

IN THE NEWS

# Favorite Employees from Movies & TV

Today we celebrate Employee Appreciation Day with a look at the good, the bad and the clueless working stiffs from classic movies and TV.

LAURIE ULSTER • MAR 5, 2015

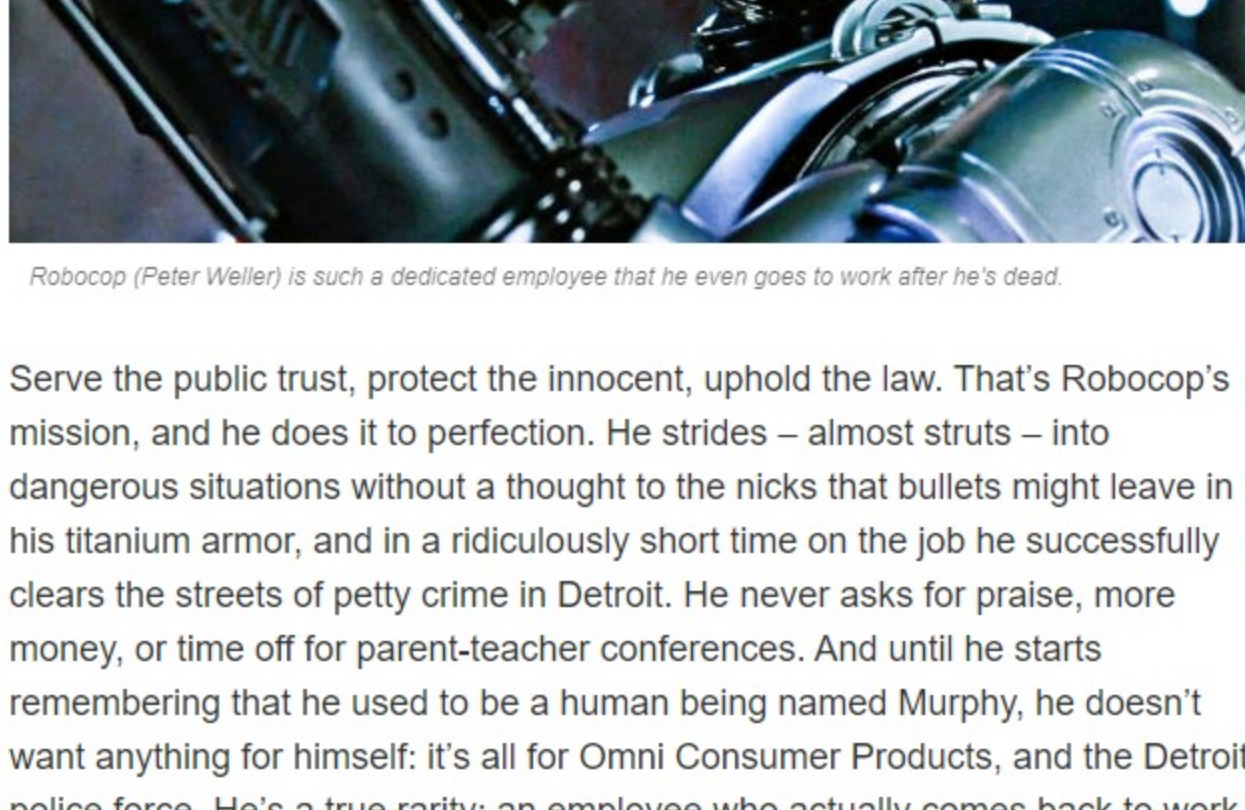
It's Employee Appreciation Day! Today we celebrate the unsung heroes of the everyday world. Employees come in all shapes and sizes, all levels of competence and dedication, and have personalities that are as diverse and unpredictable as job requirements and hiring practices.

We offer up this salute to the noble employee in some classic movies and TV shows, demonstrating that you don't have to be a leader to stand out in the crowd.

