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Hard Target

Goldman Sachs is easy to hate — and tough to excuse

By Jonathan Weil

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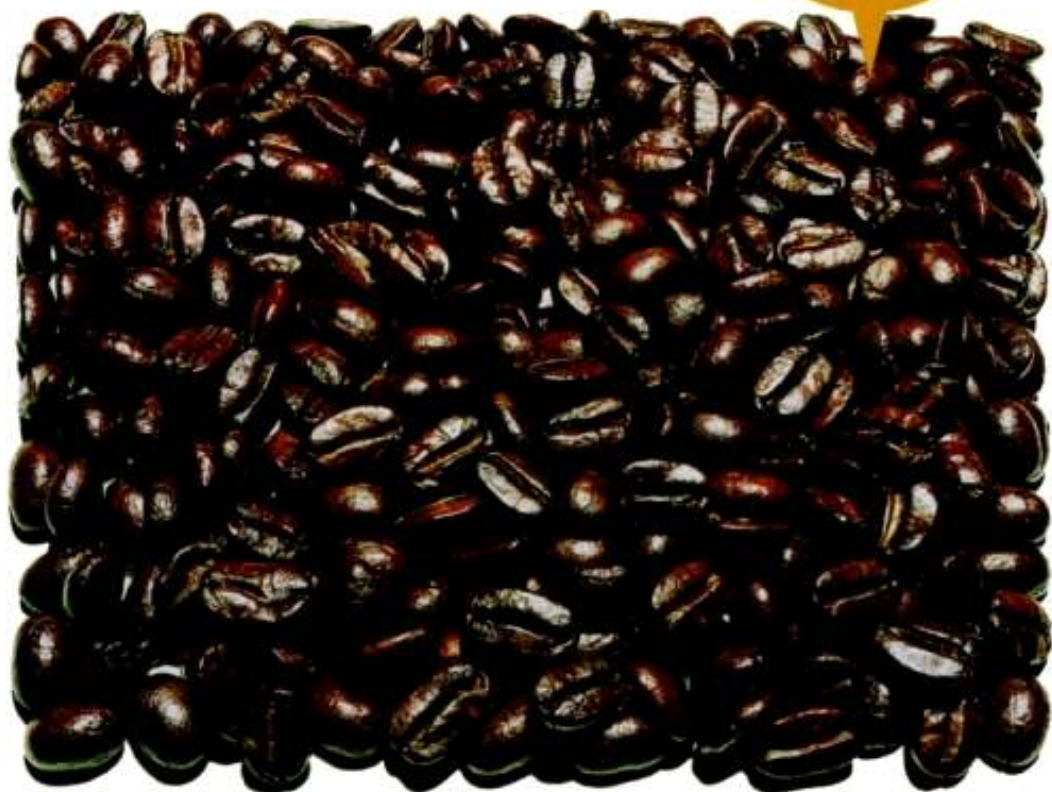
What the SEC Investigation Changes on Wall Street

By Michael Lewis



Etc. Work Drug

Choose Your Jolt



Crunch, swallow, repeat: How about popping a few beans?

D GETTING YOUR FIX



Plain beans

If you can find one you like, and get past the gritty feel on your tongue, a bean can stand in as a low-dose, extended-release caffeine pill.



Inhaler

Each Le Whif contains 300 mg of coffee powder, sugar, and caffeine, among other ingredients, and costs \$3.99. It's available through www.laboshop.fr.



Soap

A company called ThinkGeek offers Shower Shock, a peppermint-scented soap to help you get your morning buzz before even stepping out of the shower. \$6.99 per bar at www.thinkgeek.com.



Lip balm

Protect your lips while perking up. Spazzstick is available in mint and vanilla toffee flavors, for \$2.99 per tube, at www.thinkgeek.com.

Coffee isn't the only way to deliver a caffeine rush

Bored with drip coffee? Has that triple shot of espresso ceased to deliver a reliable jolt? You may want to check out the robust world of alternative caffeine delivery systems, from eating whole beans to literally inhaling the stuff.

From Kaktovik, Alaska, comes Spazzstick, a caffeinated lip balm dreamed up by Richie Holschen, a local police officer who thought he'd tackle two of the long-shift polar cop's greatest foes—chapped lips and exhaustion—with one tube. Holschen once stirred a spoon of pure powdered caffeine into his morning cup of coffee “without realizing how much it was. It was the equivalent of ten pots. I was rather awake the rest of the day.” One application of his lip balm equals a sip of coffee.

Last month saw the debut of Le Whif, the brainchild of David Edwards, a professor of biomedical engineering at Harvard. You put a thumb-sized cylinder in your mouth, draw a breath, and enjoy a burst of aerosolized espresso—the caffeine equivalent of a sip. It takes just ten puffs to empty the cylinder, so you're more likely to use it as a caffeine supplement—“part of the coffee life,” as Edwards puts

it—than turn it into your new morning ritual. Still, since it dissolves on your tongue and is absorbed directly in the mouth, Le Whif's caffeine reaches your bloodstream faster than liquid coffee. Spazzstick, according to James Coughlin, a food toxicologist, is similarly effective, because lips have a particularly delicate skin barrier.

And what of mainlining pure, unadulterated coffee? On a recent morning at a café in Brooklyn, Daniel Humphries, a 32-year-old coffee consultant, conducted a blind taste test—of whole roasted beans. There was the Illy Dark Roast (“almost like dirt”), the Starbucks Ethiopian blend (no “popping acidity”), and the pre-ground Dunkin' Donuts Dark Roast (“ashy ... faded”). The winner was a Peruvian single origin from “third wave” roaster Counter Culture. “Smells fantastic,” Humphries said, with notes of “lemon” and “toast with honey” and a “juicy flavor.”

In America, bean eating is limited to a few eccentrics who show up in Internet forums with an occasional confession (“I love eating coffee beans, especially when I'm pissed off”). The grit is unpleasant; more important, perhaps, a whole bean delivers its energy payload slowly, Coughlin says, like an extended-release pill. “It's gonna take a while for the acidic conditions of the stomach to degrade the shards and extract out the caffeine.” **B** — Benjamin Wallace