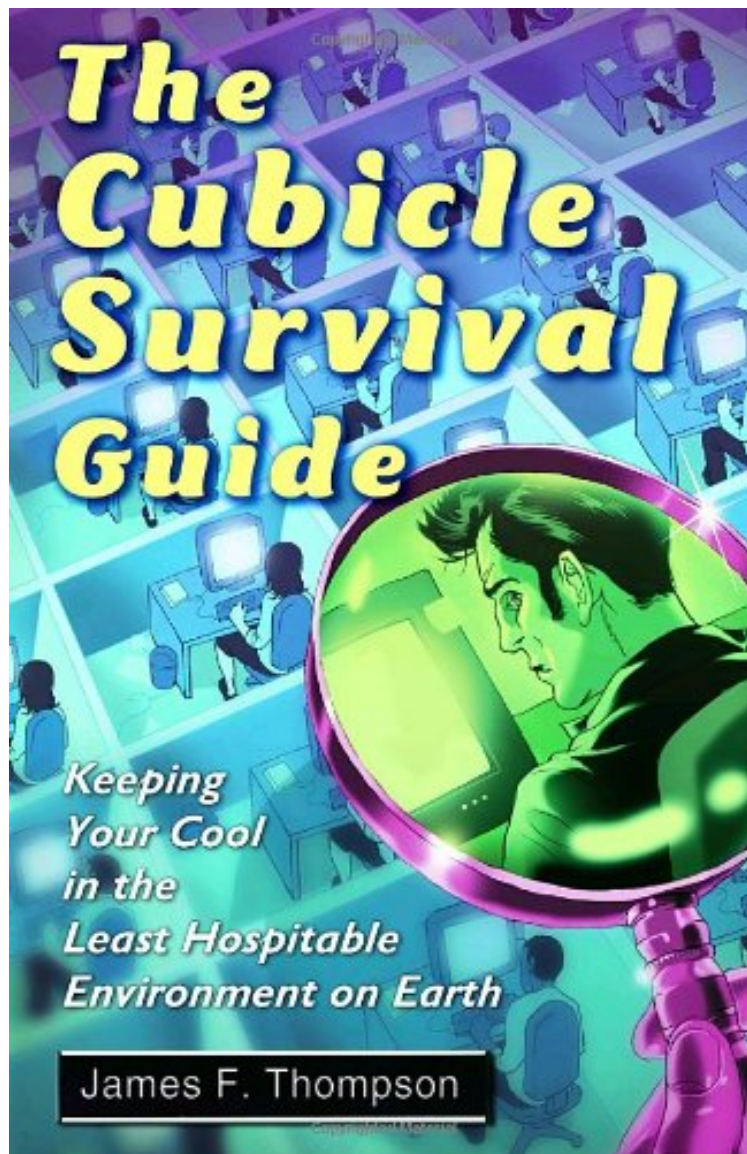


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The Cubicle Survival Guide: Keeping Your Cool in the Least Hospitable Environment on Earth

James F. Thompson

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James F. Thompson : The Cubicle Survival Guide: Keeping Your Cool in the Least Hospitable Environment on Earth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cubicle Survival Guide: Keeping Your Cool in the Least Hospitable Environment on Earth:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. good humorBy Baskin TapkanFun book to read, although I was lost towards the last chapters especially when locking things done in your cube, using "Caution - Yellow Police Tape". It would attract more looks to your area, which counterpoints his claims. Anyway, if someone at your office is out to get you, they will get you. So be aware of your surroundings, and be a good corporate citizen. That is all. And yes, I definitely recommend a Rear View mirror. I have one from a co-worker which was his car's sideview mirror, and it does say "Objects in mirror are closer than they appear". Good book, Mr. Thompson!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Only basic do's and don'ts - not anything additional to truly deal with horrible people that sit around youBy LauraCNot at all the content expected.Only basic do's and don'ts - not anything additional to truly deal with horrible people that sit around you.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. But all's fair in love and cubiclesBy Harsh criticIt's okay. I think it's more of a gag gift book than an actual survival guide. But all's fair in love and cubicles.

