

Celinda C. Lake  
*President*

To: Karen Nussbaum and Robert Fox, Working America

Alysia R. Snell  
*Partner*

From: Lake Research Partners

Michael J. Perry  
*Partner*

Re: Memo on Bad Bosses Survey Findings<sup>1</sup>

Date: July 14, 2008

David Mermin  
*Partner*

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The following memo highlights findings from a survey of 1,000 workers about their current bosses:

Robert G. Meadow,  
Ph.D.  
*Partner*

### **Strategic Summary**

Daniel R. Gotoff  
*Partner*

- Over one-third of American workers feel pressure to stay with a bad boss because of the current economic problems (36 percent). Full-time workers in particular are more likely than those working part-time to say they feel a lot of pressure to stay with a bad boss in their current job (21 percent to 12 percent).

Joshua E. Ulibarri  
*Partner*

Rick Johnson  
*Vice President*

- The traits workers most often complain about in their bosses are “laziness” and “dishonesty” (13 percent each).

Tresa Udem  
*Vice President*

- A higher proportion of workers overall see their bosses as taking credit for their work (21 percent), not providing guidance and opportunities necessary to advance (25 percent) and not providing recognition for success or hard work (33 percent).
- Almost one third of workers, or approximately 45 million people, are working in the evening or both in the daytime and evening (31 percent). Among men, the number is 32 percent; among women, 28 percent say they are working in the evening or both daytime and evening.

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners (LRP) designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,000 working adults nationwide (who are not business owners, CEOs, or salaried managers or supervisors). The survey was conducted May 7- 18, 2008.

Telephone numbers for the sample were drawn from a random digit dial sample (RDD). The sample was stratified geographically based on the proportion of working adults in each region. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, region, race, and education level in order to ensure an accurate reflection of the demographic configuration of this population. The margin of error for the total survey is +/- 3.1%.

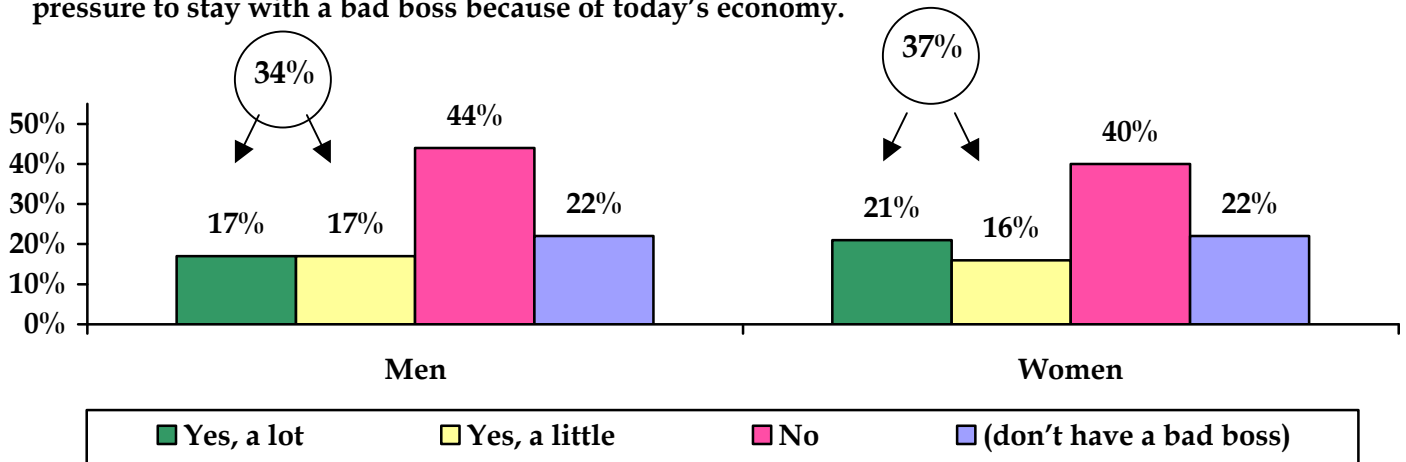
- Workers who work the night shift are more likely to have a bad boss. They are more likely to see their bosses as taking credit for their work and report more difficulty in getting time off. Those reporting that they work daytime and evening shifts also prove less satisfied with their bosses.
- Despite the hype about flexible workplaces, about one third of workers say it is difficult to get time off. African Americans and evening workers<sup>2</sup> are among those most likely to report that it is very or somewhat difficult to get time off.
- About ten percent of workers say they have bad bosses, the equivalent of about 15 million workers.
- Workers under 40 report more experiences with bad bosses than their older counterparts: they are more likely to report that their boss constantly looks over their shoulder and that their boss asks them to work late unexpectedly.

