

ADMINADVANTAGE

The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

September/October 2021



Disney Meetings & Events Introduces Reimagined Product Offerings

FEATURES:

Effective Communication

Business In The 2050s: How The Future Of Work Might Look

Boost Your Autumn Mood

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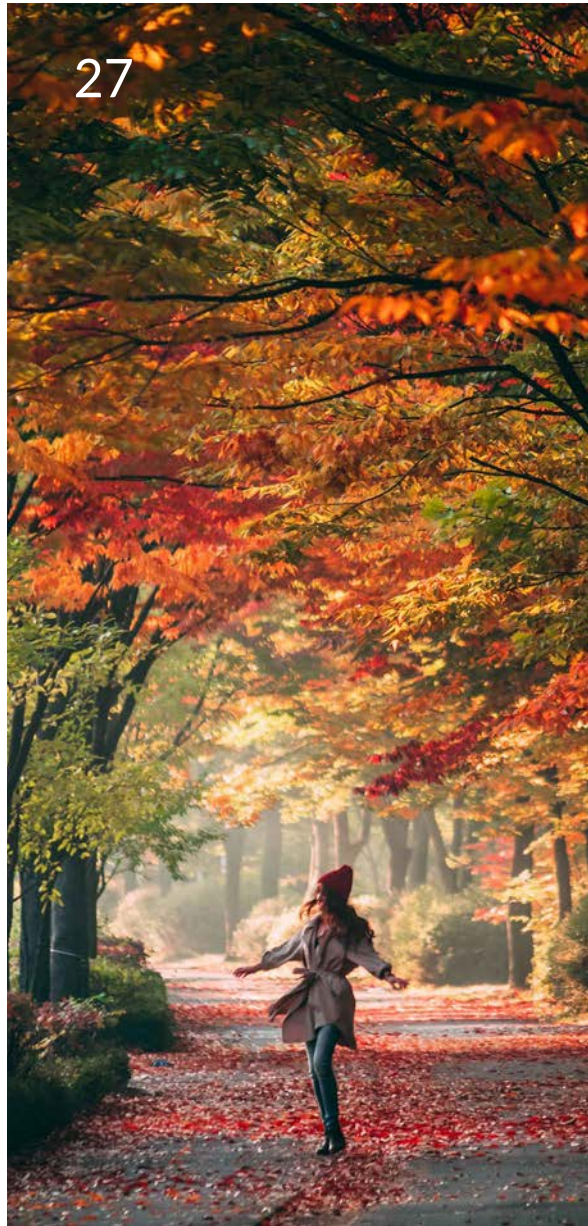
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Attending Staffing Conferences This Fall? Get the Most Bang for Your Buck

By Terri Roeslmeier

It's that time of year again when companies are preparing to attend all of the major fall staffing conferences! With conferences taking place in a virtual environment last year, there is even more anticipation to finally be back to in-person events this year. Whether you are attending one of the national conferences or a local one, making the

most out of the conference is important. You don't want to spend the time and money to attend a conference if you aren't receiving a lot back in return. So, how do you make the most out of your fall conferences? Below is a check list of ways you can prepare, things to do during it, and follow-up items after the show, to help you get the greatest return on your investment! ▶▶

Research Presenters and Sessions Ahead of Time
Before you arrive at the conference, check out the sessions ahead of time and select which ones you want to attend if multiple are taking place at the same time. You don't want to land up in a session that is irrelevant or not valuable to you after spending money to attend. Attend the sessions that you will get the most out of. Check to see if there is a conference app to download as well. Conference apps will usually show the schedule, exhibitors, a map, etc. Sometimes there is even an option to network and connect with other attendees in the app itself!

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

If you plan to attend the conference with other co-worker's, plan to divide and conquer the schedule. You will get the most of out of the conference if you split up and attend different sessions. You can then regroup after the session and once you arrive back at the office to educate one another on what was discussed.

