

Chapter 1: Interactive agencies and the “good interactive agency worker”

On a warm Tuesday morning in June, I walked into an afterthought of an office filled with drab brown cubicles. There were several empty cubicles in view, scattered with forgotten computer cables and sachets of take-out soy sauce. The office was almost silent but there was clearly a hum of activity. Several heads covered in state-of-the-art headphones were visible above the cube walls. One or two of them bobbed to the rhythm of soundless music.

I was a bit nervous. It had been some time since I had worked in the private sector, and I had never worked in an agency before. I had been “client side,” as they say in agency parlance. I was suddenly aware of being overdressed. My suit was clearly the wrong choice; most people were wearing jeans and t-shirts. One woman wore a powder blue zip-up hoodie – with the hood up. There were no couches or foosball tables, no video game consoles, no exposed beams or brick walls. Yet I knew this place. I knew its language and its spirit. Despite wearing my suit, I instantly became comfortable. I understood this place.

What are interactive agencies?

This dissertation focuses on the practice of work in a relatively new sort of organization: the interactive agency. The interactive agency is essentially an advertising agency that specializes in the online medium. Forrester Research

defines interactive agencies those which produce commercial, marketing-focused Web sites with full-time staff dedicated to designing and building Web sites (Manning, 2005). The Wikipedia defines "an interactive agency a mix of Web Design/Development, Search Engine Marketing, Internet Advertising/Marketing, or E-Business/E-Commerce consulting" (Wikipedia, 2007).¹ Interactive agencies typically produce commercial and marketing Web sites, as well as online advertising campaigns.

The interactive industry is a particularly interesting case study because they are emblematic of the so-called "new economy," which involves both the extensive use and production of technology. Interactive agencies themselves are still developing an organizational culture around work. Academic studies of advertising have focused on ethical dilemmas of advertising executives (Lelebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991); patterns in compensation and billing habits of advertising managers (Spake, D'Souza, Crutchfield, & Morgan, 1999); and potential impacts of globalization on the advertising business (Delener,

¹ Please note that while the Wikipedia is not a definitive, peer-reviewed source, in the case of interactive agencies, it is the most up-to-date, and relevant to the community of interactive workers. It is routinely edited by volunteer human editors, as well as automated editors that test for "marketing-ese" definitions. This dissertation will rely heavily on non-traditional online sources, primarily because the topic is concerned with the online space.

1996). But there is very little academic work that focuses on the contemporary working experience of advertising. Mayer (1958) introduces us to the “golden age” of Madison Avenue in the 1950s, and describes the American working landscape at that time. Tunstall (1964) provides a rich description of the advertising world in the 1960s, but avoids revealing the structures in place that shape the working experience of advertising workers. More recently, Alvesson (1998) provides a subtle, gendered analysis of the working experience of advertising workers in a Swedish advertising agency. But there are no studies I have found that examine the world of *interactive* advertising, and none that study the nature of working time within that context. This new medium has yet to be understood in this way.

The mass appeal of the Internet, and its graphical interface known as the World Wide Web, is barely 10 years old. The mavericks of the Web industry were building commercial Web sites in the mid-1990s. Yahoo! Inc. is a good example of “veteran” Web company, founded in 1994. The Web industry’s “veterans” are relatively young. This provides a unique opportunity to understand institutional change. How does such a young industry understand itself? What are the stories people in this industry tell each other about work and time? How are conventions around work and time practiced?

The interactive agency is both an advertising agency and a Web company. This hybrid gives it a unique cultural legacy. On the one hand, it is very much shaped by the culture of the technologically savvy designers of the Internet, and on the other, it is a product of the culture of the advertising industry. In this chapter, I will explore this industry's twin cultural legacies of Web and advertising work. Both Web work and advertising work appear to overturn social relations in traditional businesses by professing a commitment to democracy, non-hierarchy, and an express rejection of "stuffy" business practice. But both industries do not fundamentally challenge the tenets on which capitalist industry is built: that employers benefit more than workers from longer hours and a more intense pace of work. I will introduce to you the stories that Web workers and advertising workers tell each other about their industries, and I will show how these stories came to influence the current state of the interactive agency.

