

# Work & Money

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## EMPLOYMENT, PAGE 7E

Search the latest postings for jobs in the Triangle.

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## CHANNELS, INSIDE

## Tough love for charities

I am a sucker for a hard luck story. Ask me for money on the street, and I'll most likely find a dollar or two. Tell me you've got hungry kids, and I tend to up the ante. My son asks me how I know people are telling the truth. I tell him I can't take the

### CENTS AND SENSIBILITY



Mary Cornatzer

chance that they aren't. I'm tougher when it comes to charities. I check them out rigorously, looking at how they spend their money, how much goes to overhead and staff, and how much gets to those in need. I am particularly harsh on those who call to thank me for my past support and double-check my address so they can send me a new pledge card. I tell them: If you want my donation, send me information. I usually don't hear another word, at least until another year rolls around.

The calls are coming now — it must be the season. Just this week, I've been asked to help the families of firefighters and police officers, send kids to camp and to the circus.

I'm not saying any of these groups are scammers. There are plenty of legit organizations that help the very people they say they will. But never write any group a check without first checking them out.

Get the group's name. Ask whether they've been hired to solicit donations for the charity. Check to see that the company and the charity are licensed to solicit in this state. You can do that at the Secretary of State's Web site at [www.sosnc.com](http://www.sosnc.com); just click on the "charitable solicitations." From there you can look at licenses and check tax forms, called a 990.

But just because a charity is licensed to solicit in the state doesn't mean it's a slam dunk to get your money.

Earlier this spring, attorneys general in 32 states, including ours, accused Community Support of Milwaukee, Wis., of using misleading statements to solicit donations on behalf of veterans, firefighters and police through telemarketing and mailings. The AGs and the company reached a settlement that says Community Support can not misrepresent how or what portion of a donation will benefit the charity. Nor can it falsely claim that the consumer or a family member donated to a charity in the past.

The investigation found that the company typically kept 80 percent or more of the funds it raised for various groups, which in North Carolina included the state chapter of the U.S. Navy Veterans Association HQS, the National Vietnam Veterans Foundation and the Reserve Police Officers Association.

There are other sites that can help you donate wisely. One I like is [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org). The site is an independent evaluator that monitors how various charities spend their donations. If a charity spends more than 50 percent of its budget paying professionals to solicit money, it will be noted by Charity Navigator.

A lot of charities could really use help right now, so make sure your money is going where it can do the most good.

