

Lanyards and clipboards

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I was watching the most recent Mars landing a couple of weeks ago.

It was pretty impressive to see the lander falling through the Martian atmosphere in high definition while the parachute deployed and allowed for a soft landing.

Then there was the obligatory shot of mission control where everyone jumps up from their seats and starts clapping and hugging each when it is announced 'the Eagle has landed.' (Or whatever name they gave to this particular lander).

It was indeed quite an accomplishment to land a craft on another planet.

The group in mission control looked pretty happy with their somewhat identical outfits, and matching ID tags hanging from lanyards around their neck.

It is the lanyard which has apparently become the symbol of importance. Without that lanyard around your neck, you wouldn't be allowed in mission control, or probably within a mile of the front door lest you be some kind of spy or worse yet, someone who isn't a rocket scientist.

I was watching another YouTube video of a technology conference. The speaker was someone important giving a lecture to similar minded techy type people.

The speaker told a joke and the camera cut to the audience roaring with laughter ? and everyone was wearing a lanyard and ID badge. Every single one of them.

I wondered if anyone even looks at those badges?

I'm pretty sure the fact that it is visible is enough. I don't think anyone ever takes a close enough look to realize it's a photo of Homer Simpson along with a signature that says 'Roy Orbison' or 'Roy Rogers, King of the Cowboys.'

If you've got the lanyard, you're in.

There are two simple things in industry that will open doors for you, or at least keep people off your back.

First of all, carry a clipboard and a pen.

If you go into any factory or industrial complex, you will always see at least one guy walking around with a clipboard and a pen. For some reason, everyone assumes he is doing something important, because after all, not just anyone can use a clipboard.

You can't just carry the clipboard though. To add realism, you have to glance around a lot. Look up, look around corners, then occasionally jot something down on your piece of paper.

It could be a scribble or a little cartoon character ? it doesn't matter because no one will ever look at your clipboard to see what you are writing down.

If you really want to shake things up, watch a couple of guys working away for a moment, THEN make a squiggly mark on your clipboard paper. Of course you won't make any new friends by doing that, but you will certainly be the topic of conversation on the

next coffee break.

The other thing you can do is find yourself a white hard hat. For some inexplicable reason, people of importance wear only white hard hats. No executive worth his salt would show up on a job site to inspect the troops and put a yellow hard hat on his noggin. And he certainly would never be caught dead wearing common blue headgear.

For realism, wear a necktie with your hard hat, with a button-down shirt ? not a T-shirt. That combination will guarantee your authority even if people don't know who you are.

If someone does approach and asks if you need assistance, just point to your white hard hat with some authority. That person will nod knowingly and leave you alone.

Here's another trick I hadn't thought of.

I posed a question on an international forum about the use of lanyards.

One fellow from the U.S. responded with another version of the clipboard gag.

He worked in some kind of government operation in the States.

He claimed that whenever he was carrying a set of blueprints, they acted as a symbolic tool to get him in pretty much anywhere ? even secure facilities where normally you require a security clearance.

Apparently if you are carrying blueprints, people, including security people assume you are 'part of the project' and gladly wave you through.

He took to carrying a set of blueprints with him everywhere on the job because it made his life a lot easier.

I'm thinking of trying an experiment.

I'm going to locate a CSIS office in a big city and walk through the front doors carrying a clipboard and pen in one arm, a set of blueprints in the other, while wearing a suit and white hard hat and see if I can waltz past the front door security by saying 'I'm here for the Kerpluknic project?' and see how far I get.

I'm kidding CSIS, don't look me up!!

Although I may still get a lanyard and Homer Simpson ID badge just to look important.