

JÓZSEF HAJDÚ

Colours of the collar in the labour market

Introduction

For the last couple of years the various colours of the workers' collar increased significantly in the field of labour law and HR literature. In this article we collect the most important, existing colours of the workers/employees' collar and search for the answer whether such colours make real and meaningful differences, or there is only one collar (the collar of the person who pursues the working activity) and the attached colours appear according to the requirement of the professional writers.

We are all quite familiar with the colourful distinction of the different employment sectors. White collar employment includes salaried professionals and clerical workers. Blue collar employment involves manual labour, and there are more coloured collar works (green, grey, gold, red, etc.).

Nowadays a new sector is emerging and growing in both popularity and support: the green collar workers. Green collar jobs involve products and services that are environment-friendly. Any organization that seeks to improve upon the environment is considered „green”, and if it employs individuals to that effect, then it has created green collar jobs. Green collar jobs include any that involve the design, manufacture, installation, operation, and/or maintenance of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. And the green collar sector is booming. For example, it is currently the fifth largest market sector in the US.¹ The article would like to give a comprehensive overview of the different types of work which are named after the collar of the workers/employees.

1. Traditional double distinction: blue and white colour work

1.1. White-collar workers

The term white-collar worker refers to a salaried professional or an educated worker who performs semi-professional office, administrative, and sales coordination tasks, as opposed to a blue-collar worker, whose job requires manual labour. „White-collar work” is an informal term, defined in contrast to „blue-collar work”.

¹ <http://www.alternative-energy-news.info/white-blue-green-collar/> [04. 08.2010.]

Charles Wright Mills, an American sociologist, conducted a major research study of the white-collar workers which was reported in his book, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951). He claimed that alienation among the white-collar workers was high because they were not only selling their time but also had to sell their personality with a „smile on their faces”.²

Origin of the term „white collar” is accredited to Upton Sinclair, an American writer, in relation to modern clerical, administrative and management workers during the 1930s, though references to „easy work and a white collar” appear as early as 1911. Examples of its usage in the 1920s include a 1923 *Wall Street Journal* article that reads, „Movement from high schools to manual labour in steel plants is unusual, as boys formerly sought white collar work”.

Sinclair's usage is related to the fact that during most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, male office workers in European and American countries almost always had to wear white, collared dress shirts. Formerly the minority in the agrarian and early industrial societies, white-collar workers have become a majority in individualised countries. Industrial and occupational change during the twentieth century created disproportionately more desk jobs, and reduced the number of employees doing manual work in factories.

In recent times workers have had varying degrees of latitude about their choice of dress. Dress codes can range from relaxed – with employees allowed to wear jeans and street clothes – up to traditional office attire. Many companies today operate in a business-casual environment where employees are required to wear dress-pants (business trousers) or skirts and a shirt with a collar. Because of this, not all of what would be called white-collar workers in fact wear the traditional white shirt and tie.

At some companies „white-collar employees” also on occasion perform „blue-collar” tasks (or vice versa), and even change their clothing to perform the distinctive roles (i.e., dressing up or dressing down as the case requires). This is common in the food-service industry. An example would be a restaurant manager who may wear more formal clothing than lower-ranked employees, yet still sometimes assist with cooking food or taking customers' orders. Employees of event-catering companies often wear formal clothing when serving food.

As salaried employees, white-collar workers are sometimes members of white-collar labour unions and they can resort to strike action to settle grievances with their employers when collective bargaining fails. This is far more the case in Europe than in the United States, where less than ten percent of all private sector employees are union members. White-collar workers have a reputation for being sceptical or opposed to unions, and tend to see their advancement in work as tied to their reaching corporate goals rather than in union membership.

1.2. Blue collar worker

A blue-collar worker is a member of the working class who typically performs manual labour and earns an hourly wage. Blue-collar workers are distinguished from those

² C. WRIGHT MILLS: *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. Oxford University Press, 1951. ISBN 978-0195000245 p. 183.

in the service sector and from white-collar workers, whose jobs are not considered manual labour.

Blue-collar work may be skilled or unskilled, and may involve manufacturing, mining, building and construction trades, mechanical work, maintenance, repair and operations maintenance or technical installations.