Several authors have introduced their readers to working experience by interrogating the social norms of particular workplaces. They investigate what an organization may consider a "good worker," and infer a set of values for that organization. Kanter (1977), for example, found that "good workers" in her unnamed American corporation typically had high visibility and "commitment" to the company – an archetype that was exceedingly difficult for women to represent because of the lack of visibility their jobs typically had. Edwards (1979)

found that what constituted a “good worker” differed from workplace to workplace, depending on what kind of control mechanisms management tended to use. In the more subtle use of bureaucracy as a control mechanism, “good workers” were those that internalized the firms’ goals as their own, instead of simply complying with the speed and timing of the assembly line.

I will use this approach of investigating the “good worker” to reveal the norms of the interactive agency. In this chapter, I will unpack the archetype of the “good worker” in the interactive context by reviewing the construction of the “good Web worker” and the “good advertising worker.” The interactive agency’s “good worker” is a construct based on those dual cultural legacies. I will also show how, through severe economic changes in the industry, the organization and practice of work in Web companies came to demonstrate the advertising model of work and business. Consequently, the current conception of the “good interactive agency worker” is heavily influenced by the political economy of the Web business.

On that warm June morning, I was quickly equipped with a laptop computer and Internet access. I soon pinned charts and graphs up on my cube wall. My cube neighbors were amused with my devotion to numbers and analysis. They spent hours creating a likeness of me that they then taped to an unused computer monitor. They called it Sam 2.0 (“Sam 2-Point-Oh”) and

routinely asked it arcane technical questions before collapsing in hysterical laughter. This glimpse into agency life is evocative of the “fun” culture of the Web.

A brief history of the Internet

No history of the interactive agency would be complete without a history of the emergence of the Web itself. The Web was originally imagined in 1945, when MIT scientist Vannevar Bush wrote a seminal article for *The Atlantic* magazine. Bush envisioned a magical machine he called the “memex,” which would sit on one’s desk and retrieve knowledge at the touch of a button (Bush, 1945). His vision inspired a league of university and military researchers to create a distributed network of computers that could enable this exchange of knowledge. The first known technical description of what was to become the “Internet” was by MIT scientist J.C.R. Licklider, who described a network of computers, over which information could be sent. In 1969, collaborations between university and military researchers created “ARPANET,” or the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network. In 1970, the first computers were networked together using the Network Control Protocol, which enabled data to be sent efficiently through this network. In 1972, the first email was written and rapidly became the “killer app” of this select group of researchers using networked

computers (Leiner, 1997). While there were many “NETs,” the “Internet” came to refer to the physical cable network that connects computers around the world.

This new network represented a distributed form of ownership, both symbolically and literally. The initial plans to connect several independent networks explicitly included a commitment to the open architecture concept, with “no global controls at the operations level” (Leiner, 1998). In other words, those that designed the Internet designed it explicitly to have no central authority. This decentralized structure connoted a sense of democratic administration. When no single computer or Web server is in control of the entire network, individuals can access it from any single point, with no one individual having privileges over another. This is, in fact, one of the central ideas behind the efficiency of a network itself – priority is determined on efficient use of bandwidth and not on the original location of any single message. This technical architecture became emblematic of the Internet’s mythology: an anti-hierarchy of interconnected people using computers, democratically communicating directly with each other. Users of distributed network were welcome only if they had the requisite technical skill to use the system. Expertise – not money – was the ostensible price of entry. Although, notably few people outside the research elite were given access to the hardware required to access the system.

The number of researchers using the Internet remained relatively small because of the large amount of technical knowledge required, and the few access points. In 1985, a conference was organized to bring inventors, researchers, and commercial vendors together to talk about the possibilities of the Internet. 250 commercial vendors and 50 researchers attended — this same conference is held today, with yearly attendance of over 250,000 in 7 different global locations (Leiner, 1998). In those early days, even simple exchanges still required arcane uses of computer code. Even though the Internet was in existence, the vast majority of people had no access to it.

In 1995, the select nature of the Internet community changed radically. The World-Wide Web Consortium (W3C) was formed to explore the future mass potential of the medium (World Wide Web Consortium, 2007). At the same time, the Mosaic Web browser was created, providing a common platform for HTML-based Web pages to be read on multiple “clients” or computer desktops. The World Wide Web opened the door for mass numbers of computer users to connect to the Internet by connecting their “client” computer to the “server” of their Internet Service Provider (ISP). Arcane, elite knowledge was no longer required to participate; the World Wide Web made the Internet (theoretically) accessible to anyone.