*Rating their Bosses*

Approximately one in ten workers say they have a bad boss, while 31 percent rate their bosses as a “10,” or a very good boss. Thirty-five percent give their bosses a rating of “8” or “9,” and 16 percent prove neutral, giving their bosses a rating of “5.”

Those most likely to say they have a bad boss include workers who say it is more difficult to get time off approved from their bosses and those that say they are never allowed to take breaks outside of lunch. Beyond that, 41 percent of those who say their bosses never provide recognition for hard work or success<sup>3</sup> and one in four of those who have bosses that do not provide the guidance or opportunities necessary to advance say they have a bad boss.

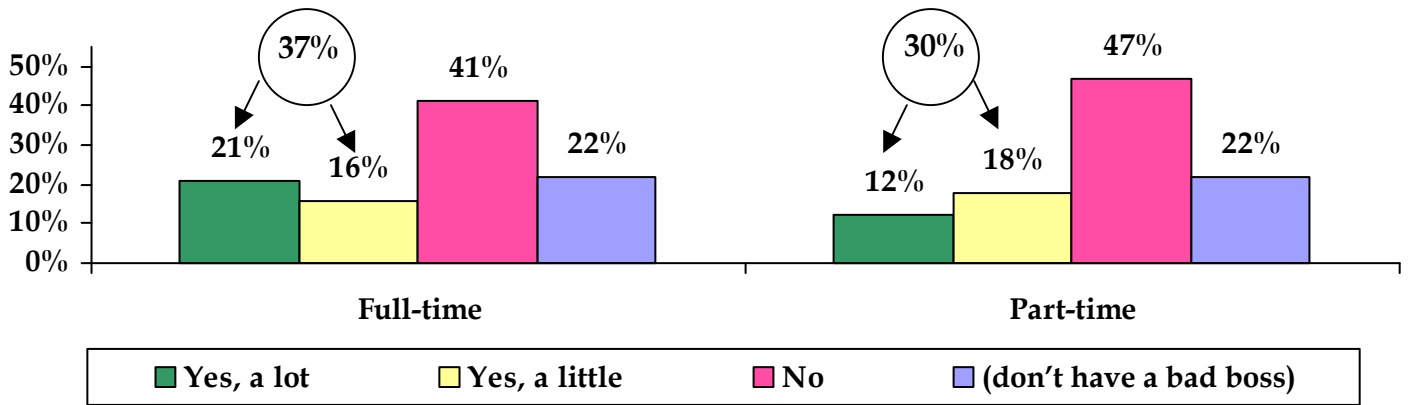
**The impact of a bad boss is acute right now, with over a third of workers saying they feel some pressure to stay with a bad boss because of today’s economy.**



<sup>2</sup> Small n size.

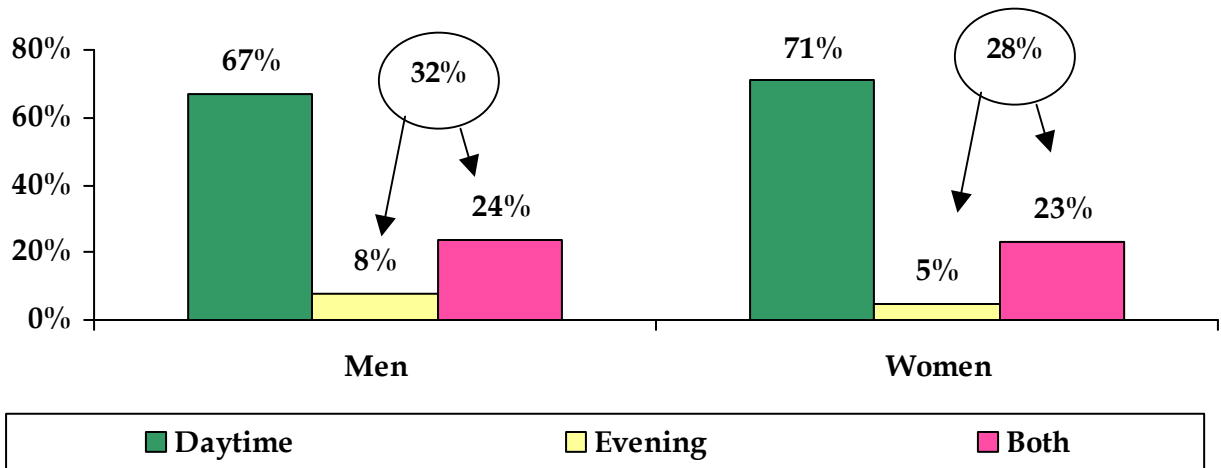
<sup>3</sup> Small n size.