The origin of the term. Industrial and manual workers wear durable clothing that can be dirty, soiled, or scrapped at work. A popular element of such clothes has been, and still is, a light or navy blue work shirt. Blue is also a popular colour for coveralls, and will frequently include a name tag of the company/establishment on one side, and the individual's name on the other. Often these items are bought by the company and laundered by the establishment, as well. The popularity of the colour blue among manual labourers is in contrast to the ubiquitous white dress shirt that is standard attire in office environments. Colour-coding has been used to identify a difference in socio-economic class. This distinction is becoming more blurred, however, with the increasing importance of skilled labour, and the growth of non-labouring, but low-paying, service sector jobs. „Blue-collar” may also be used as an adjective to describe the environment of the blue-collar worker: a „blue-collar” neighbourhood, job, restaurant, bar; or any situation describing the use of manual effort and the strength required to do so.

A distinctive element of work is the lesser requirement for formal academic education which is needed to succeed in other types of work, with many blue-collar jobs requiring only a high school diploma. Blue-collar work typically is hourly wage-labour. Usually, the pay for such occupation is lower than that of the white-collar worker, although higher than many entry-level service occupations. Especially skilled blue-collar jobs may pay very well compared to white collar jobs. Sometimes the work conditions can be strenuous or hazardous, also known as the three Ds: *Dirty, Demanding, and Dangerous*. Blue collar jobs may be represented by trade unions or regulated by state and/or federal statutes.

Shift of blue-collar jobs from industrialized countries to developing regions. With the move of Western nations towards a basis of service economy, the number of blue-collar jobs has steadily decreased. Another main cause for the decrease in blue-collar jobs in the West is due to the information revolution. Perhaps the biggest cause is that many low-skill manufacturing jobs have been outsourced to developing nations with lower wages. Outsourcing of manufacturing jobs is resulting in a growing class of „blue-collar” workers in developing nations, changing these regions from an agrarian to an industrial job base.

2. Green job – green collar worker

2.1. What are Green Jobs?

Green collar jobs are related to products and services that are environment friendly. The organizations that incorporate environment friendly practices are termed as „green” and the jobs arising out of this green policy is „green collar job.” Like other sectors,

green sector too has designing, manufacturing, installing, operating and maintenance units.³

However, green collar jobs are basically blue – sometimes white – collar jobs in green businesses – that is, manual labour jobs in businesses whose products and services directly improve environmental quality.⁴ Green collar jobs are located in large and small for-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, social enterprises, and public sector institutions. What unites these jobs is that all of them are associated mainly with manual labour work that directly improves environmental quality. In other words, *blue-collar can become green*. Labour leaders see green jobs as a way to fight outsourcing and keep manufacturing alive.⁵

It's easy to limit green jobs to solar panel installers, energy-efficient building architects and wind turbine manufacturers. But green jobs encompass so much more. They include all positions that ensure the well-being of the environment. The renewable energy sector, of course, employs a lot of engineers and other scientists. Yet green jobs also encompass urban planners, bike repairers, corporate social responsibility advisers and solar sales people. Public transit workers and teachers can have green jobs, too.

Most green jobs are just like any other jobs. They are in major industries such as manufacturing, construction, sales and agriculture. They are both white collar, usually requiring a four-year degree, and blue collar, requiring little prior experience or training. The majority of green jobs are „middle skill”, necessitating more education than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. Employees can often make a transition to green jobs with just a little bit of training. Construction jobs can be green, for instance, with education in retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency. Electricians can work as solar installers or designers with training in photovoltaic technology. However, if a job improves the environment, but does not provide a family-supporting wage or a career ladder to move low-income workers into higher-skilled occupations, it is not a green-collar job.⁶

Green collar jobs represent an important new category of work force opportunities because they are relatively high quality jobs, with relatively low barriers to entry, in sectors that are poised for dramatic growth. The combination of these three features means that cultivating green collar jobs for people with barriers to employment can be an effective strategy to provide low-income men and women with access to good jobs – jobs that provide workers with meaningful, community serving work, living wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities.

For example, twenty-three different sectors of the U.S. economy currently provide workers with green collar jobs.⁷ These sectors include:

1. Bicycle repair and bike delivery services,
2. Car and truck mechanic jobs, production jobs, and gas-station jobs,

³ <http://www.alternative-energy-news.info/green-collar-jobs/> (28.08.2010.)

