

# JOBWISE

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## ASK THE GOOD GIRLS

WITH LESLIE WHITAKER

### BALLISTIC BOSSES

Dear Good Girls,  
I am terrified of my boss. I never know when she is going to come into my office and explode. I've gotten so anxious that I call in sick just to avoid seeing her, and I've never done that before. I've started looking for another job. Are there less drastic options?

Dear Reader,

Certainly it's time to start job hunting, but you may be able to solve this one without having to quit. While your boss's blow-ups may seem random, there may be a pattern. "Usually there is one," says Harvard Business School professor John Kotter. For example, some bosses don't take kindly to bad news.

If the pattern continues to elude you, seek out the insights of trustworthy peers and even higher ups. They might have more insight into your boss's situation and be able to suggest preventive action.

Once you have determined what might trigger the outbursts, ask for a meeting with your boss and present your concerns "innocently," Kotter suggests. Ask her about the best way to handle problem areas going forward. "What you're really saying is, I

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### POP GOES THETENURE

The median tenure with an employer for 55- to 64-year-olds has decreased by 2.3 years since 1983 - the largest drop in any age category.

**1983** 12.2 years  
**2004** 9.9 years

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Census Data

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By MARY FONTS  
CONTENT THAT WORKS

This spring, thousands of college seniors will toss their caps into the air at graduation ceremonies across the country, embarking on what they hope will be a bright, financially stable future. After all, they've earned a degree, doesn't that guarantee a decent, or at least a high-paying job?

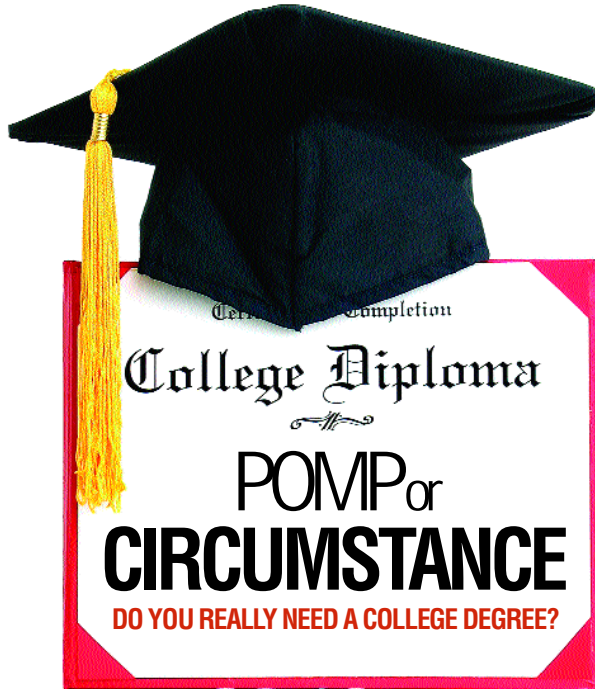
Not necessarily. For many years, we've heard reports that a person with a college degree will automatically make more money than someone without one. According to the Princeton Review online, a study conducted by the Census Bureau and Department of Labor in 2002 found that an individual with a high school diploma will average 1.2 million dollars in total income over their lifetime; a person with an Associate's degree will earn 1.6 million and a person with a Bachelor's degree will earn around 2.1 million.

But Marty Nemko, author of "The All-in-One College Guide" (Barron's, 2004) and "Cool Careers for Dummies" (For Dummies, 2001), says that data is misleading. "Most of that data is retrospective," says Nemko. "In the 60s, yes, a person with a degree made more money than a person without one, but that's becoming less and less the case." Nemko says many jobs that used to require degrees are being shipped offshore or are using technology instead of humans. With the exception of computer jobs such as a program system analyst, the job market for college grads is "highly competitive" and therefore alters the old statistics.

"I would bet that these days, a person who becomes a good electrician, a carpenter or a robotics repair person will earn more over their lifetime than the typical liberal arts undergraduate with a sociology, women's studies or even psychology degree," Nemko adds.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 68 percent of high school graduates make the leap to four-year colleges, the highest percentage in history. Often, the choice to go to college is one that high school seniors are pushed into by parents or peers, and it is a decision made without understanding the other options available to someone wishing to continue education after high school. A lot of the kids at my school are choosing to apply to Ivy League colleges. They are so focused on getting in, they don't even know why they want to go," says Catherine Herzog, a senior at Evanston Township High School in Evanston, Ill.

