

Job Market

The New York Times

[More Articles in Job Market >](#)



The New York Times

Save on home delivery.

[CLICK HERE ▶](#)

[Skip to article](#)

[NYTimes.com](#)

[Go to a Section](#)

[Log In](#) - [Register Now](#) **It's Free!**

[JOB MARKET](#)

[FIND A](#)

[POST YOUR](#)

[MY JOB MARKET](#) [JOB TOOLS](#)

[POST A](#)

[EMPLOYER](#)

[HOME](#)

[JOB](#)

[RESUME](#)

[JOB](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

Life's Work

The Fairway Isn't the Only Way to Bond



Randall Enos

- [Sign In to E-Mail This](#)
- [Printer-Friendly](#)

By LISA BELKIN

Published: August 28, 2005

YEARS ago, when Deborah A. Coleman was the most senior woman executive at Apple, she attended a company retreat. Knowing that she would be the only woman in the room, and certain that all the small talk would be about sports, she spent a night cramming about Northern California teams. She sat down at dinner, all prepped to talk about the Giants and the 49ers, when someone complimented the chief executive, John Sculley, on his beautiful sky-blue sweater.

He stood up, turned to model it, and spent much of the meal discussing the marvelous selection at Nordstrom. "So much for sports," said Ms. Coleman, who is a founder and general partner of SmartForest Ventures, a venture capital firm based in Portland, Ore. "I should have brushed up on fashion."

I thought of Ms. Coleman this summer when I was invited to go golfing. It was a women's networking event, a chance for female clients of a certain industry to bond on the links. I'm not quite sure why I was on the invitation list. I am female, yes. But I had never heard of the host company. And I don't play golf.

The invitation was worded as a jab at the way men have been doing business for years - over golf or baseball or a few beers and a cigar - but that struck me as a step backward. One of the many advances women have brought to the workplace is the right not to bond over golf (or any of the other sporting events that I have been, um, pathetic at since childhood) because there are just so many more interesting things to do.

Don't get me wrong, I am all in favor of bonding. Relationships are what make the office palatable, what give it depth and flavor, what make you want to show up every day. A Gallup survey has found that employees are much more likely to stay in a job if they have a "best friend" at work. That has probably been true for eons, but until recently most of the available friends had Y-chromosomes.

"Sports became a bonding glue when the Old Boy's Network ruled," notes April Masini, who writes about dating and relationships for her online magazine, AskApril.com. Now, she says, "there are lots of other networks, like the Pink Network, which is women; the Rainbow Network, which is gays; and the Puke-Stained Network, which is working mothers." And these groups are coming up with a variety of ways to play.

Diane Danielson, a former vice president of a real estate firm and the founder of a young women's networking organization, downtownwomensclub.com, likes to offer clients and colleagues tickets to events that do not involve balls. Theater, for instance. "I generally try to get three tickets and invite two clients who might enjoy meeting each other," she says. "It makes it a fun night out," and eliminates one potential risk of any invitation - "entertaining male clients who may think you're asking them out on a date."

The law firm of Winston & Strawn issues invitations as well - to events planned just for women clients and partners. There was an evening of sushi-rolling a while back. Last month, there was a private viewing of the Chanel exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Other companies bring their employees together to create things. Nevada Association Services, a collections agency for homeowners associations, has held a glass-blowing event for employees and clients. At the Regence Group, health insurers in the Pacific Northwest, one division recently got together for a two-day retreat that included painting clay vases, bowls and mugs, then firing them in a kiln.

Among the most laudable bonding experiences are those that make the world better. The 27 employees of RxHub, a health information technology company in St. Paul, recently spent a day building a Habitat for Humanity house together. Four times a year, Alta Public Relations in San Francisco invites employees, current and prospective clients and their families to volunteer together at a local food bank. The three hours are physically taxing, said Erica Lorraine Scheidt, a principal in the firm, and "we sweat, have fun together, and lose the 'us vs. them' that is common in a client-agency relationship."

Even more fun is had, I imagine, at companies where bonding includes travel. Brogan & Partners, an advertising agency with offices in Michigan and North Carolina, takes an annual company "mystery trip." All 50 employees are told only what to pack

and the average temperature where they are going. Not until they arrive at the airport - yes, there is plane travel involved - is their destination revealed. This year they went to Amsterdam. Last year it was Iceland. Other trips have been to London, San Francisco and the Bahamas.

In the Bahamas, tee times were available. But only for those who like that sort of thing.

This column about the intersection of jobs and personal lives appears every other week. E-mail: Belkin@nytimes.com.

[More Articles in Job Market >](#)



[Summer Savings: Get The New York Times for as low as \\$2.90 a week.](#)

Inside NYTimes.com



[Off Ecuador, Grief for Lost Dreams](#)



[Past Lingers in Vietnam](#)



[Ancient History Underfoot](#)



Did Lomax Neglect Black Scholars?



Divorce, Corporate American Style

Advertisement

As low as
\$2.90
a week

▼

The New York Times

With Pride and Vigilance, the Nation Celebrates

U.S. PLAN FOR IRAQ IS SAID TO INCLUDE ATTACK ON 3 SIDES

Preliminary Document Evidence

Click here to save on home delivery ►

Most E-Mailed Articles The New York Times

[Past 24 Hours](#) | [Past 7 Days](#)

1. [Op-Ed Contributor: Show Me the Science](#)
2. [Frank Rich: The Vietnamization of Bush's Vacation](#)
3. [David Brooks: Winning in Iraq](#)
4. [Paul Krugman: Greenspan and the Bubble](#)
5. [Missed Church? Download It to Your iPod.](#)

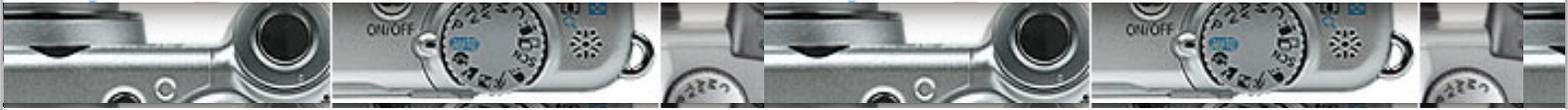
[Go to Complete List](#)

1. [Maureen Dowd: My Private Idaho](#)
2. [Scientists Speak Up on Mix of God and Science](#)
3. [Editorial Observer: Grasping the Depth of Time as a First Step in Understanding Evolution](#)
4. [Rents Head Up as Home Prices Put Off Buyers](#)
5. [Maureen Dowd: Bike-Deep in the Big Muddy](#)

[Go to Complete List](#)

Labor Day
Memories

Labor Day
Memories



[10 most popular digital cameras](#)

Also in Technology:

- [10 most popular camcorders](#)
- [10 most popular cellphones](#)
- [Love technology? Check out Circuits.](#)

Advertisements

The New York Times
Save on home
delivery.
[CLICK HERE ▶](#)