

## Be yourself at work but watch your back

BettyJo Bouchey Workbytes

Published 1:00 a.m., Sunday, May 16, 2010

I like Time magazine, its hard-hitting news and pop culture with a sprinkle of sarcasm and entertainment. I often find myself wondering why some of the information contained in this little weekly nugget didn't reach me in other ways. I find myself reveling in the thought that I am empowered with this new information to potentially improve my life -- or dazzle someone with at a cocktail party, whichever comes first.

So, it is with this literary fervor that I read the issue that outlines the most innovative companies and ideas around the world. Half of the goods and services that I'm told will change the life of my child and his children I can't even pronounce, but they all sound wonderful.

I read on even more fascinated with the "what if" of technology when a chief executive officer from a technology company in France is being quoted on how his hard-hitting style had softened over the years. His beautifully appointed headshot exudes manly confidence and a polish that could possibly be mistaken for veneer. I must've been distracted by his glitzy appearance because I had to re-read the word he used three times before it really hit me: "Bossnapping".

He uses it as part of why he has softened his management approach; he uses it as easily as we might say "diversity training." I don't mean to minimize everything he said because the whole bossnapping thing wasn't all he talked about, but it took me a full five minutes to come to the understanding that bosses get kidnapped in France.

Employees actually swipe their bosses in the dead of night in the hopes of bargaining on a contentious issue or to humiliate them for firing someone. It reminds me of that movie with Lily Tomlin, Jane Fonda and Dolly Parton from 1980 in which they kidnapped Dabney Coleman. I wonder if "9 to 5" is running on French television too much these days.

Even more, I wonder how a trend like this would play out in America.

I can only imagine the impact if people were actually scared to take the corner office. The crippling effect on business growth and sustainability would be inevitable if employees just took matters into their own hands.

And then I think to myself that employees actually do kind of bossnap every day, perhaps just not physically. American employees who don't get what they want mince words, take comments out of context, sue, defame and otherwise stunt the movement of their bosses all the time.

I remember the first time I was bossnapped the American way. The feeling of betrayal and

helplessness was overwhelming. The tale that was reported to human resources was so tall that it was practically unfathomable to me. I just kept trying to figure out what I must've done to this person to make him go to such lengths to ruin me professionally and personally.

Martyrdom aside, I can't help but compare this to the experiences of those bosses in France, though I never felt I was in physical jeopardy as some of those bossnap victims must've.

Apart from my peers, this was the defining moment when my professional life departed from my personal life. It was sobering to have to back away like this, but necessary and in the long run, this lesson has served me well.

So, has the American version of bossnapping softened me over the years? I suppose it has in some ways, but not fundamentally. I still make work as much fun as it can be while keeping in mind that my words and actions can easily be misconstrued or used against me.

I'm certainly more aware of my exposure than I was before the event I mentioned above. But on the weekends? Well, that's when I'm all "Jo" all the time. Life wouldn't be worth living if we couldn't be ourselves around those we love and trust -- and you can trust that sometimes you have to love me to put up with the real me!

NextGen Workbytes is written locally by and for Gen Xers learning the realities of the workplace. Bettyjo H. Bouchey is vice president of campus operations at Empire Education Corp. in Albany, and is involved with a local young professionals' group.

---

#### **President Lowers Mortgage**

If you owe under \$729k you probably qualify for the Govt Refi Program.  
[www.MortgageRatesExperts.com](http://www.MortgageRatesExperts.com)

#### **Raspberry Pill Melts Fat?**

"Celebrity Doctor Exposes One Weird Fruit That Melts Fat Fast..."  
[PureRaspberryKetone.com](http://PureRaspberryKetone.com)

#### **Apartment Deals for You**

View Thousands of Cheap Apartments. View Videos, Photos, Floor Plans!  
[ForRent.com](http://ForRent.com)

**Ads by Yahoo!**