⁴ <http://www.ncsustainableenergy.org/media/File/PDF/Microsoft%20PowerPoint%20-%20Pinderhughes%20-%20Low-Wealth%20&%20Minority%20%5BCompatibility%20Mode%5D.pdf> (05.09.2010.)

⁵ <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1809506,00.html> (05.09.2010.)

⁶ <http://bss.sfsu.edu/raquelrp/documents/v13fullreport.pdf> (05.09.2010.)

⁷ <http://www.ncsustainableenergy.org/media/File/PDF/Microsoft%20PowerPoint%20-%20Pinderhughes%20-%20Low-Wealth%20&%20Minority%20%5BCompatibility%20Mode%5D.pdf> (05.09.2010.)

3. Production of bio-diesel, vegetable oil and other alternative fuels,
4. Energy retrofits to increase energy efficiency and conservation,
5. Food production using organic and/or sustainably grown agricultural products,
6. Furniture making from environmentally certified and recycled wood,
7. Green building,
8. Green waste composting on a large scale,
9. Hauling and reuse of construction and demolition materials and debris (C&D),
10. Hazardous materials clean up,
11. Green (sustainable) landscaping,
12. Manufacturing jobs related to large scale production of a wide range of appropriate technologies (i.e. solar panels, bike cargo systems, green waste bins, etc.),
13. Materials reuse/producing products made from recycled, non-toxic materials,
14. Non-toxic household cleaning in residential and commercial buildings,
15. Parks and open space maintenance and expansion,
16. Printing with non-toxic inks and dyes and recycled papers,
17. Public transit jobs,
18. Recycling,
19. Solar installation and maintenance,
20. Tree cutting and pruning,
21. Peri-urban and urban agriculture,
22. Water retrofits to increase water efficiency and conservation,
23. Whole home performance (i.e: HVAC, attic insulation, weatherization, etc.).⁸

Until now, there has been much anecdotal evidence indicating that the pattern of employment is indeed changing- and that new jobs are beginning to emerge in favour of greener, cleaner and more sustainable occupations. This is in a large part as a result of climate change and the need to meet emission reduction targets under the UN climate convention. This has led to changing patterns of investment flows into areas from renewable energy generation up to energy efficiency projects at the household and industrial level.⁹

The bulk of documented growth in Green Jobs has so far occurred mostly in developed countries, and some rapidly developing countries like Brazil and China. Green Jobs are also beginning to be seen in other developing economies. A project in Bangladesh, training local youth and women as certified solar technicians and as repair and maintenance specialists, aims to create some 100,000 jobs. In India, an initiative to replace inefficient biomass cooking stoves in nine million households with more advanced ones could create 150,000 jobs. It now appears that a green economy can generate more and better jobs everywhere and that these can be decent jobs.

Despite such optimism, it is clear that urgent action is needed. In some areas, especially in the developing world, new jobs being created in the food, agriculture and recycling sectors as a result of climate change and environment leave much to be desired and can hardly be considered as decent. Climate change is also having a negative impact on jobs in some areas. Sectors consuming large amounts of energy and natural resources are likely to see a decline in jobs. Climate change is already damaging the livelihoods of

⁸ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/nwlb/Green_Collar_Jobs_236013_7.pdf (05.09.2010.)

⁹ <http://unfccc.int/2860.php> (05.09.2010.)

millions, mostly poor people in developing countries. Thus, just transitions to new opportunities and sustainable jobs and incomes are needed for those affected.¹⁰

Equity is going to be a key condition for a new agreement, between countries as well as between social groups within countries.

The future trajectory of the Green Jobs Initiative will therefore depend on a wide range of factors and actors. Governments, as well as the private sector, will play a key role. Changes in the decisions, practices and behaviours of millions of managers, workers and consumers will be needed.

This is a visible period of transition: trade unions, employers' organizations, the private sector and the UN are natural allies in this quest. Each has a critical role to play, not least in the areas of boosting efficiency in the use of energy and raw materials through better work organization and of retraining and retooling the global workforce to seize the new opportunities and to master the transition to green production and consumption.

