three become the books to be read for the first three meetings. For the initial meetings, I recommend planning no more than three months in advance. After that, the group can decide whether they prefer to continue down the prioritized list or revise it. Perhaps the group decides to begin the entire selection process over again for 3, 6 or 9 months. I would not advise scheduling books for more than one year in advance, as people's circumstances and interests may change.

Keep in mind what was said earlier about book clubs helping to explore new fields of knowledge and enhance your cultural literacy. Even if the top three selected books may be historical fiction, a book about modern art and C. S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain*, you can still benefit even if your primary interest is in autobiographies. The

book club is an ideal way to stretch your intellect and imagination to new levels. Hold onto those prioritized lists in case you want to go over them again later as a book club or even read some of the non-selected titles on your own.

Time and Place for Discussion

Give yourselves one full month to read the selected work. If the book is a real "tome," you might want to read it over two months. This allows for more in-depth discussion of the first half and more time to read the second half for a still-better discussion of the entire work.

Determine whether you will meet in someone's home or place of work or at an open-space atrium around your neighborhood that is convenient for all. Have a pre-defined start and end time, such as 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. on the second Monday, or 4:00 - 6:00 on the last Saturday of every month. Give yourself some 10 or 15 minutes to settle in and handle whatever greetings or introductions are necessary, and then dive right into your reason for being together.

A good book discussion might have a start time, but is not always so easy to finish. If you are meeting for 1½ hours, plan on 45 - 50 minutes of solid discussion time. Depending on the book you are reading, you may want to get a general feel for how much the book was liked or disliked, talk about major themes or characters, discuss writing style and the author's skill with metaphors or imagery, etc. Sometimes you might compare and contrast your author's treatment of the topic with other authors from the same generation or from our day. On occasion, the book itself will serve as a springboard for discussing current events in politics, literature or social justice. This need not be problematic

as long as there is no radical change of subject or the group ends up not discussing the book at all.

As the book club coordinator, it is your job to be sure that everyone has a chance to be heard. Encourage all participants to listen and learn as well as add or contradict. You will want to avoid having one person dominate the floor or intimidate those with different opinions. Keep the discussion moving, respectful and on-track. Steer the discourse toward a timely and reasonable conclusion with enough time for some informal chat, refreshments if you wish, and goodbyes. It is better to avoid extending the allotted time for the session simply because some members are enthralled with the discussion. It is more important to respect the agreed-upon timeline so that people don't think they are walking out early or else held hostage till the wee hours. Individuals who want to continue the conversation on the book can meet for coffee or lunch later to pick up where they left off.

With a little planning and management, organizing a book club is not at all complicated and the rewards are great: rekindle your own passion for reading and experience the joy and satisfaction of sharing ideas with others.

Rosemary Kite works as a consultant for non-profit educational foundations and recently starting one of her own. She has been involved in book clubs on and off for the past 15 years.

Listed below are Rosemary's suggestions for books that work well in group discussions.

Classics and Fiction

Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*
C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country*
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose
by Flannery O'Connor
Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Non-Fiction

Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Intelligence at Work*
Harry Beckwith, *Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing*
Robert Coles, *The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child*
The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor
Kevin Ryan & Karen Bohlin, *Building Character in Schools: Practical Ways to Bring Moral Instruction to Life*
Terry Orlick, *In Pursuit of Excellence*

Biographies and Autobiographies

James McBride, *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*
David McCullough, Truman, John Adams or Mornings on Horseback: The Story of an Extraordinary Family, a Vanished Way of Life and the Unique Child Who Became Theodore Roosevelt
Patricia Raybon, *My First White Friend: Confessions on Race, Love and Forgiveness*
Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*
Christopher Nolan, *Under the Eye of the Clock*
C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*
Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy*
The Diary of Anne Frank

Religion and Ideas

Michael Pakaluk, *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*
C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*

Scott Hahn, *Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace*
Walter Cizek, *With God in Russia: My 23 Years in Siberian Prison Camps* (and its sequel: *He Leadeth Me*)
Immaculee Ilibagiza, *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*

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News and Upcoming Events

A New Executive Director for Murray Hill Institute

We are pleased to welcome Rosemary DellaMarco, the new Executive Director of Murray Hill Institute as of November, 2008. Prior to coming to Murray Hill Institute, Rosemary was a Vice President at Banc of America Leasing. She became familiar with the operations of non-profits through her work in financial services lending to healthcare and educational institutions. A native New Yorker, Rosemary is a graduate of Hunter College where she majored in History.

