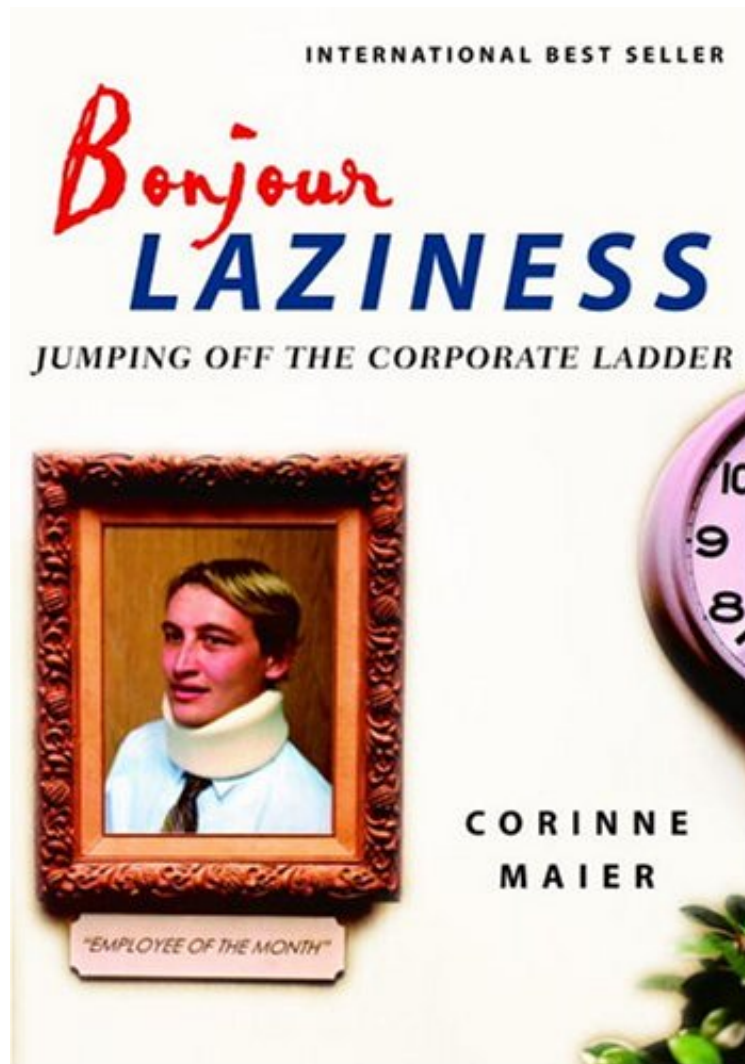


Bonjour Laziness: Why Hard Work Doesn't Pay

Corinne Maier

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Corinne Maier : Bonjour Laziness: Why Hard Work Doesn't Pay before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bonjour Laziness: Why Hard Work Doesn't Pay:

32 of 36 people found the following review helpful. This book turns corporate life on its head By Hound Dog 56 "Bonjour Laziness" goes against everything you've ever been taught about becoming a professional. Maier encourages an anarchistic approach to corporate life, one which professes that the avoidance of responsibility and action is the best revenge against an oppressive bureaucratic structure, and that increased job satisfaction will come with working less. This is a book which is highly original, and probably one which some people will find disturbing because it goes so against the American work ethic of taking on more and more responsibility -- and that your success in life is dictated by the length of your title and the size of your paycheck. In that sense it is very European -- and of course

very French, Maier being a native of France -- but it also tries to take a broader view of why we work and what the end result is. Maier saves her biggest rips at upper corporate management, accusing them of being relatively lazy, greedy users of the workforce. This is certainly Marxist in viewpoint, and her answer for what to do about it, is to slow the wheels of the corporate machine from within. Her points are not entirely false, but she does emphasize that the real work of companies are being done by those at the low end of the totem pole, something that's difficult to dispute. Anyone who has worked for a large corporation can readily understand many of her points of view. The goal of corporate life is to conform, to impress your superiors and to fit in with a larger culture. Successfully doing so means getting more and more tangible rewards; the failure to do so will mean being expunged from the safe, secure world of the corporate family. For those who get their identity and self-worth from their careers, this is indeed a problem. Maier is a good writer and has some very interesting and important points to make. It is questionable whether Americans will embrace her philosophy, in part because it goes so much against the grain of what our national identity is about. Still, for those with an open mind, her ideas are worth exploring, more in the context of whether it is possible to have a pleasant, enjoyable career within a large faceless bureaucracy, than in trying to slow the machine down to a grinding halt. This is a well written, well focused book, and while not everyone will agree with her points of view, Maier deserves much credit for putting them out there.

8 of 13 people found the following review helpful. France gets the best-seller it deserves

