

ADMINADVANTAGE

The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

Vol. 17
May 2010

A close-up portrait of Stacy Leitner, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair and blue eyes, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark blazer over a white collared shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing warm indoor lighting and hints of architectural details.

Stacy Leitner
taking her career
to the next level

FEATURES:

Update Your Social Networking Sites
How to Organize Someone Else
How to Write a Winning Cover Letter

A publication of
Deskdemon.com
North American edition

Vonage™ **FREE UNLIMITED** Calls Around the World

\$14.99
Per Month

For the first 6 months, then only \$25.99/mo with 1 year agreement. Plus taxes and fees.†

Call the U.S. and more than 60 countries* NOW FOR ONLY \$14.99/mo for the first 6 months, then only \$25.99/mo †

WHEN YOU ADD IT ALL UP, NOTHING ELSE STACKS UP!

- Unlimited local and long distance.
- FREE calls to more than 60 countries.*
- Consistently clear call and sound quality.
- Great features like readable voicemail and simulring.

EASY TO SWITCH, EASY TO SAVE

- Keep your existing phone number^.
- Vonage® works with your existing home phone and high-speed Internet connection.
- 25 Premium Features at no extra cost.
- FREE activation.

**30 Day
Money-Back
Guarantee<**

Call: 1.888.900.5962

† With one-year agreement. Limited time offer; new lines only. Rates exclude surcharges, fees and taxes. High-speed Internet required. *In-plan international calling may exclude certain call types such as calls to cell phones depending on the destination. Out of plan calls are charged at our low per minute rates. Offer valid in the US only. See Terms of Service for details. < For Guarantee details see Vonage.com. ^ Where available. The number transfer process may take up to 10 business days from the time you confirm your transfer request. Vonage 911 service operates differently than traditional 911. See www.vonage.com/911 for details. TTY, Alarms and other systems may not be compatible. ©2010 Vonage.

Too many business owners put off doing

their Morning meeting. Check voicemail.

Get coffee. Email. Sales call. Make copies.

Organize planner. Interview prospect.

Email. Afternoon meeting disaster plan.

Whether natural or man-made, at least one in four businesses affected by a disaster never reopen. Though emergencies are unpredictable, when you have a plan in place you can adapt, recover and stay in control.

It's never too late to protect your business until it is.

Make a plan.



READY.GOV

Ready Business

ADMINADVANTAGE

US & NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
303 Twin Dolphin Drive, 6th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94065 - usa
Tel.800.406.1348 Fax.888.215.1852

EDITORIAL TEAM

Susan Silva
Managing Editor
susan@deskdemo.com

PRODUCTION & DESIGN

Robert Olszewski
Graphic Designer
robert@deskdemo.com

Kulasekaram Vimalarasa (Raj)
Web Developer
raj@deskdemo.com

Suresh Karuppannan
Website Designer
suresh@deskdemo.com

ADVERTISING

Susan Silva
Advertising & Sales US
susan@deskdemo.com

Jane Olsen
Director Advertising & Sales UK
jane@deskdemo.com

BUSINESS STAFF & PR

Mek Rahmani
Founder, CEO & Publisher
mek@deskdemo.com

CONTENTS
of May '10

20 Stacy Leitner taking her career
to the next level

8 The Importance of Water in Weight Loss

12 Top Five Reasons You Need To Update
Your Social Networking Sites

16 How to Organize Someone Else

26 How to Write a Winning Cover Letter

31 Shorthand - A Lost Art or a Gem
in your Professional Toolbox?



DRIVE YOUR **career** FORWARD
in the **new DECADE**

17TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE September 21 - 24, 2010

red rock
CASINO • RESORT • SPA
Las Vegas



Earn 1.5 CEUs



**OFFICE
DYNAMICS**

19 Years of Administrative Excellence Training

For Details
Visit OfficeDynamics.com
1-800-782-7139

Earn Your WCA Designation

- ◆ NEW - Earn Your WCA Designation in 2 Parts
- ◆ VIP Experience at Red Rock Country Club
- ◆ Personal Coaching From Joan Burge
- ◆ 3.0 CEUs Awarded
- ◆ 20 Attendees Per Class

SPRING DATES: MARCH 10-12 & MAY 5-7 2010



NEWS

OFFICEMAX UNVEILS INNOVATIVE BINDER SERIES FROM [IN]PLACE®

OfficeMax® a leader in office products and services, is unveiling the next generation of binders with the introduction of the Innovative Binder Series under the [IN]PLACE® brand. The collection features a series of dynamic, flexible products that work inherently together to offer customers an enhanced system for organizing, transporting and storing documents. The [IN]PLACE Innovative Binder Series includes its signature Poly Binder featuring a modern design with security straps, storage pockets and an easy-load spine, which is enhanced by the collection's accessories ranging from snap-close Document Envelopes to 3-pocket Binder Pouches to Snap-In Dividers with reusable tabs.

The [IN]PLACE Innovative Binder Series was designed based on months of consumer research, which examined how customers were currently using binders — Planning,



Project, Presentation and Reference — and identified key opportunities for improvement in Efficiency, Findability, Flexibility, Portability and Image. The resulting findings led to the development of a new binder solution for today's modern consumer. The Innovative Binder Series is available exclusively at OfficeMax stores nationwide.

