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## What's on tap this month that executives won't want to miss

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[Enlarge](#) By Ron Batzdorff, Starz Original

Actors Lizzy Caplan and Adam Scott in an episode of the clever workplace sitcom "Party Down," airing on Starz.

### CALENDAR

**Monday:** The Commerce Department reports whether consumer spending was up at the first of the year after a dismal fourth quarter.

**MEDIA HAPPENINGS:** [Watch, listen & read IN MAGAZINES THIS MONTH:](#) [Check it out FIVE QUESTIONS:](#) [For ... utility exec David Ratcliffe](#)

**WHAT I READ:** [With eco-friendly exec Jeffrey Hollender CORPORATE PULSE:](#) [Executive Suite front page](#)

**Friday:** Did job losses exceed 600,000 last month? The Labor Department tally tells.

**March 8:** Daylight Saving Time begins.

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**March 13:** British Prime Minister Gordon Brown meets with President Obama on the global financial crisis.

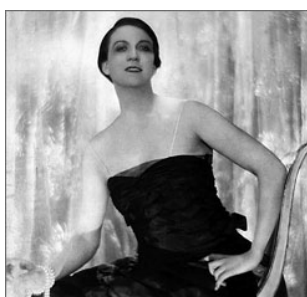
**March 31:** Chrysler and General Motors say they'll go out of business if they don't get more government money by then.

### WATCH, LISTEN & READ

#### ON TV:

*The Powder & the Glory*

PBS, March 23, 10 p.m. ET (check local listings or [pbs.org](#))



Elizabeth Arden Archive  
 Elizabeth Arden is featured in "The Powder & the Glory."

#### Party Down

Starz, March 20, 10:30 ET/PT

Finally, a reason for the remote to land on Starz. A stellar cast with keen comedy chops plays the inept crew of Party Down, a Los Angeles catering outfit made up of Hollywood hopefuls and almosts.

One of the many intriguing things about this smart new workplace sitcom is that the workplace changes every week. That gives regular players such as Ken Marino (*Role Models*, MTV's *The State*) and charismatic Adam Scott (HBO's *Tell Me You Love Me*) new scenery to chew and some well-placed guest stars (Marilyn Henner, Ed Begley Jr., Rob Corddry) to mock at such glamorous affairs as homeowners association meetings, singles seminars and

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corporate retreats.

The show, which wouldn't be safe for work — it's premium cable, after all — boasts a hip pedigree: Among its co-creators is Rob Thomas (*Veronica Mars*) and actor Paul Rudd (*Knocked Up*).

#### **Celebrity Apprentice**

**NBC, Sundays, 9 p.m. ET/PT**

On Sunday night, *Celebrity Apprentice* kicked off its second season with a cupcake challenge and the firing of Andrew Dice Clay. This Sunday, the remaining 15 celebrities — including Joan Rivers, Dennis Rodman, Clint Black and Scott Hamilton — design a comic-book character and present it to an Internet executive.

The boardroom is again full of Trumps: CEO/host Donald Trump and two of his children, Donald Jr. and Ivanka, who return as advisers and judges. Trump Jr. says the two-hour episodes give viewers better insight into what actually goes on in some of the character conflict.

"When we're filming those things, sometimes we're in the boardroom for three or four hours just with the back and forth," Trump Jr. says.

Candidates are playing for charity again this season, though Trump Jr. says the economy posed an extra challenge.

#### **PODCAST:**

##### **Money Girl**

Available free on Tuesdays at [www.qdnow.com](http://www.qdnow.com) or on iTunes

Laura Adams' free weekly personal finance podcast, *Money Girl*, promises quick tips for a richer life. The helpful recordings, which seldom exceed eight minutes, include topics ranging from taxes and investing to real estate and retirement.

A scroll through the archives of more than 100 podcasts reveals something clickable for everyone: a lesson on exchange traded funds; a primer on coupons; how to find a financial adviser; avoiding Ponzi schemes; and a crash course in Coverdell Education Savings Accounts.