Full-time workers report that they feel more pressure to stay with a bad boss than their part-time counterparts. One in five full-time workers say they feel a lot of pressure.



*Evening and Daytime/Evening Workers*

Almost a third of workers work evenings or both days and evenings.



Evening workers<sup>4</sup> are among those more likely to express dissatisfaction with their current bosses. They are more likely than those who only work daytime hours to see their bosses as taking credit for their work (evening: 38 percent very or somewhat frequently; daytime: 21 percent). Additionally, evening workers are more likely to report having difficulty getting time off approved (evening: 45 percent a little/somewhat/very difficult; daytime: 28 percent). When asked to rate their bosses, evening workers prove more neutral than their daytime counterparts (14 percent “5” compared to 8 percent).

Workers who report working both daytime and evening hours also show some unhappiness with their bosses:

- They are less likely than those who only work daytime hours to describe their bosses as hard-working (daytime: 68 percent very well; daytime and evening: 59 percent), easy to get

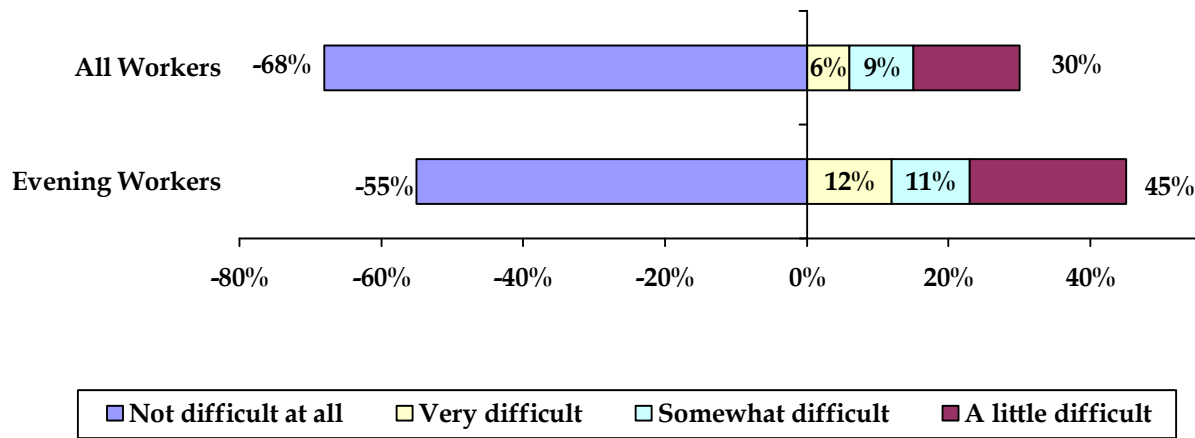
<sup>4</sup> Small n size.

along with (daytime: 63 percent; daytime and evening: 58 percent), or accessible (daytime: 64 percent; daytime and evening: 51 percent).