Help. . . . Cubicle Life Is Killing Me!Leaving no stone unturned, no ergonomic chair unadjusted, and no leftovers in the communal fridge uneaten, this hilarious guide to cubicle life will be the salvation for the more than forty million Americans stuck in cubicles. By turns uproariously funny and enormously useful, each chapter tackles a different area of cubicle life and includes a "cube tip," a quiz, illustrations, and examples that will have you laughing out loud. Discover• how not to disturb colleagues with unwanted sounds and smells, such as the crunch-crunch of your sour-cream-and-onion chips and the unmistakable odor of your spicy Thai shrimp• how to knock when visiting other cubicles and how to devise politically correct ways of saying "Do not disturb"• the do's and definite don'ts of cubicle decoration• how to set up a security system that will rebuff potential thievesThe Cubicle Survival Guide could very well change your life and set you climbing the corporate ladder to success!** Results not guaranteed. Pay raises and promotions are up to your boss, but using this book couldn't hurt.Praise for The Cubicle Survival Guide:"A spiritual air conditioner for the cubicled soul." — Turk Regan, author of Pimp My Cubicle: Take Your Workspace from Boring to Bling!"James Thompson's The Cubicle Survival Guide offers the rare, and definitely appreciated, combination of laugh-out-loud humor and sound advice for surviving the jungle that is Corporate America. On some days, there's nothing more motivating to fresh air-starved cube dwellers than a book that will simply crack them up. This is that book."— Alexandra Levit, Author, They Don't Teach Corporate in College"If you must work (and I don't recommend it), The Cubicle Survival Guide provides a wonderful way to slack off and stay entertained. You can easily kill two weeks with this book."— Josh Aiello, Author, 60 People to Avoid at the Water Cooler"Thompson provides a humorous yet thought-provoking look at what employees in today's large organizations must deal with besides their jobs."— Malcolm O. Munro, Author, From Cave to Cubicle

From Publishers WeeklyVeteran cubicle laborer Thompson has gotten into every nook and cranny of his subject, the ubiquitous workplace environment known, unofficially, as the "cubicle farm," in this humorous but uneven workplace guide. Chapters cover basics like handling the phone (including how to surreptitiously screen calls) and inter-office communication (never whisper), as well as advanced topics like "Anti-Spy Methods" (equipping one's computer monitor with rear-view mirrors) and maintaining proper posture and blood circulation (through exercises like the "Red-Carpet Chest Thrust" and the "Booger Flick"). Though there are sound tips here, funny stuff dominates—Thompson includes a handy "Stink Pyramid" to measure the relative offensiveness of lunchtime smells like fast food, microwave meals and fish. In other places, advice reads more like filler: when confronted with a coworker's family photos, Thompson suggests that readers "...be sincere, but cautiously so. ... most of us are indeed ugly, warped and possess faces that age like fallen apples on a driveway." True enough, but mere common sense will probably preclude the idea to insult coworkers' loved ones. More an excuse for frivolity and catharsis than a practical resource, this hit-and-miss guide will give cube dwellers plenty to chuckle over in the break room. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.About the AuthorJames F. Thompson is a writer and editor who lives in New York City. He has an extensive publishing background that spans books, travel guides, print magazines, and various online publications. He specializes in arts and culture, travel, food and beverages, sports, humor, history, branding, and business writing. He holds a BA in English from Virginia Tech and an MA in writing from Johns Hopkins University. Thompson has taught English in Japan, ESL in a jail, and literature on an active navy destroyer. He is the author of The Cubicle Survival Guide: Keeping Your Cool in the Least Hospitable Environment on Earth.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Chapter OnePerspectiveOver the centuries humankind has adapted to all kinds of environments and climates. As our surroundings evolve, so do we. Eskimos adjusted to arctic conditions by building igloos and hunting in sealskin canoes. In Los Angeles, where the weather is perfect, people have decided they need to be perfect, too, and survive on green-tea hand lotion and Botox injections. For thirteen hundred years the residents of Inuyama, Japan, have provided for their families with ukai, a traditional style of river fishing that utilizes cormorants on leashes. Nevertheless, despite its impressive history, the human race has had difficulty harmonizing with the proliferation of cubicle environments. Some treat their cube like an Exxon bathroom; others, like a fabric chamber of corporate policy. Perhaps in the future the harsh cubicle landscape won't produce a