Asked about her vision for MHI, Rosemary had this to say: "Professional work done ethically can make a real change in the environment. The current economic situation gives evidence of the importance of ethical behavior and demonstrates the need to help people realize that they have a personal responsibility to foster a positive work environment by behaving with professional integrity. I'm glad to be part of something that supports that vision."

Rosemary's valuable analytical skills and broad knowledge of how businesses operate bring much expertise to help develop our programs and strategies as MHI begins its second decade.

Connie Kelly to Speak to Young Professionals Group on "Put Your Best YOU Forward"

Connie Kelly, an executive coach and consultant, will be the featured speaker at an Evening of Conversation for Young Professionals on Wednesday, March 25th, 7:30 pm, at Murray Hill Institute. Connie will share her insights on how to convey poise, self-assurance, and confidence: a critical dimension to one's professional persona, whether you are preparing for a job interview, a performance review, or a presentation to your peers.

Visit the Murray Hill Institute's Web site, www.murrayhillinstitute.org, for more information. To reserve a space email, info@murrayhillinstitute.org.

On Wednesday, May 13, Vanessa Cognard, Advertising Director, More magazine, will speak on "Developing Relationships Across Generations."

The Young Professionals Evenings of Conversations are part of the Mentoring Program at Murray Hill Institute. These evenings bring together experienced professionals and young women in the early stages of their careers to share ideas and provide networking opportunities. Last fall, on November 11, Alice Tepper Marlin, President, Social Accountability International, spoke to the group on "Corporate Social Responsibility." On December 12, the young professionals group enjoyed an evening of flute, violin, and piano music followed by Christmas caroling.

Fashion Forum

Fashion Forum, a partner of Murray Hill Institute, is a non-profit organization for young women that explores fashion and related industries, and promotes those positive

trends, which uphold the dignity of women. In this brief report, the Public Relations Director for the group gives an account of recent and upcoming activities.

Fashion Forum is in the middle of another trend-setting season with their 2008-2009 events. Taking a hint from the NY runways, we had fun with feathers - learning from the crafty Molly Gee how to make oh-so-fashionable feather headbands from affordable materials. Each of the attendees came away wearing a big smile and their own colorful creation. I even wore mine to the second annual wine-and-cheese reception hosted by Alderton House to benefit Fashion Forum! We had a great crowd and great time, sharing the mission and vision of Fashion Forum. This year's reception also featured guest keynote speaker Amanda Ferrer, knit designer at Adrienne Vittadini, and young designer Satsi Khalsa, whose evening dresses several board members wore at the event. With the word out, we hope to attract more great talent to share their knowledge and passion and more young women to learn and benefit from them. Every introduction, word of advice, and penny helps!

In November, Fashion Forum hit the streets and took a field trip into Brooklyn to tour the studio of Domestic Construction, a company created by that dynamic duo Trish & Maureen, whose creativity reaches as far as fashion, housewares, and even wall surfaces. Trish took us through the ins-and-outs of a successful marketing strategy for a self-owned business, especially with a brand as distinctive as Domestic Construction, voted #1 designers in decor on the acclaimed trend website Daily Candy!

2009 started off with a bang when Bethany, fabric buyer for Oscar de la Renta, explained in our January event the entire process of fabric from thread to dress. She wowed us with samples from an array of fabrics, stories about Oscar, and the sculptured Oscar de la Renta skirt that she wore to the event.

