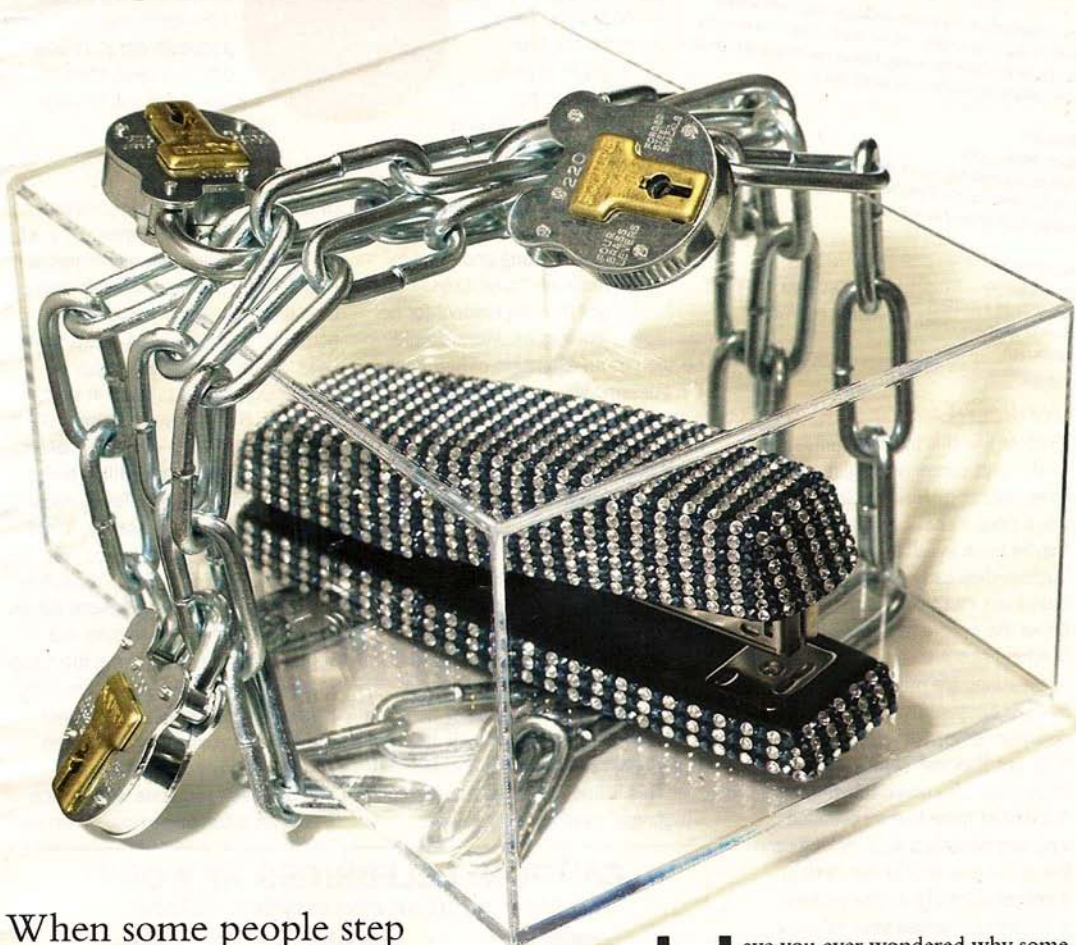


WARNING:

Weirdos at work!

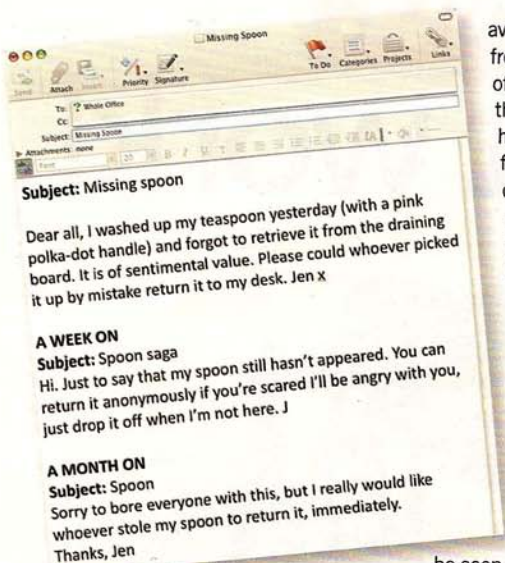


When some people step through the office door, they temporarily leave their sanity on the pavement outside. But if you thought *your* workplace was bad, take a look at this lot and be very, very thankful

By **Catherine Gray**

Photograph by **Paul Bowden**

Have you ever wondered why some of your co-workers appear to go through a magical portal, minutes before work, arriving minus their marbles? Us too. Arsey emails about missing staplers, bonkers orders from our boss and a whole host of habits so far from office-appropriate it's truly baffling. Let's leave it to one rather uptight colleague of ours to demonstrate the point perfectly in a series of genuine emails... ►



avoid washing up," says Suzy from Bristol. "She'll buy a pint of milk, use what she needs then dump the carton into her bin, where it festers for the rest of the day. She has no shame. Even when the firm brought in pest control to put mouse traps around the office, it didn't stop her."

