

Editor's notes:

How satisfied are you with your job? The question was presented to American workers and the results indicate that Americans seem to be unhappy with their careers these days. A survey of 26,000 people from *Parade* magazine and Yahoo Finance found that almost 60 percent would pick a new career if they could -- perhaps only 27 percent said they think success comes from hard work, while close to 50 percent believe workers get ahead these days through office politics.

The workers also may feel stuck in their jobs for a lot longer. Only 33 percent expect to retire by age 65, and 43 percent plan to keep working until they are about 70. One factor: money. Fifty-three reported having just three months' worth of money saved in case they got fired or laid off, with another 15 percent citing sufficient savings to last four to six months. Right now, more than half of workers would prefer a raise of 5 percent to two extra weeks of vacation.

December comes from "decem," Latin for 10, because it was once the tenth month in the Roman calendar. The son of Marcus Antoninus, Emperor Commodus, tried to rename the month Amazonius in honour of his mistress (whose portrait he had painted as an Amazon), but the attempt failed.

Here are a few dates of note this month:

St. Nicholas Day, December 6 -- In Europe, St. Nicholas is not depicted as the jolly, fat, white-haired Santa who wears a red suit. Instead, Europe's St. Nicholas is a tall, lean man sporting a brown beard, dressed in a long brown robe with a gold belt. "Santa Claus" and his presentation of gifts at Christmas are believed to have derived from the charitable acts of Saint Nicholas.

40th Anniversary of the last manned moon mission, December 7 -- In 1972, three American astronauts launched into space for a three-day exploration of the moon. They came back to Earth on December 19. This was the last of a total of six manned missions to the moon.

Hannukah, December 8 -- An eight-day Jewish holiday beginning at sundown. Hannukah celebrates the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem after the Jewish victory over the Maccabees in 165 B.C. Each night, families light one candle on the menorah, observing the traditional story of how a 1-day supply of oil for the temple's eternal flame burned for 8 days.

*Merry Christmas
from all of us at Helix!*

Auld Lang Syne

On December 31, on the stroke of midnight most of us will be listening to the song: "Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and days of auld lang sye?"

The tune may be familiar but not the meaning of the words. It is a poem in Scots dialect, set to a Scots folk tune. "Auld Lang Syne" can be translated as "long, long ago," or "old long since." It is a song that asks a question that has do do with the nature of being alive. What's more, the song not only asks, it gives an answer.

The great poet, Robert Burns, the Bard of Scotland, wrote the poem in approximately 1788. Burns, who collected old folk tales and poems, wrote that an old man was the inspiration for the poem. Burns found the phrase auld lang syne "exceedingly expressive." The song became a hit throughout Scotland and soon spread to the English-speaking world to mark the new year.

The poem asks: Should those we knew and loved be forgotten and never thought of? Should old times past be forgotten? The answer is clearly given: No, says the song, they shouldn't be. We'll remember those times and those people, we'll toast them now and always. The song emphasizes that the past is important and we mustn't forget it. And while the old has something for us, so does the present. The last stanza is about those who are in your life now: "And there's a hand, my trusty friend, and give a hand of thine, We'll take a right good-will draught for auld lang syne."

There are many movies scenes in which this song is played during a New Year's celebration. The most famous scene is from "It's a Wonderful life." It comes at the end of the film. Friends surround George Bailey who was recently rescued by an angel. Someone bumps against the Christmas tree and a bell ornament makes a sound. George's daughter says, "Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings," and George looks up and winks. "Thanks, Clarence."

Winter Solstice, December 21 -- The shortest day of the year (in terms of sunlight), when the noon sun appears at its lowest point.

New Year's Eve, December 31 -- No better time to start working on those New Year's resolutions.

Learn the career lessons they don't teach in school

Education is a stepping stone to success, but some of the most important lessons aren't taught in school. Here's what you need to learn in order to grow in your career (and in your personal life):

You can't do everything yourself. Don't be a control freak. Learn your limits so you can concentrate on what you do best and delegate the rest to people (or tools) capable of doing as good a job, or better.

You need to understand finance. No matter what field you're in, a basic understanding of how money flows in and out of your organization will help you stand out from your peers and make better professional and personal decisions.

You don't always get a second chance. Failure isn't necessarily fatal, but that doesn't mean you'll get unlimited opportunities to try, try again. Learn to distinguish between foolhardy gambles and reasonable risks, and show that

you're willing to do your best -- but be ready to move on if things don't work out.....

Your attitude is paramount. Stay upbeat, no matter what happens. Not only will employers and co-workers respond to your energy and positive outlook, but you'll be more motivated and productive if you approach your work with optimism and a can-do spirit.

Your boss doesn't have all the answers. Listen to your managers, but remember that they're human, too. They don't always know what to do. Your job is to help them get things done, not dump problems in their laps. Offer solutions and support wherever and whenever you can.

You've got to market yourself. You're responsible for your own success. Most of your managers and colleagues are too busy with their own issues to look out for your career. Look for opportunities to shine, let people know what you're capable of, and be ready to prove yourself.

Pretzels and Religion

You may not think that munching on pretzels is a religious experience, but these three-holed snacks were invented by monks who wanted people to be reminded of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The first pretzels were made from dough left over from their bread baking at monasteries. The earliest pretzels were so large that people could wear them around their necks.

Christmas: December 25

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, but the actual date on which he was born is not known. So for more than 300 years Christmas was observed at varying times of the year -- in January, April, even May. Finally, in the fourth century, Pope Julius I declared December 25 Christmas Day. His reason? The date coincided with the pagan rituals of the Winter Solstice, or Return of the Sun, which the church wished to replace with a Christian celebration.

Happy New Year!

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of our holidays. It was first observed about 4,000 years ago in ancient Babylon. The Babylonian new year, however, began on what is now March 23 -- a logical date, since it is the start of spring, a time for planting seeds. The new year continued to begin in the spring through Roman times, until Julius Caesar established the 365-day Julian Calendar around 46 B.C., in an attempt to synchronize the year with the sun because it takes roughly that many days for the Earth to revolve around our star. The current Gregorian Calendar keeps January 1 as the start of the new year.

*Have a Healthy & Prosperous
Happy New Year!*

Some Coffee Trivia:

Your morning cup of coffee may be a vital daily ritual, but a black caffeinated beverage was once an important element of native culture that's only now being understood by scientists.

European explorers in the 1600s observed native inhabitants imbibing what they called "the black drink" as part of a purification ceremony.

The beverage, brewed with the toasted leaves of the Yaupon holly plant, apparently dominated religious ceremonies in Cahokia, considered North America's first city. Cahokia was located near the site of modern-day East St. Louis from about the year 1050 to 1350, before abruptly disappearing for no clear reason.

Researchers analyzing ceramic pottery excavated from the Cahokia site found residues of the black drink in shell-shaped mugs.

Because the holly it was brewed from isn't native to the region, scientists view its presence as evidence that Cahokia was a hub of trading and commerce, suggesting that the drink was important to the early Native American culture. The brew's presence in the high-quality cups found by archeologists suggests it was highly prized -- perhaps more sacred than a double latté.

A 'Cool' Service Addition

Helix Courier drivers now carry coolers in their vehicles, for clients who require prompt delivery of things that have to be kept cool while in transit. If you have something that needs this type of service, call Sharon at 519-453-0501 to discuss what you need and how we can help you.