homogenized corporate humankind, but an individualistic Australian-like wildlife of humanity, teeming with evolutionary freaks such as the platypus, koala bear, and saltwater crocodile. Yet to envision the future of cubicles, we must take a look at their history. Where did cubicles officially come from? And why? Cubicles were originally designed so that office workers could freely discuss and trade ideas without being tempted to shake hands or exchange pictures of their children. Every dimension of the cubicle partition has a specific, tactical purpose. Though invented back in the 1960s by Bob Probst, a professor of fine arts at the University of Colorado, cubicles became an unpopular cultural phenomenon in America around the same time actual money was replaced by the idea of stock options and entry-level twenty-somethings began renting limousines for no reason other than it was a Saturday night. Today those twenty-somethings drive SUVs, and the only fallout from the fusion-like implosion of the dot-com era is a nuclear winter of cubicle farms inhabited by lithe humans who toil in confined spaces in exchange for compensation. Despite sensitivity training, ergonomic keyboards, and much-needed health insurance that includes psychotherapy, cubicle dwellers can't escape the oppressive monotony and homogenization of their existences. Fear not, The Cubicle Survival Guide is here to help. Shhhh . . . They're NotReal WallsFirst, know your surroundings. Most cubicle dwellers have no idea what their walls are made of or why. Today most cubicles are relatively uniform and constructed from a one- or two-inch steel frame that supports a wood core wrapped in neutrally colored fabric so it can be utilized as a bulletin board. Many cubicles come with various accessory options such as shelves, cabinets, or over-desk storage. However, the characteristic that has made the cubicle omnipresent in capitalistic ventures across the planet is that it is, as one seller puts it, "Easy to assemble and move without tools." In other words, you can reconfigure how and where employees work within minutes. So don't get comfortable. The days of lifelong employment and company loyalty are long gone. Global and national economies are constantly ebbing and flowing, sometimes drastically, which means businesses are, too. They need the ability to adapt and reconfigure their mission statements, their corporate profiles, and, yes, their employee structure. Likewise, employees are often, even in their own cubicles, searching for the next step in their professional lives. Cubicles serve as the drab metaphor and stark, impersonal reality of the modern employee-employer relationship: Expendability rules. This is why one can earn an advanced degree in human resources. Considering America's long love affair with the right to privacy and individuality, it seems paradoxical that forty million of us voluntarily work in cubicles. The traditional American pioneer spirit seems at odds with the reality of our modern culture. So what happened to our American love of distinctiveness? Technology. The cubicle farm, after all, was cultivated around the bumper crop of computer technology. However, before you blame Bill Gates and Steve Jobs for your carpal tunnel and slipped vertebrae, remember that cowboys today use high-tech cell phones to herd cattle and the real James Bond chases enemies of the state across software and bandwidths. So don't despair. You're not the only one interacting with the rest of the world through your computer screen. And you're certainly not the only one who feels depersonalized by the superconnected world we live in. Cubicles are the result of our times, not our personalities. Corporations often have difficulty appreciating individual talents because they focus on the bottom line: how the department is performing as a whole. Most American cubicle dwellers know that business is about profit margins, and they accept this reality. Unfortunately, the folks who communicate with "corporate" often only notice individual office workers when they're doing something wrong. Like eating microwave popcorn and stinking up the hallway. Or inappropriately expressing themselves with sexy calendars, deeply personal screensavers, and outlandish attempts to make their work spaces quaint and comfortable. For some reason even the most intelligent, educated, and well-meaning people cross the invisible corporate line. For example, no one at Cubers International knows that Larry worked fifty-five hours last week. Everyone knows, however, thanks to the picture tacked onto his cubicle wall, that he got trashed last Halloween. Kathy over in Cubers International's executive resources loves going to the beach in a bikini; apparently she got a boob job sometime between the summer of 2004 and 2005. According to the buttons pinned along the top of her cubicle wall, Gertrude Patterson is ultraliberal and collected several souvenirs at the pro-rights rally last month. Her boss, a quiet neo-conservative whose sparse office is decorated with a stuffed largemouth bass, not only silently disapproves of her buttons but is also allergic to the Ecuadorian tiger lily on her desk. He mentions his allergy problem to Carlton Frye in human resources, whom no one knows is not even registered to vote. Though Gertrude will never be fired because no one wants lawyers around, she will also never get a promotion. Decorating her cubicle with touchy political beliefs is in poor taste, and her inability to understand corporate decorum demonstrates a lack of perspective and emotional intelligence. Subconsciously the colleagues she has made uncomfortable will avoid interacting with her. Eventually, upset by her working conditions, Gertrude will quit Cubers International. Unbeknownst to her, she'll quit her next job for the same reasons. And the next. Two years later she'll move back in with her mother and begin collecting stray cats. When the police come to arrest Gertrude Patterson because of neighborhood health code violations, they will find 738 cats, many of them covered in fleas and living in the bedroom walls. When they escort Gertrude into the backseat of the police car, she will sob to an officer, "Life is not fair." She's right. It's not. Especially life in a cubicle. It needs a guidebook. Today Gertrude would be running her own Fortune 500 telecommunications company if only she'd had a copy of The Cubicle Survival Guide. Don't laugh. There is more to your job than how well you work. There's how well you "work." Offices are like casinos in that they are designed around manipulating, controlling, and profiting from human behavior. Make no mistake, where you sit,

