

Metrognomes

"Gee, I wish I had time to piss away my future riding motorcycles and yapping in flap rooms."

"I got commitments. Responsibilities. Giri."

"When's payday?"

You've always been the responsible one. The best way you saw to make a contribution to your family's quality of life and well-being was to take up the slack. You babysat for your younger siblings, got up early to make breakfast for your parents before they had to go off to work, and when your family began to struggle to keep up, you got a job after school. Your Mom and Dad are very proud of you, or so they tell you in the notes they leave on the fridge. You don't get to see them much anymore.

Your friends from school give you puzzled looks. They don't understand why you've given up the best years of your life to be a wage slave. They look at the corp that you work for as some sort of great evil, and at you as their puppet. They don't seem to realize that, at your level of employment, the most evil you do is occasionally call someone while they're in the middle of dinner. You get yelled at for it, too.

The term "Metrognome" is a portmanteau of "metropolitan" and "nomenklatura" (A Russia term for a class of people from whose ranks top government officials are chosen). Some people choose to see it as a derogatory term, hence the connotations of being monotonous like a metronome, but you believe that, if you labor earnestly and intelligently towards a goal, it's only natural that you will rise to positions of power and authority within the corporation. The only people who really seem to understand that are your fellow Metrognomes. You all work hard, dress neatly, and conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times.

Are you a sell-out? You don't believe so. Since when was it a crime to want to do well, and achieve things through honest labour and a good work ethic? That was what the American dream was all about, after all. Because you're a member of the workforce as well as a student, you find your time enormously strained. Some days, you don't get to sleep at all. You take on extra assignments both at school and at work in the hopes that the extra effort you put into things will make a good impression. It is not uncommon for a Metrognome to pass out from strain, dehydration and/or hunger because, in working so hard to achieve their goals, they neglect the needs of their bodies.

Is it worth it? Well, you're not going to be making it to CEO of a Megacorp. Those positions rarely become available thanks to the longevity treatments their current holders receive, and are more likely to be filled by cronies and relatives of the current holders. You are likely, however, to hold a middle-to-high level management position within the corporation. If you don't drop dead of Karōshi first.

What You Look Like

You always dress neatly and are always groomed to make an impression. This is where Metrognomes compete most with one another, because image is an important thing. While you won't be dressing in Eji anytime soon, your clothes are usually better than off-the-rack quality. Despite the school of thought that flash is better than substance, your employers are looking for you to fit in seamlessly with their other employees, and the nail that sticks out is usually the one that is hammered.

Up-and-coming young men favor crisp white shirts, black, charcoal gray or navy slacks with creases that can shave the fuzz off a peach, and a tasteful power tie. Most will go with a short, neat hairstyle, often slicked back. More daring (some would say vain) Metrognome men might go with longer hair and a ponytail, but this is always a crapshoot in cubicle hell. If you wear jewelry, they had best be small and tasteful, or else they will always be the center of your boss's attention when you're called in for a performance evaluation. Visible tattoos are a one-way ticket to the mailroom.

Metrognome ladies are afforded a great deal more freedom than men, thanks to an ongoing catch-22, but are similarly expected to conform to a rigid set of dress codes. You're expected to keep covered up, and not be distracting. Your color palate is expected to be muted, if not monotone, and the clothes you wear must be crisp and well-pressed, as well. You are allowed a little more leeway than men with your choice of accessories, jewelry and hair, and are allowed to wear makeup if it is understated and tasteful. Once you start garnering too much attention, however, the jealous eyes of the rest of the female employees in the Corp will turn your way, and the daggers they stare at your back won't be the only backstabbing you should be prepared to receive. Don't even try to come in dressed in the schoolgirl outfit, either. It'll get your manager to drool over you, sure, but that's just the fast track to spending the rest of your career on your knees under the manager's desk.

Casual dress Friday (Or Hawaiian Shirt Friday or Dress-Down Friday) might seem to be the one time when you can let your hair down, but that's a trap that you're not falling into. You iron your jeans and Hawaiian shirt just as obsessively as your

slacks and business shirts.