The Importance of Water in Weight Loss

by Ed Burgess

Did you know that not drinking enough water might be why you're on that dreaded weight loss plateau even though you're maintaining your diet? Research suggests that a lot of Americans unknowingly suffer from mild, chronic dehydration, and that might be you they're talking about! I hope you read this article because it explains and makes sense the importance of water and the surprise impact to dieters. ►►

Water is an essential ingredient for your weight loss. Water is required for a whole range of the body's biochemical processes, so let's look at what water does specially for dieters:

Your body needs to metabolize stored fat into energy - so much so, that your body's metabolism can be slowed by even mild levels of dehydration. And the slower your metabolism, the slower your weight loss (and you become tired), until eventually your weight loss just grinds to a halt! You now have just hit the dreaded diet plateau.

Water is a natural appetite suppressant. What good news! In the hypothalamus, a region in your brain that controls appetites and cravings, the control centers for hunger and thirst are situated next to each other, and there tends to be some overlap. This has both advantages and disadvantages for the dieter. On the flip side, it means that chronic mild dehydration can confuse these mechanisms, leading to feelings of hunger, rather than thirst. But on a positive note, it means you can use water to reduce your appetite. For example, in one University of Washington study, drinking a glass of water reduced nighttime hunger cravings for most of the dieters studied. I have also found this to be true.

Water is an essential to the processes that enables your muscles to contract. So water helps maintain muscle tone. Better muscle tone means a better looking body, and isn't that what dieting and weight loss is about?

There's help for that sagging skin. Water also helps

to prevent the sagging skin that often follows weight loss - water plumps the skin cells, giving the skin a younger and healthier look.

Water helps rid the body of waste. During weight loss, the body has a lots of waste to get rid of because of all that fat. So enough water is essential to your health while dieting.

Water also helps with constipation. When the body gets too little water, it siphons what it needs from within, particularly from the colon. This leads to constipation. But normal bowel function almost always returns with adequate water intake.

Generally speaking, mild dehydration can cause a number of health problems, in addition to your diet plateau. The symptoms of mild dehydration can include:

Headaches; that light headed feeling as dehydration interferes with normal body processes, including waste disposal.

Fatigue, as the body's metabolism is slowed Mild dehydration is usually the most common cause of daytime fatigue.

Hunger; cravings due to weakening of the thirst mechanism

Fluid retention as your body tries to hold on to the water it already has

Constipation, as the body works to conserve its internal water sources

Not a pretty picture but once you get your water in balance, you reach the "breakthrough point", a concept pioneered by Dr. Peter Lindner, a California obesity expert. He says, "Once you've

LIFESTYLE

reached the breakthrough point, fluid retention eases, the liver and endocrine system start to function more effectively, you will start to regain your natural thirst and your hunger cravings will be significantly reduced. And so the end result of reaching and sustaining the breakthrough point in your water balance is that your body is able to metabolize fat more effectively.”

How much water should you drink daily to be healthy? First, a couple of basic principles:

- 1. The simplest way to tell if you are drinking enough water is check the color of your urine: It should be clear or a very pale yellow in color. (but note that some supplements and medications may also affect your urine color).
- 3. Get in to the habit of drinking regular and adequate amounts of water. Never wait to drink until you’re thirsty, because if you’re feeling thirsty, dehydration has already set in!


Having said that, an adequate water intake for a sedentary but normal-weight adult during cool weather, is generally recognized as 8 x 8 oz glasses. You will need more water in hot weather, when you lose more water through sweat. You also need to drink more water when you exercise. Athletes attempt to enhance their performance by maintaining an optimal fluid balance while exercising, estimated to require 6 to 12 oz of fluid at 15 to 20 minute intervals. Even if you’re not concerned about your athletic performance, you should consume a similar amount of water when

exercising, in order to maintain adequate hydration.

Here’s another important thing to remember; if you’re overweight, you’ll need an extra glass of water for each 25 pounds overweight, because the extra weight creates extra metabolic demand.

How can you drink so much water? Weight loss experts secrets say drink 3 glasses of water with every meal. That’s 3 glasses with breakfast, 3 with lunch, and 3 with dinner. Plus, of course, additional regular water between meals when you’re exercising or when it’s hot. That sure makes it doable, doesn’t it?

So if you’re dieting, stalled on a weight loss plateau, or suffering some of the classic symptoms of dehydration, do, above everything else, be sure that you have an adequate water intake. It could be the missing ingredient in your diet regime and as easy to fix as drinking 3 glasses of water with each meal.

Remember that water is a natural appetite suppressant. Use it to your advantage. If you’re out shopping, take a bottle of water with you. If you feel like a late night snack, either go to bed or drink a glass of water. If you want a change, add a little bit of lemon juice into a glass of water. I find, instantly, my desire to eat is gone. Give it a try. 

To read about pimples on head and pimples on scalp, visit the Pimple Marks site.

LOOKING BEAUTIFUL
is easy with Mineral Elements™

TRY IT TODAY
pay just \$7.32 s&h

9-PIECE KIT
\$175
VALUE



Get your 9-piece introductory kit to try today — just call or visit us online.
RiskFreeMakeup.com/47 • 1-877-716-7547

Mineral Make-up
Introductory Kit
Includes:

- 2 Mineral Foundations (SPF 24)
- Mineral Finishing Powder
- Mineral Warmth
- 3 Application Brushes
- Designer Cosmetic Bag
- Designer Brush Pouch



http://www.