The “good Web worker”: zany antics and long hours

Though the World Wide Web transformed the Internet into a mass medium, it retained the cultural roots of those early researchers. The “good Web worker” is a signification of the culture of the Web itself. The “good Web worker” is someone who personifies the Web’s anti-authoritarian values, but is also deeply motivated to work long hours. Norms around appropriate hours of work in this industry were shaped by the instantaneous character of the Web and the legacy of intense working hours of technology workers. Hyper-responsiveness to work demands became the order of the Web workplace.

Edwards (1979) argues that the “good worker” in contemporary workplaces are those that identify with the firm: “‘we’ now means ‘we the firm’ and no longer ‘we the workers’” (Edwards 1979 148). The worker must now identify herself with the needs of the company and not with the needs of herself or fellow workers. Web workers came to signify a democratic spirit, but they also were required to project a hyper-responsive persona in order to be valued by their peers and their companies. Discursive representations of Web workers signified a “new” way of working. These workers did not stand on ceremony, were likely to “play” at work, and were known to sleep on couches near their desks when pulling all-nighters.

Consider, for example, this description of the working environment of BuyBuddy.com. In 2000, the 19 and 17-year-old founders and bosses:

are planning a move into larger quarters that will replace the open space where employees are free to shape the work environment to their own tastes and where desks are strictly optional. Sofas, pillows and throw rugs are the furnishings of this close-knit corporate culture of people who are highly motivated, hardworking, self-directed and creative (Solomon, 2000, p. 62).

The good Web worker came to be "creative" but also "hardworking," with a highly responsive time persona. Tapia (2006) argues that the culture of long hours and "one upmanship" among Web workers stems from a strongly masculinized competitive working culture. This kind of workplace mirrors Turkle (1984) description of computing hacking culture. In her examination of computer use, Turkle describes the practice of "sport death," which is the intense, all-nighter work cycle common among computing enthusiasts. In the three dot-com organizations she studied, Tapia found that working all night was common, as was bragging about working all night. She argues that these three companies were notably homogenous (white, young, and male) and the few women that worked there were often shut out of culturally binding rituals such as "nerf gun wars" and violent video gaming. She also argues that the "gold rush mentality" of dot-com lead to "heroic" working culture which prized "crisis management" and extreme deadlines. Time, in this context, is compressed. Embodying the

values of the Web meant having fun, working hard and responding quickly; projecting those values meant publicly participating in activities that signified these values.

The inexorable encroachment of working time into private time was largely invisible in popular discourse. The media portrayed Web workers as intrinsically and manically motivated by their own desire for creativity. The “old” way of working was contrasted as stuffy, upper class and authoritarian. The “revolutionary” Web workers did not, however, fundamentally challenge the assumptions of capitalist social relations. Instead, *Fortune* characterized the “culture clash” or old versus new media as:

Stock options vs. country-club memberships. Sevenday (sic) workweeks vs. nine-to-five. Eddie Bauer vs. Brooks Brothers. Sega vs. secretaries. The cultural gulf between the newmedia boys and the old-media men is vast-and the chances of bridging it are slim (Roth, 1998, p. 141).

This culture clash seemed to pit bottom-line oriented business people against “fun” oriented technical workers – albeit ones who responded to work demands seven days a week. This tension between the values of “fun” and the demands of business would play out for several more years. One project manager of a large financial services company complained to *InfoWorld* that “This technology is being used by the technologists for doing things that may or may not be in the best interest of the business. There's a lot of playing around here; it's a toy”

(Gardner, 1997, p. 1). Web work signified, on the one hand, a rejection of traditional business values such as “stuffiness,” but on the other hand represented an increased devotion to work.