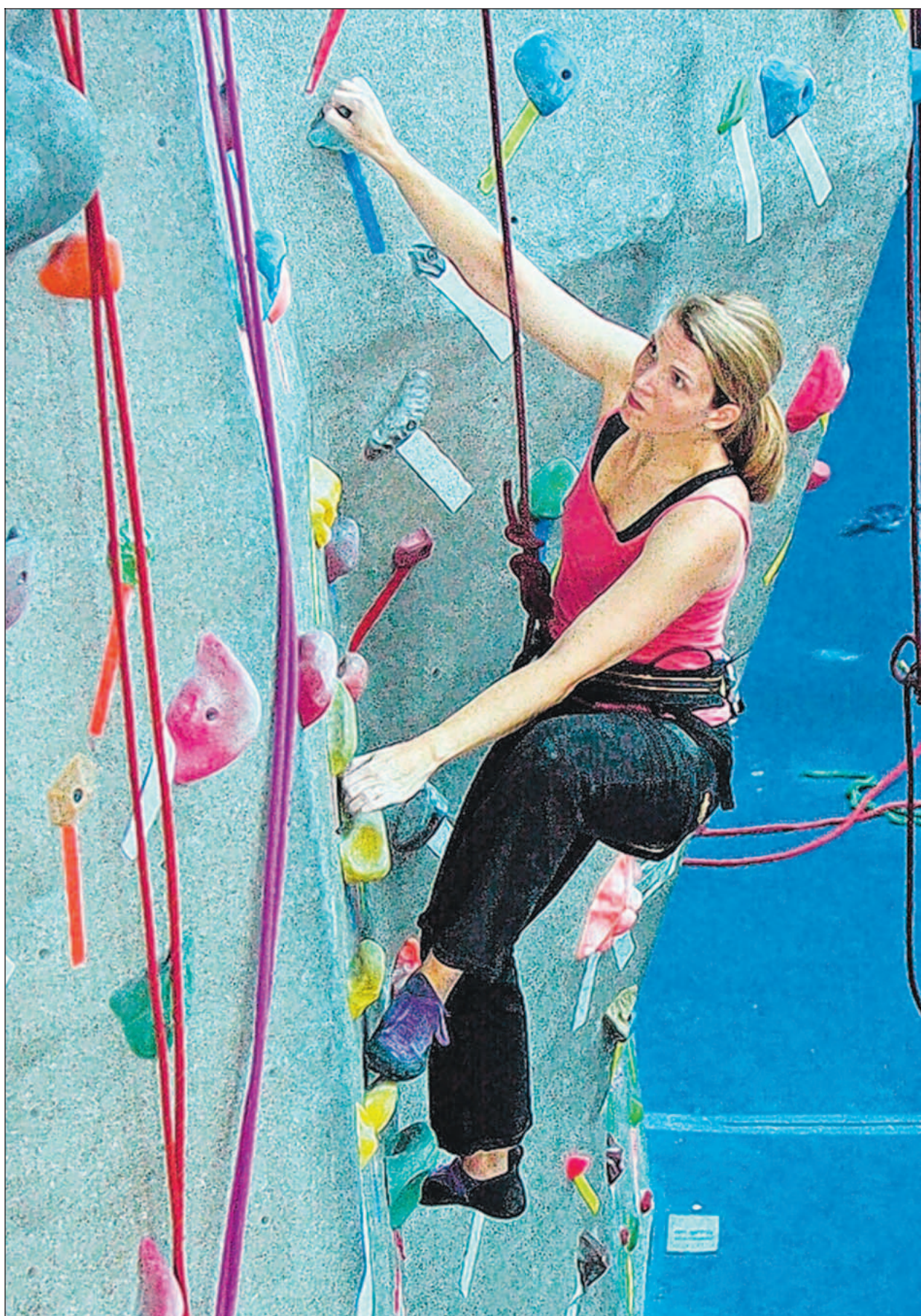
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**Timely tax reminders:** If you've recently married and opted to change your name, let the Social Security Administration know. If your name and SSN don't match when you go to file taxes next year, expect headaches. Also, report address changes to your company's HR department so you'll get a W-2 form next year, and update your withholding status.

For parents who have children

SEE CENTS, PAGE 3E

'There are times when you have to put all of your focus on one giant leap.'

BRENDA BERG



Brenda Berg, the founder of a children's furniture company, climbs high at Triangle Rock Club. 'It is all about facing your fears head on,' she says. 'If you can't handle fear, starting a business is not for you.'

STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN ROTTET

By GRACE W. UENG  
CORRESPONDENT

Many people try to start businesses. And there are those who try to climb mountains. The few who are good at both say that learning the skills to do one can help with the other.

Randy Myer was a successful entrepreneur and climber when he decided nine years ago to return to his alma mater, UNC-Chapel Hill, to share his experience. His key lessons on marketing, business plan analysis and more are built on a very solid and rugged foundation from his love of mountain climbing.



Climbing helps Myer inspire his business students.

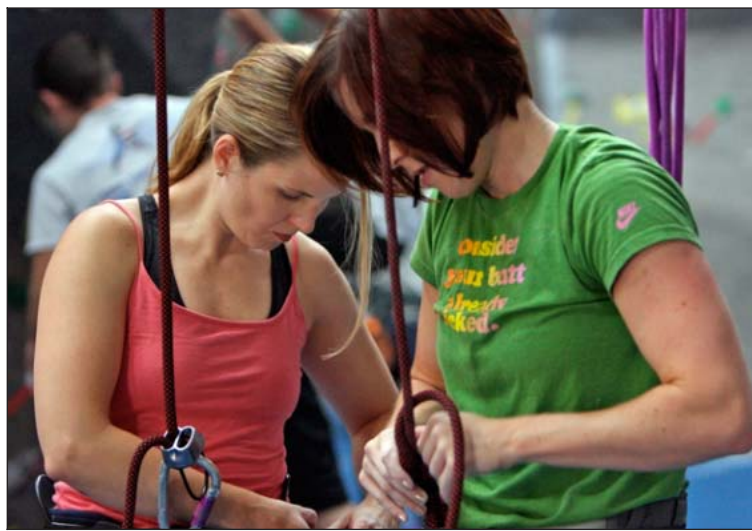
"Climbing required drive, motivation, individual energy and quick decision-making," Myer said. "You don't have to be book smart to start your own business — or to be a successful mountaineer — you need to be goal-oriented."