## THE GREATS

What makes a truly great employee? Someone who's dedicated to their work, who values doing a good job above personal needs, who sees the big picture and does what needs to be done without complaint or extra vacation time. And for that, I give you ...

**ROBOCOP (Peter Weller) in *Robocop* (1987 version)**



Robocop (Peter Weller) is such a dedicated employee that he even goes to work after he's dead.

Serve the public trust, protect the innocent, uphold the law. That's Robocop's mission, and he does it to perfection. He strides – almost struts – into dangerous situations without a thought to the nicks that bullets might leave in his titanium armor, and in a ridiculously short time on the job he successfully clears the streets of petty crime in Detroit. He never asks for praise, more money, or time off for parent-teacher conferences. And until he starts remembering that he used to be a human being named Murphy, he doesn't want anything for himself: it's all for Omni Consumer Products, and the Detroit police force. He's a true rarity: an employee who actually comes back to work after he's dead.



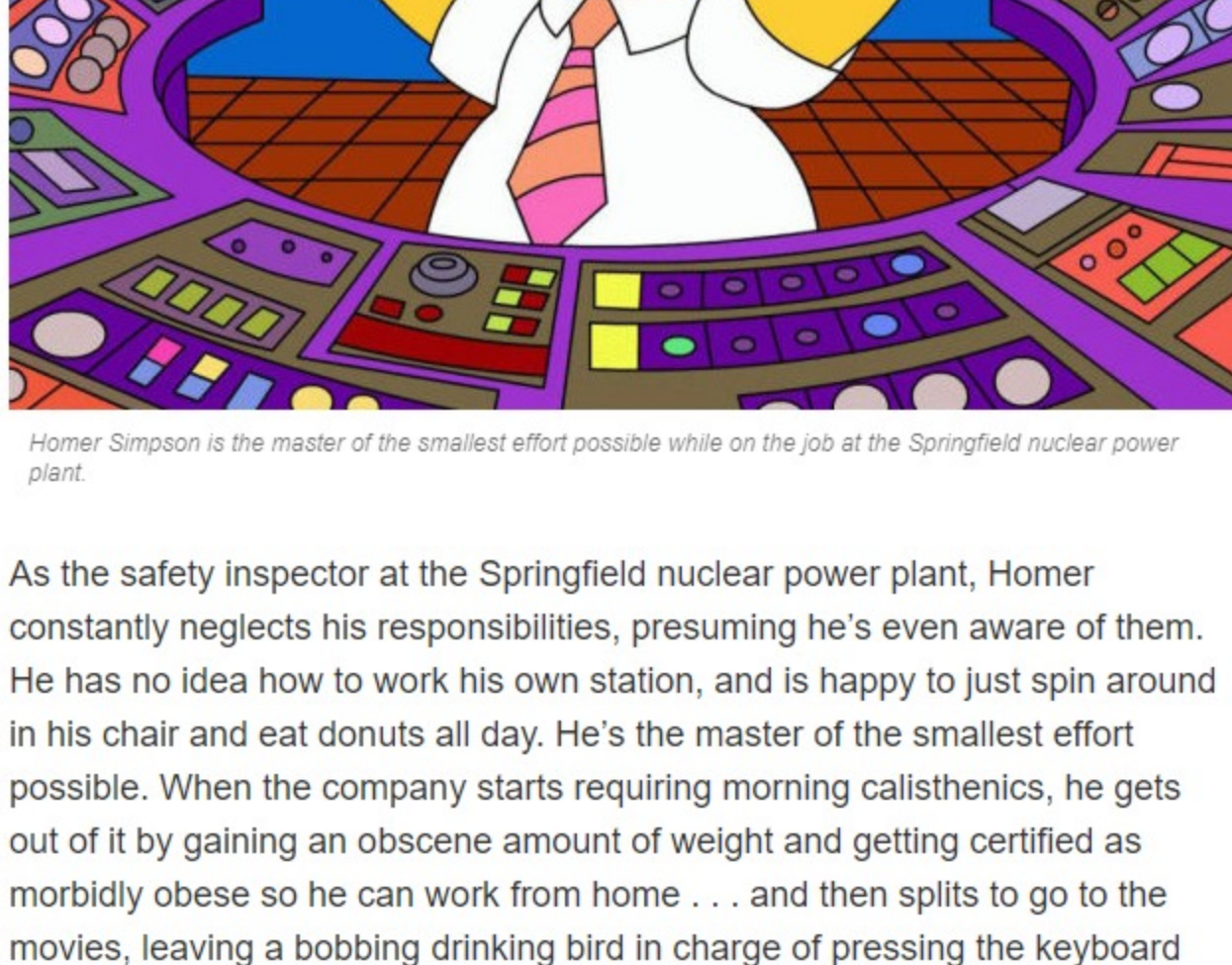
Data (Brent Spiner) in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