the direction you face, the size and dimensions of your workstation were meticulously planned by people you have probably never met. So, welcome: Corporate America has been waiting for you. Being stuck in a cubicle is like being stuck in an elevator. You have to assess the situation, assess the people you are with, and appreciate the circumstances. You may not like the state of affairs, but given the reality you must learn to not only like but also trust, the people you are with. Realize that your lives could go up, down, or nowhere . . . together. The saying goes that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the rest. Well, cubicle farms are the least desirable forms of working environments, except for all the rest. It's true. That is why so many of us agree to work in them. But keep it together. Our fantasies are just that. Fly-fishing guides complain about mosquitoes and idiot wealthy fishermen who catch their own earlobes. Supermodels throw up Greek salads and live off of cocaine and cigarettes for the sake of job security. Fame and wealth turned Tom Cruise into a paradoxical billionaire/homeless-acting man who believes in a religion that has nothing to do with the Middle East. Weirdo. Most world leaders have middle-management haircuts at best. Every member of Congress looks like he or she would steal NutraSweet packets from the coffee machine bin; given the option, they'd all steal packets of Equal because of its politically correct name. So when it comes down to working in a cubicle, you are dealing with regular folks: people who understand that the world is full of tough jobs, and that working at a cubicle is not a bad way to make a living. These same sensible folks also realize it is their responsibility to protect themselves by being team players, socially savvy, and able to walk that fine line between being helpful and respectful of others without acting obsequious, wimpy, or contorting like a defenseless ant burning under the magnifying glass of corporate exploitation. The cubicle community, after all, is about fitting as many people as possible into a limited space. Cubicles are a unique means of arranging human beings and their behaviors. Navigating both the visible and invisible walls of the corporate landscape requires diligence. This is where personality, education, upbringing, and your mothers and fathers come into play. Mind your manners. Remember I'm okay, you're okay. Hold the elevator door open for people making their way to it. Those forty-five seconds of your life could make a life-altering impression on some folks who don't know you, but may remember your gesture when you interview for that promotion next year. If they don't thank you for holding the door open, ignore them; they don't appreciate the little things that people do for free and probably won't appreciate the little things people do when they are getting paid. If cubicle inhabitants do not make defending their integrity and maintaining their self-respect a priority, then they run the very real risk of burnout, a common affliction in many jobs, particularly those surrounded by three fabric walls. Be able to give colleagues what they want without indulging their self-inflating efforts to bloat their egos by making you feel inferior. In essence, to survive or perhaps even thrive in the cubicle community you must have refined coping skills. You are, after all, part of the great monolithic machine known as the corporation. The cubicle environment begins when you enter the building. Never forget this. Unfortunately, America today is seeing regular cubicle dwellers lose their rights. As long as you do your job well, corporate should never have rights to your blood, mental health history, home computer, religious beliefs, DNA, thoughts, political affiliations, urine, sexual orientation, subconscious, or secrets. If it does, then jobs in the cubicle community are no longer jobs, they are Hitleresque experiments on people who don't have the means or wealth to act like megalomaniacs who want to control human nature for the corporate bottom line, which they invariably explain away as health insurance expenses. Don't fall for it. If corporate only tested for infidelity, embezzlement, and greed, it would drop institutionalized behaviorism like a prostitute with a penis at a Las Vegas convention. But since that won't happen, remember this rule of thumb: How you decorate, organize, and behave in your cubicle is as important as how you dress, socialize, and perform your job.

Quick Quiz Self-Assessment(1) True or False? Cubicles were invented during the Cold War in the basement of the Landsdown office building in Detroit, Michigan, by Dr. Brandon Flumdinger. He originally designed the partitions for the US military, which used the lightweight walls to construct fake headquarters, bunkers, and latrines in order to fool Soviet spy satellites.(2) Complete the following the sentence: Having more than nine cats as pets is a sign that the owner . . .(a) can probably speak feline and see in the dark.(b) no longer has mice in the house.(c) was dehumanized by cubicle culture and now only relates to animals.(d) buys kitty litter in bulk.(3) Identify the quote that is from an actual James Bond movie.(a) My name is Bond, James Bond, in cubicle L-17.(b) Money penny, the watercooler is empty.(c) If you get in trouble, James, push this button. It turns your stapler into a welding device.(d) None of the above.

ANSWERS:(1) False. The cubicle was invented in the 1960s by Bob Probst, a professor of fine arts at the University of Colorado, so employees could freely exchange ideas and inspiration. (2) c. (3) d.