Certainly there will be winners and losers, so support for workers and enterprise adaptation will be of key importance. But if the international community can get it right there is the real prospect of generating and fostering Green Jobs and Decent Work for ever more people. Green Jobs and Decent Work are a new and powerful force for achieving a more resource efficient and equitable global economy that mirrors all our aspirations for true sustainable development.¹¹

So far, a small group of countries accounts for the bulk of renewables investments, R&D, and production. Germany, Japan, China, Brazil, and the United States play particularly prominent roles in renewable technology development, and they have so far garnered the bulk of renewables jobs worldwide. European manufacturers account for more than three-quarters of global wind turbine sales, but India's Suzlon is also a major force in the industry. China's employment numbers are particularly high because the country continues to rely on large numbers of relatively low paid workers in contrast with the fewer higher paid workers found in Western industrialized countries.

Given the rapidly rising interest in energy alternatives, future years may well see worldwide employment soar-possibly as high as 2.1 million in wind energy and 6.3 million in solar PVs by 2030, and on the order of 12 million jobs in biofuels-related agriculture and industry. Projections for individual countries all indicate strong potential for large job creation in coming years and decades. Installations and maintenance of solar PV and solar thermal systems in particular offer tremendous job growth.¹²

2.2. Some advantages of green collar jobs

Mostly, green jobs cannot be outsourced overseas. For example, Hungarian buildings cannot be retrofitted from China. Therefore, one of the most important advantages of green jobs is that they are good for local economies.

¹⁰ <http://unfccc.int/2860.php> (05.09.2010.)

¹¹ http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (12. 09. 2010.)

¹² http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (12. 09.2010.)

There is another advantage, namely that renewable energy is often very labour intensive, especially compared with fossil fuels. The Union of Concerned Scientists found that wind creates 2.4 times more jobs than coal or natural gas during plant construction and 1.5 times more jobs during long-term operations and maintenance.¹³ There are just not a lot of jobs in drilling and producing oil and natural gas, whereas in wind, natural resource is taken and this kind of activity is adding a tremendous amount of value to the product in order to turn it into an energy source. There is manufacturing, shipping, assembling, maintaining and managing. The same thing happens in the case of solar energy as well. However, alternative energy is a much smaller industry than energy conservation. Construction and manufacturing are likely to be the biggest green sectors because of the huge growth in the solar and wind industries.

2.3. Future of Green Collar Jobs

Over the next decade, the potential for green collar jobs, which can be defined as blue-collar work force opportunities created by firms and organizations whose mission is to improve environmental quality, could be very large.¹⁴

It is very clear that moving away from polluting work and towards environmentally restorative work will bring significant changes and immediate benefits to workers, communities, and society at large. It is a demand to develop a clearer understanding of what kinds of policies and programs can ensure that green collar jobs are made available to workers with limited initial education and skills, and that these jobs are stable, living wage jobs that provide benefits to workers and their families. Do green collar jobs, in and of themselves, offer workers a supportive work experience that contributes to improvements in quality of life?¹⁵

3. Grey-collar workers

Grey-collar refers to the balance of employed people not classified as white or blue collar. Although grey-collar is sometimes used to describe those who work beyond the age of retirement, its most widely accepted meaning refers to occupations that incorporate some of the elements of both blue- and white-collar, or are completely different from both categories.

Examples of Grey Collar industries: a) Farming, fishing, forestry, and other forms of agribusiness. b) Health care, aged care, child care, and the personal service sector. c) Protective services and security. d) Food preparation and the catering industry. e) High-tech technicians. f) Skilled trades, technicians, etc.

Grey-collar workers often have associate degrees from a community college in a particular field. They are unlike blue-collar workers in that blue-collar workers can

¹³ http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/; http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/NEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (05. 09.2010.)

¹⁴ <http://bss.sfsu.edu/raquelrp/documents/v13fullreport.pdf>;
http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (05. 09.2010.)

¹⁵ <http://www.urbanhabitat.org/node/528>;
http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (08. 09.2010.)

often be trained on the job within several weeks whereas grey-collar workers already have a specific skill set.