**Runner-up:** Data (Brent Spiner) in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. He's like Robocop Junior. He's faster, smarter, and stronger than his human colleagues, and for some mysterious reason, still thinks they're better than he is. Humility's a nice touch.

## THE NOT-SO GREATS

Not everyone can be a shining star. Some employees' incompetence is equaled only by a lackluster attitude and innate selfishness. Blissful ignorance and a well-developed id are the basic qualifications for this one.

**HOMER SIMPSON (Dan Castellaneta) in *The Simpsons***



Homer Simpson is the master of the smallest effort possible while on the job at the Springfield nuclear power plant.

As the safety inspector at the Springfield nuclear power plant, Homer constantly neglects his responsibilities, presuming he's even aware of them. He has no idea how to work his own station, and is happy to just spin around in his chair and eat donuts all day. He's the master of the smallest effort possible. When the company starts requiring morning calisthenics, he gets out of it by gaining an obscene amount of weight and getting certified as morbidly obese so he can work from home ... and then splits to go to the movies, leaving a bobbing drinking bird in charge of pressing the keyboard buttons he barely understands himself. (Of course the bird is a shirker too, and the plant almost blows up.)

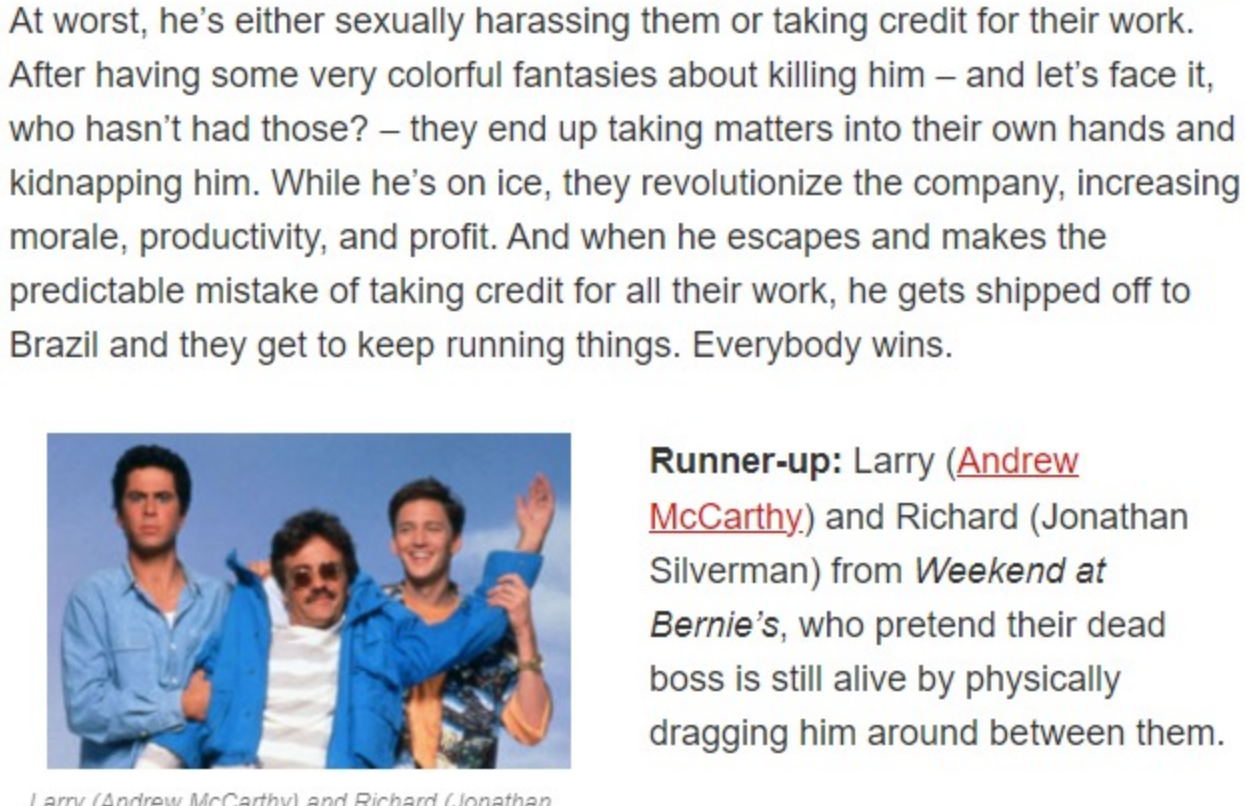
Homer wasn't bad at every job he tried. He was a great bowling alley pin boy, as well as an excellent snow plow, mafia bodyguard, sideshow freak, baseball mascot, and substitute clown. He was even a pretty passable monorail conductor. But he didn't quite cut the mustard as a sugar magnate, astronaut, or carry, and the only thing he was worse at than safety inspecting was being the sanitation commissioner. The entire town was forced to move to a new location because of his garbage mismanagement, accompanied by U2, which softened the blow.