MAKE APPOINTMENTS AHEAD OF TIME

Conferences are a good time to connect with other staffing professionals you know in the industry. If there are a few contacts you want to connect with, reach out to them ahead of time and see if you can schedule time during a break or after the day's agenda to grab a drink or dinner. This will help you manage your schedule so you are making the most out of your time.

Additionally, if there are any exhibitors you wish

to visit, try scheduling an appointment with them ahead of time as well. Conferences are a great time to talk to vendors in the industry. If you have an appointment ahead of time, they will be able to tailor your meeting to your company and better prepare to meet with you, then if you were to just stop by. Some vendors will even show you a demonstration at the conference if you wish to see a demo of their product. By the end of your meeting, you will hopefully have a good understanding if they are a company you want to look further into partnering with!

DISCONNECT FROM THE OFFICE

As hard as it might be, try to disconnect from your email and phone during the sessions. You can take any needed time to respond back to emails and make calls during your breaks. If you are multitasking throughout the session, it will be hard to pay attention and retain the information being discussed. There is almost no point of even attending if the time isn't spent focused on the presentations.

To avoid distractions, simply turn your phone off or put it on silent. Also, remember to put your out of office on stating you will be unavailable. That way anyone trying to get in touch with you, will know you won't be able to respond immediately.

TAKE NOTES

It's easy to sit and listen in each session, but remember to also take notes. By the end of the

TRAINING



next session, you won't remember what you learned in the last one. Take notes throughout so you remember key points that were made. If it helps, at the end of each session you can even jot down your top three takeaways.

As a food for thought, statistics show that taking notes by hand is more effective than taking notes through a computer or tablet. You are able to retain the information better and remember it. This might be something worth considering! It



will also help you avoid being distracted from emails and messages coming in.

CONNECT WITH SPEAKERS

If there is a speaker that stands out or perhaps

is someone that would be worth connecting with, introduce yourself after the session and get their business card. After the conference, you can then connect with them on LinkedIn and stay in communication. You may even consider sending a thank you email or note to them after the conference as an additional gesture. The speakers presenting are industry experts and are good connections to stay in touch with. Down the line, you never know if you will need their advice or perhaps even have an occasion to partner together!

NETWORK

During the conference, attend networking sessions and parties. These are great opportunities for you to connect with other staffing companies similar to yours and see what they are doing. It's also a chance for you to gain new ideas and see a fresh perspective on your business.

Be sure to pack those business cards too! As you are connecting with speakers and other attendees, the best way to stay in contact is by passing out your card.

VISIT EXHIBITORS

We discussed making appointments with exhibitors a little bit earlier. Of course, an appointment isn't necessary to visit an exhibitor, unless there is one you know you want to see then it might be beneficial to contact them ahead of time. Regardless if there is a specific exhibitor

TRAINING

you want to see, take some time to visit the exhibit hall. Exhibitors take the time to be at the conference as a resource to you. You may find some vendors you didn't know existed or come across a product or service that will be beneficial for your company. Exhibitors help you learn about the resources and technology available to you to help your business grow. If anything, you can take home some cool swag!

MAKE A TRIP OF IT

For the past year and a half, we have been stuck in the life of COVID. You may not have been able to take a lot of trips or have a getaway. A conference is the perfect opportunity to turn it into a longer trip! Either before or after the conference, stay a few extra days in the area. You can even invite the whole family to come out and join you for a mini family vacation!

Hold a Lunch and Learn When You are Back
Once you return to the office hold a lunch and learn session with your team. This is a chance for the whole team to also learn from the tips and ideas you brought home from the conference. You and other attendees can put together your notes and present key takeaways. Bringing back all of the knowledge with you and sharing it with your team, is one of the best ways to get the most bang for your buck!

SET ACTION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

After your lunch and learn session, hold a follow-up meeting to discuss any ideas that

stood out to you that you would want to try implementing at your staffing company. This meeting can be used for discussion and even as a brainstorming session to see how you can put these ideas into action, specifically at your company. At the end of the meeting, be sure to have an action plan and delegate tasks so the ideas, don't just remain ideas. This last step can be one of the most important steps, where your learnings become part of your company strategy. Soon after you may even begin to see a tangible return on your investment!