As with other extreme or endurance athletes who are successful in the corporate world, mountain climbers are passionate about setting goals, training and succeeding, no matter the time commitment and energy required. This passion is very similar to entrepreneurs starting a business, pouring almost every waking hour into a

SEE MOUNTAINS, PAGE 6E

# If there's a mountain, CLIMB IT

Lessons from training carry over into business



Berg, left, and her climbing partner Erica Jevons rope up as they get ready for another climb at Triangle Rock Club.

## Sun, sand, and e-mail

Even on vacation, work never ends

By CAMERON STEELE  
THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

For John Wheelless, a project manager for a Charlotte security company, going on vacation doesn't mean getting away from work. He takes his cell phone and laptop with him on family vacations so his employer, SFI Electronics, can reach him.

"It's required to stay in contact with work," said Wheelless, a South Carolina native who spends his yearly vacation in Myrtle Beach with his wife and 3 kids.

Last weekend, as the whereabouts of missing S.C. Gov. Mark Sanford gained national headlines, the chatter touched on when it was OK for someone to disconnect entirely from work. It must be nice to totally escape on vacation, right? Sanford, of course, had reason for being MIA when it came to phone calls, texts and emails — he gave the world the slip to hook up with his mistress in Argentina.

His confession left questions as to whether he would've acknowledged the affair if his disappearance — and apparent lack of contact with his staff — had not been so highly publicized. It also underlined the fact that it's not just top executives who are expected to be linked to office at all times.

Studies show that technology has compelled more rank-and-file workers to stay connected all the time.

During this downturn, some employees get a built-in excuse to avoid keeping in touch with the office: Workers at companies that are using temporary furloughs to cut costs legally aren't allowed to check work e-mail or perform other tasks while on leave.

But even some of those people bend the rules because they feel guilty or fear a backlash if they don't. No one wants to return from a furlough or vacation to find e-mail and extra work piled up. And few people are willing to take a chance that a boss might think they're expendable during an absence.

"Once people know you're behaving this way [staying in touch by cell phone and e-mail], businesses expect you to be at their beck and call so vacations become hard," said Gary Marchionini, the Boshamer professor at UNC-Chapel Hill's school of information and library science.

Constant contact has become the norm, and that means vacations aren't the isolated, work-free experiences they once were.

People stay connected to the of-

SEE VACATION, PAGE 6E



MCT FILE ILLUSTRATION

### A GROWING PHENOMENON

A 2008 survey of 250 advertising and marketing executives showed that 30 percent checked in at the office at least once a day while on vacation, up from 19 percent three years ago and 11 percent in 2001. And 10 percent said they try to avoid vacations, because they cause more stress than satisfaction.

Another survey conducted in January showed that almost 50 percent of 605 full- and part-time employees around the country check their work e-mail while on vacation.



## Making the most of forced downtime

Among 1,800 laid-off workers, 22 percent are spending more time with family and friends, according to a CareerBuilder.com survey. Another 15 percent are fixing up their homes, and 14 percent are exercising more.



## MOUNTAINS

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new venture. An entrepreneur feels pressure from investors, customers, employees and family.

"Major climbs have three phases that are not unlike starting a new business," Myer said. "The first phase, planning, is quite similar in both. The second phase, the actual journey, is much the same, although the climb gets harder as you get higher, which is probably the reverse for starting a business."

Finally, there is the third phase, reaching the summit, which has some of the same characteristics of selling a new business or taking it public. For most climbers, the excitement is in the journey, as it is for entrepreneurs.

"But the outside world often measures you by the third level — did you reach the summit or have a successful exit," Myer said. "We love the journey much more. But people that ask about climbing or my start-up seem to focus mostly on the end result."

## Always climbing

While at Harvard Business School, Myer caught the bug for climbing from a classmate from Alberta, who eagerly taught him the ropes during visits to neighboring New Hampshire.

Myer ascended Mount McKinley, Aconcagua, Rainer and Kilimanjaro, each requiring a full year of preparation, all while working as a consultant at Booz Allen. He would book the tallest hotel while on business travel so that he could awake before sunrise to run the stairwells with whatever work materials and books from his hotel room, Bible and magazines, could fit into his backpack to simulate his 90-pound mountain pack.

Inspired from mountain climbing, Myer quit his consulting job, dug into his entrepreneurial adventure with vigor and founded Best Friends Pet Care. Raising an initial \$3 million in seed capital to launch his idea, he built his pet-services chain into a \$30 million operation with more than 55 U.S. locations.