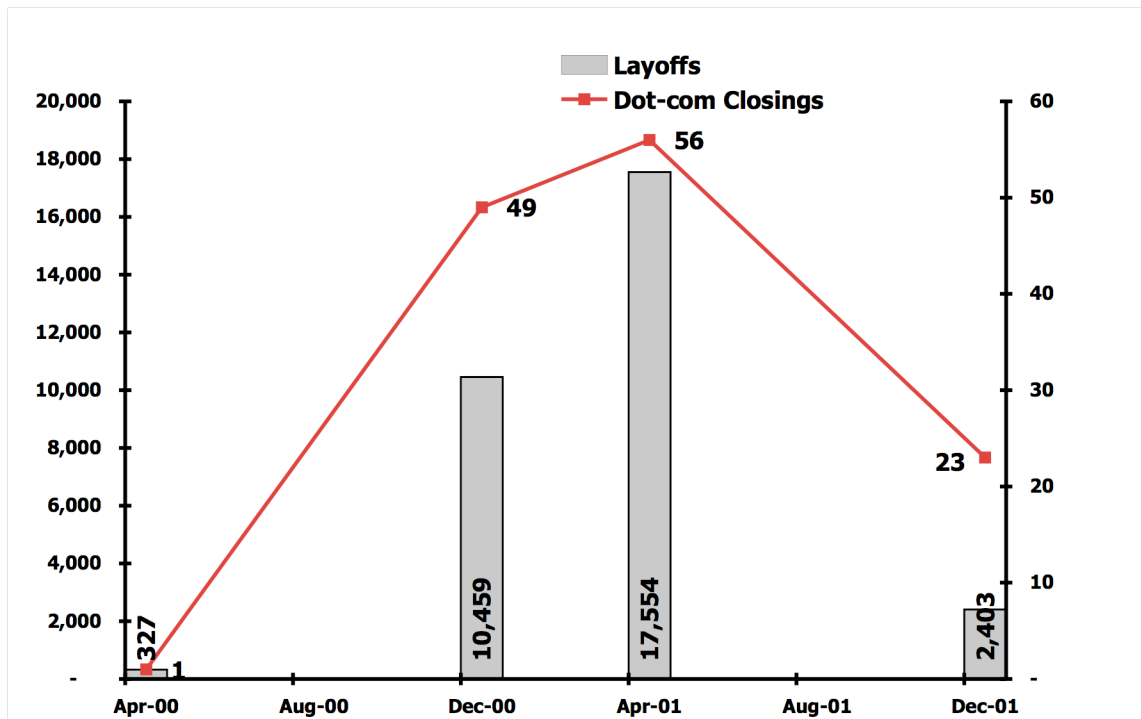
This shift toward continuous availability to work remained obscured, however, behind this supposed “culture clash” of old versus new management. Even the venerable Yahoo! was not immune to this culture clash. In a profile of the company’s “grown-up” CEO, 49-year-old Andrew Koogle, *Businessweek* noted that there was an ongoing tension between Koogle and the company’s junior founders Jerry Yang and David Filo. Koogle,

...ever the businessman, he partakes in few of the zaniest antics. For example, before the company went public in 1996, founders Jerry Yang and David Filo took on the titles of Chief Yahoos. But Koogle steadfastly refused pleas to become the Chief Chief Yahoo. He hasn't tattooed the company logo on his rear end, either, as has another executive. And he declined a request from this publication to spray-paint his wavy, graying mane in Yahoo's trademark purple and yellow colors (Himmelstein, 1998, p. 49).

The tension between “serious business” and “zany antics” is the legacy on which interactive agencies are built. The organizational culture of Web companies was portrayed as inherently conflicted between “fun” and “business.” Yet the sacrifice of private time for work time was never questioned. It was the veneer of “fun” that came to be questioned in a climate of extreme financial pressure.

By 2000, the stock-market frenzy of Internet companies had begun to die down. *Businessweek* began to run stories of how to best liquidate the leftover business fixtures of dot-com companies (Himmelstein, 2002). The conflict between young entrepreneurs and their business-trained seniors came to an end: the suits won. The result was a spate of closings of Internet companies, and thousands of layoffs, as noted in Figure 1. The message was clear: zany antics did not pay the bills. The Web needed to become serious about business, lest the Wall Street masters call in their markers and stop all the fun. Notably, the normative expectation of continuous availability to work was never challenged by the dot-com blow-out.

Figure 1: Dot-com Closings and Layoffs, 2000-2001



Source: Businessweek. 2002. "Bottoming Out?" *Businessweek*, March 18, 2002, p. 4.

The Internet, as a business and a medium, went through a great deal of change and insecurity between 2000 and 2002. The economic forces within the industry created a drive for revenue-producing ventures. Interactive agencies, which only create Web sites and online advertising for fees, became dominant players in the Internet industry. But the cultural legacy of "zany antics" and the veneer of democratic, youthful work continued. Interactive agencies had another cultural legacy, that of the advertising industry.