Subculture

Metrognomes are fresh-faced, enthusiastic climbers of the corporate ladder, and as such, are often seen as grist for the mill. And there's nothing that corporate types like better than to slowly grind an energetic young employee under their heels. Let's face it, the corporate world is filled with old-timers who insist on making you jump through hoops. They call it "paying your dues." Until you pass muster (I.E. have suffered enough humiliation and mistreatment), you're not going to go any further in the corp.

Your job isn't all that glamorous. You're an assistant or adjunct in one of a dozen different departments. Maybe you work in Sales or Market Research and make calls to people who'd rather not hear from you. Perhaps you work in Customer Service or Tech Support, receiving calls from people who are angry at your company in general and want to take it out on you. Maybe you work in the dreaded Records department, and are stuck wading through decades-old financial records from the now-defunct companies that your Corp absorbed. Whatever the case, you're a minor functionary in a much larger machine.

Your fellow Metrognomes are your greatest allies, but also your fiercest rivals and competitors, which means that, to truly succeed, you have to know how to forge alliances. The best places to forge those alliances are at the water cooler, over lunch in the commissary, at Youth Achievement and Junior Republican meetings at School, in flap rooms for would-be executives, and at coffee shops where it takes you three minutes to order a cup and half your salary to pay for it. Your most valuable allies are the ones who are in different departments than yours, or in different corporations that operate in different fields than yours does. Networking with these Metrognomes assures you that you'll always have useful friends in semi-influential places.

Metrognomes have developed rituals that closely resemble twentieth-century corporate team-building exercises. Such things as organized calisthenics ensure that Metrognomes are physically fit despite being confined to cubicles. Paintball teaches tactical proficiency and teamwork. Virtuality golfing teaches you to network and to suck-up through sabotaging yourself athletically. Camping retreats teach you that cooperation makes life easier for everyone. And you've all read The Art of War and The Book of Five Rings by now. A Metrognome's favorite flatvid is the Michael J. Fox movie, "The Secret of My Success."

Starting at the bottom and working their way up,

Metrognomes often find creative ways to improve the way that the lower echelons of the corporation function. Unfortunately, finding those means and getting them implemented are two different things. Oftimes when they suggest improvements, they hit a brick wall of resistance, or someone else will take credit for them. This is the way that a Metrognome will learn how things work. Observant Metrognomes will come to learn the way that a corporation works from the bottom up, and learn to use these skills to expedite their advancement.

Smart Metrognomes will also network with other yogangers with helpful skills. Although it might seem cynical to say so, teenage revolution can only last for so long before people need to get jobs and go to work, and befriending Metrognomes is a good way to ensure that they won't be stuck in fast food for the rest of their lives. Metrognomes are shrewd in recognizing people with the talents and skills to help them, and can be ruthless in discarding those who appear worthless.

Metrognome rivalries are usually benign and competitive, forcing those involved to put forth their best efforts, but occasionally, things will get dirty. When things get dirty between two Metrognomes, their efforts usually degenerate into wars of backstabbing and bootlicking. The best that non-involved Metrognomes can hope for is to steer clear of the meltdown and hope to not get smeared by the fallout. Such a war will usually lead to both Metrognomes losing face among their peers.

Belonging

To become a Metrognome, you had to get a job at the Cube Farm and get to work. Responsibility and diligence are the properties that lead to advancement. Like every Yogang, there is a period of requisite hazing involved in becoming a Metrognome. This is much like the hazing that the Metrognomes receive from managers and supervisors before they can advance in the corporation. It's just one more way of paying your dues. This hazing can take the form of being made to fetch coffee from the commissary, rearranging their cubicles, stealing their stapler, and the like.

Once the other Metrognomes recognize you as a member, you can expect to be included in coffee klatches, calisthenics, and team-building events. You can also expect to have to compete with your fellow Metrognomes in the workplace. Eventually, you will also be expected to form alliances and organize events for you and your allies to participate in. And that's pretty much all there is to being a Metrognome. The rest of your time is spent working or going to school.

