

= The List (The Office) =

" The List " is the eighth season premiere of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's 153rd episode overall . The episode originally aired on NBC in the United States on September 22 , 2011 . It was written and directed by executive producer B. J. Novak .

The series ? presented as if it were a real documentary ? depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania , branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In the episode , new CEO Robert California (James Spader) writes a mysterious list that has a line down the middle and every member of the office on either one side or the other . The office members frantically try to figure out what it means , causing a crisis for manager Andy Bernard .

" The List " was the first episode of The Office to feature James Spader 's Robert California in a starring role . The episode received moderately positive reviews with many commenting that it proved the series could survive without Carell . According to Nielsen Media Research , " The List " drew an estimated 7 @. @ 63 million viewers and received a 3 @. @ 9 rating / 10 % share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , making it , at the time , the lowest @- @ rated season premiere since the first @- @ season premiere .

= = Plot = =

Jim explains to the camera that Robert California (James Spader) was appointed Regional Manager of the Scranton Branch , but on his first day traveled to Florida and convinced Jo Bennett to give him her position as CEO of Dunder Mifflin @- @ Sabre . Robert then appointed Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) as Scranton Regional Manager in his place . Andy makes it his goal for the office to receive a half day off on the Friday before the Columbus Day weekend .

Robert accidentally leaves his personal notebook at Erin Hannon 's (Ellie Kemper) desk , and she notices it contains a list of Scranton 's employees on two columns with a line down the middle . Concerned about what the list means , the employees pressure Andy to ask Robert about it . Robert is offended by Andy 's inquiry , assuming that he snooped through his notebook . While brushing the list off as " doodles , " he conspicuously moves Andy 's name from the left column to the right . Later that day , Robert invites the employees on the left column to lunch : Jim (John Krasinski) , Dwight (Rainn Wilson) , Angela (Angela Kinsey) , Kevin (Brian Baumgartner) , Phyllis (Phyllis Smith) , Toby (Paul Lieberstein) and Oscar (Oscar Nunez) . After they leave , the " right @- @ siders " try to console themselves with a pizza party , but remain despondent about their exclusion .

During lunch , the " left @- @ siders " pester Robert about the list . Slightly intoxicated , Robert informs them that the left @- @ siders are " winners " while the right side are " losers " . Jim is astonished , but the others become cocky . Kevin sends a mass text to the right @- @ siders , mocking them as " losers " , and later squirts Meredith with a water pistol . Andy does not like this and confronts Robert with a demand to alter the list . Robert refuses , and then speaks to everyone by admitting to calling certain members of the office losers , but also reprimanding them for fixating so much on someone else 's opinion of them , saying he will be working with them a long time and that his opinions on certain people may very well change , finishing with " Winners , prove me right ; losers , prove me wrong " . Andy , unsatisfied , lists off the qualities the right @- @ siders have , stating that Stanley (Leslie David Baker) may be a grump , but has the best sales record in the office (something Robert admits to being unaware of) ; Meredith (Kate Flannery) is persistent and does not know what the word " no " means ; and Pam (Jenna Fischer) is " easily the most creative and kind person [he has] ever worked with " . Andy concedes to Robert that putting Gabe (Zach Woods) in the losers ' column was " astute " . He then demands the Columbus half day and exits , prompting a respecting smile from Robert . Though the office annually gets the half day in any case , they happily wish him good evening as they depart , and Andy looks very pleased with his work as the boss .

Pam is pregnant with her and Jim 's second child (revealed to be a boy) and is emotional , easily brought to tears throughout the day . Angela is also pregnant , having married the state senator Robert Lipton over the summer , and says that she 's " Little Preg " to Pam 's " Big Preg " . When

Jim picks up his things to leave for the day , he " accidentally " drops a piece of paper . Pam picks it up and sees Jim 's personal winners and losers list : Pam , Cece and their new baby are on the left , and the words " everything else " is written on the right . Pam tearfully vows to frame it .