SEE YOU THERE!

I hope you found this check list helpful as you prepare to attend staffing conferences this fall! Conferences present a rare opportunity for staffing companies to take a step back and really dive into the state of the industry to learn about where the industry is heading and current trends. Sometimes it's hard to step back and see your business from a fresh pair of eyes, as you are busy going about day-to-day activities. Conferences though help you begin to think outside of the box and help you come up with new initiatives to take back with you. And let's not forget about the exhibitors available to you to show you technology and services available to help your business thrive! 🇺🇸

President and CEO of Automated Business Designs, Inc. (ABD). ABD is the developer of Ultra-Staff software for the staffing industry. Terri has worked with the staffing industry for 30+ years. Prior to ABD Terri worked for Electronic Data Systems (EDS).

Effective Communication: Be Mindful of Your Word Choice and Tone of Voice

By Cassandra R. Lee

Our lives have changed due to COVID-19. We have found ourselves in different, difficult, and uncertain times with our jobs, careers, families, and finances. ▶▶

TRAINING

How we work, socialize, and live with one another has changed.

How we communicate with each other has also changed.

Limited are the face-to-face interactions with bosses, co-workers, clients, colleagues, customers, extended family members, and friends.

Increased, however, are the bonding moments with immediate family members, such as, children, husbands, wives, partners, boyfriends, girlfriends, and significant others.

The way in which we communicate with each other has become more than the type of medium we use (i.e. face-to-face, Zoom, FaceTime, Duo, Marco Polo).

The way in which we communicate with each other has also become a reminder about what **we say** and **how we say it**.

The need for adequate, respectful, and loving communication is important to have right now. The reason I say this is because in the past few months, I have noticed a shift in television commercials. More often now I see commercials about suicide prevention, mental health, domestic violence, child abuse, and stress management.

These types of commercials are a sign that

people are experiencing more stress and conflict in their lives than ever before.

These types of commercials are also a sign that people are feeling stressed out to the point where they are causing harm to themselves and/or to others.

When stress heightens and we feel like we cannot take it anymore, we lose the ability to effectively communicate. Instead of honestly and directly asking for what we want and need, we lash out, call names, put down, or say nothing at all. We limit our chances of a healthy, results-oriented conversation.

Now - more than ever before - is the time to make sure we pay attention to how we communicate!

Our communication skills must be used in a healthy way to save our lives, maintain our relationships, and positively contribute to the lives of others.

During this time, we must become mindful of our **word choice**. Choosing our words carefully when we speak will allow us to become conscious of what we actually say. Saying the right things when we speak will allow us to maintain valued relationships with our loved ones. Using the appropriate words when we speak to ourselves will boost our self-confidence and start to eliminate some of the frustrations we feel.



During this time, we must also become mindful of our **tone of voice**. We have heard the saying over and over again, “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.” Saying the right thing - to others and ourselves - can be compromised by using the wrong tone.

A conversation with my boyfriend recently reminded me of these two lessons.

He and I were discussing an incident which had occurred a few weeks ago. He informed me

that during that time I had been mean to him. As I listened and thought back to the incident, I realized, he was correct. I had been mean to him. And it had all occurred in my word choice and tone of voice!

Aargh!

Although he told me he forgave me because he knew I was going through something at that time, I must admit, I was not proud of myself to realize I had slipped up and used the wrong word choice and tone of voice with my honey.

TRAINING

I was disappointed. For you see, these are my trouble spots. I struggle with keeping it together with my word choice and tone of voice in frustrating situations - especially with my loved ones.

Over the years, I have gotten better at using the appropriate word choice and tone of voice in frustrating situations. Unfortunately, based on the conversation with my boyfriend, I realized I had a relapse and my trouble spots had resurfaced.

Instead of beating myself up, I thanked him for being honest with me. I apologized to him with a hug and kiss. Then I acknowledged the incident as an opportunity for growth.