Top Five Reasons You Need To Update Your Social Networking Sites

by Marie Herman

When is the last time you updated your social networking sites - specifically the professional development side like LinkedIn; not your latest Mafia Wars / Farmville updates on Facebook. How often do you publish updates on yourself and what is going on with your career? There are a number of reasons why it's a wise career development strategy to start right now. ►►

1. If you are not currently doing a job search, you will someday.

It's highly likely that at some point during your 45 years in the working world you will be between jobs, regardless of the reason. When is the last time you touched base with your references? Do you wait until you are looking for a job to re-establish contact? Do they have any idea what skills or certifications you have added since you last saw or worked with them? They would if they were in your online network and you were providing regular updates.

If you heard about a job loss of two people that you have known for ten years, who would you rather help? The one you worked with for two years, ten years ago, who hasn't talked to you since that time or in any way contacted you other than now with a request to be a reference or the person who is on your LinkedIn list, who has notified you regularly of updates in their career (such as a new certification in Microsoft Office, holding an office in their professional association, etc.) and who has posted comments on your updates? Who would you feel "better" about recommending? Who would come to mind first if you heard about a new job posting that either individual would be qualified for? Most likely, the person who has kept in touch with you over the years and who has kept you updated on all the new skills they have added to their repertoire.

2. Online networks are really about the long term relationships that you are building.

Each time you post a small update, people are learning more about you. They are not only adding more knowledge of you to their long term memory banks, but they are also getting regular reminders that you exist! Long term relationships need nurturing or they wither away. Another advantage of the regular updates is that you will also see your network's updates and can comment on and support them as well!

3. Acquaintances are feeling more and more like they "know" you even if they actually might not.

Have you ever felt like you have gotten to be friends with someone strictly from online communication? If you are involved in forums, it's quite common to start to develop a feeling of family when people share their day to day experiences and let others get a glimpse into their lives. You can get a strong sense of their personality, their likes and dislikes, and their opinions.

4. It increases the chance of success of any new ventures – whatever they may be.

Because you are announcing your goals and efforts publicly, there is accountability for actually accomplishing what you say you will do. Let's say you lose your job or decide to start a new business (or both!). If you tell your network, chances are someone may know someone



who can help you. If you tell no one, who is out there looking on your behalf? Posting regular updates also makes others feel like they are accompanying you along the journey and helps them to feel vested in your success.

5. Never having any updates to share should be a big red flag to you about your professional development.

Is there really NOTHING that you have to share about your professional life? You literally can't come up with even a once or twice a month update?

Examples could include:

- Attending a professional association meeting
- Sharing something you learned at that meeting
- Running for office in your chapter
- Going to a company training event

- Studying/Registering for a certification test
- Passing a certification test
- New knowledge you have gained about software features
- Writing an article for your company or association newsletter
- Preparing for your performance review
- Planning a meeting
- Reading articles of a professional nature
- Recommending a career related book you have recently read
- Presenting a lunch and learn program to your coworkers
- Celebrating the success of a meeting you planned for work
- Being nominated for or receiving an award
- Listing a goal you have set for yourself to achieve in a certain amount of time
- Announcing your excitement about an upcoming event that you are planning or participating in or attending

If it truly is the case that you have nothing to share on a regular basis, what are you saying about the priority you place on your career? It's one thing if you have made a conscious choice to focus on other priorities at this time, but it's something else entirely if you've simply not been paying attention to your career for no particular reason. Sometimes the real world intrudes on the best laid plans, but at some point in time, if your career is actually important to you, you need to carve out the time to keep your skills up to date and your network in touch.


As an example of how social networking increases your chances of success in a new business venture, Sandy Plarske of Elite Administrative Services (<http://www.eliteadminforyou.com/>) shares her experience with social networking. She posted a comment about a book she was reading called The Commonsense Virtual Assistant on her LinkedIn profile. One of the contacts in her network got in touch to ask if she was a Virtual Assistant. That began a series of conversations that eventually led to the contact retaining Sandy. As Sandy says, "I can't stress enough the importance of effective networking. Stay in contact with others, share successes, ask for help or just keep in touch. You never know when one of your conversations will result in future opportunities."

You do need to be wise in what you are publishing. Posting a note that you are sitting at your desk nursing a hangover from the wild

party last night is NOT the kind of update being encouraged. Nobody likes to read constant whining and complaining. Badmouthing your current (or past) employer is always a poor choice as well. Be cautious about revealing too much information from an identity theft/privacy perspective as well (but that's a general caution any time you are posting on the internet).

You want to post positive (or possibly neutral/factual) updates that will help others to think positively of you, support you, and want to continue seeing what is going on with your life. You also want to post things that future employers will want to see or know about (again, think long term, such as that future job search that you might be facing).

If necessary, put a recurring once a week or twice a month reminder on your calendar to post updates on your social networking site of choice.

Don't be the weakest link in your network! Put yourself out there and get posting! 

Marie Herman CIWD, ATM-B operates a successful business, MRH Enterprises (www.mrhenterprises.com), whose services include online tutoring and Microsoft Office certification study groups, writing articles, and conducting workshops and other speaking engagements. She can be reached at info@mrhenterprises.com.

