



Cut! Print!

Autumn is here ... and here in great style! Day after day we are enjoying beautiful clear blue skies, and the dampness that has been clinging to us all summer has finally disappeared. And of course, the thermometer is falling day by day, and we can now enjoy crisp and cool temperatures.

'Enjoying' is the word I use for this season, but the ladies here in the workroom have other views. All I hear from them recently, day after day, is "It's getting so cold!" And this is inevitably followed by "Dave, *do* something!" Meaning, get the room heater ready ...

Well, that will come in due time, perhaps next week. My own preference is to delay getting the heater ready for as long as possible, because once we have deployed it we have no further 'ammunition' to use against the cold. We're looking at around five months (or more) of chilly temperatures, so the longer we can postpone the 'official' start to winter, the better.

But there is another aspect to this season that is affecting our work - absences due to people calling in sick are far more frequent at this time of year. Over the past few weeks, this has increased to the point where I now sit and wait each morning for the phone calls to come in. Who will it be today?

Now on the one hand, this isn't really a big problem for me financially, because the ladies training here as printers are being paid either by the hour, or by the amount of work they produce, so either way I don't have to pay them for the days that they are not here. But that doesn't help us build up our catalogue of prints for sale, and as we have a very large amount of work on our plates just now, each lost day is another day that the deadlines draw closer with no progress being made.

If they were full-time employees, we would have to start keeping track of 'sick days', and comparing them against the legally permitted amounts, and I suppose the phone calls would be more difficult - is this person *really* sick, or just using up a legally mandated sick day? But perhaps due to the fact that there are no legal obligations in our situation, they really seem to make these calls quite casually; "I have a cough Dave, I won't be coming in this morning ..." And there is no possible response I can make except, "OK. See you tomorrow ... I hope!"

I want them all to be more like me, and I don't just mean better printers! I myself *never* take days off because I feel 'sick'; my own 'ethic' says that you don't avoid work for something as trivial as catching a 'cold'. And as for staying away so that you don't spread it to other people, I basically have the opinion that we are all going to get these things anyway, so it's just not worth trying to avoid it.

But speaking about this now reminds me of my experience with my first full time job, back in my early twenties. I had been given a job by the owner of a music shop, and this man actually had not wanted to hire me, but did so only out of obligation to a friend of his who had asked him to 'give Dave a chance'. The owner fully expected that I wouldn't be suitable, and could be let go after the passage of a trial period (to satisfy his friend).

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I began work enthusiastically, and was making - I thought - a good impression on the owner, but part way through the first week, disaster struck. I woke up one morning under the influence of a truly vicious flu. I couldn't possibly go to work; it was impossible to escape from the bathroom for more than a couple of minutes at a time.

So I had to bite the bullet and make one of those phone calls. I was hugely embarrassed about this, and I suppose I tried to make my voice sound as 'sick' as possible. (Probably only succeeding in making him think I was acting up!)

If I were to meet him now, we could laugh about this episode, because as it would turn out, that was the last time that I was ever to make such a call in the ten years that I worked for him.

So it's no joke; I'd like to hire more people like me! Where can I find some?

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