

THE EFFICIENT COMPANY

by

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Cast:

Tom - Office Manager

Jake - New employee

Bob - Employee

Melanie - Employee

Frank - Employee

Where: Bradley Computer Services office. The scene is an office environment with a desk and a chair stage right. A stationary bike (or similar) is located stage left. The exercise bike has an electrical wire taped to it on one end while the other end of the plug is taped to the outlet on the wall.

Synopsis: Tom is introducing Jake to their "efficient" company and its employees. Jake quickly discovers the company is anything but efficient.

LIGHTS UP

BRADLEY COMPUTER SERVICES OFFICE

DAY

Frank is pedaling backward on the stationary bike at stage left. Bob is sitting at the desk with his eyes opening and closing trying to keep himself awake while holding a small handheld computer. Tom welcomes Jake who enters from stage left.

TOM

C'mon in Jake. Good to see you.

JAKE

Thanks

Tom shows Jake around the office since it's his first day.

TOM

I'm glad you decided to join us here at Bradley Computer Services. You'll quickly see that we consider ourselves to be efficient.

(pause)

Actually we're very efficient.

(pause)

In fact...I think we are probably the most efficient office around. Heck, we'd probably win the Ultimate Efficiency Award.

JAKE

(curious)

There's an Ultimate Efficiency Award?

TOM

(smiles)

I don't know, but if there is one I'm sure we'd win it.

They pass Frank pedaling backwards on the stationary bike.

Keep up the good work Frank.

FRANK

(nods to Tom)

TOM

(to Jake)

We're so efficient that Frank's helping us undo our electrical usage. Pretty amazing, huh?

JAKE

(looks at Frank)

Undoing? How?

TOM

See how the bike is connected to the electrical outlet. With Frank pedaling backwards he's putting electricity back.

JAKE

(dumbfounded)

How is that possible?

Tom walks toward Bob at the desk with Jake following, but Jake continues to look at Frank on the bike.

TOM

(ignoring Jake)

And here is your desk.

Tom gestures toward the desk where Bob is sitting.

JAKE

Here?

TOM

Yes

JAKE

(uncertain)

But there's someone sitting here.

TOM

It's just Bob. He's using the desk at the moment.

Bob starts swaying with his eyes closed.

JAKE

(confused)

Using the desk? It looks like he's sleeping.

TOM

Oh no, he's very busy. At least that's what he tells me. Bob says he has the ability to enter an extremely efficient hypnotic state where he thinks about his work in new and profound ways. I'm hoping to learn how he does it someday.

JAKE

(puzzled)

New and profound ways? What does he do?

TOM

I'm not entirely sure, but as long as it's being done efficiently that's fine with me.

Melanie pops on the stage left edge.

MELANIE

(yells)

Bob, Y O C I.

Bob wakes up rubbing his eyes. Puts down the computer and exits stage right. Melanie exits stage left.

JAKE

What was that all about?

TOM

Just a message.

JAKE

But what did she say? It didn't sound like English.

TOM

She told Bob that his order came in. Melanie talks like a text message. It's her way of contributing to our efficiency. So, instead of saying I don't know she'll say IDK.

JAKE

Why did she have to yell like that? Couldn't she have called Bob on the phone?

TOM
(gesturing to the desk)
There's no phone.

JAKE
No phone?

Jake sits down at the desk and turns to look at Tom who is standing STAGE RIGHT a few feet from the desk.

TOM
We only have one phone for the office and it's up front.

JAKE
(incredulously)
One phone! You've got to be kidding.

Frank stops pedaling, walks over and tries to sit in the same chair as Jake. Jake turns to see what's going on. Meanwhile Melanie enters stage left, gets on the bike and starts pedaling.

JAKE
What the—

Jake is trying to maneuver in the chair while Frank is doing the same and starts using his handheld computer until Jake falls to the floor.

FRANK
(looks at Jake on floor)
Are you okay?

JAKE
Am I okay? What was that all about? Why did you sit in my chair?

