

## Just in case it matters to you:

- **MINI-MADOFF PONZI SCHEMES ARE COMING OUT OF THE WOODWORK**, thanks to a “deteriorating economy and heightened skepticism about outside returns, after the revelations... which scare off new clients and cause longtime investors to demand their money back, and brings the charade tumbling down.” Recent busts: a \$380M scam in New York involving ‘high-yield private bridge loans’ supposedly paying up to 80% annual return; a \$50M Philadelphia scam involving nonexistent futures contracts; a \$25M Atlanta scam offering 20% per month returns through something called ‘30-day-currency trading contracts’; another \$300M out of Sarasota Florida, \$100M in Idaho (which offered 40% returns), and even a \$60M scheme “to make campaign donations to presidential candidates Obama & Clinton. In January, senate legislation was introduced “to provide \$110M for 500 new FBI agents, 50 new U.S. Attorneys and 100 new SEC enforcement officials to crack down on such crimes... working like a posse to go after this fraud” (at least after it happens). [NEW YORK TIMES – Jan 28, 09]
- **LOTS OF PEOPLE PROCRASTINATE TASKS WHICH ARE DIFFICULT, UNAPPEALING OR EXPENSIVE** and lots of theories exist for why this happens: “Some psychologists think that those who delay completing tasks do so because they have low confidence of succeeding. Perhaps procrastinators are perfectionists or they may just be depressed. Others believe they are impulsive and lack self-control.” Now, new German research shows that people also defer tackling projects which they view in ‘abstract’ terms, rather than as specific tasks. In several separate studies, “those who were presented with concrete tasks and info responded more promptly than did those who were asked to think in an abstract way” and the 56% of the abstract thinkers failed to respond at all. So, always best to offer the procrastinators a specific choice. [THE ECONOMIST – Jan 24, 09]
- **THE NEW FIELD OF NEUROSCIENCE (SOME CALL IT PSEUDOSCIENCE)** is based on brain scans which purport to explain and forecast human behavior. ‘NeuroMarketers,’ for example, use brain scans to formulate political campaign ads, correlating factors like anxiety with pictures of Mitt Romney, emotions about Hillary Clinton or “disgust when subjects looked at John Edwards. The problem with reading brains this way is that specific brain structures rarely perform single tasks, making one-to-one mapping between a given region and mental state nearly impossible – e.g. the part of the brain associated with disgust is also linked to orgasm and to indignation.” One company claims 97% ability to detect lies based on brain scans which “sounds impressive until you realize that these are lies told in the safe confines of psychological laboratories rather than in the real world where incentives for escaping detection are far greater... The very idea that a brain’s response to a TV ad can predict consumer behavior in the real world, as neuromarketers claim, is naïve. Companies don’t sell to brains; they sell to people. Human actions are determined by an array of motives and impulses that come into play once the subject leaves the scanning machine.” Nonetheless, ‘neuroscience’ is big business. [FORBES – Feb 2, 09]
- **THE TATOO CRAZE HAS SPREAD TO OBAMANIACS**, using their skin to celebrate personal expression. Like the more than 25% of other Americans under age 30, this ‘body art’ decision is generally undertaken without knowledge or care as to health implications, including the fact that inks are not FDA regulated and “no one knows exactly what’s in there, deeply entrenched under the skin. But chemists have turned up some unhealthy surprises – like mercury, lead and antifreeze.” Or the fact that later removal (often the case) “is a major and painful excavation or demolition effort, with pigments either surgically excised or attacked with a laser – which then opens a toxic chemical dump as the intense heat triggers chemical reactions that generate a soup of carcinogens and other hazardous chemicals absorbed in the body.” [US NEWS & WORLD REPT – Feb 09]
- **THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK:** ***“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated failures. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”*** –Calvin Coolidge



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....  
**for people  
who can't  
remember shit.**