**Runner-up:** Barry (Jack Black) in *High Fidelity*. Oh sure, he knows his music and he loves it, but his job is to sell records. (Remember those?) A hapless customer looking to buy *Sleevie Wonder*'s "I Just Called To Say I Love You" leaves empty-handed and insulted. Sub-question: is it in fact unfair to criticize a formerly great artist for his latter day sins?

## THE ONES WHO MAKE THE BOSS LOOK GOOD

Sometimes the boss is the problem. What do you do when your boss just, well, sucks? Or cheats? Or lies? Or steals? Sometimes there's no choice but to take over.

**JUDY BERNLY (Jane Fonda), VIOLET NEWSTEAD (Lily Tomlin), and DORALEE RHODES (Dolly Parton) in *9 to 5***



Judy (Jane Fonda), Violet (Lily Tomlin), and Doralee (Dolly Parton) kidnap their jerk of a boss (Dabney Coleman) and revolutionize their company while he's out of the picture.

Violet, Judy, and Doralee understand the worker's woes. Their boss is a boorish, sexist, selfish, exploitive, unrepentant jerk. At best, he ignores them. At worst, he's either sexually harassing them or taking credit for their work. After having some very colorful fantasies about killing him – and let's face it, who hasn't had those? – they end up taking matters into their own hands and kidnapping him. While he's on ice, they revolutionize the company, increasing morale, productivity, and profit. And when he escapes and makes the predictable mistake of taking credit for all their work, he gets shipped off to Brazil and they get to keep running things. Everybody wins.