FRANK
We always do that. I need to use the desk.

Frank continues to work with his computer, but then gets sleepy.

TOM

I told you we all share the
same desk.

Jake gets up from the floor brushing himself off.

JAKE
(annoyed)
You share the desk at the same
time?

TOM
Of course. It's most
efficient.

JAKE
You only have one phone and
one desk? That's ridiculous!

TOM
(smiles)
No, that's efficient!

JAKE
What about you? Where's your
desk and phone? Where's your
office?

TOM
I don't have one.

JAKE
You don't have an office?

TOM
Nope. Too inefficient. I
just wander around the office
until someone needs me for
something.

JAKE
Don't you have work to do?

TOM
Sure...I think efficient
thoughts about my work all the
time.

Jake doesn't know what to make of Tom's response and then
looks at Frank who is now sleeping at the desk.

Jake
(points at Frank)

Look! Now he's sleeping.
First he pushes me off the
chair and now he falls asleep?

TOM

He's not sleeping. Frank is
working out a complex problem.
He told me he needs to close
his eyes so he can visualize
the most efficient method.

Jake walks around Frank and looks at him from all angles. He
even checks his breath to see if he's sleeping.

JAKE

Visualize the most efficient
method? You've got to be
kidding? He's sleeping!

While Jake continues to "exam" Frank and get close to his
face, Bob enters from stage right.

BOB

(yells)

Melanie, you have a call.

The yelling wakes up Frank who sees Jake near his face looking
at him.

FRANK & JAKE

(yells)

Aaaahhhh

Both Frank and Jake are scared for a moment and Jake jumps
backwards while Melanie gets off the bike exiting stage left.

FRANK

(annoyed)

What are you trying to do?
First you get mad at me for
working at the desk with you
and now you're hovering over
me. You scared me half to
death!

JAKE

(composing himself)

Uh...sorry about that.

Frank shakes his head at Jake then gets up and exits stage
right while Melanie enters stage left and sits at the desk.
Then Bob enters stage left and gets on the bike while Tom and
Jake watch.

TOM
(smiling)
Don't you just love
efficiency!

JAKE
(frustrated)
Efficiency? This is like
working at a carnival.

TOM
Yes, but it would be an
efficient carnival!

JAKE
(shaking his head)
What about a computer? Do I
get one of those? We are
computer consultants right?

TOM
Of course. We all use a small
hand-held computer which you
can use when it's your turn.

JAKE
My turn? What does that mean?

TOM
We all share the same
computer?

JAKE
Let me get this straight. You
all use the same phone, same
desk, and the same computer.
I can't believe you consider
your office to be so
efficient. It's anything but
efficient as far as I can see.

TOM
Sometimes it's hard for the
untrained eye to fully
appreciate such efficiency.
It will take you some time.

JAKE
I don't think so. I don't
need to have a trained eye to

see how inefficient this
office is.

Frank enters stage left proceeds to walk backwards downstage
and then crosses to stage right and ends up next to Melanie at
the desk. He sits in the same chair with Melanie for moment
then gets up and walks back the same route backwards.

JAKE
(to Tom)
What was that?

TOM
(matter of fact)
That was Frank. He had work
to do at the desk.

JAKE
Wait, wait, wait! I'll give
you the part about Frank
sitting at the desk at the
same time as Melanie, but why
in the world is he walking
backwards?

TOM
Oh...to save time.

JAKE
Of course. How silly of me.

(pause)

And how is he saving time?

TOM
By walking backwards Frank
will save time and thus he'll
be more efficient.

JAKE
(confused)
How?

TOM
Because he's walking backwards
in time instead of forwards.
Don't you watch any of those
science fiction movies? They
do it all the time.

JAKE

But, that's science fiction.
That's on television! Not
real life! This is
incredible. I can't believe I
work here.

(rubs face and pauses)

How long have you been in
business?

TOM

Oh, about six months, but we
think it's only been three
months because of all the
extra time we've saved. You
know because of walking
backwards and using the bike
and stuff like that.

