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REAL LIFE: DANA KNIGHT

OK, it's 2007 now. What changes does it hold for the office?

Is it possible that the cell phone—a tiny techno piece of annoyance, singing tunes to remind us we are constantly plugged into the office—could be turned off in 2007?

Is it allowed? Do cell phones even have off buttons? Evidently, yes. And evidently this year just may give that mobile pest a break.

“People will make a conscious effort to slow down,” says Marian Salzman, who has predicted several workplace trends for 2007. “Not putting (the) cell phone on the table during lunch will be a real statement about giving undivided attention.”

Just think of a lunch where your client or boss has the cell off (no vibrating allowed). You are important enough to them that other things can wait.

It's just one trend for the office in 2007, according to Salzman, one of the world's leading trend spotters. In a nutshell, that means she makes predictions based on cold hard facts and anecdotal information. She outlines them in a book she co-authored called “Next Now: Trends for the Future.”

But Salzman isn't just an author. She also is executive vice president and chief marketing officer for the largest advertising agency in the United States, J. Walter Thompson. She knows a little about a workplace (hers has 9,000-plus employees). Take a look at how she says you may see things change this year:

THE BLUR GETS BLURRIER (BUT BETTER).

Many employees complain that the line between work and home life is blurred. With computers, Blackberrys and such, it's tough to distinguish when you actually get off work. There's good news.

Salzman says if work travels home with us, home will travel to work with us as well. Watch for more employees

to do home banking, book vacations, instant-message friends and research their kids' homework at the office. After all, it's only fair since later that night they will be crunching numbers for work over dinner with the family.

MAY I TAKE YOUR ORDER?

You aren't at the office and you aren't working from home, but you are working. Where?

“Starbucks, Kinko's, Office Depot,” says Salzman. “People go to escape.”

She calls it the in-between office. The place where you can plug in, either to get away from the pesky co-workers and get work done or (for those who work from home) make some human contact.

“Even if you're just hearing someone say, ‘Hi, can I get you a latte?’” she says. “At least you feel more connected.”

HONEY. I'M HOME.

American workers have done a great job of making time for children but a lousy job of staying connected to their mates. While 2007 won't see people taking more vacation time, it will reveal people using it in a different way—for couple time.

“We'll see short couple vacations,” she says. “A four-day trip to the mountains.”

DUDE, THAT'S MY STAPLER.

Workers are going to exert more power over their space. With more offices boasting open designs (so open you basically are sitting in the middle of a floor), people will become “hyper-territorial,” Salzman says. They will crave privacy. Expect companies to respond with private rooms and options to get away from it all. Hello, office massage.