The field which most recognizes the diversity between these two groups is that of human resources and the insurance industry. These different groups must be insured differently for liability as the potential for injury is different.¹⁶

4. Gold collar worker

The term gold-collar worker is used mainly in the American literature. Basically, there are two interpretations of gold-collar workers. First, it means highly skilled, highly valuable employees, and second, low wage, luxury seeking workers.¹⁷

4.1. Highly skilled, highly valuable employees

The term 'Gold-Collar worker' was first used by Robert Earl Kelley in his 1985 book *The Gold-Collar Worker: Harnessing the Brainpower of the New Work Force*.¹⁸ Here he discussed a new generation of workers who use the most important resource of American business, brainpower. A quote from the book summary states: „They are a new breed of workers, and they demand a new kind of management. Intelligent, independent, and innovative, these employees are incredibly valuable. They are lawyers and computer programmers, stock analysts and community planners, editors and engineers. They are as distinct from their less skilled white-collar counterparts – bank tellers, bookkeepers, clerks, and other business functionaries – as they are from blue-collar labourers. And they account for over 40 percent of America's workforce.” The colour gold applies to these workers because they are highly skilled. When Kelley's book was published in 1985, these were typically understood as being young, college-educated, and specialized.¹⁹

Changes in the nature of work and the workplace have led to large growth in the numbers of a particular kind of knowledge worker – the gold-collar worker, whose most valuable assets are problem-solving abilities, creativity, talent, and intelligence; who performs non-repetitive and complex work that is difficult to evaluate; and who prefers self-management. The gold-collar worker is, for example, the computer engineer as opposed to a lower-level knowledge worker such as an input operator. Kelley pointed out that even though the name is new, there have always been gold-collar workers like designers, researchers, analysts, engineers, and lawyers.²⁰

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey-collar_worker;

http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (08. 09.2010.)

¹⁷ <http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/7030539>

http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (05. 09.2010.)

¹⁸ ROBERT E. KELLEY. 1985. *The Gold-Collar Worker: Harnessing the Brainpower of the New Work Force*. Addison-Wesley. ISBN 0-201-11739-8 p. 5

¹⁹ <http://www.kelleyideas.com/pages/thegoldcollarworker.html> Book Summary of Gold-Collar Worker

²⁰ <http://www.worldwidewords.org/turnsofphrase/tp-goll1.htm> World Wide Words with the definition of Gold collar worker.

Learning, Teams, and Strategic Thinking. Wood²¹ (2001) characterized gold-collar workers in information technology (IT) similarly by focusing on qualitative matters. Gold-collar IT workers learn continually from experience. They recognize the synergy of teams and can demonstrate leadership; they are strategic thinkers who see the big picture and can change strategic directions when necessary. They have a portable, flexible skill base relevant to a variety of work environments and maintain that skill base through their own personal development, with well-connected networks of contacts at the leading edge.

Another feature of gold-collar workers is interdisciplinary knowledge. Where business and science intersect, the basic focus of the gold-collar worker is interdisciplinary knowledge and experience (Todaro²² 2001; Van Nierop and Bow²³ 1997). This interdisciplinary focus combines scientific or other technical knowledge and skills with business literacy to result in a gold-collar worker with expertise across several areas. Gold-collar engineers, chemists, biologists, physicists, or geoscientists understand the relationship between their scientific discipline and business, have the management and financial knowledge needed for a business environment, and can „marry” science and entrepreneurship.

Other Characterizations. Roe²⁴ (2001) called the gold-collar worker „a highly skilled multidisciplinary who combines the mind of the white-collar worker with the hands of the blue-collar employee”. Examples include aircraft systems maintenance technicians, network administrators, and advanced manufacturing technicians. A similar case would be online customer service representatives (CSRs), for whom managing customer relationships now involves not only oral communication but also text-based Internet chat and e-mail about tough questions not answered in frequently asked questions or canned e-mail responses (Dicksteen²⁵ 2001). Others describe gold-collar workers as those in high-skill, high-wage, high-demand occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree—for example, chemical process industry (CPI) operators and technicians (Shanley and Crabb²⁶ 1999); or electrical power line installers, telephone and cable TV installers, plumbers, pipe fitters, and electricians (Raffaele²⁷ 2001). Some consider older workers, with their irreplaceable fund of knowledge and experience, to be the gold-collar work force („Gold-Collar Workers” 2001).²⁸

²¹ WOOD, B. STAYING ON TOP OF THE TREE IN IT--PART 1. Melbourne, Australia, Index Technology Recruiters, 2001. <http://www.mdccs.com.au/news/treetop.html>

²² TODARO, R. M.: *New Programs Push Business Education for Scientists*. APS NEWS ONLINE 10, no. 8 (August-September 2001). 7.