Vocational schools - often referred to as



private trade schools or community colleges - are a solid choice for many students, namely due to finances. According to the Department of Education, a Bachelor's degree student averages a bill of \$8,655 each year for tuition, room and board. That doesn't count books, tutors or basketball games, either. On the contrary, vocational

schools provide career training in half the time of a four-year college and, according to Marty Nemko, are cheaper, more flexible (most don't adhere to a 2-semester cycle) and often "do a wonderful job."

Nemko says there is no singular step that suits all graduates. Steven Spielberg, John D. Rockefeller, Walt Disney and

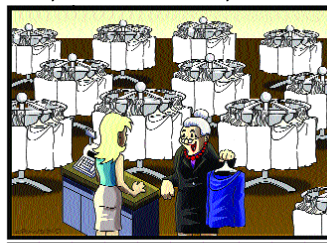
Madonna never attended college.

Ryan Allis is proof-positive. CEO of both Broadwick Corp., a provider of the permission-based e-mail marketing software and Virante, Inc., a web marketing and search engine optimization firm, Allis has turned

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### ALL IN A DAY'S WORK ...

Written by MATTHEW M. F. MILLER Illustrated by ORION JOHNSON



"Excuse me, does this blouse come in white?"

### LEARN A NEW BODY LANGUAGE

WHY SHRUGS WILL SABOTAGE YOUR EMPLOYMENT AMBITIONS

By PATRICIA RIVERA  
CONTENT THAT WORKS

You spend weeks polishing a resume so that it portrays you as innovative and resourceful - and d & s in preparing intelligent responses to curveball questions.

But on the day of the interview, without saying a word, you come off as immature or impatient in a matter of seconds. What went wrong?

Blame it on your body language, an often-underestimated form of communication.

"People invest too much into words over all nonverbal communication," said Sherry Maysonave, an image consultant based in Austin, Texas and author of "Casual Power: How to Power Up Your Nonverbal Communication and Dress Down for Success" (Bright Books, 1999). "You really need to be aware of the little things like



the shrug of the shoulder that tells someone you don't know what you're talking about or, worse yet, that you don't care."

As the old saying goes: Actions speak louder than words, and interviews are no exception. In

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# GOOD GIRLS

**A new job might not be the best answer to a tyrant of a boss**

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want to be a better subordinate! Sometimes this works very nicely," he says. "And if she tells you something you can do, follow through."

If the situation remains unchanged, can you request a transfer? If not, you'll be happy you've already begun to polish your resume.

## SLOB ON BOARD

**Dear Good Girls,**  
I own a small company with 15 employees. Eight of them do their jobs on the telephone. Last year, I hired a woman with many years of experience to be their supervisor.

Recently, I gave her a performance review praising her work. However, I had to point out an area that needed improvement: her appearance. Although we are business casual, this supervisor wears clothes that are worn out, too big for her and too casual for any office environment. When we have expected clients in our offices I have reminded her to dress more appropriately, and she will wear black pants and a large ill-fitting sweater.

After the performance review, I had hoped she would purchase some better-looking outfits, but she has not. I do not want to fire her because she does a good job. What do I do?

Dear Reader,

Professional image consultants suggest dressing up your criticism in constructive clothing. Start off by producing a written dress code to give your employees a clearer idea of your definition of "business casual." In addition to giving examples of acceptable outfits contrast them with attire you would consider "weekend casual" and thus not welcome in the office. "If you say something like 'that's really for the weekend,' you are making your point without undermining a valuable employee," notes Linda Thomas, founder of Powerful Appearance, a Dallas-based corporate consulting firm.

Another option is to ask your local Macy's, Nordstrom or other favorite department or specialty-clothing store to host a free "dress for success" seminar for your employees. Anxious to boost sales, many retailers are willing to oblige.

Susan Bixler of Professional Image Inc., a consultant to Avon Products and other corporations, suggests taking a "book group" approach. Purchase copies of a book that you think would boost your employees' business acumen and discuss it as a company. Bixler suggests her own book, "The New Professional Image, 2nd Edition" (Adams Media, 2005). Another possibility is "What the CEO Wants You to Know" (Crown Publishing, 2001) by Ram Charan.

Bixler notes that dressing well boosts employees' performance, whether they work face-to-face or on the telephone. She claimed to be dressed up during our phone interview... Oops... Guess it's time to trade in those jeans and sneakers.