The “good advertising worker”: ulcer gulch meets the personality market

As with the Web culture, work at advertising agencies is a product of the values shared by members of the industry. On the Web, a “good worker” was constructed to be technically skilled, “zany,” committed to democratic values and not hierarchy, and to routinely sacrifice private time for working time. In advertising, the “good worker” was constructed to be intrinsically motivated to complete creative work – and to routinely sacrifice private time for working time. Hyper-responsiveness to work demands has always been the norm in advertising. The industry is volatile and stressful; Madison Avenue has been called “ulcer gulch” (Mayer, 1958). Advertising workers share norms about appropriate work intensity that are a product of the industry’s “crisis” mentality, and the need for intense impression management.

In her examination of the use of knowledge within organizations, Lam (2000) notes that advertising agencies, like management consultancies and software companies, rely both on tacit knowledge and on individualism. She calls these organizations “ad hockeries,” which tend to be organic, collaborative, highly innovative and to creatively solve problems. The difficulty with such companies is that they rely heavily on individual experts who do not codify their knowledge within the firm. These organizations are particularly vulnerable to

losing workers to competitors – which happens frequently – making them unstable, highly volatile organizations. Expertise in such industries is not based on official credentials, but on past work experience and reputation. For workers in such industries, “career mobility relies on effective signals” (Lam, 2000, p. 491), which are typically built through reputations within the worker’s social network. As a result, the representation of self and impression management is critical for success in advertising agencies. Successful “rising stars” must maintain an image that is consistent with the values the industry considers reputable.

The predictions of Lam’s framework are borne out in the advertising industry. Impression management, volatility, and high stress are common in advertising agencies. In his examination of London-based advertising agencies, Tunstall (1964) finds support for this notion of impression management and insecurity among advertising workers. He notes that insecurity is mostly a perceived experience among workers, and not a reality. But it stems, in part from marginalized position advertising workers have in comparison to other professions such as business or law. Advertising lacks an official credentialing system, as Lam notes, which contributes to the industry’s relative lack of status within society. Advertising workers, according to Tunstall, feel an acute sense of judgment about their jobs by others. He notes there is a pervasive inferiority

complex among advertising workers: "Indeed, a pall of failure hangs over the advertising agencies. It cannot escape the attention of anyone who has worked in the business that some of the ablest people in advertising are doing their best to get out" (Tunstall, 1964, p. 15). The net effect of this sense of failure is a continuous flow of workers from agency to agency. The best way to get ahead in advertising, according to Tunstall, is to change agencies.

Image matters in advertising work. Tunstall argues that advertising agencies offer a rich culture in which democratic ideals are professed, but hierarchy still exists. An advertising worker walks a fine line between voicing an opinion, and maintaining good relations within the agency:

People who move into advertising from other jobs often notice that agencies have an atmosphere all their own. This is the atmosphere of the *personality market*; individuals must sense the mood of others. This makes for a free and easy atmosphere, an appearance of democracy...(Tunstall, 1964, p. 17 , emphasis mine).

In this "personality market," advertising workers are behooved to project the norms and values implicit in the industry.

In order to succeed, an advertising worker must project a likable, organizationally acceptable persona. The need for impression management is paramount, according to Alvesson (1998). In his examination of the gender relations within a Swedish advertising agency, Alvesson finds impression management is critical in determining success for any advertising worker: "The

advertising worker, when not extraordinarily successful, faces more pressing identity problems than most other workers. Personality, personal relationships -- with clients, but also within the agency -- and ability to give a trustworthy impression is seen as crucial" (Alvesson, 1998, p. 991). This pressure was particularly acute for women advertising workers, who were often required to project both a "sexy" and "trustworthy" persona, which proved exceedingly difficult.

"Trustworthy" essentially means being continuously available to work. Madison Avenue, as noted by Mayer (1958), is defined very much by long hours of work: "At the agencies, especially, the hours are long to the point of brutishness. Clock watching...at an advertising agency it is a cardinal sin..." (Mayer, 1958, p. 10) . Hours are long, Mayer writes, and the working culture is stressful. Advertising workers, like Web workers, are expected to be hyper-responsive:

Advertising men (sic), in fact, rarely get much time away from their jobs. They work in a windy atmosphere of shifting preferences where crisis is a normal state of affairs, and (as one advertising manager puts it) 'someone is always hitting the panic button' (Mayer, 1958, p. 10).