How to Organize Someone Else

By DeskDemon

While getting yourself organized is hard enough, getting someone else organized can be murder. By the end of the process, you may want to literally murder both yourself and the “organize.” However, in order to run an office effectively, you will have to not only organize yourself to insure that you know where and when you are supposed to be – and, in many cases, where and when your supervisor is supposed to be as well – but also establish a system that will enable you and the people who work with you to get information about daily goings on in the office so that they can make the most of their time at work. ►►

Particularly if you are an onsite administrative assistant or a virtual assistant, your job will hinge on your ability to organize the disorganized. In fact, most employers hire assistants to be organized for them, so beware! Fortunately, there are some simple things that you can do to make your work easier when it comes to organizing other people. Once you get started, the entire office will find that life and work are easier when they work within your system, and they will start to organize themselves.

First of all, reach an agreement with the people that you work with and that you have been hired to organize. For example, if your role in the office is to schedule meetings, run conferences and generally make the office run smoothly, then make sure that this is how your employer perceives your position as well. Making sure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to your organizational efforts will make it easier for you to establish rules and guidelines to help with organization. For example, while rearranging the office supply room may be necessary, if no one views this as part of your responsibility, you may run into some disgruntlement if you change the way everything is set up and people cannot find things. They may undo your work, complain about it or even ignore other aspects of your organizational efforts because they do not feel that you are doing the things specific to your job. Setting out clear requirements for organization and agreeing on them with your supervisor ahead of time will help you get a

WORKSMART




positive, productive response from the rest of your team.

Secondly, make sure that information is publicly available. If part of your job is to keep everyone on track and in the places that they are supposed to be, then it may be tempting to “hoard” that information so that people have to ask you where to go and when to be there. However, this usually leads to resentment since it makes it harder to people to plan their days (even if it looks to you as if there is very little planning involved!) While you need to be aware of where the people that you are in charge of organizing are supposed to be, you also need to take proactive steps to make that information available to those individuals. You may want to send out a morning email detailing the events of the day in a timeline, or possibly even email everyone last-thing before you leave the day before. If you are a personal assistant or only organizing one

or two people on-site, then you might print out a schedule of the day and place it on their desk before they arrive. This scheduling, along with timely reminders throughout the day if necessary, will help them feel like they are in control even though they are relying on you, and it will make it less likely that you will have to chase them down to make sure they are in the right place at the right time.

Stick to your own rules. Probably one of the most important things that you can do when organizing someone else is to stick to your own rules. Do not allow yourself to run behind or let deadlines or meetings slide into rescheduling. You will not be able to help others manage their time effectively if you are unable to manage your own. This may mean that you need to establish an agenda for yourself every morning or evening as well, or it might require you to arrive at the office a little ahead of schedule – and a little ahead of the pack – in order to insure that by the time the rest of the people whose schedules you are in charge of arrive, you are ready to help them face the day.

Organizing yourself will actually happen naturally as you start to organize someone else because it is very difficult to stay on top of someone else’s schedule if you cannot keep track of your own. Just be sure to be patient and timely with your reminders and remember that organization is a process and may not happen automatically overnight. 

Eat Great, Lose Weight!



Victoria lost 75 lbs.*

“I lost the weight and got my life back!”

BEFORE

eDiets®
fresh
prepared
meal delivery

Rated #1 best-tasting
by epicurious.com

“Best bang for your buck!”
- Redbook

- ✓ **FREE** online tools to boost results
- ✓ **FREE** unlimited expert support
- ✓ **FREE** week of delicious meals

Call 1-888-799-7063
and get a FREE WEEK
of meals plus a
BONUS \$25 GIFT!

eDiets®



Jennifer lost 20 lbs.*

BEFORE

Justin lost 65 lbs.*

BEFORE

Connie lost 136 lbs.*

BEFORE

*Victoria lost 75lbs. in 18 mos. using eDiets Glycemic Impact & Meal Delivery Plans. Connie lost 136lbs. in 17 months following the Heart Smart Plan. Jennifer lost 20lbs. in 8 wks. on the Meal Delivery Plan. Justin lost 65lbs. in 21 mos. on the Glycemic Impact Plan. Generally expected weight loss for active eDiets members is 2lbs/wk during the first 5 weeks of the program. Promotional discounts were received.

Your 8th week of meals is free after the purchase of 7 weeks of meals. See complete terms and conditions at www.ediets.com.

© 2009 eDiets.com, Inc. All rights reserved. epicurious is a trademark of Conde Nast Digital. Redbook is a trademark of Hearst Communication, Inc.

INTERVIEW

Stacy Leitner taking her career to the next level

by DeskDemon.com

This month we talk to Stacy Leitner. Stacy shares her story about teaching, finishing her Masters, even creating an IAAP chapter all while working full time!

Stacy is truly an inspiration. ►►

INTERVIEW

Can you tell us a bit about your background?

I was born and raised in Chico, CA, where there were two unspoken rules in my family—1) you will play the piano (made mom happy) and 2) you will play sports (made dad happy). Fortunately for me, I excelled in both playing the piano and sports. While participating in these activities, I learned the value of practice, dedication, and working in teams. In high school, I knew that both the piano and sports were fun recreational activities but nothing I wanted to pursue professionally. I soon thought about what I did enjoy and came to the conclusion that I really enjoyed my high school business courses. I knew that I wanted to work in a high-level administrative support position supporting an executive—a CEO.

Going to college was an easy decision for me because I knew I wanted to be smart and I wanted good skills. Upon graduating from high school, I attended colleges in California, Idaho, and Utah, where I completed two associate degrees, a bachelor's degree in business, and most recently a master's degree in education.