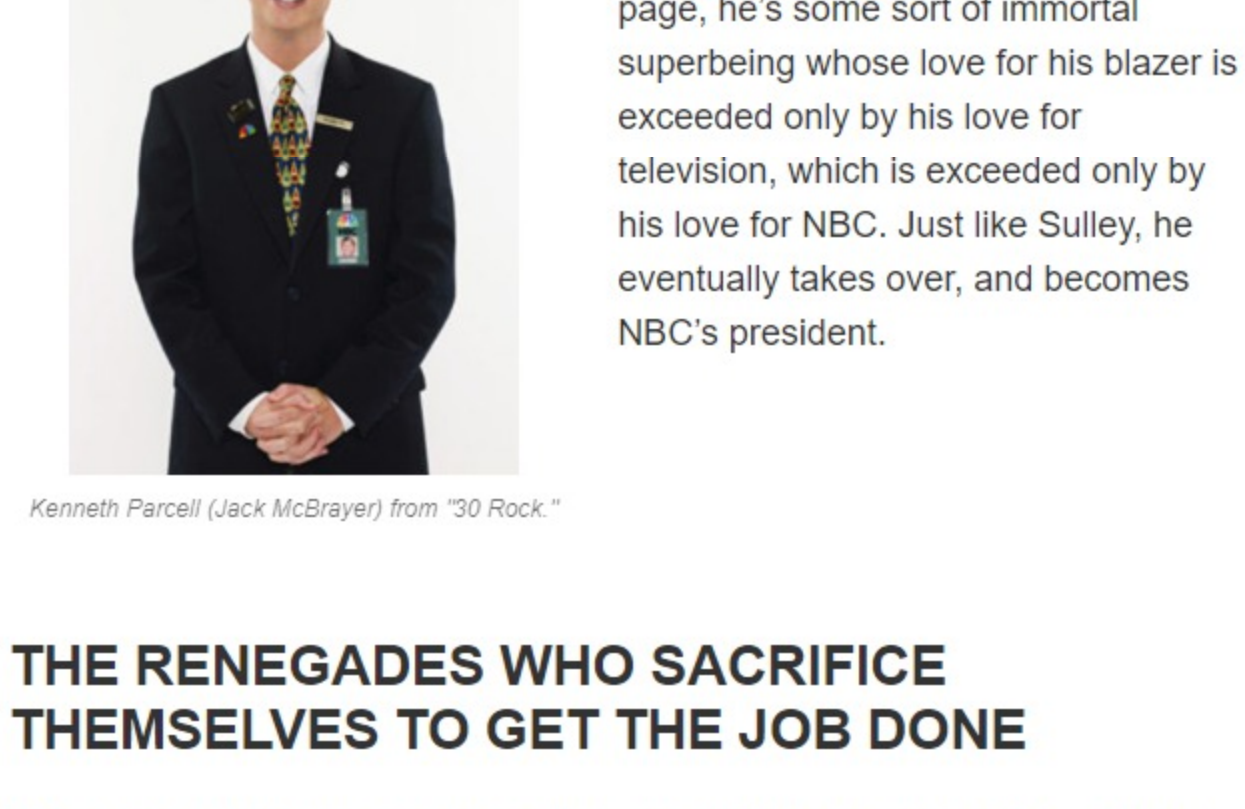
Larry (Andrew McCarthy) and Richard (Jonathan Silverman) from "Weekend Update."

**Runner-up:** Larry (Andrew McCarthy) and Richard (Jonathan Silverman) from *Weekend Update* at *Bernie*'s, who pretend their dead boss is still alive by physically dragging him around between them.

## THE ONES WHO LOVE THE COMPANY MORE THAN THEMSELVES

These are rare, but they're out there: they're the company evangelists, who believe that the company is everything and everything is the company. They feel safe and taken care of by their employers, and are willing to give it their all, just to show their faith in the benevolent organization that pays their salaries.

**JAMES P. "SULLEY" SULLIVAN (John Goodman) in *Monsters, Inc.***



Sulley (John Goodman) from "Monsters, Inc." is a monster who believes in his company's mission.