The line between private time and working time has always been blurred in the advertising industry. Working time in agencies evolved to include every spare

moment. Advertising workers were expected to voluntarily extend the working day into their domestic lives:

...Every night the brief and attaché cases go home stuffed with work because the advertising man (sic) is paid for his production, not his time, and the industry expects every man to do his duty whether he is in the office or eating lunch, on the commuter train or in the bosom of his family" (Mayer, 1958, p. 10).

The normative working day in advertising became one that included regular (and cheerfully accepted) intrusions into the domestic sphere.

Advertising legend David Ogilvy, founder of Ogilvy & Mather, concurs that both working hard and *appearing to work hard* are paramount. Given that impression management is so crucial in advertising, Ogilvy advises prospective advertising managers to both endure and to project the normative value of hard work. He even argues that hard work is a *morale booster* among workers:

Discipline works. Insist that your people arrive on time, even if you have to pay them a bonus to do so... Above all, insist that due dates are kept, even if means working all night and over the weekend...There is nothing like the occasional all-night push to enliven morale – provided you are part of that push (Ogilvy, 1982, p. 50 , emphasis in original).

He writes that running an agency is a high-stress job for both managers and workers. It requires "midnight oil, salesmanship of the highest order, a deep keel, guts, thrust and a genius for sustaining the morale of men and women who work in a continuous state of anxiety" (Ogilvy, p. 45).

These working-time norms have distinct gender implications. Ogilvy himself burnt much midnight oil, which had a negative effect on his home life: "When I was the chief executive of my agency, I always took home two briefcases, and spent four hours reading their contents. Not much fun for my wife" (Ogilvy, 1982, p. 46). Ogilvy personifies and perpetuates the belief that the "good worker" in advertising includes four hours of nightly homework. He valorizes working time over non-working time. A "good worker" brings work into his home, and enthusiastically sacrifices time with his partner in favor of time for his company. It also implies that someone else, usually one's female partner, must perform the domestic labor.

These regular intrusions into the home have distinct gender implications on the job. Managing one's representation as "trustworthy" translates into a can-do, industrious work persona, which is especially difficult for women to project. Recently, worldwide creative director of WPP Group Neil French made headlines when he was asked his honest opinion why there were relatively few women creative directors: "They're crap," he told an audience in Toronto in 2005. He noted that women were unable to work the long hours the industry demanded while caring for their children and families (Best, 2005). He was fired from his job at WPP in the fall-out, but remained unrepentant. He later told *The Globe and Mail* editorial board, "[E]veryone who doesn't commit themselves fully to the

job is crap at it" (The Globe and Mail, 2005). And fully to commit, in French's mind, means relying on a partner at home to tend to the home and the family. In other words, working time supersedes private time for a truly committed advertising employee. It is more appropriate, efficient, and proper to rely on someone else to perform domestic labor.

The value of working time often requires the advertising worker to sacrifice health in favor of work. In their first-person accounts of multiple jobs, Bowe, Bowe, and Streeter (2000) interviewed an advertising executive of small firm. He reports, "[I]n the two years of work, I've never missed a day. I've been sick, but I've never taken a sick day, and I probably will never take one" (Bowe, Bowe, & Streeter, 2000, p. 151). The executive notes that since he's the "junior guy," he is expected to work harder than anyone else in the company. In other words, he practices impression management by not taking sick days. He also notes, "They're paying me for nine-to-five, but I work much longer than that" (Bowe, Bowe, & Streeter, 2000, p. 151). Working time is as much about "face time" and impression management as it is about the actual work.

The norms of advertising working culture crossed over and melded with the Web working culture when online advertising grew in prominence. As the dot-com bubble burst, the Web's status of a mass medium solidified within a context of instability and severe economic pressure for profits. Online advertising

and marketing-based corporate Web sites were the few dot-com examples that made money. Web workers themselves were required to justify their skills and creativity as economically viable and not just “playing around” or “zany antics.” The “good Web worker” came to be constructed out of both the Web and the advertising industries’ working culture. The “good interactive agency worker” projects a persona of hyper-responsiveness, creative and/or technical skill, intrinsic motivation, professed democratic ideals but an express ability to “get along” with others in the agency, and an internalized commitment to the company’s profitability. This persona became firm when the Web as an advertising medium became legitimized and established as the norm.