Allies and Enemies

Most other yogangs are convinced that you've sold out, so you can't expect to have a great number of allies. Taggers will vandalize your citycar, Gogangers and Megas will try and kick your ass, Beaverbrats will try to steal your workpass and Vidiots will try to expose you for the sell-out you are. Rads rip on you and Goths sneer at you. Guardians seem to be the only ones who appreciate your dedication and work ethic.

Conversely, you don't have much use for yogangers who are shiftless and nonproductive. Megas, Squats, and Facers are worthless in your eyes. Goldenkids and Beaverbrats are worse than useless -- they're privileged sucklers at the teat of corporate affluence. Beastieboys, Tribals and Ecoraiders need to stop hugging trees and get a life. You expect to be hearing Boardpunks and Goths asking you if you want fries with that in the near future.

Tinkertots, V-punks and Mallbrats are useful, and therefore you try to maintain good relations with them. You appreciate Rads, Guardians and Streetfighters for their work ethic and dedication to their ideals. If you can befriend some Gogangers, they might be a valuable asset.

Slang

Karōshi - Japanese term for death by overwork. What you feel like on Saturday morning.

Datsusara - Quitting your job. You might as well stop being a Metrognome after this.

Mail Room - The beginning of anything. Because mail rooms no longer exist, this also illustrates the fact that you are non-existent until you begin to advance.

Lumbergh - When Management or other sources of authority (Police, ISA) begins to become too intrusive.

Frycook - A prospective future employee of McOilly's

Assistant Manager - Someone who is a pain in the ass.

Yogang Skill: **Sarariman** (INT/COOL)

You are a skilled employee and an up-and-comer in the workplace, which makes you a valuable asset. Perhaps they don't know how valuable you are. You may only be a single cog in the works, but if you're not functioning correctly, things can often grind to a halt. And if you're working against the system, there's no limit to the way things can break down.

Specializations

Generic Employee = +2 to *Gleaming the Cubicle*

Teambuilding = +2 to *The Art of Five Rings*

Customer Service = +2 to *Fulfillment*

Gleaming the Cubicle: Once you've been in the employ of a corporation long enough, you begin to learn how things work there. Thus, once you've mastered the Research Department, you're only one day's training away from being moved to Sales or Customer Service. In addition to the practical aspect of being able to work in many capacities at the corp, you also learn a lot about how it operates. You can embezzle (Average) or disrupt the department's operations (V. Difficult) if you put your mind to it. You might even be able to make the entire Corp grind to a halt for a few minutes (N. Impossible) or learn blackmailable secrets about key personnel. (Difficult) You'll soon learn that all corps run pretty much the same, and will be able to adapt to the procedures of another corp quickly (Easy).

The Art of Five Rings: Thanks to corporate team-building exercises, you have studied small unit combat tactics. You're a crack shot with a paintball gun, are aware enough of your surroundings to choose a beneficial position from which to attack from (Difficult), and might be able to determine when you're walking into an ambush (Your Sarariman skill vs. the Ambusher's stealth score).

Fulfillment: Customer service is a tightrope that you walk between completely fulfilling a customer's wants and maintaining the Corp's interests. It teaches you the fine art of negotiation and bargaining, and you can use Fulfillment to achieve favorable results in any situation where negotiating a compromise or bartering is involved.

If you're a Metrognome

- 1) Tell me your name, age and sex.
- 2) Describe what you look like.
- 3) Besides your V-trodes, pick four different things from the list below that you are currently carrying.

- Apple 520 V-term and a deck of V-cards of different golf-course holes.
- Citycar.
- Lark Mini-scooter.
- Splatman air pistol and 100 paint rounds.
- Gourmet coffee attaché (a briefcase with four mugs and a coffee machine that brews cappuccino, espresso, lattes and flavored coffees at a fraction of the cost of the trendy coffee shops).
- Multiclub (one golf club made of electricity-reactive plastics that can electronically shape itself to any size iron, club, wedge or putter. DC 5).
- Snoopbox privacy scanner.