<http://www.aps.org/apsnews/0801/01new.pdf> http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (08. 09.2010.)

²³ VAN NIEROP, M., and BOW, P. UW LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE SCIENCE AND BUSINESS PROGRAM. RELEASE NO. 145. Waterloo, Ontario, University of Waterloo, 1997.

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca:80/infonews/release/1996>

²⁴ ROE, M. A.: *Cultivating the Gold-Collar Worker*. HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW 79, no. 5 . May 2001. 32–33.

²⁵ DICKSTEEN, L. N.: 'Gold Collar' CSRs. CATALOG AGE 18, no. 7. June 2001. 141–142.

²⁶ SHANLEY, A. and CRABB, C.: *Who Will Operate Your Plant?* CHEMICAL ENGINEERING 106, no. 2 February 1999. 30–31.

²⁷ RAFFAELE, M.: *Panel Suggests Ways to Improve Work Force*. THE SUNDAY PATRIOT-NEWS (Harrisburg, PA), December 9, 2001, p. B14.

²⁸ *Gold-Collar Workers: The New Workforce*. UWS NEWS, September 20, 2001. online, n.p.<http://www.uws.edu.au/media/news/?more=40>

Although those characterizations are different, they share some common themes:

a) For gold-collar workers, knowledge is not just having information; it is using information to solve problems, to create solutions and strategies, to learn from experience.

b) Gold-collar workers typically use knowledge from more than one area. In some cases, gold-collar knowledge crosses formal, academic disciplines like science and business; in others, occupationally specific technical knowledge is used in combination with more general process, communication, and learning-to-learn skills.

c) Gold-collar workers tend to be autonomous. Traditional gold-collar professionals (engineers, lawyers) have always enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. With the disappearance of much middle management, newer gold-collar workers like online CSRs and CPI operators, formerly considered skilled trades, often perform work once done by degreed professionals.

d) Gold-collar workers tend to work in traditionally male occupations like engineering, law, or IT. Traditionally female occupations involving comparable knowledge work (e.g., nursing or teaching) do not receive the accolade „gold collar”.

e) However they are characterized, gold-collar workers are in great demand. Whether a top Visual Basic programmer in IT, a physicist with an MBA, or a 60-year-old who chooses to cut back rather than retire, gold-collar workers are sought, recruited, and hired – sometimes so eagerly that they can write their own ticket.

The characteristics of gold-collar workers, coupled with the great demand for them, raise human resource development issues for employers (Holland, Hecker, and Steen 2002).²⁹

According to Peter F. Drucker (cited in Bunk 1999)³⁰, knowledge is the principal resource of the 21st century, and knowledge is fundamentally different from the traditional resources of labour, raw materials, or capital. Unlike information, which can be computer generated, knowledge is in the minds of workers and arises from their own cognition and insight; knowledge workers own the primary tool of their own work and can take that tool with them if they change jobs. That knowledge is dynamic, and the goal of management should be enhancing, exchanging, and using it effectively rather than preserving and systematizing it like a static resource. A more productive approach to managing gold-collar workers includes concentrating on end results by setting goals rather than controlling the processes involved. Goals provide guidance and help ensure that workers don't stray too far into the details of bench work, for example. At the same time, they can allow the leeway and flexibility necessary for exploring and tinkering, from which new solutions, new strategies, and new learning result. Managers should use their own judgment to determine when and if more detailed plans and regular updates to monitor progress are needed.

In particular, managers must recognize that the scientific management theories and tools to handle unskilled, Industrial Age, assembly-line workers are not appropriate for

²⁹ HOLLAND, P. J.; HECKER, R.; and STEEN, J.: *Human Resource Strategies and Organisational Structures for Managing Gold-Collar Workers*. JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL TRAINING 26, nos. 2–4 2002:80.