In 2007, I was recognized as "Teacher of the Year" at the Rancho Cordova Heald College campus. In 2008, I was recognized as a runner-up for the Administrative Professional Excellence Award sponsored by Office Team.

In 2009, I was recognized as "Distinguished Rancho Cordova Educator" by the Cordova Community Council, a local community organization.

Who do you work for and what do you do in your current job?

I have worked dual professions for over 11 years. I am both an administrative professional and an educator.

Currently, I work as an Executive Assistant to the City Manager for the City of Rancho Cordova where I perform a variety of sensitive, confidential, analytical, and responsible administrative and secretarial support work. I serve not only as an executive assistant, but I am also a working professional that is on the City's management team. Managing the City Manager's time and schedule is one of my priorities. More importantly, I assist the City Manager to manage the organization so that he can meet the goals and expectations of his bosses, the staff, and the citizens. I must coordinate a multitude of administrative activities, which requires frequent contact with the Mayor and City Council, executives, the public, other agencies, and government officials. I use effective diplomacy, public relations, and liaison skills in interacting with those I serve and work alongside. I also supervise a team of administrative professionals and interns.

INTERVIEW

I am also a faculty member at Heald College in Rancho Cordova, where I teach business and computer related courses. Heald College is a regionally accredited, career college that has been preparing students for rewarding careers in Healthcare, Business, Legal and Technology for over 145 years. There are currently 12 campuses across the Western United States.

You teach administrative skills at night can you tell us about that?

It has been a privilege to teach administrative skills for three colleges. Currently, I am a member of the Heald College faculty in Rancho Cordova, California, where I teach business classes in the evenings. I have been employed by Heald College since May 1999. I teach a variety of courses such as: Professional Career Development, different Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher), Portfolio, Keyboarding, and Integrated Office Projects. It is rewarding to bring what I do as an administrative professional and incorporate this knowledge into the classroom. The students are the beneficiary of my current work experience and business contacts.

Over the course of the last few years, I have been recognized by the leaders and students of the Rancho Cordova Heald College campus and a local community organization for my role as a teacher and mentor.

Can you tell us what motivated you teach?

My mom Susan Leitner helped motivate me to explore the teaching profession. My mom taught at Butte College in Oroville, California, for 35+ years and loved teaching. I grew up visiting a college campus regularly and was surrounded by college faculty who became extended family. As a teenager, I was always asking my mom if I could help organize/alphabetize student papers, grade multiple choice exams, and help with typing projects.

Secondly, I've had positive classroom experiences at all levels of my education. My teachers have been wonderful influences in my life. I teach because I enjoy the subjects that I am teaching, but most importantly, I care for each and every student in my classroom. I want students to be successful in the classroom. Success in the classroom will transfer to success in the workplace, confidence and self-esteem, and a greater earning potential

How do you feel when your students do well from your teachings?

I am thrilled when students are successful! It is so incredible to listen to stories of students as they transfer what they have learned in a classroom environment into the workplace. In 2004, I helped to initiate a partnership between the City of Rancho Cordova and Heald College by starting an internship program for



the students. This offered students at Heald College an opportunity to gain real-world work experience. This initial partnership blossomed into additional internship programs with other schools. Some of these internships have turned into temporary or permanent positions and have been stepping stones for many individuals.

INTERVIEW

On top of all that you recently got your degree, can you tell us about that?

In May 2010, I finished a Masters Degree in Education with an emphasis in Educational Technology from Boise State University. With two full-time jobs, this was not an easy undertaking. After completing all the required coursework, my final graduate project focused on the need for administrative professionals to become technology savvy and to learn and utilize Web 2.0 technologies.

Ongoing education is important to me as it helps me to keep my skills current and it helps me to be more indispensable to my employer. I actively seek information through a variety of sources and have participated in a multitude of learning experiences. I recently obtained my Certification Professional Secretary (CPS) designation offered through the International Association of Administrative Professionals and I am studying to complete the rest of my Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) 2007 certifications.

Tell us more about this graduate project.

As companies today compete and win in a worldwide economy, business and governments need well-educated and well-trained workers. Our businesses and governments will be strengthened having a workforce of proactive, highly-skilled, and

INTERVIEW



technology savvy administrative support staff to partner with business leaders in today's global economy.

Office professionals at every level have new opportunities to help business compete and those who can access information through technology will become more indispensable to their employers. Technology savvy administrative professionals will be able to provide a deeper level of support, which will help businesses and governments succeed. I strongly feel that office professionals are never done learning because our industry is always changing. The project I created was an online course for administrative professionals to learn and to utilize Web 2.0

technologies. Those technologies included: Blogs and RSS Feeds, Social Bookmarking, Social Networking, and GoogleDocs.

What advice do you have for other administrative professionals?

Keep your skills current, read, and get involved in your profession! Businesses need a greater number of well-educated, well-trained, workers skilled in the highest form of technology. Administrative professionals in our 21st century work environment are asked to master many skills far beyond keyboarding, grammar expertise, telephone skills, time

INTERVIEW

management, and organization. It is essential for today's administrative professional to accept and adapt to change and learn new computer technologies.

I am an avid reader of non-fiction and professional development books. I would encourage every administrative professional to read more about their profession, more about their industry, and to read what their boss is reading. There are many professional organizations for administrative professionals and I would encourage administrative professionals to join them all as they provide tremendous resources.

What are your biggest challenges?


