

**Title:** The Twelve Days of Christmas Cutbacks

**Source:** email

*With the melting of the polar ice cap and the global economic collapse, recent policy development at the North Pole has focused on achieving efficiency and cost savings, and a slowdown in the rate of property acquisitions. As a Senior Pole-icy Officer, I thought I should let you know the latest news.*

**To:** Elves

**Cc:** Dwarfs

**From:** Santa's Administrative Aide

**Date:** December 2008

**Subject:** Improved efficiency

Today's global challenges require the North Pole continually to look for better, more competitive measures. The following measures are to be implemented immediately in the "Twelve Days of Christmas" program:

**The partridge** will be retained, but the pear tree never turned out to be the cash crop forecasted. It will be replaced by a plastic hanging plant, providing considerable savings in maintenance.

**The two turtle doves** represent a redundancy that is simply not cost effective. In addition, their romance during working hours could not be condoned. The positions are therefore eliminated.

**The three French hens** will remain intact. After all, everyone loves the French.

**The four calling birds** were replaced by an automated voice mail system, with a call waiting option. An analysis is underway to determine who the birds have been calling, how often and how long they talked.

**The five golden rings** have been put on hold by the Board of Directors. Maintaining a portfolio based on one commodity could have negative implications for institutional investors. Diversification into other precious metals as well as a mix of T-Bills and high technology stocks appear to be in order.

**The six geese-a-laying** constitutes a luxury which can no longer be afforded. It has long been felt that the production rate of one egg per goose per day is an example of the decline in productivity. Three geese will be let go.

**The seven swans a-swimming** is obviously a number chosen in better times. The function is primarily decorative. Mechanical swans are on order. The current swans will be retrained to learn some new strokes and therefore enhance their outplacement.

As you know, **the eight maids a-milking** concept has been under heavy scrutiny by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A male/female balance in the workforce is being sought. The more militant maids consider this a dead-end job with no upward mobility. Automation of the process may permit the maids to try a-mending, a-mentoring or a-mulching.

**Nine ladies dancing** has always been an odd number. This function will be phased out as these individuals grow older and can no longer do the steps.

**Ten Lords a-leaping is overkill.** The high cost of Lords plus the expense of international air travel prompted the Compensation Committee to suggest replacing this group with ten out-of-work middle managers. While leaping ability may be somewhat sacrificed, the savings are significant because we expect an oversupply of unemployed middle managers this year.

**Eleven pipers piping and twelve drummers drumming** is a simple case of the band getting too big. A substitution with a string quartet, a cutback on music and no uniforms will produce savings which will drop right down to the bottom line.

Overall we can expect a substantial reduction in assorted people, fowl, animals and related expenses. Though incomplete, studies indicate that stretching deliveries over twelve days is inefficient. If we can drop ship in one day, service levels will be improved.

Regarding the lawsuit filed by the attorneys association seeking expansion to include the legal profession ("**Thirteen lawyers a-suing**"), a decision is pending.

Deeper cuts may be necessary in the future to remain competitive. Should that happen, the Board will request management to scrutinize the Snow White Division to see if seven dwarfs is a sustainable number.

*Author unknown*