³⁰ BUNK, S.: *How to Manage Knowledge and 'Gold Collar Workers*. THE SCIENTIST 13, no. 3 (February 1, 1999): 16–17. http://www.the-scientist.com/yr1999/feb/prof_990201.html
http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf (05. 09.2010.)

the non-repetitive and complex work activities of gold-collar workers (Kelley 1990)³¹. The planning, scheduling, and quality control necessary to monitor progress should be a cross-functional team effort among all workers involved; written progress reports should be kept to a minimum and replaced insofar as possible by brief onsite meetings, one on one or with the work team as a whole. Time management techniques should allow workers to focus both on important and urgent tasks as well as on the important but often less urgent major knowledge tasks of the team; uninterrupted periods of concentration should be preserved. To minimize or avoid the ego problems sometimes experienced with talented workers, groups can set norms for social behaviour, allowing somewhat greater latitude for emotions and behaviour. Individual work and contributions should receive regular recognition- and at the same time, constructive criticism must be sought, accepted, and used. Power struggles over turf can be avoided by challenging assignments to stretch individual abilities, team rather than independent work, and rewards for group performance in addition to individual performance. Managers can bend organizational rules, allowing departures from the letter of the rule in favour of performance and results that accomplish the spirit of the rule.

Put another way (Curtin³² 1995), gold-collar workers want a transformational leader who has charisma, who represents an ideal they can assimilate and adopt, and who provides the stimulation and individualized consideration they need to become more than they were.

4.2. Low wage, luxury seeking

Gold-collar worker (GCW) is a neologism, which has been used to describe either young, low-wage workers who invest in conspicuous luxury (often with parental support), or highly-skilled knowledge workers, traditionally classified as white collar, but who have recently become essential enough to business operations as to warrant a new classification.

Low wage, luxury seeking means 18 to 25 year-old persons in a position to divert a significant portion of their earnings towards material luxuries. They typically have fewer than 2 years of post-high school education. Like their counterparts attending college, they are often employed as retail workers or in the hospitality industry, particularly food service as servers. Unlike college students, though, this group tends to have more disposable income than college students, who often pay high tuition costs, take on a number of financial loans, and often move away from their parents. A lack of financial obligations leaves young people in this situation with a higher enough level of discretionary/disposable income, which they use to finance luxurious goods. Thus, the term also carries a connotation of immaturity, the extension of youth, and nurtured adolescence, as in the movie *Failure to Launch*, where a man still lives with his parents despite being well into his 30s and owning a business. In the UK the expression 'two-bob billionaire' is used, in that whilst one feels wealthy and hardworking one's status is in fact illusory.

The main challenge faced by gold-collar workers is the short-lived nature of their financial security. More often than not, these people marry and have children, and take on

³¹ KELLEY, R. E.: *Managing the New Workforce*. MACHINE DESIGN 62, no 9 May 10, 1990.: 109-113.

³² CURTIN, L. H.: *The 'Gold Collar' Leader...?* NURSING MANAGEMENT 26, no.10. October 1995. 7-8.

additional financial responsibilities such as mortgages and health insurance. With partial or no higher education, however, their job prospects could be viewed as narrow and fairly restricted.

These people are going to be cash-rich 19-year-olds and cash-poor 30-year-olds... If you are making 22 grand a year and not paying for college, you can earn enough disposable income to have an apartment and a car. But it tops out there. Job security is not good, and you end up in the lower middle class and working poor.

5. *Red-collar jobs*

For nearly 20 years, white-collar jobs have been the most prized in China since the 1990s. However, times change and now more people are hoping to trade their white collars for red ones. So-called „red-collar” workers refer to civil servants in China. China has about 50 million civil servants now, and more people are planning to enter this class through public entrance examinations. Because of its stable income, security and the promise of promotions, more and more people are aspiring to be civil servants. Back in the early years of reform and opening up, large numbers of foreign-funded corporations came into view and employees at these companies carried with them a certain kind of glamour in the eyes of the nation because of their elegant attire, high incomes and great quality of life. The public called them „white-collar workers”, a word that came from the West. In those years, „white-collar” and „blue-collar” workers were seen in stark contrast in terms of income and prestige, although both terms were introduced from the West. However, the distance between the two categories has been continually closing, and sometimes the blue-collar workers are even much better off than the white-collar ones after so many years have passed.

Now, to mention a white-collar worker conjures an image of dressing well on a crowded bus or subway and struggling to afford a house. The term „white collar” has lost its appeal and become an embarrassing existence.