We have a great line-up for the spring: expanding our repertoire with interior design, getting hands-on practical with chic and affordable shopping strategies. And we'll also be bringing back the highly-successful Prom Panel, now in its second year, which not only gives fashion tips on dress, hair, makeup, accessories, (and even etiquette!), but also offers a refreshing view of the real core and meaning of prom: expressing our own inner beauty and sharing the evening with our friends.

For comments, suggestions, or further information, email us at nyfashionforum@yahoo.com

Angela Reckart

A Philosophical Perspective on Competitive Sports with Paul Gaffney

The winter 2009 lecture in Murray Hill Institute's Culture and Core Beliefs lecture series, which took place on Friday, February 6, 2009, dealt with "Sports and the Good Life: The Meaning of Athletic Competition." Paul Gaffney, Chair of the Department of Philosophy, St. John's University, explored the philosophical question of why sports matter. A brief answer may be given by saying that they are inherently meaningful. Athletic competition sets up a relationship between two or more persons where the conscious intention is to defeat the opponent. Only the opponent gives us the opportunity to be a champion. We enter into a competition to become a

winner. In order to better understand the nature of athletic competition, Prof. Gaffney gave a brief description of two philosophical positions regarding human struggle: the Hobbesian position where physical survival and the restless desire for power are all-important, and where the opponent would be seen merely as an obstacle, since what would matter would be the goods attained after the victory; and the Hegelian position where two spirits or human beings confront each other, seeking recognition. In the Hegelian model, each human being wants to prove himself, each needs to be acknowledged. The encounter between the two is intrinsically valuable since the self realizes his being through the opponent. The real self is in relation to the other. In a Hegelian understanding of athletic competition nothing is at stake except recognition.

Athletic competition then is not about external values such as money, neither is it, according to this interpretation, utilitarian, as the practices of law and politics can be. To give an example of the kind of recognition that is meant here, Plato's description of the philosopher as an "athlete with words" can be of service: there can be a kind of genuine intellectual combat whereby two persons try to defeat each other with a better argument; the best argument wins out and is recognized as such. Whatever external prize there may be is not what is important but rather the activity itself that is excellent. When athletic competition is seen in this way, then the athlete can be considered a representative type for mankind because of the many virtues needed to foster excellence in competition with others.

Prof. Gaffney kindly provided a copy of his talk for the Murray Hill Institute

Resource section of our website. To read a copy of the talk, visit www.murrayhillinstitute.org.

Alice Ramos

Women in Media

Mirta Ojito, Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, spoke to the Women in Media group during an Evening of Conversation on Wednesday, February 11, 2009. Her topic, "The Journalist and the Immigrant; Reporting on the Self" explored ways that a journalist's personal background can serve as a positive influence on his or her reporting. Mirta gave us a compelling account of her emigration to the United States from Cuba at age 16, and her subsequent experiences as a young journalist at the *Miami Herald* and later at *The New York Times*. She had the opportunity to cover Cuba in 1987, and returned to cover Pope John Paul II's trip to Cuba in 1998. Both of these experiences strengthened her conviction that the work of reporting and writing is enhanced if the reporter knows something about the topic and can bring insights, depth, and nuance to the situation being covered. Fair and balanced reporting is paramount and can be strengthened, rather than hampered, by a point of view. Mirta has captured many of her experiences in her well-received memoir, *Finding Mañana*, published in 2005 by The Penguin Press.

Internships Needed!

The Rosedale Center, a supplementary educational center in the South Bronx and a partner of Murray Hill Institute, runs a Job Training Program for high school girls each summer. Rosedale is seeking partnerships with companies who would like to host a full-time or part-time high school intern for the month of July 2009. All interns are

carefully screened by the Rosedale staff and are given supplementary training and mentoring throughout the program to ensure that the experience is a productive one for both the host company and the intern. This is a great opportunity to help an aspiring inner city student gain work experience and refine her career goals. Companies who have participated in the program in the past are universally positive about the experience. If you know of any companies that would be interested in participating, or would like to find out more about this opportunity, please contact Alice Trimmer at atrimmer@sbef.org.