Sulley is the ultimate poster boy for his company, the perfect monster to trot out to motivate new recruits. He cheerfully works his fur off competing for the all-time scare record, he loves his job, and he's got a welcoming smile for everyone else at the office, from his fellow scarers to the janitors and the mailroom workers. He's a monster who believes in his mission. And when he's faced with the harsh reality of a corrupt boss who lies about the supposed dangers of small children, he gets to the truth, STILL saves the company, and then becomes its chairman. Monsters, Inc. prevails.



Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) from "30 Rock."

**Runner-up:** Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) in *30 Rock*. He's not just a page, he's some sort of immortal superbeing whose love for his blazer is exceeded only by his love for television, which is exceeded only by his love for NBC. Just like Sulley, he eventually takes over, and becomes NBC's president.

## THE RENEGADES WHO SACRIFICE THEMSELVES TO GET THE JOB DONE

The renegade is by no means a common employee at an everyday sort of company. It takes a very specific type of organization to privately train its employees in the use of excess while publicly condemning those same tactics. That's right; you have to work for the government.

**CARRIE MATHISON (Claire Danes) in *Homeland***



"Homeland's" Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) will stop at nothing (and we mean nothing!) to get the job done.

Carrie works for the CIA, no stranger to the tarnished reputation. She's bipolar, but that's barely an obstacle. Her dogged determination to stop terrorists leads her to step well outside company boundaries, in addition to what really should be her own personal ones. She starts off by bugging every room in rescued POW Nicholas Brody's home and then watching him obsessively, without official authorization. When she's forced to shut that operation down, she insinuates herself into his personal life, and soon they're having sex in her car, an act likely not written into her job description. Neither was seducing a terrorist's young nephew, directly defying orders, or having sex with Brody while her colleagues are forced to listen in, but she doesn't let things like that get in her way. And truth be told, she IS smarter than everyone else, and she IS right about what needs to be done. She also happens to be the only one willing to do it.



Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) from "24" should be named the "bitchiest employee of the month."

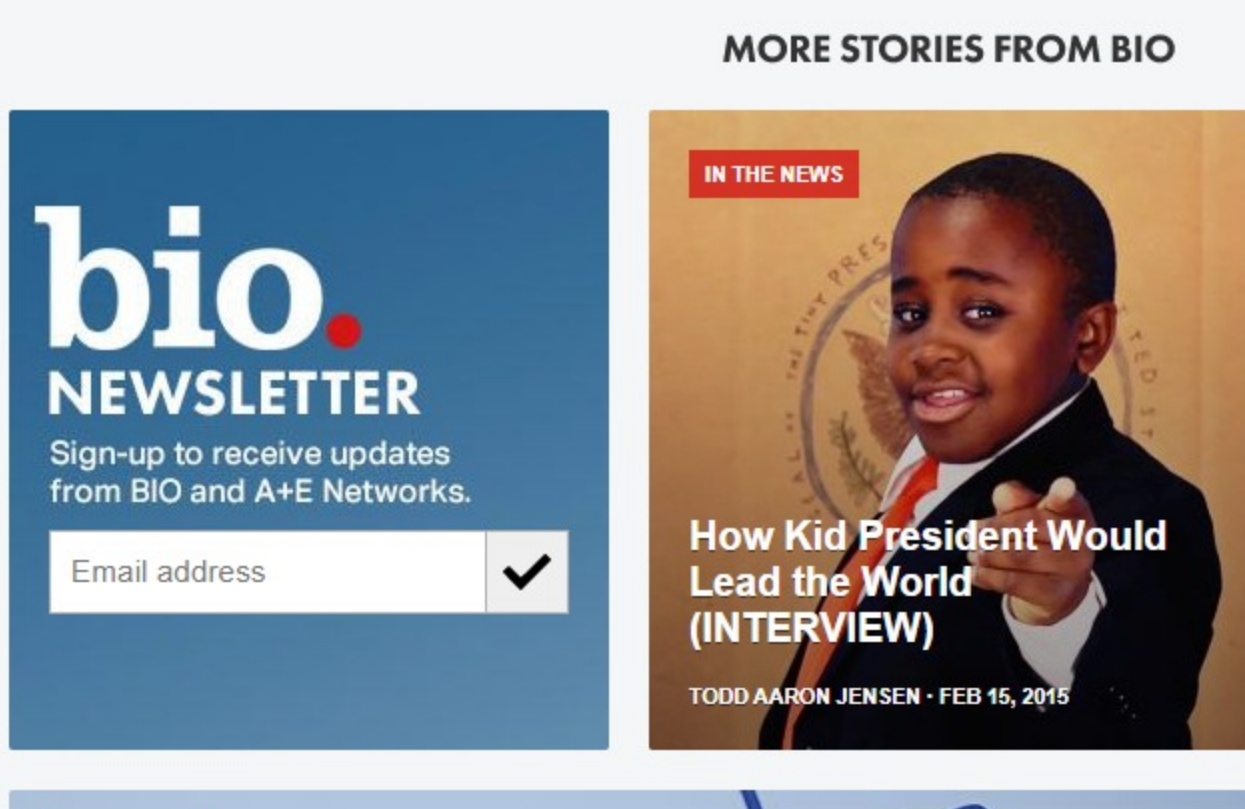
**Runner-up:** There would be no Carrie Mathison without Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) of *24*. Although he never uses sex as a recruitment tool, he frequently defies orders, takes matters into his own hands, and when he isn't saving the world – or sometimes when he is – he's dodging capture by the very people he works for, who have no idea how