*Money Girl's* March schedule:

- **Tuesday.** How much money should you have on hand for emergencies in the current economy?
- **March 10.** Where to stash your cash, but still have it working hard for you.
- **March 17.** How to avoid penalties if you exceed IRA contribution limits.
- **March 24.** Is it time to get back in the market?
- **March 31.** Dividend-paying stocks can be less stressful investments.

#### **BOOKS:**

##### **Fight for Your Money:**

*How to Stop Getting Ripped Off and Save a Fortune*, by David Bach (Broadway Books, \$26, Tuesday.)

Popular *Start Late, Finish Rich* author David Bach says his latest book is an A-to-Z guide for consumer advocacy, vastly different from any of his nine previous books.

"It's designed to pull back the curtain, show all the industries that are taking advantage of us and show you how they're making billions but how it's costing you hundreds and sometimes thousand of dollars a year," Bach says.

Among his targets: payday loans with interest rates higher than 400%; \$200 early-termination cellphone fees; and companies that are still slapping fuel surcharges onto bills. It's best to educate and stick up for yourself, is the implication, because no one else has your financial interest at heart.

"What Americans need today is their own economic stimulus plan, because fighting for your own finances ... is going to get your money back in your pockets faster than waiting for the government to get your money back in your pocket," Bach says.

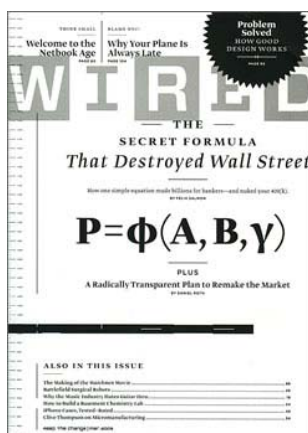
#### **CHECK IT OUT**

##### **The man bethind the math**

Ever hear of the Gaussian copula function? Few have outside of Wall Street and academia. It's a mathematic equation that allowed complex risks to be modeled with more ease and accuracy than before. The March edition of *Wired* magazine introduces readers to the math wizard behind the formula, David Li. Li made it possible for traders to sell vast quantities of new securities, expanding financial markets to unimaginable levels, writes Felix Salmon. Li's method was adopted by everybody from bond investors and Wall Street banks to rating agencies and regulators, Salmon says. "And it became so deeply entrenched ... that warnings about its limitations were largely ignored."

##### **Don't do as Japan did**

Economist Richard Koo, author of the definitive book on Japan's decade-long recession in the 1990s, distills *The Holy Grail of*



**Macroeconomics: Lessons from Japan's Great Recession** in the latest edition of *The International Economy*. To Koo, Japan prolonged its recession by failing to sustain an aggressive fiscal policy. His advice to America: keep the foot on the fiscal pedal. Emphasize spending — not tax cuts. "A large part of any tax cut may be used by the private sector to increase savings or decrease debt as we have seen in the recent U.S. income tax rebate," Koo writes.

#### Celebs became financial prey

Want to know how Hollywood denizens such as Kevin Bacon, Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg were suckered by Bernard Madoff's alleged \$50 billion Ponzi scheme? Because they entrusted their finances to personal business managers, a quasi-profession with too many practitioners who don't know that they're doing, writes Amy Wallace in *Condé Nast Portfolio*. The nature of film and TV production makes them indispensable. "It's difficult to keep one's financial affairs in order while, for example, shooting a movie three months in a Bolivian jungle," Wallace writes.

#### Recession's long-term effects

At some point the global recession will end, but its consequences will be with us for a while, says the latest edition of *Foreign Policy* magazine. It predicts what's in store in *The Long Legs of the Crash: 13 Unexpected Consequences of the Financial Crisis*. Our favorite: No. 5, Glory days for evangelicals.

