

together, so even though one cracks or both cracks, they're still held together by the laminate."

While an investigation was ongoing at press time, Ringler suggests the cause could be attributed to the presence of microscopic bits of nickel sulphide that somehow got into the glass when it was being manufactured. When nickel heats up, it expands and can cause the glass to pop.

"The only way to test prior to putting the glass in is to have had the glass heat-soaked. You would have to do that to every piece," Ringler says, adding that he has seen glass shatter on job sites before.

Greg Burchell is editorial assistant of OHS CANADA.

Nice guys do not finish last — just a distant second

By Samuel Dunsiger

It doesn't pay to be nice, literally. A recent study attested to that proverbial wisdom with findings suggesting that when it comes to earnings, nice guys take second place.

The study, *Do Nice Guys — and Gals — Really Finish Last?*, examines the effect of gender and agreeability on income. Researchers from three universities in North America analyzed data from four studies and found that men who identified themselves as less agreeable earned 18 per cent more than those who rated themselves higher on the scale of agreeability. Female employees who rated themselves as less agreeable earned five per cent more than those who deemed themselves nicer.

"The most significant aspect is looking at gender," says Charlice Hurst, study co-author and associate professor with the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. "Men who are highly disagreeable make the most out of everyone else."

The study also looked at data for 460 undergraduate students from Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. They were asked to review descriptions of eight candidates for a consultant position and determine if each should be fast-tracked to management. Results show that agreeable candidates were less likely to get recommended for advancement.

While pleasant people may be well-liked, their warmth may also undermine perceptions of their competence. "Disagreeable behaviours, particularly in settings where competitiveness and aggressiveness are valued, seem to signal ability and promise," the report concludes.

Hurst says the findings could influence employee behaviour. "Some [employees] could get the idea that being mean is a winning career strategy," she says, and cautions that abrasive behaviour "can be costly to the organization in terms of

missed work, diminished productivity and turnover."

Kelly Fraser, a human resources advisor with Calgary-based KMA Land Services Ltd., has seen her fair share of mean workers after having worked in six companies in the last seven years. "They see others behaving that way and they wonder, 'Is this going to get me up the corporate ladder?'"

Mihaela Osacenco, an office manager and former restaurant owner in Toronto, says that there is always two sides to a coin. "Every company has mean people and nice people."

Companies should put in place policies to discourage undesirable behaviour, says Fraser, citing her company's zero-tolerance policy toward bullying as an example. Attitude is also being evaluated as part of overall job performance.

The study advises that agreeable employees could adopt a flexible repertoire of behaviours that are appropriate to the context. Instead of striking an adversarial stance in all workplace interactions, which could hurt relations with co-workers, they could assess the person they are dealing with and adapt their assertiveness level accordingly.

On the upside, the study notes that nicer folks neither receive fewer benefits in other aspects of their careers, nor suffer a dent in the psychosocial aspects of their lives.

After all, it is about striking a balance, Fraser says. "It's still important for employees to step up and challenge ideas, but in a respectful way. There needs to be healthy conflict."

Samuel Dunsiger is a writer in Toronto.

Public sector absence rates draw union rebuttal

By Jean Lian

The perception that private sector employees are kept on a tighter leash in terms of attendance than their public sector counterparts is likely to stick around a bit longer, with Statistics Canada's release of absence rates for 2010.

Full-time public sector employees, who are more likely to be unionized or female, lost more workdays (11.8) for personal reasons — namely, illness or disability and personal or family responsibilities — than their private-sector counterparts (8.2), the report notes. A similar pattern exists for unionized full-time workers who missed 12.9 days on average in 2010, compared with 7.3 days for their non-unionized counterparts. Workers with permanent jobs also lost more workdays (9.3) than those in temporary employment (6.7).

"I don't think anybody who has looked at absence over time would be surprised," says Ian Cook, director of research and learning at the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (BCHRMA) in Vancouver.

Work absence data from BCHRMA show that in 2010, the median absenteeism rate for public and private sectors

