



How to Sleep Your Way to the Top

By Dr. Kathleen Begley, Book Author and Professional Speaker

Note to Readers: Here's another offbeat e-update on business communication and current events from Write Company Plus, a corporate training firm located outside Philadelphia. In respect for your busy schedule, writers and editors have arranged seven at-a-glance ideas at the end of this article. Skip directly there if you lack the time to read the entire document.

"The early bird gets the worm." "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." "Start early and begin raising the bar throughout the day." Yeah, yeah, yeah. These often-quoted lines about the glories of getting up before lunch burn my butt. It, along with the rest of my body, happens to prefer to stay snugly in bed under a thick down comforter way past day break.

In my view, the notion that morning people are somehow superior to night owls is just plain crazy. Think about the phrase "crack of dawn." The first word refers to an illegal substance and the second is the name of a dish detergent. How on earth is that a good thing? To convince you further of the solidness of my anti-early-rising theory, I submit the following information about the individuals who first uttered the stupid sentences used to start this article. Consider the source, as they say.

The stomach-turning early bird getting the worm line was the brainchild of a person named Proverb, who apparently thought he had the single-name recognizability of accomplished entertainers such as Beyonce, Cher and Prince. Talk about arrogance. The healthy, wealthy and wise adage came from early American Renaissance man Ben Franklin. I bet your pajama bottoms that Franklin, a widely acknowledged womanizer, never got out of bed before noon with his latest paramour. For heaven's sake, he spent much of his adult life in urbane Paris, hardly a bastion of farmers needing to get out early to feed the chickens. The last quote issued forth from the lips of onetime Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner. Having abandoned his supportive first wife years ago for the siren call of Hollywood, Jenner today plays a hapless father in the reality series "Keeping Up the Kardashians." It's shown on the exceedingly high-brow E! Television Network.

I rest my case. Rest? Is it time to catch a nap yet? As a self-employed communications trainer, I do everything possible to kick off speeches and classes at 9 a.m. -- at the absolute earliest. Throughout the day, I get smarter and funnier as time progresses. By 5 p.m., I'm usually a cross between Dr. Albert Einstein, without the thick hair, and comedian Joan Rivers, without the multiple facelifts. Clients who hire me for lunch and dinner gatherings get a much bigger bang for their buck.

But occasionally, because I assume other folks recoil from mornings just like I do, I make a hideous mistake in scheduling. A case in point: A few weeks ago, I agreed to speak Thursday April 2 at a meeting of the Longwood Rotary Club, located about 50 miles west of Philadelphia. After the fact, I found out I'm expected to arrive at the ungodly hour of 6:30 a.m. I'm unsure if my digital clock even contains those numbers.

The famous Longwood Gardens, where the gathering will be held, is about an hour's drive from my home office, counting on stops at three or four convenience stores along the way to get coffee. Is this gig uncivilized or what? If you're interested in watching a woman yawn openly during her own speech, Rotary President Dave Haradon says you're welcome to attend my presentation. In fact, you can give the talk for me if you don't mind my snoring in the background. Any topic will be just fine.



So what makes me such a slugabug? I credit good genes. My aunt, my sister, my niece, and several cousins all share my extreme penchant for hanging onto the pillow in bed in the morning as tightly if it were a lifeboat in an ocean storm. My mother was the same way. Thank heaven for outstanding DNA!

Care to join me in my morning-averse behavior? Here are some ways to create a work style enabling you to forever tune out that appallingly cheerful chatter on morning shows such as TODAY and Good Morning, America:

Ask to work at home. Savvy employers know that they get more productivity from people who toil away from the distractions of the average office. How many reports did you ever see churned out in the break room? Just be sure that you put in a full eight-hour day and produce the expected results; late sleepers cheat only in occasional X-rated dreams. If you own your own business, refrain from doing something stupid like buying a fleet of ambulances. Rumor has it that most people get annoyed if you try to postpone transportation of their sick relatives until you've had a few more hours of shut-eye.

Take advantage of voicemail. I'm continually amazed at the number of people in my life who seem compelled to answer the phone every time it rings. Hello? Individuals who insist on calling me early get nothing other than the ability to recite my chirpy outgoing voicemail: "You've reached The Write Woman, but at the wrong time." In my dictionary, the last two words are defined as "before noon."

Rethink your career. If your lifelong dream is to manage a chain of retail stores, you may encounter problems getting out of day work. Alas, few people shop outside their homes for computers or groceries in the middle of the night. But nuclear plants, electrical grids, and airport towers abound in jobs for employees awake enough to protect people, equipment, and property in the wee hours of the morning. Isn't society lucky?

Hire a morning babysitter. Most parents have it all wrong. They pay sitters to allow them to get out for the evening, when the kids are already close to sleep. By getting help to cover your tracks in the morning before your feet even hit the floor, you're more likely to get your money's worth out of your child-care dollars. Let the sitter untangle the Cheerios from Jessica's hair and the chewing gum from Rover's paws.

Make no apologies. According to the latest scientific research, getting up early can damage your health if you're blessed enough to possess nocturnal biorhythms. Why fight Mother Nature? The worst you'll get from endlessly staying in bed is some extra greenish sleepies in the corners of your eyes or a few chenille bedspread marks on the cheeks of your face.

Revel in your own genius. Some experts believe that late sleepers are far more creative and intelligent than their annoying bounce-fully-awake-from-bed peers. I agree. Anyone with a brain knows that only masochistic misfits enjoy stepping into the shower and being pummeled by cold water before the sun has even come up.

Live and let live. Although it has crossed my mind to beg and plead with the Longwood Rotary to reschedule their April 2 meeting for 7 p.m. rather than 7 a.m., I've decided against it. My guess is that members long ago became set in their crazy, upbeat, dew-loving ways. Bah, sunbug. As far as sleeping late is concerned, I also suspect the Rotarians might be highly resistant to my attempting to show them the light -- especially when I'm working hard to sleep straight through it.