Working for the City is not like working for a business. Things happen in the community 24/7; the City Manager has to respond, and often times that requires my assistance. Our priorities change constantly. And then we must reprioritize those priorities. What you think is important one day might not be critical the next.

In April 2009, I helped to found the Rancho Cordova Chapter of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) with a few of my colleagues.



This was a huge undertaking. You can learn more about our chapter at www.ranchocordovaiaap.org.

What do you like best about your job?

I enjoy the diversity; no two days are ever the same. There is always something new, and because I am involved in so much the days fly by. I interact with a lot of great people, and I work for two of the greatest people I've ever met—City Manager Ted Gaebler and Campus President Ada Gerard. I've never worked so hard, but I'm having a lot of fun! 

How to Write a Winning Cover Letter

by Robert Hosking

Planning to skip the cover letter because you're submitting your resume online or through e-mail? You may want to rethink those plans. According to an OfficeTeam survey, 86 percent of executives said cover letters are valuable when evaluating candidates. These documents serve as the hiring manager's introduction to you since they're often read before resumes, and they're also your first opportunity to make a positive impression. ►►

While your resume provides an overview of your professional background, a well-written cover letter allows you to explain in depth how your unique skills and qualifications could benefit the organization. These documents can be especially helpful for entry-level workers or individuals seeking a career change because they draw attention to relevant experience or transferable skills that make you the best fit for the role.

When applying to positions through online job boards or employer websites, there is usually an option to provide a cover letter with your resume. If submitting your application via e-mail, you'll want to share this document as the body of the message. Following are seven tips for creating an effective cover letter:

1. Avoid a generic salutation.

Whenever possible, address the letter to a particular individual, instead of starting your note with "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam." If a job posting doesn't mention whom to contact, be proactive and call the company to ask for the hiring manager's name (as well as the correct spelling), title and gender if it's not obvious. By doing so, your note will land in the right hands, and you'll score points for demonstrating initiative and resourcefulness.

2. Keep it short and sweet.

Busy managers with piles of applications on

their desks to review simply won't continue reading verbose and unfocused documents. The most effective cover letters are comprehensive, clear, concise and compelling. In general, it's best to limit the document to two or three short paragraphs. Explain why the job interests you and what qualities you can bring to the position. Also, while it's acceptable to show some personality, keep the spotlight on your career and avoid sharing irrelevant details about your personal life. Your interest in knitting, for example, shouldn't be mentioned unless you are, in fact, applying to a firm that manufactures yarn.

3. Customize the content.

Employers have unique needs and corporate cultures, which is why it's crucial that you learn as much as you can about a company so you can customize your letter to the specific opportunity. Make sure you link your skills, work history and biggest professional accomplishments to the requirements of the open position. Base your approach on the information revealed in the job posting as well as insights from the company's website and other sources. For example, if you are applying for a role that involves supervising a small team of administrative assistants, highlight your interpersonal skills and previous experience overseeing others. Expand upon one or two key points from your resume – perhaps how you kept your team motivated during a time of change – to better key in on the potential employer's needs.



4. Showcase your top attributes.

Even if you meet all of the requirements and feel that you're the perfect candidate for the job, understand that there's a fine line between confidence and arrogance. Avoid self-praise in your cover letter and instead

use specific examples of how your work has benefited previous employers. Saying you are the "best executive assistant west of the Mississippi" is less effective than explaining how your PowerPoint skills allowed the executive you supported to keep the presentation design process in-house, saving both time and money.

5. Address any concerns.

Offer a brief explanation for any potential issues that might concern a hiring manager, such as a gap in employment. You might, for instance, write a short sentence discussing why you were out of work but quickly follow up with information about how you've kept your skills up-to-date. For example, did you attend any industry seminars or enroll in professional development courses to expand your knowledge in a particular area? Have you taken on temporary assignments or volunteer work? Explaining how you've remained productive and connected to your field shows commitment and motivation – both of which are appealing attributes that can allay concerns about a resume gap.


6. Don't make demands.

Never ask for a specific salary or make other work-related requests (e.g., "I prefer working from home every Friday.") in a cover letter. The purpose of the document is to explain what you can do for

the company, not vice versa. Wait until you have secured a meeting and become better acquainted with the hiring manager to mention these topics.

7. Check for errors.

Submitting a document with grammatical mistakes or typos is a sure way to take yourself out of the running for a job. After proofreading your cover letter, ask a trusted friend or family member to review it, as well, before you send it out. Also, don't stretch the truth about your accomplishments. Even seemingly minor misrepresentations – saying you developed a new companywide filing system when you actually worked with a colleague on the plan, for example – can come back to haunt you during the reference or background check process.

Some job seekers spend hours assembling a resume and only a short amount of time on the accompanying note – and it shows. Submitting a thoughtful and well-written cover letter, however, can help you outshine your competition and get you one step closer to an interview. 

Robert Hosking is executive director of OfficeTeam, the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled office and administrative support professionals. OfficeTeam has more than 320 locations worldwide and offers online job search services at www.officeteam.com. For more career advice, connect with us on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

**Meet the Toughest,
Hardest-Working Office
Supply in the Business.**



Pendaflex
SureHook™
REINFORCED HANGING FOLDERS

Meet Hercules T. Pendaflex. Hercules is proud to be a Pendaflex SureHook Reinforced Hanging Folder. He's smart by design, with longer plastic hooks and revolutionary built-in tension springs. Together with his extra-sturdy rods and hooks, he's more secure, won't bend, will always stay on track, and will never, ever buckle under pressure. After all, Tenacious is his middle name. www.pendaflex.com

SureHook™ Features Longer Flexible Hook Technology



Secure on Rails



Slides Easily



Less Bending

Pendaflex

Pendaflex and SureHook are trademarks of Esselte Corporation. ©2009 Esselte Corporation.