The web’s transition to advertising

Mass media are products of the context in which they mature. In their review of radio broadcasting’s evolution, for example, Leblebici et al (1991) note that radio manufacturers were the primary influencers of radio policy in the medium’s early days. Technological limitations of the medium were considered paramount in institutional practice and medium regulation and manufacturers frequently held sway in the medium’s governance. But over time, fringe players and their practices came to rule how the medium was governed and used. This kind of practice, which began as the exception, became legitimized as major players in the industry followed suit. The net result was a shift from radio as a

public good (and governed as a piece of technical, public infrastructure) to radio as a medium appropriate for advertising, and governed by the norms and practices of advertising.

The Web has followed a similar vein, where advertising slowly became a legitimate form of Web content. The Web's early days were founded on "The phrase 'content is king,' and a general obsession with 'content,' are in the foundation of our information economy culture" (Colvin, 1999, p. 140). But as the Web evolved, the bottom-line business mentality began to take root. People were making money on the Web, but not through the subscription model. By 1999, *The Financial Times* declared "Content is dead and content plus commerce is king" (McKay, 1999, p. 9). Just like in radio, the advertising model began to be the preeminent model.

The Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) was founded in 1996, with founding members from the top Web sites of this burgeoning medium, including CNet News.com; Time Inc., InfoSeek Corp., and Turner Interactive Marketing and Sales. The aim of the new organization was to facilitate the growth of online advertising (Internet Advertising Bureau, 1996). By August 1996, the organization had 70 member companies. By 2007, the IAB has over 300 members.

More recently, interactive agencies are branching out into traditional advertising, such as billboard design, as well as into new product design (Morrissey, 2007). Internet-based advertising is growing quickly. In the first six months of 2006, \$7.9 billion in revenues, up from \$5.87 billion in the first six months of 2005, an increase of 36.7% (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2006). Industry watchers have predicted that the total amount to be spent on online advertising in 2007 will exceed \$20 billion (Shields, 2007). This enormous growth and diversification may make it possible for interactive agencies the coveted "agency of record" for larger companies.

Along with the growth of online advertising came the online advertising agency. The interactive agency is the hybrid Web/advertising company. The birth of the interactive agency, "did not take place on Madison Avenue, the home of the ad agency. Instead it bloomed in 'Multimedia Gulch' in San Francisco and New York City's Silicon Alley" (Zeff & Aronson, 1999, p. 20). The first interactive agencies were typically strong technical shops that build the first corporate web sites. The potential revenue from online advertising created an ever-increasing need for companies that had expertise in both advertising and marketing, as well as the technical skill of building Web sites. Over time, the techie interactive agencies either hired people with advertising agency experience or merged with an advertising agency (Zeff & Aronson, 1999).

The emergence – and acceptance – of advertising and marketing Web content can be traced through the creation and evolution of the annual “Webby Awards,” which are granted for “excellence on the Internet including Websites” (The Webby Awards, 2007). In 1997, the first Webby awards were given in 15 categories. These categories tell us as much about how the Web was perceived and understood as a mass medium. The 1997 categories and winners, listed in, connote the Web as primarily a medium for news, information, and entertainment. One can imagine a corresponding magazine title for each of these Webby categories.

Table 1: 1997 Webby Award Winners

Category	Webby Award Winner	Details
Art/design	Entropy8.com	Online art
Books/magazines	Salon.com	Online news magazine
Film	IMDB.com	Internet movie database
Games	You don't know Jack Bezerk.com	Online trivia game
Home	Family Planet Family.starwave.com	Family interest web site
Living/health	Reuter's Health Information	Health-related Web site
Money	Edmund's Automobile Guide	Online car shopping
Music	SonicNet.com	Music interest Web site
Politics/law	The Netizen	Political column
Science	The Exploratorium	Online science museum
Sports	ESPN Sports Zone	ESPN sports
Travel	Travel Mag	Travel interest Web site
TV	TheGist.com	Online TV guide
Weird	Gallery of the Absurd	Online Absurdity

