

Super Bowl slackers may erode company productivity

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bonanza, of course, for businesses such as bars, restaurants and retailers.

John Challenger, the firm's chief executive, emphasized that his firm isn't trying to

put a damper on the fun or suggest that companies ban betting pools. He acknowledged that some productivity gains can come from a friendlier workplace and higher employee morale.

"We just want to inject a

little sobriety into the discussion around the country, especially here in Chicago," he said in a telephone interview. "In every office, there are sports junkies and others who are caught up in the hoopla around the Super

Bowl. In Chicago ... there might be some offices that grind to a halt."

Overall, Challenger noted: "There are always distractions in the workplace. The Super Bowl is just one more."

Case in point: The Super Bowl isn't even the biggest productivity eroder among U.S. sporting events. That honor goes to the 16 days of March Madness, the NCAA basketball championship

tournament, when many early round games are played during regular working hours.

On the Net:
www.challengergray.com

Parents splurge on kiddie clothes that mimic their own wardrobes

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against anyone's skin, regardless of age. Sure, a T-shirt costs \$28 at Freckle Face, but the mother is used to paying double that for the adult version.

The premium segment of the infant, toddler and preschool market is worth \$14.5 billion in apparel and another \$1.6 billion in shoes, according to consumer strategist Michael Silverstein of The Boston Consulting Group and is growing at least 4 percent a year.

"Children's clothes are emotional to begin with. I sell a lot of mini versions of what mom and dad wear, but not in the bad way, not the way the junior market skews a little sexy. My clothes are sophisticated and tasteful. I'm basically speaking to the customer," Freckle Face's Inmiss said.

At her shop, it is the upscale but not ultra-luxe products that sell best. "I have a lot of shoppers who are more conservative and think about what they're spending. Tea is a brand that does really great clothes at a great price point, and Splendid—oooh—it's so soft. ... I have some people who will get the Splendid T in every color and size. They love it, it feels great and it washes well," Inmiss said.

Modern parents see their children as representatives of a lifestyle they've worked hard to achieve, adds Pilar Guzman, editor-in-chief of Cookie magazine, so it's no surprise that manufacturers and marketers recognize this link, too.

She points to the varied—and sometimes unexpected—labels that offer children's clothes: Burberry, Ralph Lauren, DKNY, Diesel and Roberto Cavalli.

"Cavalli's surprising because it's a very adult and rock 'n' roll brand, but it's fitting because even rock stars have kids."

"The reality is, people are getting married later, having kids later. They have established likes and dislikes," Guzman said.

They also have higher incomes.

Sykes says she has working-mother friends who'd much rather spend their extra cash on their children or their homes instead of themselves. "They still want to look good, but that's not where the splurge is," she said.

"These are indulgences that can be justified because they're for the kids," Guzman agreed. "You buy a fancy stroller with high design because it has safety features and you buy expensive clothes because you can pass them on to the next kid."

She added: "Even regular minivan drivers in regular suburbs are buying Bugaboo strollers. These luxuries can be justified and not feel guilty about having. Mothers like to be sort of selfless in their spending, plus these things jazz up their day a little bit."

And analyst Silverstein notes that often it is more than one person fueling the spending. The grandmother and grandfather have waited 35 years for this first grandchild and they too are affluent and have money to spend.

Inmiss says she tries to offer a range of products, from everyday duds to party clothes, at a range of prices. The overall goal is to have clothes on the racks that look special, not what would be on the shelves of a mass retailer, explains Inmiss, who previously worked in prod-

uct development for Kohl's. Many of the items are exclusive to Freckle Face in the Milwaukee market.

Uniqueness also is what Cristie Schrader strives for with her label Nest, a year-old Seattle-based company.

"We do want to offer pieces that parents can keep as an heirloom," Schrader said. That means a combination of timeless, sophisticated designs and quality materials and construction. "You want to buy something for your oldest child and have it last for your little one," she added.

Among Nest's best-sellers are an eyelet wrap dress, a toddler trench coat and a tunic-style cotton onesie for babies. The onesie she described as "a new look but it's something that you'd never say is so last year."

"I think our customers dress that way themselves. I don't think they sit around and follow the trends. I think they know the key pieces," Schrader said. "I think they're smart."

Even Disney has seen the value of offering more subtle, more upscale baby products. The Walt Disney Signature and Classic Disney lines have a "Euro mentality," describes Donna Sheridan, vice president of apparel, accessories and footwear in North America. "It has a softer palette, pretty colors and cozy fabrics."

The Signature Line is built around the 1930s version of Mickey and Minnie in a delicate watercolor shades with minimal use of logos. Items include cashmere hoodies and blankets that cost upward of \$100.

"You think about Disney, you think about nostalgia and memories. It's relevant to a mother who either wants to do the mini-me or do the nostalgia," Sheridan

Ethnicity a factor in cosmetics choices

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—With hundreds of new beauty products introduced each year, one has to wonder if there's a woman left out there who still has any room left in her cosmetics case.

Yet women of all ages and all skin tones still feel they are missing products that are right for them.

"More than anything, what we hear from consumers is that there is a frustration with trying to find products that work for them," said Karen Grant, a senior beauty analyst at NPD, the consumer research firm.

According to NPD, based on an online study of 5,657 women, 84 percent between the ages of 18-64 have worn makeup in the past year.

Black women are the least likely to use both makeup and skin-care products, Grant reported, and that might be because they probably have the hardest time matching these products to their skin color and treatment needs. They are, however, the biggest users of fragrance.

Overall, Hispanic women are the most likely to use makeup. The number hovers between 86-87 percent across all age groups.

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How's Your Wealth?

When the New Year comes, many of us become very optimistic that our financial situations can be better in the New Year. We may feel that this is the year in which we will get that raise. On the other hand, maybe you are thinking about getting another, more fulfilling job that will allow you to make a difference in the lives of people. Your hope is that not only will you be able to do something that will help others, but that it will also be financially rewarding as well.

Whatever your goal may be, you may have decided that 2007 is going to be the year that you finally go after your dream that you have been putting off for far too long.

But as you come to this point in life where you have decided to create greater financial rewards, what will you do to maintain your enthusiasm and motivation so that you will not give up on your dream a few months or even a few weeks into this New Year?

For example, although you may want a business of your own, or want to create greater financial success or do

something that you feel has significance in the world, how do you know the steps that will take you to the level of financial success that you want?

You need a plan to follow in order to achieve the goal of greater financial success. However, you may be like many who do not know quite where to start. In that case, perhaps you could use some help in creating a plan for your success.

Could use some guidance in discovering some ways of getting on the track to greater financial success? Do you need some ideas for having your own business? How can you train your mind and spirit consistently so that you will not give up on your dream this year? Send an email or call the number at the end of this article for a free consultation.

For more information or a FREE consultation on how to reach your goals for 2007, contact
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