98%
of people say stealing food is the No 1 office crime

learning how to please your boss is a killer career strategy. But some bosses bully and push to see what they can get away with. If they're not asking you to buy their children's birthday presents in a grateful, apologetic way, and these requests are spiralling out of control, start to assert what you should/shouldn't be doing."

A WEEK ON

Subject: Spoon saga
Hi. Just to say that my spoon still hasn't appeared. You can return it anonymously if you're scared I'll be angry with you, just drop it off when I'm not here. J

A MONTH ON

Subject: Spoon
Sorry to bore everyone with this, but I really would like whoever stole my spoon to return it, immediately. Thanks, Jen

"Lazy or slatternly colleagues have probably been in their jobs about a year too long and need to move on," says Lees. "This girl has lost respect for her colleagues. Work should

be seen as an extension of home, and I'm guessing she would never pull a stunt like this there. It's a mini-rebellion from responsibilities she can't evade at home, but it won't do her work relations any favours."

Take a deep breath...

Shouty signs on the fridge. Tirades about the printer. Mug wars. Why are we consumed by such tiny things at work? Partly because we're spending time with people we wouldn't normally, thus they wind us up, says Lees. "Plus, frustration or lack of motivation manifests itself in petty wrangles. But believe me, these don't go unnoticed by the decision-makers."

In these redundancy-filled times, a ranty email or a catty Tweet about your colleagues could see you shoot to the top of the 'for the chop' list. "At the very least," says Lees, "fastening onto things like missing spoons makes you the butt of jokes, plus no one wants to look as if they have too much time on their hands. Before you send a vitriolic email, read it to yourself first to rant-proof it," advises Lees. "And try to say how you feel in person – no one likes someone who is nice to your face but aggressive on email."

Verdict? Career suicide

"People like this live in a fantasy land," says career strategist John Lees, author of *How To Get A Job You'll Love*. "They believe they're in an invisible bubble: they can see out, but others can't see in. Often the people who are fanatical about their possessions are put upon by their bosses. They feel disempowered. They can't control that; but they *can* control their stationery. It's classic transference. A friend of mine had a colleague who was obsessed with locking up the entire contents of her desk in a drawer each night. She crossed a line when she was seen taking a half-drunk glass of water out of it."

Lees says there are five main types of infuriating behaviour: chronic laziness, the aforementioned possessiveness, forced intimacy, aggression and unacceptable demands from the boss. And the *really* terrifying thing? You never know when one of these types could be coming to a desk near you!

Chronic laziness

"My colleague is so idle, she buys paper bowls for her morning cereal to

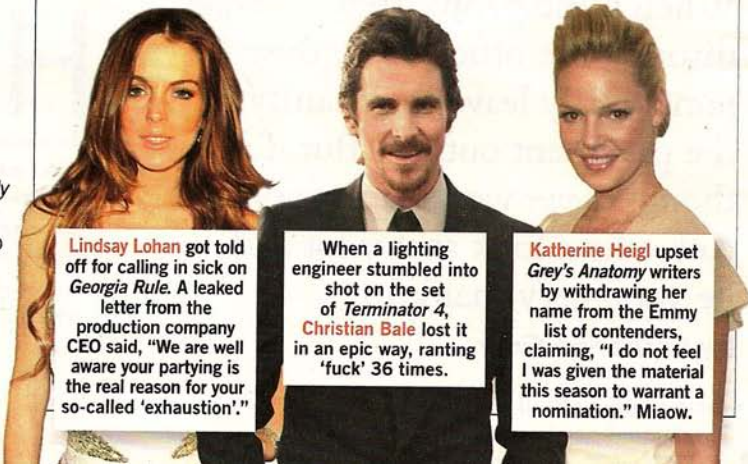
32%
of women have quit jobs because they despised their workmates

Dotty demands

"In the past few weeks my boss has asked me to clean deodorant off her top, ask around for tampons (saying they're for me) and swap her flats for my heels so she'd look glam at a lunch," says Lily from Dorset. "This is one of the most difficult situations," says Lees, "because

CAUTION: CELEBRITIES AT WORK!

'9-5 fever' doesn't just affect us civilians, you know...



Lindsay Lohan got told off for calling in sick on *Georgia Rule*. A leaked letter from the production company CEO said, "We are well aware your partying is the real reason for your so-called 'exhaustion'."

When a lighting engineer stumbled into shot on the set of *Terminator 4*, Christian Bale lost it in an epic way, ranting 'fuck' 36 times.

Katherine Heigl upset *Grey's Anatomy* writers by withdrawing her name from the Emmy list of contenders, claiming, "I do not feel I was given the material this season to warrant a nomination." Miaow.