By 2000, by contrast, the category “commerce” had been added (among others including “education”). Babycenter.com won the commerce category in 2000, beating out amazon.com and etoys.com. By 2006, the Webbys were giving out “lifetime achievement awards” (awarded to the Artist Formerly Known as Prince). There was also a marked increase – and change – in the nature of the categories. Now, awards are given in 60 separate categories, as noted in Table 2. In addition to online advertising, such as banner ads, established “brick-and-mortar” companies began to build corporate and marketing Web sites, such as the Redken Haircolor Web site. And interactive agencies themselves, such as boomMedia, are now recognized mainstream players in the Web industry. More recently, interactive agencies are branching out into traditional advertising, such as billboard design, as well as into new product design (Morrissey, 2007).

Table 2: 2006 Selected Webby Award Winners

Category	Winner	Details
Beauty and Cosmetics	Redken Haircolor	Advertising hair color
Lifestyle	Epicurious.com	Cooking, recipe and e-commerce site
Pharmaceuticals	Change of Haart	HIV/AIDS site operated by a private health care company. HAART refers to Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy, which includes a "cocktail" of expensive HIV/AIDS drugs.
Professional Services	mediaBOOM	Web site of an interactive agency that sells web design services
Lifetime Achievement	NPG Music Club	Web site operated by rock/pop artist Prince, which sells music and fan paraphernalia
Associations	Cotton Inc	Web site of lobby group of cotton manufacturers and growers

These agencies combine the working cultures of both the Web and advertising into a distinct working culture that emphasizes "zany antics," passion for the creative work, and an internalized, deep commitment to working time often at the expense of private time.

The “good interactive agency worker”

Blast Radius is an interactive agency founded in Vancouver in 1996. Profit magazine reported in 2000, that “Blast Radius knows Rule 1 of the new economy: Be serious, but have fun doing it” (Macdonald, Lynch, Davidson, & Baillie, 2000). But “[CEO Gurval] Caer says his company's most important strengths are still the talents and passion of its people. ‘We try to foster the best working environment possible,’ he says: ‘That's what matters most’” (Macdonald, Lynch, Davidson, & Baillie, 2000).

Digitas is an interactive agency based in Boston, Massachusetts, with offices in Chicago, New York, and Detroit. On the careers section of its Web site, Digitas tells prospective workers, “When you work at Digitas, expect to be challenged to be your absolute best. In a constantly changing environment, our teams are redefining the standards for best practices and defining the next ‘big idea’” (Digitas, 2007) The company says it “rewards creative thinkers who are **passionate** about delivering results for our clients” (Digitas, 2007, emphasis in original). But working at Digitas isn’t all business – it includes “fringe benefits like ‘bagel Fridays’” and sports activities (“Bagel Fridays” may admittedly fall short of “zany,” but the spirit of “fun” is implied).

Sapient is an interactive agency founded in 1990 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with 17 locations worldwide. On their Web site, they tell

prospective workers that “Our unique, open culture ensures that everyone’s contributions are valued — from seasoned consultants to newly hired associates” (Sapient, 2007). This statement is near perfect combination of the advertising and Web working cultures. Skill is valued, democracy encouraged. The company tells us that “Everyone at Sapient continually strives to find new ways to do things that can make a big impact. It’s the foundation of our culture, and the passion behind our commitment to help our clients do amazing things” (Sapient, 2007). Passion. Commitment. Continually strive. Amazing things. This culture prizes intrinsically motivated, creative, and tenacious workers. The company also says it has a “commitment to work-life balance” which has earned it multiple “great place to work” awards. How does this commitment to “work-life balance” work in practice? How does working time get negotiated with directly competing demands of home and “amazing things”? How do interactive workers, in general, negotiate these competing priorities?

One of the most intriguing and enduring sociological problems is the gap between *de jure* policy and *de facto* lived experiences. Habermas notes that efforts to make women equal before the law (policy) continues to be outpaced by the *de facto* inequality (lived experience) of women. The effect of this gap is to make the sense of *inequality* “all the more obvious” (Habermas, 1994, p. 114).

How is this expectation of hyper-responsiveness reconciled with the professed commitment to “fun” or “work-life balance”? What is the division between working time and private time for these workers? In the next chapter, I will provide an overview of how theorists have understood working time, what it indicates about social relations, and how it can help explain the lived experiences of workers in all industries.