



What every working woman or potential working woman must know: how to avoid a dead-end job; or, how to succeed in business without really typing. By Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Twelve years ago, when I walked the pavements with my college diploma under one arm and the help-wanted ads under the other, three of my best friends were making a beeline for the state teachers' examinations.

For me, teaching offered satisfaction but no career surprises. On the other hand, business seemed to promise unlimited horizons. I was thrilled to get work as a secretary in a book publishing house. While I dreamed of editing another *Gone with the Wind*, my three friends explored the typing, filing and menial trivia that filled my days.

"Each to her own taste," goes the French proverb. Yet, however different their vocations, teachers and telephone operators, stewardesses and surgeons, lawyers and librarians share a common wish for free access to success as they define it. And none of them relish having limited options and employment traps programmed into their lives.

In a sense there are no hopeless jobs—only jobs that make some people feel hopeless. A housewife taking her first job at age 40 may be overjoyed to work as a receptionist. But a woman economist is likely to recoil at the same job, even if she is assured that it's only an entering wedge into the upper echelons of the company. A high school graduate might jump at the chance to be a legal secretary. But a female attorney who is asked to type briefs or serve coffee to her colleagues will not find those duties tolerable.

Obviously, one woman's primrose path is another woman's prison. What you must determine is where you stand in the employment picture, where you want to end up and how much you'll put up with to get there. While there are no absolutes about good and bad jobs, there are jobs that would be absolutely ruinous for you. These should be avoided altogether or else endured only as a stepping stone to your goal. Whether you're working or job-hunting, you'll find these 10 danger signals a useful early warning system to direct

1. When you present your credentials for an administrative position, the first question you're asked is: "How fast can you type?"
2. The job is described as a great opportunity "for a woman."
3. The personnel department is interested in your marital status or your method of birth control but not in your talent or training.
4. When you inquire about advancement, they distract you with the company's policy on coffee breaks and Christmas bonuses.
5. You notice that no women hold jobs above the middle-management level.
6. The emphasis is on your appearance, charm, personality and willingness to "serve" an executive.
7. Tradition sets policy. Some telltale comments are: "All our girls start this way." Or, "Women have always been researchers; the editors are men." (Both *Time* and *Newsweek* required legal action to break their tradition of freezing women in low job categories.)
8. Fun and glamour are offered as substitutes for a fair salary and an honest job title. Watch out for the boast: "Some women would pay us for such an exciting job."
9. Your boss is a confirmed misogynist (you know, the kind of man who believes that if the Lord wanted woman to be equal, He would have made her out of more than one rib). Or your superior is a woman who had to claw her way up—and can't see why you should have it easy.
10. You're (continued on page 120)

Meet the JOURNAL's newest columnist. A working woman for 13 years, Letty Cottin Pogrebin is wife (of New York labor lawyer Bertrand B. Pogrebin), mother (of twin daughters Abigail and Robin, 6, and son David, 3), and author. During her 11-job business career, Letty, 31, rose from file clerk to vice president; she's been a secretary and had a secretary; she's run executive meetings and wiped her children's running noses—and still found time

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