John Spivey, right, founder of Gardens of the Carolinas, a design landscape firm, and his son tackled Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe, and reached its top.

COURTESY OF JOHN SPIVEY

He sold his interest in the company in the mid-1990s to outside investors.

While climbing Mount McKinley in Alaska, the highest mountain peak in North America, the group leader told Myer's team that conditions would force them not to attain the summit. "Did I want to turn back on McKinley? Absolutely not," Myer said. "But I did not argue with our leader. That is the hardest part for me — managing the drive to excel — to get to the top."

## To conquer fears

Like Myer, Brenda Berg started climbing during college and planned her life around her passion. Berg is the founder of Scandinavian Child, a Raleigh company that is the exclusive North American distributor of unique children's products. She's also an avid "rock jock" whose license plate reads "CLIMBING."

"For years I did nothing other than school, work, and climb all over the country, plus Mexico and New Zealand," Berg said. She would often travel five days a week

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Grace W. Ueng is the founder and CEO of Savvy Marketing Group, [www.savvy-marketinggroup.com](http://www.savvy-marketinggroup.com), a marketing and consulting firm based in Cary. She and her team work closely with senior management who want to maximize the success of their ventures. A consultant, speaker, writer and teacher, Ueng has served as an adjunct faculty member at UNC-Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School and in the international MBA program at Fudan in Shanghai, a joint venture with MIT's Sloan School of Management, teaching "Entrepreneurial Marketing and Innovation."



for work as a management consultant, then detour to rigorous climbing locations. She then climbed for the weekend before heading off on her next business trip.

Learning to handle fear is a key hurdle for successful climbers and entrepreneurs. "Climbing is a great way to learn your strengths and weaknesses," Berg said. "It is all about facing your fears head on. If you can't handle fear, starting a business is not for you."

Berg gives climbing credit for having a positive impact on her starting and running a business. "If you really have a passion for climbing, it means that you are up for a challenge," she said. Taking that challenge and applying it to starting a business is a great next step.

"There are times when you have to put all of your focus on one giant leap — trusting yourself, your gear and your partner to make sure that it happens, or that they catch you on the way down," she added. "Moreover, if it doesn't work, you have to get back on the rock and try it again, or the fear will take over and paralyze you."

Climbing also gave her lessons in leadership. "In times of crisis, I learned that I can be calm and in charge," she said. "This gives me added confidence in my work. Fear is a good driver when channeled positively, especially as a leader."

## To plan for anything

For some climbers, the quest is a family affair, with the goal of tackling the so-called Seven Summits — the highest peaks of the seven continents.

John Spivey, founder of Gardens of the Carolinas, a design landscape firm, has ascended Mount Kilimanjaro, Elbrus and Aconcagua with his grown son. They are planning now for Mount McKinley, also known as Denali, next spring.

"Climbing the Seven Summits with my son has become a unifying aspect for us," he said. While his son trains on the mountains in Boulder, Colo., Spivey regularly runs or treks, complete with weighted pack, at William B. Umstead State Park in Raleigh.

An entrepreneur at heart, Spivey registered for incorporation of his business the first work day after his graduation from N.C. State, where he played on the soccer team. He remains very active in the day-to-day activities of his landscaping business, which has benefited from his passion for mountaineering.

"In climbing, I must plan for the unexpected," Spivey said. "My approach to gear, food and route are crucial. This sort of planning has stimulated a more complete approach to my business planning."

## To relish the risk

Another local climber who has begun his quest to conquer the seven summits is Zachary Maurides, who works as a product quality analyst at SciQuest, a Cary technology company. He continues to run two thriving businesses he founded while at Duke on a football scholarship.

While a student at Duke, Maurides reached the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. In August, he will attempt to summit Mount Elbrus in Russia. Like Spivey, he and his father would like to ascend all Seven Summits and make it a family tradition.

He is currently getting in at least one strenuous workout a day such as climbing the stairs of Duke stadium with a full pack as well as one light workout of a long walk of more than three miles.

"Starting your own business involves a lot of risk," Maurides said. "I think this appetite for risk is what allows me to think I can conquer these seven mountains."

Stepping back, he reflects, "I also think that climbing a mountain, like any other difficult task, helps to give a person perspective on their life. It makes the day-to-day struggle of starting and growing a business seem small."