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*Got a problem at work? Leslie Whitaker, coauthor of The Good Girl's Guide to Negotiating, would like to hear from you. Send Leslie an e-mail at good-girls@contentthatworks.com or write to P.O. Box 5063, River Forest, IL 60305*

# BODY LANGUAGE

**It's not what you say, but how you portray, that can make the job**

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fact, human resources professionals are often trained to look for the non-verbal cues that better define a candidate.

"They want to go beyond the words and see what you really are like so they look for visual indicators," Maysonave says.

Small gestures greatly influence a listener's impression of a speaker. University of California psychologist Albert Mehrabian found in a classic study of communications that listeners derive 55 percent of any message from non-verbal cues, including body language, eye contact, gestures and appearance. Only seven percent of any message comes from the words used by the speaker while 38 percent comes from the voice.

Be warned that hiring managers look for revealing signs before they even shake someone's hand. If

you're caught pacing in the lobby as you wait you could be deemed too nervous. Employers want someone who can exert confidence during critical moments.

Once you're greeted, extend a firm handshake that says, "I'm alive, I'm here and I'm confident," Maysonave says.

Men should be careful of how they interact with women. "If you're dealing with an HR woman and you give a soft, tentative handshake because that's what you've been taught, then you may be in trouble," says Marion Gellaly, founder of Powerful Presence, a Monterey, Calif.-based image management consulting firm.

Weak handshakes imply a meek and ineffectual personality. Take care not to appear too dominant either. A person who, during a handshake,

turns the palm down so that his or her hand is on top gives the impression of trying to dominate.

As you sit to answer questions about your strengths, make sure your body language does not betray you. Here's what experts suggest:

**FACE:** Show enthusiasm by maintaining eye contact and keeping an interested expression. Watch for the unconscious gestures. A tightly pursed mouth shows a closed, judgmental person. Excessive blinking expresses nervousness. Avoiding eye contact can convey dishonesty.

**TORSO:** Lean forward while relaxing your posture, but not too much. A slouching figure may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect as well as a lack of interest. A rigid posture may mean that someone is anxious or uptight. Maintain a space of about three feet from the interviewer to

avoid being too invasive.

**ARMS, HANDS AND LEGS:** Sit comfortably with hands on the table and feet on the floor. Avoid showing nervousness by clenching or wringing your hands. Twirling your hair or flipping it in provocative fashion is another no-no. Men and women should avoid crossing their legs; men should not sit with their legs too wide apart.

Gellaly suggests that you practice at home in front of a mirror or ask someone to videotape you during a mock interview.

"Look to see if you're fidgeting with a pen or ringing your hands," she says. Those nervous mannerisms may raise questions about a seemingly intelligent professional with a polished resume.

"Body language is often a universal language," Gellaly says. "If there is a disconnect between what you say and your body language, people will tend to believe what they see."

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*Freelance writer Patricia V. Rivera writes frequently on business and workplace issues from Dagsboro, Del.*

# COLLEGE

**How does a degree equate to success?**

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two ventures into million dollar successes without a college diploma. In fact, this 20-year-old Bradenton, Fla. wiz did it before he had a high school diploma. So what does a millionaire Internet entrepreneur do as an encore? Head to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, to major in economics, of course.

"I finally decided to go for two reasons. First, in addition to marketing and entrepreneurship I was very interested in development economics and reducing poverty in developing nations, and knew I would not be able to get far in these fields without a degree. Secondly, I hope to be able to get an MBA one day," says Allis.

With bigger goals in mind, Allis realized that to achieve his humanitarian goals, education was a necessary step, although an unorthodox move for someone already deemed a success.

The business he started at age 11,

however, remains in his future.

"I plan to continue to build Broadwick and Virante for a few

years, then go off to Harvard or Stanford for MBA school. After that, I'd like to continue my career as a serial entrepreneur," he says.

Ultimately, the choice is an individual one. If you earned As and Bs in high school, have at least a 1350 SAT or 20 ACT, have a sense of career direction and believe that future debt is worth the educational rewards, a four-year college is likely the right choice. College, as most grads will tell you, is not just about studying a particular subject, but also about creating one's world view and cultivating a sense of self.

If you disliked school, got average grades and still don't know whether you want to be a Zoologist or a retail clerk, put down the college application - Mary Nemko says college is just one route toward a successful life; take your time and make the choice that is right for you.

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*Mary Foss is a Chicago-based freelance writer.*