

**MAYBE ALL THOSE CEO SPEECHES** and pronouncements about ethics finally sank in. Or perhaps everyone's just watching the books more carefully these days. Either way, business-media coverage these days seems to be registering a lot less large-scale corporate fraud than it did a few years ago.

That doesn't mean, though, that ethics officers are struggling to look busy. Nearly all workers, from top to bottom, violate companies' zero-tolerance policies at some point. If you've taken home a spare pad of paper or sent a personal e-mail in the afternoon or expensed a not-really-business lunch, you've surely run afoul of some tightly written rule in the HR handbook.

So what to do with all the offenders? Senior editor Vadim Liberman explores the subject in "Workers Behaving Badly" (page 12), talking with corporate ethicists and compliance experts, most of whom frown upon abiding even the most trifling breach. Vadim reaches a different conclusion: A workable policy demands a measure of flexibility. "Acknowledging that you can't wholly separate black from white to account for reason and common sense doesn't necessarily trap you in an ethical maze," he writes. "It's not only possible to work within the gray—it may even be preferable."

Perhaps the most interesting tidbit Vadim turns up: The perfectly reasonable assumption that the bitterness and low morale in today's workplaces have generated more petty pilferage... appears to be mistaken. People may tell pollsters that they feel no loyalty and intend to leave the company as soon as there's somewhere to go, but they don't seem to be taking out their frustrations on the supply cabinet.

Desperate for a workplace trend for which to be thankful? You're welcome.

**If you haven't** visited [tcbreview.com](http://tcbreview.com) lately, you're missing out: Since April, we've been regularly posting feature stories above and beyond what's in the printed magazine, with provocative takes on business and social issues, all easily readable and downloadable. In just the last couple of months, we've run articles by Steve McKee on dealing with C-suite disagreement, Sander Flaum on the search for work/life balance at the top, and Howard Bloom on the roots of consumer culture.

Plus, the site offers ready access to articles from previous issues, in case you overlooked one or just have a few free minutes and feel like browsing. Check it out.

**Last: For this issue,** I sat down with Bart van Ark, The Conference Board's chief economist, to discuss the economic outlook for 2010 and beyond; his predictions and analysis begin on page 34. The annual-forecast tradition started two decades ago, when Gail Fosler joined the Board as chief economist and began writing for this magazine: Every January from 1991 through 2008, she marshaled her insight and the organization's resources to deliver a fresh outlook article, becoming a welcome byline to readers as well as a familiar face to followers of global economics and CNN's financial coverage.

Why take the space now to acknowledge Gail's longtime contribution, more than two years after she moved up to become president of The Conference Board? Because as of the end of 2009, she's leaving the organization to pursue other worthy projects. She'll be much missed.



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