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DIGITAL SLOB

Curt Brandao

Tech advances help the lazy rise and shine

The digital revolution is making slobs seem respectable and is making the respectable seem deranged.

As a slob most of the time, I couldn't be happier, but as a respectable member of society at least part of the time, I'm more than a little concerned.

Nothing has done more to make a slob's 1040EZ tax return look respectable than the Digital Age. Thankfully for me and my kind, even the worst jelly doughnut stain can never mar a resume posted on the Web, and as long as we're able to keep the holes in our socks inside our shoes for the entire job interview, slobs generally stay under the radar well past our 90-day probationary period.

On the opposite end, those who once had impeccable personal habits have been lured into an etiquette free-fall since the Digital Age began.

Grocery stores are turning into cell-phone insane asylums filled with pseudo-schizophrenics who talk to themselves while loading up on frozen food. At the first hint of anything mundane, otherwise respectable people feel the need to stick hands-free buds in their ears to talk (loudly) to people they'd do back flips to avoid in real life but call anyway because their "anytime minutes" are paid in advance.

Add to that, we all get to play "Name That Tune" from the previews to the closing credits, thanks to cellular sociopaths that now fill our movie theaters.

And say what you will about the limiting nature of corded phones, but before the mid-'80s none of us ever imagined how violated we could feel by the sound of a toilet flushing during a phone conversation. (I may start a support group for this one in particular. Phone-Flushers Anonymous, perhaps.)

As for the title of this column, "Digital Slob," I came up with it not because I'm a digital expert, but because I'm a slob expert in the burgeoning Digital Age. As a single man in his 30s, I live like an FBI agent on a prolonged stakeout (though the condo board did ask me to remove the telescope from my bathroom window).

I'm so lazy that when I microwave a frozen dinner, I punch in "2:22" on the timer instead of "2:00" because it's easier to hit "2" three times in a row than to refocus and reposition my index finger for the "0" lower down on the pad.

So, suffice it to say, my sloth oddly guarantees that I will tirelessly, relentlessly be on the lookout for labor-saving devices at least as hard as they look for me, each and every day up and until the pizza guy knocks on my door.

Plus, since no retailer has ever cut up my credit card while I watched in dismay, I represent the mother lode for high-tech marketers, who study my particular demographic closer than Jane Goodall commiserates with chimps.

I'm not just lazy, I'm cutting-edge lazy, and everyone who plants a "cookie" on my computer knows this probably better than I do.

Without getting all high and mighty (i.e., expert or informed), this column does not aspire to be the first word, or the last word, on digital electronics, but rather the final fall-back position for the rest of us before we have to surrender to a future worthy of the name.

As Henry David Thoreau said, "We have become the tools of our tools," to which I would humbly append ... Oops, never mind, we'll pick this up next week.

The pizza guy is here.

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