



**SOCIETY**

# The \$10,000-a-Month Psychic

By TONY DOKOUPIL

**W**HEN SEAGATE TECHNOLOGY, the \$11 billion-a-year maker of hard drives for the Playstation 3 and Microsoft Xbox, went searching for a consultant to run one of its management workshops in the fall of 2006, it bypassed the usual list of Silicon Valley gurus. Instead, Seagate's executive director of software engineering, Gabriel Lawson, invited Laura Day—a stylish New Yorker with no tech experience—to train his Colorado-based team. “She was amazing,” Lawson tells NEWSWEEK, recalling Day’s quick insights into the poor coordination between the company’s research and marketing teams. “Anybody who can afford her will get

**When business people need a crystal ball, they turn to consultant Laura Day, the ‘intuitionist.’**

100 times their money’s worth.” What exactly is Day’s expertise? While she likes to downplay it as mere “intuition,” her clients prefer another explanation: she’s a psychic.

Day’s feel for the unknown has become a hot commodity among certain high-profile business people, bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars a year for the 49-year-old mother in the process. The William Morris talent agency has used Day to help it

decide whom to represent and how to help the company grow. “It’s like looking over at your opponent’s cards in a poker game,” says Jennifer Walsh, executive vice president of William Morris’s literary department, which reps Day. A big Hollywood producer says Day advised him in 2006 to pass on a can’t-miss animated film, predicting it would bomb at the box office. It did. (The producer didn’t want to be named for fear of public ridicule.)

A Manhattan attorney who serves as special counsel to several white-shoe law firms has used Day’s insights to help her select juries and anticipate the opposing team’s arguments. “Day saves me thousands of minutes on my cell phone” working a case, says the attorney, who also didn’t want to be publicly identified.

**PROPHETEER:** Day says she has made millions helping her clients see the future

by decision makers in law, finance and entertainment looking for an edge in a down economy. “I specialize in nonbelievers,” says Day, referring to her roster of “red-meat-eating, Barneys-shopping, Type A personalities.”

For a flat rate of \$10,000 a month, Day’s insight is available for rent. She has about five monthly clients at a time, offering them unlimited 24-hour access. She works from her airy Tribeca apartment, fielding calls while juggling domestic life as the mother of a 16-year-old boy, whose friends are often over in packs. The commotion is helpful, she says, allowing her to keep her “rational mind busy” while she picks up on things from “left field.” (Though she admits her teenager can be psychically distracting as well: “I don’t want to see what he did with that girl until 2 a.m.,” she says. “But I can.”) In a typical call early last year, a prominent Wall Street money manager asked whether

maican psychic called Miss Cleo clotted the airwaves with low-rent infomercials, giving the P word a bad public image. Some stigma still remains. “The hedge funds would freak out” if they knew he consulted a psychic, says the Hollywood executive.

But just as there are no atheists in foxholes, a bleak business climate can make believers out of anyone. Carla Baron, the psychic star of Court TV’s “Haunting Evidence”—a documentary about her work helping police investigators crack cold cases—says that roughly half the 20 to 30 readings she gives each week are now business-related. Mentalist Jon Stetson says that after years of performing on cruise ships and in the “saddest” comedy clubs, he now has a Rolodex of businesses, including Fortune 500 companies, that call him for Intuition Workshops—which differ only in name, he says, from psychic workshops. “There’s a ton of interest,” says the Boston-based 48-year-old. “It’s a new frontier.”

The relationship between psychics and the powerful has always been close. In the

## Psychic advisers have been crossing over into the world of mainstream business.

he should pull out of a risky, multimillion-dollar energy deal or let his money ride. “My gut,” Day recalls saying, “is that you’re not going to get your return.” The money manager listened and yanked his investment, she says, just before the deal nose-dived.

Day’s career as a professional psychic began in the early 1990s. Her marriage had ended, leaving her strapped for cash until she asked a hedge-fund friend if he’d mind paying her for the stock tips she occasionally gave him. He was happy to. Later she spun her abilities into a book, “Practical Intuition,” which became a New York Times best seller and formed the basis of Day’s thriving seminar business. Today she trains members of the Harvard Business School Network of Women Alumnae to use their sixth sense. In one of the Harvard group’s monthly sessions, recalls participant Karen Page, the women were asked to intuit the mystery item in a brown paper bag. Without touching or sniffing it, they came up with “yellow,” “sour” and “fruit” for what turned out to be a lemon. She’s also advised celebrities such as Jennifer Aniston and Demi Moore. Working entirely by referral, Day says she has earned more than \$10 million in the past 15 years (a figure impossible to verify—our psychic powers aren’t that great).

The scale of Day’s success would have been hard to imagine in the 1990s, when the Psychic Friends Network and a campy Ja-

Bible, Joseph found favor with Pharaoh by uncannily interpreting the Egyptian leader’s dreams. Centuries later, the supposed forecasting abilities of Nostradamus and the “mad monk” Rasputin endeared both men to the upper classes. In America, according to Catherine Albanese, a historian at the University of California, Santa Barbara, belief in metaphysical powers dates back to the country’s founding and shows “every sign of flourishing into any future that can be foreseen.” That’s especially true during times of great change or distress—war and recession—when people are looking to make sense of the uncertainty, Albanese says. Surveys show that two out of three Americans believe in the value of psychic insight, according to Michael Shermer, author of “Why People Believe Weird Things.”

Helping to create a favorable climate for intuitionists are the number of politicians and corporate titans who talk openly these days about “gut feeling,” intuition’s more masculine-sounding counterpart. President George W. Bush has told The Washington Post that he’s a “gut player,” while Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff last summer warned of an increased risk of a terrorist strike—insight he attributed to a “gut feeling.” Like Bush and Chertoff, Day doesn’t always make accurate predictions, though she admits as much. “If I were God,” she says, “I’d be charging more.” ■

Watch our video interview with adviser Laura Day at [xtra.newsweek.com](http://xtra.newsweek.com)

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