By Gary Rawlins

#### WHAT I READ

**Jeffrey Hollender** is president — and what he calls "Chief Inspired Protagonist" (CEO to others) — of Seventh Generation. The company describes itself as the nation's leading brand of environmentally friendly household products and takes its name from the Great Law of the Iroquois: "In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations." He is the author of several books, including *What Matters Most* and *Naturally Clean*. He lives in Vermont with his wife and three children.

#### His three favorite books

If I had to choose one: *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver. Over the past month I've been reading *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* by Peter M. Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers. It is like a wonderful meditation. I really enjoyed *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* by Riane Tennenhaus Eisler, which tackles the ominous gaps in our mental map of what economic theory is all about.

#### A favorite genre

Novels written for women by women, such as Barbara Kingsolver, Marilyn French, Alice Hoffman, Anna Quindlen, Anita Shreve, even Jodi Picoult and Susan Isaacs. There is no question that the perspective that women have on the world is closer and resonates more with my own. I also like John Fowles, Pat Conroy, John Irving, Tom Wolfe, but they are less prolific.

#### Books that helped him most in his career

The first few: *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing From Crisis to Sustainability* by James Gustave Speth, *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker* by Steven Greenhouse and *Capitalism as if the World Matters* by Jonathan Porritt and Amory B. Lovins.

#### Last book given as a gift

I rarely give gifts, but if I did, I'd give them *Presence* by Peter M. Senge.

#### Last book received as a gift

Someone recently gave me a book on how to deal with and stay healthy now that I'm over 50. I haven't read it yet.

#### His favorite websites

In addition to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*, I keep Google advanced search, CNN and Amazon handy.

#### When does he read?

All the time. I read novels before I go to sleep, newspapers when I wake up and magazines on the weekend.

#### Why read so much?

It's my favorite and ultimate escape. It is an endless source of ideas and inspiration

By Patricia Gaines, Special for USA TODAY

#### 5 QUESTIONS FOR DAVID RATCLIFFE, CEO OF SOUTHERN CO.

**David Ratcliffe** is facing his greatest challenges since he became chairman and CEO of giant utility Southern Co. in 2004. Southern, which serves customers in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Florida, is one of the top coal energy producers and greenhouse gas emitters. And the South has few clean-energy resources. Yet, President Obama wants to take on global



warming and force utilities to use more clean energy.

for David Ratcliffe

**Q:** Obama favors a national standard that would require utilities to get 25% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025. Do you support that?

**A:** I'm not in favor of a mandated portfolio standard, primarily because it does not allow much flexibility. In the Southeast, when you look at what's available, it's fairly limited to biomass, some solar and a little bit of wind. Beyond that, it falls off quite a lot.

**Q:** Obama wants to lower greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, forcing utilities to buy permits to emit CO<sub>2</sub>. Your thoughts?

**A:** It's going to be extremely expensive in a difficult economy.

We've got to get to the point where we begin to change out existing technology. That will take clean coal (plants that capture and store CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) and new nuclear and renewables at some scale. So, right now, I can't tell you that we have the technology to do that (by 2020).

**Q:** The economic stimulus package places a big emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation. Are utilities like Southern likely to invest in programs that result in less electricity consumption and lower revenue?

**A:** What we've suggested is that you ought to create the same kinds of (earnings) incentives for investment in efficiency that I have to invest in hard assets.

**Q:** You're proposing two new nuclear reactors near Waynesboro, Ga., by 2016, but nuclear plants are very expensive. Has the sharp drop in steel and other commodity costs made the project more affordable?

**A:** No question that will help the economics, but nobody can predict the stability of those prices. It's unrealistic for me to expect a fixed price. I can get one, but it wouldn't be one I can afford because (equipment vendors) would be taking all that risk.

**Q:** Is even a large utility like Southern affected by the credit crisis as you spend billions to build new power plants and transmission lines?

**A:** We've been impacted just like everybody else. We've been impacted less because we have a very strong credit rating.

By Paul Davidson

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