I made a mental note to myself to be mindful of how my frustrations influence my word choice and tone of voice. I made a promise to myself to practice effective communication no matter how frustrated I may feel.

How about you?

Have you recently said the wrong thing to someone you love?

Have you allowed your tone of voice to ruin your conversations?

These are frustrating times which call for the effective use of our communication skills. We must be conscious of the words we speak and the tone in which we speak them. We can use

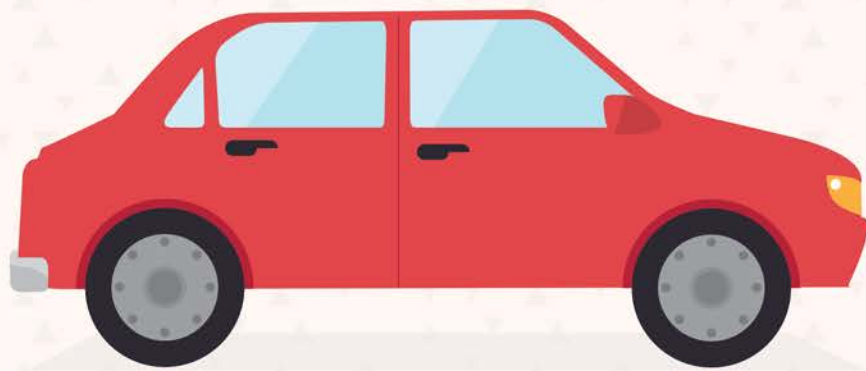
our word choice and tone of voice to ask for help; resolve domestic issues without violence; lovingly raise our children without abusing them; and speak power and positivity into our lives and the lives of others.

The next time you find yourself frustrated in a conversation with someone, I ask you to do as I will do, become mindful of your word choice and tone of voice.

This will help you to have a healthy, respectful, and results-oriented conversation in which you will not regret. 🌱

Cassandra "D.I.V.A. of Dialog™" Lee is a champion for the education and empowerment of professional audiences worldwide. As a self-development expert, inspirational speaker, corporate trainer, published author, and career coach, she uses "Divine Inspiration Vocally Applied™" to provide strategies and solutions for personal growth and career success. Whether in her live seminars, workshops, keynote speeches, training sessions, coaching sessions, published articles, or virtual trainings, she is committed to providing you with down-to-earth practical solutions you can use for personal and professional success. To book her to present at your upcoming live or virtual event, visit <http://www.divaofdialog.com/invite>.

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Disney Meetings & Events Introduces Reimagined Product Offerings

Disney Meetings & Events is revealing a slate of reimagined product offerings designed to help meeting professionals connect with their clients and deliver creative, customized content, whether attendees are meeting in-person, virtually or as part of a hybrid event.▶▶

Disney Destinations. “We’re encouraged by the broad interest we’re seeing across the board with associations, corporate groups and incentives. Planners and attendees are eager to travel again and to engage with one another.”

Reimagined product offerings include:

- **Face-to-Face Meeting Enhancements & Customization** – Flexibility remains a key focus for meeting planners as business and



leisure travel resumes. Disney Meetings & Events offers planners a single point of contact for services, whether it's venue space, hotel rooms, entertainment or other resources. It's an important benefit for improved efficiencies and a greater return on investment.

- **Disney @ Home Custom Care Packages**
– Disney has drawn on the best visual storytellers, artists and designers to

craft custom care packages for meeting professionals to send to their attendees. Each box can be custom printed to the event's theme and filled with iconic items such as a personalized Mickey Ear Hat or Mickey crisped cereal treats.

- **Virtual Studio Capabilities** – Conveniently located onsite, virtual studio technology is available for livestreaming presentations or pre-producing video content. Complete with



customizable backgrounds and other options, virtual studio support helps take the hassle out of hosting a virtual or hybrid event.

- **Professional Development Content** – With Disney Meetings & Events, meeting professionals can inspire and motivate attendees with captivating presentations and workshops from National Geographic and Disney Institute. National Geographic has brought together some of the planet’s leading storytellers to connect with audiences, engage in interactive dialogue and share personal experiences of resilience, grit and bravery. For nearly three decades, Disney Institute has helped organizations rethink how they conduct business through immersion in leadership skills, customer engagement and guest service.