= = Production = =

The episode was written and directed by executive producer B. J. Novak , who also portrays Ryan Howard in the series . It is Novak 's fourteenth writing credit and third directing credit for the series . Before this episode , series star Steve Carell left the series and the following episodes featured several different managers . In the season finale , several guest actors appeared in the episode including James Spader and it was left up in the air on who would become the manager . On June 27 , 2011 , co @-@ creator and executive producer Ricky Gervais announced Spader was to join the cast on a permanent basis . This marks his second appearance of James Spader , having appeared in the previous episode , the seventh season finale . He will appear in at least 15 episodes and will serve as a replacement for Jo Bennett as CEO of Sabre , portrayed by Kathy Bates , who left the series due to her commitment for the NBC drama series , Harry 's Law .

The episode revealed who the new office manager would be after lead actor Steve Carell , who portrayed Michael Scott . Executive Producer Paul Lieberstein had told Ed Helms his character , Andy , would be the manager during lunch in June . The writers had gone through the main contenders for the job , Darryl , Dwight and Andy , with Andy being the best choice . The episode also confirmed that Pam is pregnant with her second child , which corresponds to Jenna Fischer 's real @-@ life pregnancy . The episode also started filming on July 25 , 2011 . The Season Eight DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include Ryan explaining where trends comes from and Gabe explaining why he 's back in a talking head , Andy attempting to calm everybody down while they try to figure out what the list means , and more scenes with the winner 's lunch and the loser 's pizza party .

= = Cultural references = =

The cold open features multiple workers " planking " , an activity consisting of lying face down in an unusual or incongruous location . This is the third season premiere to include an internet trend in the cold open in a row . The first was in Gossip where Michael , Dwight and Andy try to film a video of them attempting parkour . The second was in Nepotism where the office make a lip dub video of the song " Nobody but Me " . Throughout the episode , Pam is seen crying at a commercial for The Travelers Companies featuring a dog trying to keep his dog bone safe .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast on September 22 , 2011 , " The List " was viewed by an estimated 7 @.@ 63 million viewers and received a 3 @.@ 9 rating / 10 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 3 @.@ 9 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 10 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . This marked an 11 percent fall in the demographic from the seventh @-@ season premiere , " Nepotism " , making it the lowest @-@ rated season premiere . It was also the last episode of The Office to be viewed by more than 7 million viewers . The episode ranked second in its timeslot beating Person of Interest which received a 3 @.@ 1 rating / 8 % share in the 18 ? 49 demographic and The Secret Circle which received a 0 @.@ 9 rating / 2 % share , but was defeated by The X Factor which received a 4 @.@ 4 rating / 11 % share and tied with Grey 's Anatomy which received a 3 @.@ 9 rating / 10 % share . " The List " was the twenty @-@ second most @-@ watched show for the week of broadcast among adults aged 18 ? 49 .

== Reviews ==

" The List " received moderately positive reviews . Myles McNutt of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B " and wrote that the entry " was about on par with what the show was delivering last season . " He was slightly critical of the episode 's tone , noting that it " eschew [ed] subtlety " and , instead , yielded , " a thesis statement for the transitional season to come " . HitFix reviewer Alan Sepinwall complimented the final scene featuring Andy confronting Robert calling it " sweet and felt genuine , in the way that made the show 's early days feel special . " Despite this , he said the " story fell a little flat . "

Linda Holmes of NPR praised the choice of adding James Spader , making Andy the manager , and praised the writers for differentiating Andy as manager from Michael . IGN writer Cindy White praised the episode for being an " ensemble affair " writing that " And when you 've got an ensemble this strong , that 's a smart way to go " . She concluded that " In context with the rest of NBC 's hilarious Thursday @-@ night lineup [...] The Office can 't help but seem a little long in the tooth . But you can always rely on it for at least a few laugh @-@ out @-@ loud moments [...] I 'm not ready to call time of death on this show just yet . She ultimately gave the episode an 8 @. @ 0 / 10 . TV Guide writers Joyce Eng and Kate Stanhope called the promotion of Andy as manager the third best television moment of the week . James Poniewozik of Time gave the episode a positive review commenting that " it at least showed that a season 8 Office is capable of delivering the funny as well as the character grace notes " .