His advice for aspiring climbers or entrepreneurs: "Decide you are going to do it and make a promise to yourself, and other people if necessary," Maurides said. "I find that from there my pride will push me to finish the task. The last thing I want is to tell all those people how I backed out."

## TEN STEPS TO REACH THE TOP

Can leadership on the mountain translate into business success? How, when and why do mountaineers go on to be successful entrepreneurs? Here are some tips for doing well at both endeavors:

■ **Visioning:** Includes the recognition that a powerful vision is compelling. It energizes the visionary and enables them to excite others to participate. The group dream.

■ **Choosing teammates:** Ones that fill the team from a critical skill set and personality standpoint. A quality group that supports the common vision, provides needed feedback, and implicitly trusts one another.

■ **Committing to goals and strategies:** Need to fully commit and understand what it's going to take. Decide if team wants to attempt a "first route" — to traverse where no one else has yet set foot. Akin to a breakthrough invention.

■ **Understanding the true goal:** Agreement among key stakeholders — the team — each step along the way. When to turn back? What is the difference between a "successful exit" and failure? Successful serial entrepreneurs and mountaineers know to focus on enjoying journey.

■ **Developing the action plan:** Relates to knowing "how things have been done." Don't reinvent where it's not necessary. Must have explicit plan — route, camps, backup camps, how you will communicate, financing. Leverage best practices. Be able to be specific and tactical to reap resulting success.

■ **Getting correct resources:** You need to have enough provisioning to weather the most treacherous and unexpected of wintry conditions. Have the right staff at base camp to keep foundation solid.

■ **Getting sponsors/advocates:** Relates to investors, supporters and others.

■ **Avoiding danger:** Don't do unethical things. Avoid toxic people. Be flexible and respond to the right opportunities. Know when to innovate/take risk and when to follow. Know when to take risky routes.

■ **Understanding the media:** Getting positive coverage will help you get support for your next summit, helps you develop a reputation, can help you bring attention to another cause you care about, can open up other doors of opportunity.

■ **Choosing the time to ascend:** Season, weather, politically, personal life. Are all the stars aligned to maximize likelihood for success?

'Vacation is supposed to be, well, vacation.'

CASSANDRA SHORT, WACHOVIA ANALYST, CHARLOTTE

## VACATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1E

face while on vacation partly because they're expected to, but also because they feel guilty and fear a backlash if they don't, Marchionini said.

Caroline Parker, who has worked as an analyst at Wachovia in Charlotte since she graduated from college in 2008, said she is married to the BlackBerry that the bank gave her, even when on vacation.

But Parker doesn't think constant contact with the office is always a bad thing, pointing out that now she can send e-mail and get information from home — whereas before she'd have to be in the office on a Saturday morning.

"It [having a BlackBerry] can be a luxury, because it lets you do work from anywhere," Parker said. "But it's a love-hate relationship."

## How many live like this?

A 2008 survey of 250 advertising and marketing executives shows that 30 percent checked in at the office at least once a day while on vacation, up from 19 percent three years ago and 11 percent in 2001. Ten percent said they try to avoid vacations now, because they cause more stress than satisfaction. The survey was conducted by Creative Group, a division of staffing company Robert Half International.

Another survey conducted in January by the Society for Human Resource Management showed that almost 50 percent of 605 full- and part-time employees around the country check their

work e-mail while on vacation.

For another Wachovia analyst, constant contact inspires more annoyance than love.

Charlotte resident Cassandra Short said she refuses to let communication with the office impinge on her vacation time. She takes her cell phone when she and her family make their twice-a-year trip to Hilton Head Island, but only uses it to get in touch with the neighbors who look after her house.

"The cell phone more or less stays off. Vacation is supposed to be, well, vacation, and I'm already with everybody who counts," Short said.

Her husband is not as willing to go off the grid. He brings his laptop on their vacations so he can periodically check his work e-mail.

Marchionini said he thinks society's obsession with constant contact will change once the new technology becomes a more comfortable part of daily life, allowing people to shut off their e-mail or log off Facebook without feeling like they're going to miss out on something.

Kentuckian DeeDee Harper is spending her family vacation in Charlotte, and she said there is always someone who knows where she is when she vacations. As the manager of a U.S. Bank in Walton, Ky., she says staying in touch with the office is a necessary evil.

"I want no part of keeping in touch with work," said Harper, who arranged to vacation in Charlotte after she found an old friend on Facebook who lives here. "But they call me — they know they can call me — on my cell phone if they need me."

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