- **Shared interactive experiences** – Disney continues to invest heavily in its theme parks, setting the bar for immersive entertainment experiences. These elaborate venues are a huge draw for networking events, incentives and after-meeting entertainment, eliminating the need for special décor packages. These interactive experiences not only dazzle attendees but also leave a lasting impression and can help reinforce important business messages.

The reimagined product offerings come at a time when Disney theme parks are also unveiling new attractions, entertainment and experiences.


- **“The World’s Most Magical Celebration”** kicks off Oct. 1 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. This EARidescent celebration, which



runs for 18 months, features exciting new experiences in all four theme parks and beyond.

- **At Disneyland Resort in California,** attendees can visit Avengers Campus, an all-new land inside Disney California Adventure Park. Here, Super Heroes from across time and space team up to train the next generation of Super Heroes.
- **At Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa in Hawai'i,** the popular KA WA'A Lu'au recently returned to the delight of all. Set under the stars, the show immerses attendees in the live music, traditional dance and ancient stories of Hawai'i through Disney's signature entertainment.

"Today's strong demand for bleisure travel is another compelling reason for meeting professionals to bring their events to a Disney destination," said Amy Pfeiffer, Director

of Convention Sales & Services at Disney Destinations. "No one can match Disney when it comes to the allure of destinations while also providing full-service meetings support. That's just part of the reason Disney is popular with corporate groups and has an incredible track record of driving attendance for association meetings and incentives." 

Disney Meetings & Events has more than nine resort hotels in three North America locations with dedicated, world-class meeting and event venues. With more than 775,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor flexible meeting space, planners can create an unforgettable experience for their attendees in destinations at Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, Calif., and Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa in Kapolei, Hawai'i.

To learn more or to book a meeting or event, visit DisneyMeetingsandEvents.com or call (321) 939-7129.

Business In The 2050s: How The Future Of Work Might Look

By Alexander Belsey

Predictions of the future are often wildly inaccurate. For example, Back To The Future promised us hoverboards, while almost everyone who saw Blade Runner couldn't wait to get their hands on a flying car. Unfortunately, neither are readily available to the general public yet, which is a crying shame. ▶▶



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Casting an eye into the future and speculating how the world may look at that time, is never an easy task - there are simply too many variables involved. New technologies which no-one saw coming may be pulled from the aether, while existing fields which have substantial growth potential, may fail to develop as expected. A good example of this is 3D films; time and again they've been touted as the future of the film industry because production companies have thought consumers would jump at the chance to become more immersed in the worlds that films create.

While this is true to an extent, the popularity of 3D films is currently declining quite significantly - as it has done several times before. Instead, consumers seem far keener to increase the resolution they can watch their 2D content on, which is seen in the meteoric rise of 4K and UHD televisions over recent years.

Personally, I always enjoy looking at current trends and ideas, and considering how they may progress over time, so I can form a mental picture of how the future might look if things continue on their current path.

Applying this approach to the workplace is simple enough to do, because recently there have been a great many new ideas and perspectives on how the world of work should develop over coming decades, proposed by politicians, academics, think tanks and business leaders, among others.

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By considering these new ideas, and taking the changes which have already happened in the workplace over recent years one step further, this is how the workplace of the 2050s might look...

REMOTE WORKING - THE NEW NORMAL?

Remote working is rapidly on the rise all over the world, and the stats are striking. For example, a 2019 study by Forbes found that there has been a 159% rise in remote working in the USA since 2007, while the same study estimates that before 2020 is over, 50% of the UK workforce will work remotely, at least part of the time. Allied to this development, is the decline across much of the western world of the traditional 'job for life', whereby employees stayed with same employer throughout their working life, and their concept of career progression was seeking a promotion within the same company.

