

# Smart Money

**A**ND I SAW THEM, rising over the hill like thunder, excessively young and strong, newly minted from the schools of the decadent East and the fruited Plains and the Great Northwest and even the beach-blanket nether regions of this great nation, and each did hanker to be in pinstripes, with collars that would torment their necks, and ties that bespoke nothing, and paisleyed braces that held up pants that were full unto bursting with salary plus bonus. And they were without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep.

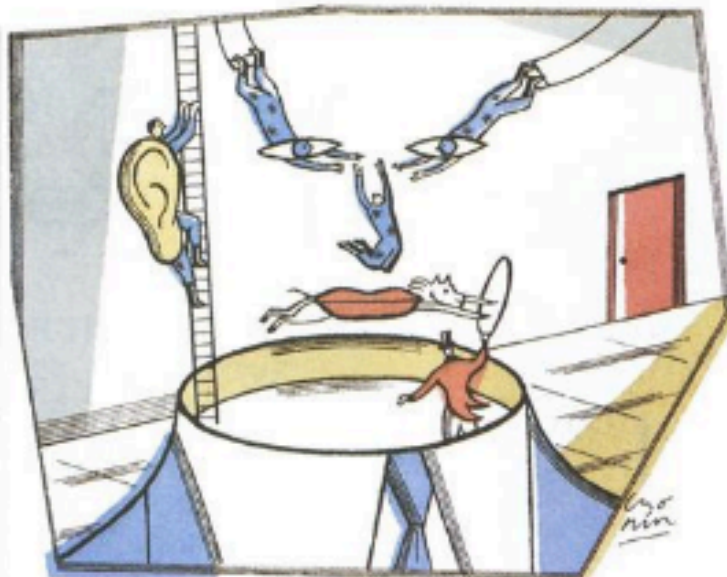
And while this vision was upon me, I figured that before these shiny disciples simply rolled lemminglike over my generation into the great gray world of their choice, they might like to hear the lowdown, for what it's worth. Read and consider, then, you of the target demographic who seek a business life:

You shall never know how weird you truly are. Oh, you shall feel plenty strange, stuffed into that monkey suit, concealing whole chunks of your original persona, but the full extent of your unadulterated self? Forget about it.

You shall have no job security, get used to that idea right away. If you work very hard and vault into a certain level of inured management somewhere, you may achieve a parachute, but management is not labor, Jack. You're too successful and smart to belong to a union. So you can be fired anytime.

You shall become cynical about people who work for a living, as opposed to those who manage people who work for a living, and come to believe in your right to pay them *bubkes*, sell their assets, and fire them.

You shall deal with jerks on a daily basis, and come to like jerks, and, if you are very lucky, become one of them. If you do not, you shall be forced to masquerade as a dynamic, precise, and driven young square until you are too old for that role, at



THE STRATEGIST

## Where I'm At Right Now

By Stanley Bing

which point you must masquerade as a thoughtful, responsible, and crusty old square.

You shall have no friends, only a really strange family made up of authoritarian parental units, annoying younger cousins, and a whole lot of stepsiblings. All your relationships shall be filtered through the issue of Rank. Think you have a true friend in senior management? Try getting under his skin at some point, the way you would with a real pal, you know? See what happens.

You shall never be satisfied with your money, your bonus, your perks, not even if they attain magnitudinous proportions. If they are too small, say, less than \$250,000 a year at age forty-two, you shall feel you never really hit the big blintze and your life was a waste. If they're way up there, you're a slave to the industry who never gets to see a

person he loves, other than himself. So if transcendent human bonds are likely to be important to you at some point in the future, think about farming. If they're not, you're in the right line of work, Fritz.

You shall have too many suits, all of them of the same color.

You shall shave 72 percent more often than a man should be forced to.

You shall use virtually none of your education, unless you have an M.B.A. instead. There's a good chance that no matter how many Phi Beta Kappa keys you earned or stole, you'll report to a cultural illiterate who went to Wharton by way of the University of Bermuda Triangle.

You shall deal with a vast infestation of numbers, all of incalculable tedium, and you shall come to have contempt for them, and a snide disbelief in anything

approaching certitude in this life, since you shall quickly learn that all situations, no matter how dire, can be manipulated to come out fine by the end of the quarter.

You shall laugh at jokes that are aggressively not funny, until one day you find them so, and

**You shall deal with jerks, and if you're very lucky, become one of them.**

are released from insincerity into stupidity.

You shall plumb the depths of existential being and nothingness, for most of the things you must write, meetings you must attend, and conversations you must have are meaningless, unless they are destructive.

For much of what you do, if you are successful in this, the latter part of the century, shall pertain to the buying and selling of assets and people, not the creation and sale of products and services. That's just the way it is, man. And you'd better like it.

And finally, brothers, my bet is that you shall always dream of what might have happened had you joined the circus—unless you become so magnificently huge that you have in effect become unrecognizable to your former self, the one that collected baseball cards, was too squeamish to hook a worm, and played the ocarina to pass Band because he had no talent in anything else.

Only one in a million reaches that deoxygenated zone. The rest of us, whatever deals we nail down, whatever bonzo vacations we can afford, whatever cars and women we drive, well, we're just in business, that's all.

Blessed is he that readeth, and he that hears the words of this screed, and keeps those things that are written herein. For the time is at hand. In fact, time is what it's really all about, guys.

Make it count. €