By WiltDurkey Being pretty cynical, I loved the idea of criticizing the stupider things done in SOME corporate settings: incompetent managers, the constant use of jargon, the endless meetings that achieve nothing, the highly paid consultants that add no value whatsoever, the leaders whose strategy consists of extrapolating current trends, golden parachutes, etc, etc... Notice 2 things about what I just wrote: First, this applies only to SOME companies. Most companies and workers are, at the least, relatively honest and competent. Second, it took me about 30 words to list these bad points. The author, who is the co-worker from hell, uses 110+ pages of constant, bitter, complaints, about everything having to do with business, rarely getting into any specifics. She has absolutely nothing good to say about anybody and she implies that every company and manager is utterly corrupt, stupid and soulless. Heck, she even criticizes the French as being in general stupid and self-centered. She hardly even bothers telling you how to beat the system. She just loves name dropping: "as philosopher X said... blah blah blah..." to show how cultured and clever she is. Of course, she doesn't propose any remedies. That's fine: I didn't expect, or want, a management handbook. But I did expect irony or satire, some finesse, some reasoned arguments. Decent prose even, occasional wit, chuckles. All I got was page after page of bitter, thoughtless, bile. Example: "My classification of employees: the sheep, the troublemakers and the lazy..." Another example, following a probably valid criticism of the lack of male input to household work: "luckily, we feel vindicated when we know that men have a shorter life expectancy and are 4x more likely to kill themselves than women. At least there is some justice". I read it in French and the better parts of the book consisted of making fun of the use of English by French workers where French words would have done just fine. Between that subject dropping out in an English edition and the constant French cultural references, I doubt that translation has made this little gem any better. This is a perfect book for a country with a persistent 10% unemployment rate, lots of public sector workers (like her) who go on strike all the time and a profound anxiety about its place in the modern world. Read Dilbert instead - it is perhaps too friendly to the corporate world (it runs in the business section!). But it sure is less shallow than this tripe. Or just look around for other books that criticize corporations, most of them are likely much better.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Welll....

By Chem Not quite sure what to write about this. As one reviewer pointed out, maybe its meant to be funny in the French version. To me, its OK, but way over the top. Let's be honest - there are lots of workers who own their own businesses, and I'd bet those people are the most fulfilled. If you can take your hobby or life's interest and turn it into a business or a living, well then - there's no beating that! And then there are workers who work for a corporation, cubicle style, and still love their work. Kudos to them - they're lucky. The next are the workers who don't particularly LIKE their work, but they're reasonably satisfied with their living and probably understand they're lucky to have their position. They take the living it gives them to pursue their interests or otherwise enjoy the life outside the office that it allows them to have. This is OK, too. And lastly, there are the ones who hate what they do (or maybe just don't care much for it) but do it because they think they have to. They simmer over the things they don't like, bosses they think are idiots, all the corporate silliness (and, admittedly, there's a lot of that to be found) - but they never do anything to further themselves, and never bother to really look elsewhere, or educate themselves to get into something that DOES interest them. Consequently, they are miserable - and they keep themselves in the same old rut. This last category is what Corrine Maier is talking about. She's funny at times, but after reading the whole book, it gets nothing short of depressing. Its a diatribe against "the system" and it will do you NO GOOD to read it if your in that last category already. I'm sympathetic with the overall theme in a conceptual way. But it offers nothing that we don't already know. Don't take this work seriously - and read it only if you have a good sense of humor. (PS - ever wonder how much money she made off the book??? Ha! Now you understand the REAL lesson!)

Your company wants you to be loyal. You should feel lucky; after all, your job is a privilege (think of all those who would like to have it). And you know (despite what you've read about Enron and WorldCom) that

management has your best interests at heart. Your goal is to devote yourself to the pursuit of corporate profit, make your company number one, and reap the benefits of its success. Or is there something else you want to do with your life? *Bonjour Laziness* dares to ask whether you really have a stake in the corporate sweepstakes, whether professional mobility is anything but an opiate. It shows you how to become impervious to manipulation and escape the implacable law of usefulness. In short, this book explains why it is in your best interest to work as little as possible. From the Trade Paperback edition.

From Publishers Weekly The press release explains this book's presence on our shores: 270,000 and counting sold in France; 70,000 plus in Spain; 3,000–4,000 copies a day on release in Germany; and rights sold in at least 19 other countries. *Bonjour Paresse* is not quite an update of *Steal This Book* for the age of corporate globalism, but the intent is similar: personal satisfaction and cultural change through the sabotage of capital. Maier's passive version, whereby one disengages from one's job and floats through work minimally, is already in active practice by any number of American workers. And the set of justifications for it she offers over six chapters isn't new, whether outrage at the corporate degradation of language or ire at the planned obsolescence of workers. But it's not the familiarity of the ideas that's the problem: what's off is Maier's gently ironic sense of proposing an honorable response to big governments and businesses that have mishandled big responsibilities. While Americans argue about big government, there has never been anything comparable here to the recently decimated social welfare states Maier laments. The inert revenge that she proposes comes off as plain lack of gumption, annoyance or sour grapes. The book will do better in Canada. Agent, Beth Vesel. (June 1) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Provocative . . . highly readable . . . refreshing . . . [and] practical. . . . An exhilarating complaint against work." —The Los Angeles Times "Maier] has become a countercultural heroine almost overnight by encouraging . . . workers to adopt her strategy of 'active disengagement.'" —The New York Times "A graceful attack on the corporate world [and] a trenchant dissection of 'corporate culture' [with] practical suggestions for subverting the workplace." —The Village Voice From the Trade Paperback edition. From the Inside Flap Your company wants you to be loyal. You should feel lucky—after all, your job is a privilege (think of all those who would like to have it). And you know (despite what you've read about Enron and WorldCom) that management has your best interests at heart. Your goal is to devote yourself to the pursuit of corporate profit, make your company number one, and reap the benefits of its success. Or is there something else you want to do with your life? *Bonjour Laziness* dares to ask whether you really have a stake in the corporate sweepstakes and whether professional mobility is anything more than an opiate, and it proposes steps you can take to regain control over what you want to do. It shows you how to become impervious to manipulation and escape the implacable law of usefulness—in short, it explains why it is in your best interests to work as little as possible.