The reasons for this decline are complex and multifaceted, but it is something which has arisen in part due to the desires of both employers - who responded to economic recessions by calling for greater flexibility with regards to labour rights - and employees - who responded to a decades-long period of wage stagnation by becoming more willing to switch employers (or even careers) in search of greater opportunities and better working conditions.

As well as the decay of the 'job for life' contributing to greater flexibility for both employers and employees, it has caused a

substantial increase in the number of people who have become self-employed, work multiple jobs, have a side-business on top of their day job, or take on freelance work in their spare time.

All these factors are combining to produce a vast number of highly productive, well trained and well-educated workers, who do not need to be physically present at the office of a primary employer between the hours of 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

However, many people who enjoy working from home do not enjoy working alone, and this has caused a massive rise in co-working over recent years.

The growth of co-working spaces looks well-set to continue into the 2050s and beyond if, as expected, more and more of the workforce begin working remotely. Indeed, as co-working spaces become busy activity hubs populated by skilled and enterprising people from a variety of different backgrounds, it is only natural that these people connect, network and synergise with each other - all of which means co-working spaces could become a fertile source of fresh innovations and vibrant new startups all over the world, not just Silicon Valley.

THE 4 DAY WORKWEEK

Even for those people who have jobs where remote working is not an option, changes in their working patterns may be afoot, as the idea of switching to a 4 day workweek has been

suggested by a range of academics, think tanks and employers.

For example, the Exeter-based travel company STC Expeditions recently completed a 12 week trial of the 4 day workweek, while during the 2019 UK General Election, the Labour Party had an official policy to make the 4 day workweek the UK's standard schedule, before 2030.

The logic behind working 4 days a week instead of 5, is that several studies have shown peoples' productivity tends to decline after about 32 hours work per week, meaning that the other 8 hours of the 40 hour workweek could be given back to the employee with little, if any, loss of productivity. In fact, a 2019 study by Microsoft Japan found that employee productivity actually increased by a staggering 40% when they trialled a 4 day workweek for the duration of the summer.

Whether a 4 day workweek is sustainable in the long-term, not just over a limited period of time, and to what extent Thursday afternoons become the new Friday afternoons with regards to productivity, are issues which will need to be investigated over the coming years, and by the 2050s, we will likely have our answer.

THE ROBOTS ARE COMING FOR US ALL

And there's no escape! Like it or not, automation and technological advances mean that sooner or later, our jobs will be done by robots who can

complete the work quicker, cheaper and to a better standard than we ever could.

This is not a change which will take place overnight, but by the 2050s, across an enormous range of industries and workplaces, highly skilled custom-made robots will be doing the jobs humans used to do.

This is not a new idea, nor is it a new phenomenon. Consider the industrial revolution, when vast numbers of textile workers found themselves surplus to requirements due to the invention of machines which could do their jobs without requesting break periods, days off or overtime pay.

In more modern times, think of self-checkout machines in the supermarket, where a dozen or more self-checkouts can be available for customers to use, with only one or two store assistants being present to supervise.

The process of specially made robots replacing people in their job roles is called automation, and you're going to be hearing a lot more about it in future, because right now in a number of very large and very important industries, robots are being developed which, by the 2050s, will have taken the jobs of hundreds of millions of people. For example, in the USA one of the largest sources of employment for non-college educated men is vehicle driving; either as a truck driver, taxi driver, Uber driver, courier, or something

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else along a similar line. Even today, self-driving cars are semi-operational, and with the amount of research funding that is currently being invested into making fully functional self-driving vehicles not just a reality, but the norm, sooner rather than later, it seems logical to suggest that by the 2050s the vast majority of driving jobs will be done by robots, not humans.

NO-ONE IS SAFE!

By no means is this a phenomenon which is unique to the automotive industry. Across all industries and all walks of life, the expectation is that robots will be doing the jobs that people currently do, within the next few decades.

For example, a 2019 study by Oxford Economics found that 20 million jobs in the manufacturing industry alone could be automated away before 2030, and that many of the people working these jobs would then tend to seek employment in related industries which are also highly vulnerable to automation.