JAKE

I'm speechless.

TOM

Good! That's very efficient
too. Maybe you could show
Melanie how you do that.

JAKE

(gets an idea)

I think I will. In fact I'll
sit at the desk with her right
now and do some efficient
things.

Jake walks over to the desk and squeezes himself on the same
chair as Melanie.

TOM

Excellent! Now you're
talking! I knew I hired the
right guy.

Jake tries to act like he's working. Melanie hands him the
computer for a moment. Then Frank comes over and "sits" on
Melanie's lap and Bob comes over and sits on Jake's lap. Tom
starts walking around the office backwards.

JAKE

(sarcastically)

Yep, look how efficient I'm
being right now. Efficient,

efficient, efficient!!! Just
call me Mr. Efficient!

BOB
Jake can I use the computer
for a minute?

JAKE
Sure Bob. Here you go.

Jake slides the computer over to Bob while everyone is
squirming and trying to get comfortable. Tom continues to
walk around the office backwards.

JAKE
I don't know why more offices
don't work this way.

FRANK
Bob can I use the computer
now?

BOB
Sure.

Bob slides the computer over to Frank and then Tom gets on the
bike and starts to pedal backwards. Everyone is fighting to
stay on the chair.

MELANIE
G O M

JAKE
What?

FRANK
Huh?

BOB
What?

MELANIE
(yelling)
G O M

JAKE
I don't know what you're
saying.

BOB
I think she said-

MELANIE

(shouts)

Get off me!!!

JAKE

What?

Melanie pushes everyone to the floor. Frank drops the computer on the desk which Melanie promptly picks up and proceeds to use like nothing happened. Frank, Bob, and Jake get up brushing themselves off.

JAKE

(yelling)

That's it! I've had enough!

TOM

What's wrong Jake?

JAKE

This is the most inefficient office I've ever seen. When I came in Bob was sleeping at the desk. He was not thinking of new and profound ways of efficiency. He was sleeping!!!! So was Frank! You're not being efficient by riding that bike backwards. It's not even connected to anything.

Jake pulls the plug taped onto the bike and outlet.

Look! It's taped to the outlet. You can't make up for lost time by walking backwards or riding backwards. That's impossible! What kind of office only has one desk, one phone, and one computer? It's insane!

(looks at Melanie)

And speaking in shorthand is not only inefficient, but no one can understand what the heck you're saying.

Jake continues to pace as everyone silently watches him until Tom gets off the bike and walks over to him at stage left.

TOM
I'm sorry you feel that way.

JAKE
I don't mean to be so harsh,
but I don't think I can work
here.

TOM
Really?

JAKE
Really.

Tom turns to look at the other employees for a moment and then
turns back to Tom.

TOM
(quietly)
Listen Jake. These folks need
you. You have skills that
could help them be more
efficient.

JAKE
Skills? What kind of skills?

TOM
You know how to use a
computer.

JAKE
(confused)
So?

TOM
None of them know how to use a
computer.

JAKE
But we're a computer
consulting company!

TOM
I know and that's what makes
it so difficult.

JAKE
(shakes head)
I can't believe this is
happening. I'm sorry I can't
do this. I don't belong here.

Tom turns to look at the other employees again for a second.

TOM
(quietly)
What if I add twenty percent
to your salary?

Jake thinks about it and looks at Tom who has a hopeful smile.

JAKE
(big sigh)
How about forty percent?

TOM
(quietly)
What about thirty percent and
a taco?

Jake thinks for a moment and then shakes hands with Tom.

JAKE
(smiles)
It's a deal, but I also want
mild sauce on the taco.

TOM
Done!

JAKE
We'll...I guess it's time to
get to work!

Jake walks backwards to the bike. He then re-tapes the electrical cord to the outlet gets on the bike and begins pedaling backwards happily. Tom walks backwards around the perimeter of the office while Frank, Bob, and Melanie struggle to stay in the chair at the desk.

LIGHTS DOWN