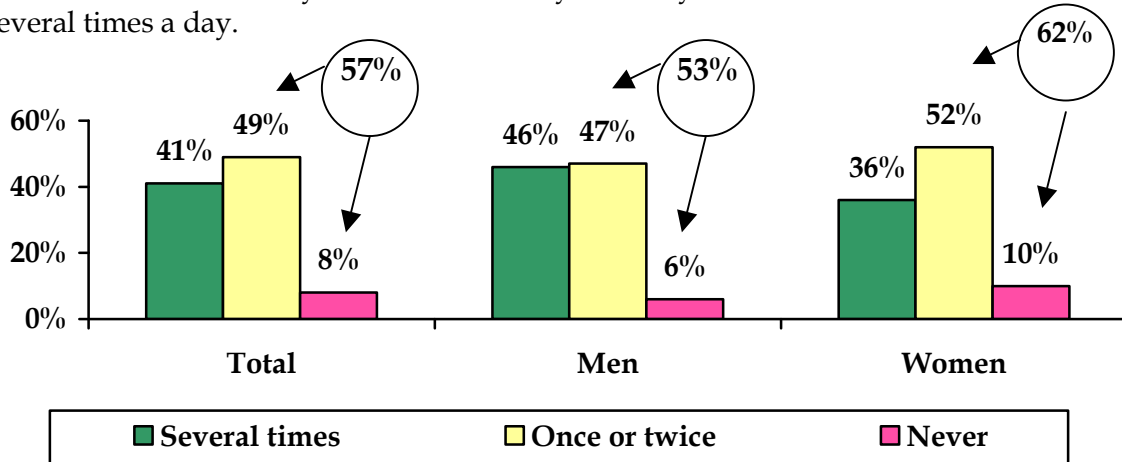
- As with evening workers, those who work both shifts are more likely than daytime workers to report difficulty in getting time off approved (daytime and evening: 33 percent to daytime: 28 percent).

*Time Off and Work Breaks*

**Thirty percent of workers say that it is at least a little difficult to get time off approved by their bosses.** African Americans, especially African American men<sup>5</sup>, are among those most likely to say it is difficult to get time off (37 percent and 39 percent, respectively). Forty-five percent of workers who work in the evenings<sup>6</sup> also say that they have difficulty getting time off approved by their bosses.



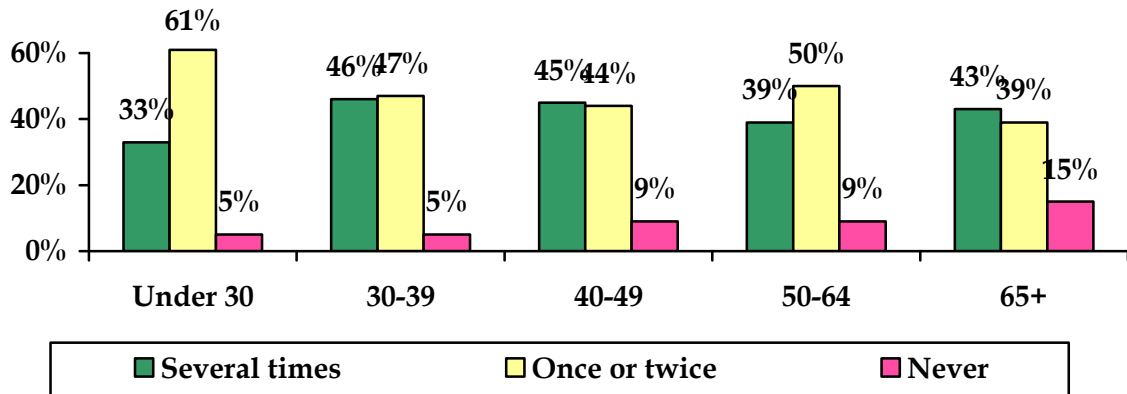
**When asked about breaks outside of lunch, over half say they are only allowed one or two breaks or no breaks.** Men are more likely than women to say that they are allowed to take breaks outside of lunch several times a day.



<sup>5</sup> Small n size.

<sup>6</sup> Small n size.

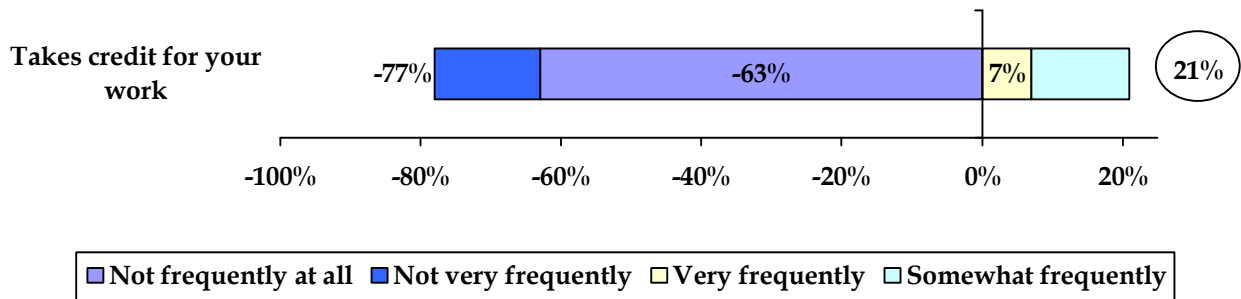
Workers under 30 are less likely than workers 30 and older to say they are allowed to take several non-lunch breaks at work. Seniors are among those most likely to say they are never allowed to take a break outside of lunch.