In truth, this scenario of widespread global job losses is not as cataclysmic as it may appear, because ever since capitalism has become the primary method by which human societies have organised their economies, innovations and technological advancements have created new employment opportunities, as well as eliminating existing ones.

A commonly cited example of this, is how the

invention of social media platforms has created the job of Social Media Manager, which is a position that would not have been close to existing even 20 years ago. And returning to the example of the industrial revolution - this is a development which created an enormous number of new employment opportunities in factories and mills, while eradicating many of the existing jobs in farming and agriculture.

However, the sheer scale of the automations which will almost certainly come over the next few decades, may present a challenge of the like we have not seen before. For example, a 2015 study by the Bank of England estimated that nearly 50% of the UK's workforce risk having their job automated away, with those most vulnerable working in admin, manufacturing, clerical, care, and customer service jobs.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND FREE MONEY FOR ALL

With so many people at risk of having not just their jobs, but their careers, automated away, the next question that arises is, 'how do we respond to this?'

One potential solution which has gained support from people on all sides of the political spectrum, is the idea of a universal basic income (UBI). UBI can be defined as, 'a model for providing all citizens of a country or other geographic area with a given sum of money, regardless of their income, resources or employment status,' while



the essential principle behind UBI is the idea that 'all citizens are entitled to a livable income, whether or not they contribute to production.'

In short, in a world where huge numbers of people will have their livelihoods and skillsets automated away, leaving them unable to compete against robots in a free-market economy, how can we ensure that these people are still able to have a standard of living which affords them some dignity?

Many brilliant minds both past and present have supported the concept of a UBI because (among other reasons) it could present a solution to this problem. Some of the more well-known supporters of UBI include: Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Bertrand Russell, Franklin Roosevelt, Margaret Mead, Martin Luther King, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg.

It is also important to note that support for UBI has

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come from groups of people who would normally have diametrically opposed political views. For example, one of the best known modern proponents of UBI is Andrew Yang, an American tech entrepreneur who recently ran to be the Democratic nominee for the 2020 presidential election, while on the other side of the political divide, support for UBI has come from the neoliberal economist Milton Friedman, and the political scientist Charles Murray, whose views on the issue of race relations could generously be described as 'controversial'.

It is also worth noting that the American state of Alaska, which is heavily conservative, has had a form of UBI since 1982. Every year, residents of Alaska receive up to \$2000 simply for living there, with barely any conditions attached. What's more, studies have shown that Alaska's UBI program has helped to wipe out extreme poverty in the state, without increasing unemployment.

RELEASING THE SHACKLES


The relative merits of UBI, and how it should be implemented, are issues which require serious studying and many more words of explanation than I am afforded for this article, but there is one more point which is vital to understand in the context of UBI and how it may affect business in the 2050s.

Consider for a second how many frustrated entrepreneurs you know. How many people

in your life would love to start a business if only they weren't so beholden to the everyday pressures of working long hours to pay the bills and support their families?

If by the 2050s, UBI has been successfully implemented in a number of countries, how many people across the world would have been able to use the extra freedoms afforded to them in terms of both time and finances, to start businesses and pursue their true calling? With some of the pressure to pay household bills and expenses relieved, how many bold new services and groundbreaking products would be developed by skilled and educated individuals, who all of a sudden had more time to work on their passion projects?

THE FUTURE IS YOURS

Whatever your views are on any of the ideas I've presented in this article, it's worth remembering that nothing is inevitable, and that the world of the 2050s will be shaped by the actions and desires of ordinary people, all across the world. As Abraham Lincoln said, 'the best way to predict the future is to create it.' 

*This article was produced by Alex Belsey
of New Frontiers Marketing
www.newfrontiersmarketing.com/content*

Boost Your Autumn Mood

By Susan Leigh

Autumn is usually the season when we start to hibernate a little, cosy down as the evenings draw in and spend more time indoors. After all the restrictions of the past year, fortunately made bearable by some gorgeous weather, many of us are anticipating the dark nights of autumn and the prospect of further lockdowns with dread. ▶▶

HOW CAN WE BOOST OUR AUTUMN MOOD?