important his mission really is. Unlike Carrie, however, he never eats, sleeps, or goes to the bathroom, which makes him a lot less human. Even Robocop eats a rudimentary paste.

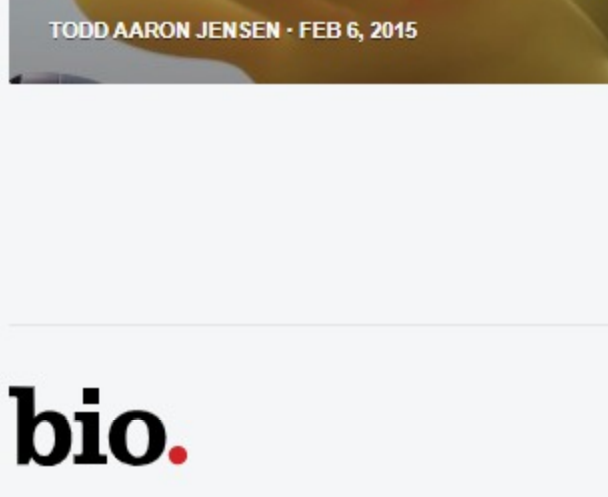
## THE EMPLOYEES WHO DON'T ACTUALLY WORK THERE, BUT COME IN ANYWAY

This is a special category, reserved for those who don't really have the jobs but still show up for every day.

**MILTON WADDAMS (Stephen Root) in *Office Space***



Milton thinks his biggest problem is that they keep moving his desk into worse and worse locations. He thinks his second biggest problem is his unwavering loyalty to his forbidden Swingline stapler. But he's wrong; his real problem is that he was laid off five years ago, and doesn't know it, due to a glitch in the system that keeps paying him and a boss who forgot to fire him. The company's newly hired consultants fix the glitch, and in an effort to avoid confrontation, maintain the silence of their bosses, hoping he'll just figure it out. So Milton burns down the building.



Dewey Finn (Jack Black) from "School of Rock."

**Runner-up:** Dewey Finn (Jack Black) in *School of Rock*, who pretends to be his roommate Ned to take a job as a substitute teacher, even though he has no teaching credentials. He just really, really needs the money.

Happy Employee Appreciation Day!

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BY LAURIE ULSTER

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