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Dumbest moments in business, 'Business 2.0' counts the ways

Feb 13, 2006

THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF TIME INC.'S BUSINESS 2.0 features its annual roll call of the "101 Dumbest Moments in Business," and Google gets its own special treatment, coming in at No. 18 and No. 19 on the list. No. 18 details how a new Google employee, Mark Jen, violated the company's strict disclosure rules by revealing on his blog that the company expected unprecedented revenue and profit growth in 2005-projections Google had yet to share with Wall Street. Jen was subsequently fired. No. 19 on the list highlights Google's decision last July to prohibit company employees from talking to CNET reporters for a full year. The reason: In an article about Google's privacy practices, CNET reporter Elinor Mills shared juicy details about Google CEO Eric Schmidt-for instance, that he has a net worth of \$1.5 billion-that she had discovered by Googling him. In September, facing criticism, Schmidt cut short the silent treatment and granted Mills an interview. Google's follies, however, were far behind the Grand Prize Winner of the Dumbest Moments in Business: the trend of converting mental

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institutions to apartments and condos. Business 2.0 cited AvalonBay Communities' conversion of a boarded-up Massachusetts mental hospital into a 497-unit complex of high-end apartments and condos. Similar conversions are planned in Columbia, S.C.; Detroit; New York; and Vancouver, B.C., according to the magazine. Our personal favorite of the dumbest moments, however, was No. 51: The Direct Marketing Association's launch of a Deceased Do-Not-Contact list, which is intended to stop telemarketing calls to dead relatives. It might cost you \$1 per deceased relative you put on the list, but your loved ones will surely appreciate some peace in the afterlife. Call them the grateful dead. *-Matthew Schwartz*

EVER WONDER HOW TO WIN A CROWD OVER when delivering a speech? Take a cue from Jim Speros, CMO of Ernst & Young, who got a good laugh by polling his audience with questions he claimed were based on the work of industrial psychologists. Speros began his remarks at the Business Marketing Association's What to Expect in 2006 event last week in New York by asking audience members to think of four shapes: a square, a circle, a triangle and a star. He then asked by a show of hands who identified most closely with the square. A few hands went up. A few more went up when he asked who identified themselves with the circle, and one when he asked about the triangle. Finally, when asked who identified most closely with the star, a majority of the room raised their hands. After all, we all like to think of ourselves as stars. Speros then translated the findings: A square indicates a propensity for intelligence, he explained. A circle means the person has a propensity for leadership. The lone triangle, he said, tends toward extreme aggressiveness. And all those stars who raised their hands? They have a propensity for sex, booze and gambling, he said. *-Carol Krol*

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EVEN CUPID CAN USE A LITTLE HELP from the pros, and thankfully, Pitney Bowes came to the rescue. The company set up camp last Thursday in New York's Grand Central Station for

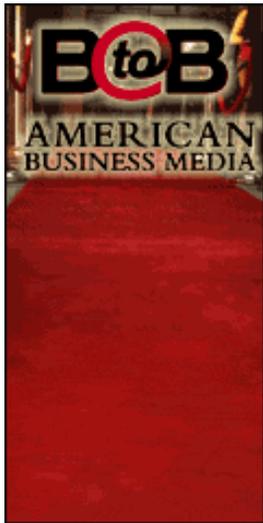
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the year. Worse than it was at the start of the year. The same. Don't know.

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its third annual get-ready-for-Valentine's Day event. With love songs such as R&B favorite "When a Man Loves a Woman" piped in as background music, the mailing giant gave away beautifully crafted Valentine's Day cards for commuters to send to loved ones. Romance writers were on hand to help participants craft just the right sentiment, and postage and mail processing were provided gratis by Pitney Bowes. Actress Virginia Madsen, who was nominated for an Academy Award and a Golden Globe for her role in 2004's "Sideways," was on hand as Pitney's official spokeswoman this year. The event drew crowds of commuters and tourists making their way through the historic train station. A booth was also set up for people to send Valentines to servicemen and servicewomen abroad through a Pitney Bowes partnership with Any Soldier Inc. (www.ansoldier.com). -C.K.



A large banner for the CTIA WIRELESS 2006 event. It features a globe on the left with a red and orange glow. The text 'The Most Important Technology Event of the Year!' is written in white, serif font. Below it, 'CTIA WIRELESS 2006' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters on a red background. At the bottom, 'APRIL 5-7 Las Vegas Convention Center | Las Vegas, Nevada USA' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters on a dark blue background.

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