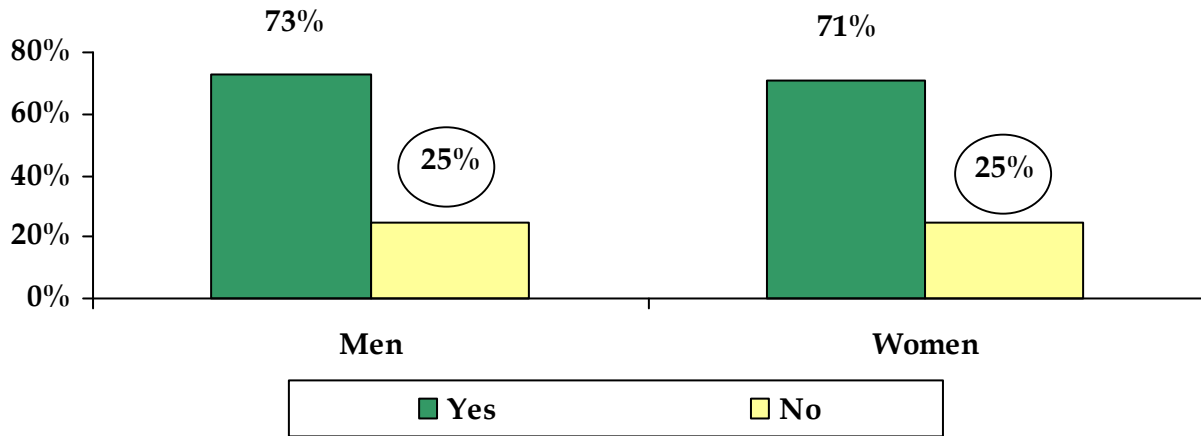
*Boss Characteristics and Behavior*

**Bad bosses are characterized by being dishonest and lazy.** Overall, thirteen percent of workers say these traits describe their bosses very or somewhat well. Also, 13 percent of all workers say their bosses are not hard-working or accessible.

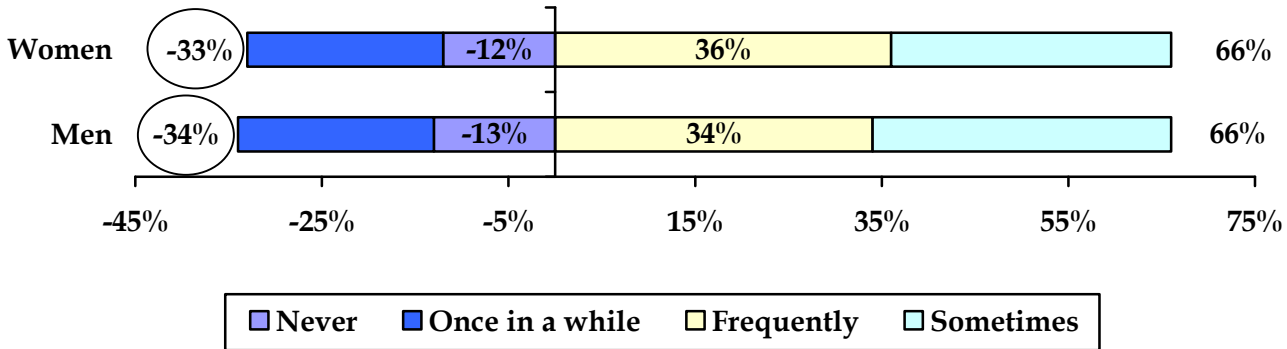
**In addition, there are one-fifth to one-third of workers who say that their boss takes credit for their work, does not provide them with recognition for success or hard work and does not provide them with the guidance or opportunities necessary for advancement.**



**Yes/No: Boss Provides Guidance and Opportunities Needed to Advance**



**How Often Boss Provides Recognition for Success or Hard Work**



Finally, workers under 40 also report more experience on certain dimensions about bosses than those 40 and older. Twenty-one percent of these workers say that they have bosses who constantly look over their shoulders and 23 percent say their bosses frequently ask them to work late unexpectedly (compared to 15 percent and 14 percent, respectively, among 40+ workers).