

NEXT



OFFICE HANDBOOK

CHAPTER II: T&E

In an effort to needlessly complicate everyone's lives, the Company has implemented a new automated T&E expense system. Please review these revised procedures for reimbursement.

USER NAME AND PASSWORD: Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to PerfaSoft, our system vendor, being sure to include your full legal name, Social Security number, mother's maiden name, first pet's favorite treat, and the name of the street adjacent to the one you grew up on. An ID and password combination will be mailed to you within 12 to 14 weeks.

REQUIRED FIELDS: In addition to the date and location of each expense (and, for meals, copies of the menu and wine list), please provide the name and contact information of an independent witness (e.g., waitress, spa attendant) who would be willing to corroborate the business purpose of any purchase as well as its estimated ROI.

RECEIPTS: Receipts must be pasted in chronological order on colored construction paper and hand-delivered to Accounting. For expenses involving alcohol or "adult entertainment," submit Form 1292-C to both the legal department and the Company's consulting psychologist. Failure to do so may result in harsh disciplinary action.

REPORTING: The new system is incompatible with Windows versions released after 1996. Employees with newer computers may therefore file reports on one of two dedicated terminals located in the "expenses" cubicle, available until 11 p.m. each work night, next to Accounting.

APPROVAL: Each report requires four approvals, including that of at least one member of the senior executive team. Approved reports then will routinely be rejected by Betty in Accounting for incomplete witness statements and receipts pasted out of order. Employees who submit errorless reports can expect reimbursement in 12 to 14 weeks.

—Ryan Underwood



Consultant Debunking Unit

"Don't Drink the Grape-Flavored Sugar Water . . ." By Martin Kihn

OCCASIONALLY, we come across some jargon so tasteless that even the CDU's hardened palate finds it hard to swallow. Such is the case with the phrase "drink the Kool-Aid," corporate-speak for immersing oneself in a cultlike culture. Appearing in the 1980s and applied to many a dotcom staffer, the expression's persistence proves it wasn't just flavor-of-the-month.

The authors of *Hard Drive* (John Wiley, 1992), a book about Microsoft, quoted one employee observing of his coworkers, "If Bill [Gates] said drink Kool-Aid, they would do it." And *The New York Times* cited one analyst who said of certain Time Warner executives: "The AOL guys have got to stop drinking the Kool-Aid and get on the team."

The Kool-Aid-cult connection was concocted, of course, after the 1978 tragedy in Guyana, where more than 900 followers of Jim Jones consumed a grape-flavored cocktail containing cyanide. It remains the largest modern-day mass suicide on record.

Kool-Aid parent Kraft Foods boldly defends its cherished beverage, proudly proclaiming that "many of today's business leaders" once had Kool-Aid stands. A cartoonish Web site with brash new flavors such as Slammin' Strawberry-Kiwi exhorts thirsty kids to, well, drink the Kool-Aid. And they do—more than half a billion gallons each year.

The CDU wondered: Just what does Kraft think of this business-jargon perversion of its treasured brand? We contacted Kraft's beverage spokesperson, Abbe Ruttenberg Serphos. After a

longish moment, she allowed she had heard of the expression. "But it wasn't even Kool-Aid that was used," she insisted. She referred us to a 1978 *Washington Post* article citing "packets of unopened Flavor-Aid" scattered in the dust at Guyana. Flavor-Aid has been proudly manufactured since 1929 by the Jel Sert Co., which also makes My*T*Fine puddings, Pop-Ice frozen treats, and other fine food products.

Fourteen-hundred miles away, Serphos's position was sweetened by Teresa Kreutzer-Hodson, curator of Nebraska's Hastings Museum, which hosts the world's only permanent Kool-Aid exhibit. "I'm thinking it has a kind of a bad association," she admitted. "But Jones didn't even use Kool-Aid—it was [Flavor-Aid]. The name Kool-Aid is like Kleenex—people don't even think to use it properly."

Invented in the 1920s by a Nebraska mail-order entrepreneur, Kool-Aid was originally sold only in the Midwest. One of its earliest advertisements claimed the confection was "splendid to serve when company drops in."

So it seems from the beginning, people have been asking their company to "drink the Kool-Aid."

[CDUNIVERSITY]

"not on the napkin"—a half-baked notion; a pre-idea

Martin Kihn is author of House of Lies: How Management Consultants Steal Your Watch and Then Tell You the Time (Warner Books)