- What are your expectations of autumn, the factors that have shaped your existing mindset? For some it's their favourite season; the thought of wrapping up warm, kicking through falling leaves on a woodland walk, mugs of hot chocolate, board games around a fire. For others it's a gloomy, miserable season filled with dark days of nothing to look forward to. How do you feel? Remember that your childhood memories and experiences don't need to be replicated as you move into adulthood. Now you can make your own choices and use your ability to take control of your environment. Why not choose to boost your autumn mood?

- As the days become shorter our melatonin and serotonin levels are affected. This is where dog walkers have a distinct advantage, as they often take their dogs for regular walks, whatever the weather. Try to emulate the dog walker and get outside, even for short breaks, so that you experience some daylight, improve your serotonin levels and hence your mood.

- Keep in touch with close friends and family so that you're able to talk if you're feeling down, in need of some light relief or need a little human contact in your life. Share your fears and concerns, especially in this present climate and agree to be supportive of each other. It often helps to know you're not alone and that others are thinking of you.



- Commit to achieving one positive experience, success or achievement each day, even if it's simply washing your hair, tidying your sock drawer, walking to the corner shop. Only you know how significant each result is! Share your good news and congratulate each other.

- Our diet often changes as the winter months approach. People relish the idea of a salad less when it's cold and dark, often preferring more comforting food like soups, casseroles and stews. Try to keep to a healthy diet and include all the colours of autumn, the vegetables and berries that are seasonal at this time of year. You could prepare something that cooks slowly, snuggle into a warm coat and take a walk, knowing you'll be returning home to a delicious meal.

- Focus on making home more cosy and comforting than it's perhaps been over the summer months. Warm fabrics, colours and fragrances can boost your autumn mood by adding brightness to your home. Red, gold, bronze, silver used for cushions, throws, prints can brighten a room. Unique items can often be sourced locally at markets and craft fairs. Scented candles can improve the atmosphere and add welcome fragrance to a room.

- Lighting is important over the darker months. Overhead lighting can be quite harsh, so think about wall lights or smaller lamps which offer mood-enhancing ways to illuminate your room. Or candles, used safely, can add an attractive glow.

LIFESTYLE


- Socialising often requires more thought, especially at the moment, with so many changing restrictions. Online socialising is a lifeline for those with internet access, providing invaluable ways to keep in touch with friends and family. Groups of friends have found ingenious ways to entertain each other, using quiz nights, book clubs, recipe sampling, all done online. And it's good to have something to look forward to.

- Online classes and training could be a good use of your time over autumn, furthering your education, giving you something extra to add to your CV and improving your job chances if you're in the market for a new career.

- Autumn is a good time to forward-plan for Christmas, making your Christmas cakes and puddings. Or you could spend hours hand-making personalised Christmas cards and gifts, utilising your skills in crafts, painting, knitting, handiwork. Children often delight in getting involved with glitter and glue!

- Working from home is an increasingly familiar option, but autumn may become a time when you start to feel like a pit pony, entering your home office and hardly ever emerging in daylight; often there's little else to do! Boost your autumn mood by scheduling regular breaks, for food, to phone a friend for a pleasant chat, to go outside and stretch your legs. Your work will thank you as breaks have been found to improve productivity upon return.

- Add some home treats, things that you might not do during typical summer months. Allow time for a thirty-minute bath with candles, plenty of bubbles and warm towels, go through your photographs or music back catalogue and laugh or cry at the memories they evoke.

A little planning can help to boost your autumn mood and ensure that you remain healthy, take good care of yourself and have positive things in your life that support you and yours both mentally and physically. 

Susan Leigh, counsellor, hypnotherapist, relationship counsellor, writer & media contributor offers help with relationship issues, stress management, assertiveness and confidence. She works with individual clients, couples and provides corporate workshops and support. Author of 3 books, 'Dealing with Stress, Managing its Impact', '101 Days of Inspiration #tipoftheday' and 'Dealing with Death, Coping with the Pain', all on Amazon.

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