S U P E R I O R D U R A B I L I T Y

by **Esselte**

WORKSMART

Shorthand - A Lost Art or a Gem in your Professional Toolbox?

by Anne Lupkoski CAP



When I heard that Miss Williamson had passed away, I was saddened by her death and sorry that I hadn't mailed my letter to her.

Alice Williamson was my high school office administration teacher in the 1970s. Several years ago, I started to write a letter to thank her for so patiently teaching me everything that I know about the fine art of Pitman Shorterhand. I thought that she would be pleased to know that at least one of those giggling teenage girls from her stenography class remembers those lessons and still finds value in what seems to have become a lost art. Like many good intentions, that letter got tucked away in a drawer, unfinished and unsent. ►►

Thinking about those classes makes me wonder about the role of shorthand in today's fast-paced, electronic modern office. Does knowing shorthand give someone a professional edge in today's employment market? Would there be any value to learning shorthand as a new skill today? Is it still relevant?

Some shorthand writers answer an emphatic yes to that question. The many more non-users choose words like "obsolete", "outdated" and "old-fashioned" to describe what was once seen as a core skill and the gold standard of secretarial competency. It wasn't unusual to open the

classifieds in the 1960s to find job ads for a “career secretary” with “proficiency in shorthand”, but the days of an executive asking his “girl” to come in with her steno pad are long gone.

Many of us learned shorthand as part of the typical high school and college curriculum of the day that focused on core office administration skills such as typing, dictation and transcription. Pitman, Gregg and Forkner became a regular part of our classroom lives and the focus of countless hours of practice drills. When asked why shorthand is no longer part of the general teaching curriculum, many educators agree that because that skill is not in widespread use in today’s workplace, it’s wise to make room for courses that address more current business trends.

Jane Cooper, Associate Dean of Business at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario, explains that Mohawk stopped offering a shorthand course in the mid-1990s. “Many employers of our graduates indicated that, from both a time and cost perspective, it was not efficient to pull a support staff person from her/his desk to take dictation when the dictation could be done on tape.”

While Carole Laperrière understands the rationale for the curriculum changes, she appreciates the extra skills that came hand-in-hand with learning shorthand. A professor of Office Administration Programs at Canadore College in North Bay, Ontario, Carole was a shorthand teacher for many years and a big fan of the Forkner

You learned shorthand and still use it today.

- ***Bravo! You are providing value add to your work, are enhancing your employment profile and have found a way to distinguish yourself in the crowd.***

You learned shorthand but no longer use it.

- ***Are you thinking about waking up that rusty, dormant skill? Why not dust off that little gem and polish it up? It may be just like riding a bike...***
- ***Did you keep your old shorthand books? If not, try your local library, retail and online book stores (especially those that specialize in used books), and online auction sites such as eBay.***
- ***You may also be able to source some speedwriting or note-taking resources at your local college or university bookstore.***

Practice Ideas:

- ***words to songs***
- ***television or radio news reports and commercials***
- ***download free online practice dictation exercises***
- ***If you’re really rusty, practise by transcribing children’s programs until you are able to increase your speed and vocabulary.***
- ***Do like Mark and Carole do: write conversations in your head when you’re waiting in line at the grocery store or bank.***

You never learned shorthand, but are considering it.

- ***Although not a “required” skill in most cases, having shorthand ability can be an excellent way to set yourself apart from the competition.***
- ***Requires dedication of time, effort and some financial commitment.***

You never learned and are not interested in learning. That’s perfectly OK!

approach. She remains convinced that “students benefitted greatly from taking notes in shorthand and transcribing those notes into office documents.” In the process, “those students improved their use of sound English grammar and punctuation skills and proper document formatting principles to produce a professional and accurate document.”

Helpful Online Resources:

***Shorthand Shorthand Shorthand:
“The Website Devoted to Pen Shorthand”,
web host Marc Semler
www.shorthandshorthandshorthand.com
Pitman, Gregg, Forkner, Teeline, Speedwriting***

***The Shorthand Place
<http://www.t-script.co.uk/links.php>***

***Articles on www.ehow.com:
How to Learn Shorthand at Home, by Emma Gin
How to Learn Stenography, by Mark Salzwedel***

If you ask Mark Nimigan about shorthand, some of his answers may surprise you. Now retired from a successful 50 year career as a court reporter and owner of a court reporting business in Hamilton, Ontario, he is an expert Pitman shorthand writer, with a reputation for being able to take verbatim handwritten shorthand – with

his trusty green-ink fountain pen and steno pad – averaging 200 words per minute. But Mark, whose professional life and livelihood were built around the art of shorthand – doesn’t see any value to bringing that subject back into the high school or college curriculum.

“Realistically, if I’m an executive, I’d prefer to pick up a tape recorder and do my dictation that way now and therefore not tie up two people. So, no, I really don’t see the benefit of bringing it back. Outside of your own personal convenience, does shorthand have a commercial value? You may have this talent, but who wants to buy it? Maybe nobody. It would be a convenience for me more than a saleable commodity for someone else. Its relevance today probably is past its peak.” Having said that, Mark does feel that a “talent is going to waste” if someone already has the ability to write shorthand and doesn’t use and maintain that skill.