With China's entry into the WTO and the rapid development of China's economy, „gold-collar” work became another dream for the public. High income, extravagant tastes, rich managerial expertise and experiences are all reasons these positions are envied. But at the same time, those „gold-collar” workers also paid what normal people could not pay to attain these. The sudden onset of the financial crisis meant all that was gold failed to glitter and the gold in the collar started to fade. Gold-collar workers' incomes were up and down following the fluctuations of the stock market, and they also have to bear high work pressure and threats to their health. Under these circumstances, the red-collar job with its stable income and little pressure has become the people's new favourite.

Wu Zhenggao, the financial director of a training institution for the civil servant examination, said the word of „red” was quite fitting for China's „red political power”. He also hoped that „red collar” could be given more of a definition, such as meeting civil servants' mission consciously and promoting better service by the government to the public as red-collar jobs are gaining nationwide popularity.³³

³³ WANG HANLU: *People's Daily Online*, September 03, 2010.

Short conclusion

There are many colours of collar in the HR and labour law literature. However, I think that basically there are still only two kinds of basic colours of the workers' employees' collar. This is blue and white. Blue collar work can be transferred mainly, and sometimes easily into the green sector or renewable energy work, leaving a room for expanding the number of white collar employees – engineers, managers, sales persons, computer expert, etc. – of this field. The traditionally white collar employees still work in their former jobs, or sometimes they have to brush up their knowledge, and rarely must they go to school to study again.

Besides white, blue and green collar jobs, we intend to introduce two less known types of collars: 1) gold collar work and 2) red collar work. They both have an interesting social role within the society.

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HAJDÚ JÓZSEF

SZÍNES GALLÉROK ÉS A MUNKAVÁLLALÁS

(Összefoglalás)

Történeti távlatból tekintve, a munkajogi szakirodalom alapvetően két színhez tartozó galléros munkavállalókról beszél: kék galléros (fizikai munkavállaló) és fehér galléros (szellemi munkavállaló).

Az elmúlt időszakban a környezet védelme, az éghajlatváltozás megfékezése, a fenntartható növekedés biztosítása, a versenyképesség fokozása, a munkanélküliség csökkentése előtérbe helyezte a „zöld munkahelyek” létrehozásának egyre nagyobb igényét. A szükséges lépések megtételét javasolják a szakemberek, amely teljesen összhangban van az EU 2020 programmal, amelyben először szerepel a 20-20-20 kifejezés. Ez azt jelenti, hogy az EU-ban a tagállamok egyetértettek abban, hogy 2020-ra a megújuló energia forrásból származó munkahelyek száma (beleértve a kék és fehér gallérosokat is) elérje a 20%-ot. Ez relatíve magas szám, de vannak országok (Franciaország, Németország és Anglia), amelyek még ennél is magasabb célkitűzést tűztek ki maguk elé (20-20-30).

A jelen cikkben – a fent említették, kék, fehér és zöld galléros munkavállalókon kívül – röviden bemutatásra került az aranygalléros munkavállalók két alapvető csoportja, és a vörös galléros munkavállalók köre.

A különböző színű gallérok és a mögöttük rejtőző filozófiák bemutatásával rámutattam arra, hogy álláspontom szerint „átjárás” van az egyik csoportból a másikba. Például a fizikai munkát végző zöld galléros munkavállalók általában a korábbi kék galléros munkavállalókból kerülnek ki. Ugyanakkor a szellemi/irányítói munkát ellátó személyek – jelentős mértékben – a fehér galléros munkavállalók világából érkeznek.

Röviden úgy összegezném, hogy munkavégzés csak egyfajta van, függetlenül attól, hogy a munkavégző személyen lévő ruha „gallérja” milyen színű. Túlnyomó többségükben ezek a megújuló energia iparhoz tartozó munkakörök mind a férfiak, mind a nők számára nyitva állnak, ugyanakkor még mindig létezik az az Európa szerte sztereotíp módon élő állásfoglalás, miszerint ezeken a munkahelyeken túlnyomó részben férfiakat alkalmaznak és a nőknek nem terem babér. Ez a beidegződés abból az időszakból ered, amikor még a férfi és női munka között fontos elhatárolási elem volt a munka fizikai nehézsége. A férfiak végezték a nehéz munkát, míg a nőkre „könnyebb” munkavégzés hárult. Itt az idő, hogy ezzel a régi beidegződéssel szakítsunk.