The International Association of Administrative Professionals also acknowledges that shorthand is not a skill that is much in demand any more. “Part of it is that it requires three semesters of training, and even then not every person can decipher the shorthand of another individual.” IAAP also points out that more managers are keying in their own text and data. They echo Mark and Jane’s comments about not tying up two individuals in the process.

Years ago, high school and college graduates frequently planned to find a good job with a

WORKSMART

single company until retirement. With “career companies” becoming less and less of an option in modern times, it remains critically important to your career that your skills remain competitive and current and that you find ways to make yourself stand out in the crowded employment field.

In its 2008-09 Occupational Outlook Handbook, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics notes that secretaries and administrative assistants held more than 4.2 million jobs in 2006, ranking it among the largest occupations in the U.S. economy. Data suggests that this occupation is expected to be among those with the largest number of new jobs, and that opportunities should be best for applicants with extensive knowledge of software applications.

OfficeTeam, one of the nation’s leading staffing services, highlights in its 2009 Salary Guide that the skills and attributes in demand in today’s hiring environment include industry background, adaptability, initiative, interpersonal skills, technical aptitude, multilingual abilities, and continuing education and certification.

Robert Hosking, OfficeTeam executive director, notes that organizations continue to search for ways to be more effective and productive, while at the same time doing more with fewer resources. He stresses that “absolutely the #1 attributes that clients are looking for are employees who are more efficient and more multi-dimensional – people who are multi-skilled,

multi-functional, who are open to doing new things and taking on tasks that are not in their job description.” He also recommends that it would be advantageous for administrative professionals to continue to sharpen their computer and communication skills, and to layer in those skills with other expertise and abilities.

With laptops and recording devices now readily available and in frequent use in the modern office, Robert says it’s tough to find people with shorthand skills today. He notes that OfficeTeam does make note of that ability when working with

For the Administrative Professional and the Busy Executive:

WAYS THAT SHORTHAND CAN ADD VALUE TO YOUR DAY

- *take notes from telephone conversations and interviews*
- *telephone dictation when executive is out of the office*
- *capture the “thinking out loud” and “initial best words” as manager talks about proposed content of a proposed letter or the board tries to wordsmith a new motion (How many times have you heard, “I wish I could remember what I just said”?)*
- *take notes at workshops/seminars – when speaker is talking too quickly for you to be able to take longhand notes*
- *make discrete “notes to self” as thoughts come to mind during meetings*

Did You Know?

from Wikipedia

- *We speak comfortably at approximately 150 to 160 words per minute.*
- *The average person writes longhand at approximately 20 to 40 words per minute.*
- *When using some form of shorthand, handwriting speed can jump significantly to in excess of 100 words per minute, and can reach up to 200 words per minute for those with particular expertise.*

candidates and can conduct database searches based on that skill to help fill the occasional requests that it receives for people who can write shorthand – typically for law firms or companies that hold director meetings. Having a skill in shorthand “would make you that much more well rounded and it would certainly set you apart,” Robert agrees. “Executives and senior managers are moving so quickly today. As one of them is sitting at his/her desk, throwing out information, and someone were able to capture those initial random thoughts using shorthand, that would be very appealing and a real plus.”

Today, it’s not so much about “can you do shorthand?”, but rather it’s probably more about whether or not you can accurately and efficiently capture information, regardless of the method used.


A recent OfficeTeam survey tells us that executives spend an average of more than six minutes screening each resume received. That’s six whole minutes for you to distinguish yourself. “...A candidate’s application must catch and keep their interest,” Hosking notes. Shorthand skills that augment machine transcription skills

WORKSMART

would likely catch a recruiter’s attention.

In the current hiring environment, think about what makes you unique and what value add you bring to your role. The career-minded administrative professional who embraces continuous learning and who has a plan to be ready for the office of the future also would be prudent to not simply hit the “delete” button on all of those previously learned skills that may no longer be in high demand. Although shorthand is not actively sought in most administrative positions – apart from specialty fields such as journalism and court reporting – admins have an interesting opportunity: knowing, retaining, refreshing and using shorthand could enhance your skill bank and your ultimate worth in the marketplace.

The same marketplace for which Alice Williamson prepared me.

Thank you, Miss Williamson, for sharing your love of shorthand with me. Thirty years later, your legacy lives on with every swirl, dot, dash, curve, loop and shun hook that I write. 

Anne Lupkoski is a Certified Administrative Professional® who lives in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. She has honed her administrative skills over the last 21 years in her role as Executive Assistant for the Hamilton Community Foundation, where she continues to use Pitman Shorterhand every single day.

Your Desktop Post Office™



1 Click



2 Print



3 Postage

Print official U.S. postage right from your PC and printer.

- ▶ Never go to the Post Office™ again!
- ▶ Print exact postage and address in one step.
- ▶ The fastest, easiest way to send letters and packages.
- ▶ Save up to 80% compared to a postage meter.

4-week trial plus

\$100 Offer

Here's what you get:

- ▶ \$45 in postage
- ▶ \$50 digital scale
- ▶ \$5 supplies kit

**Limited
Time Offer**
Act now!



www.stamps.com/2009

To get the offer, you **MUST** enter the promo code **print181**