

PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

March 2010



- ▶ Do you dread the Conference Call?
- ▶ How to organise the Best Event ever!
- ▶ Seven ways to increase your creativity
- ▶ Understanding people by their body language
- ▶ Ten steps to overcoming procrastination

A publication of
Deskdemon.com



WHO SHINES THE BRIGHTEST?



NOMINATE YOUR NESCAFÉ® GOLD BLEND® EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AND WIN...

Employee of the Month Prizes

Each month we will be awarding the top 50 voted employees with a tin of NESCAFÉ® GOLD BLEND® and a box of QUALITY STREET® for your office. The winner with the most votes will also receive a meal for two to the value of £100.

Employee of the Year Prize

An exclusive VIP box at The O2 arena to a top event for the winner (who amassed the most votes) and up to 17 colleagues and £200 spending money for your Employee of the Year. Plus, a year's supply of NESCAFÉ® GOLD BLEND® and QUALITY STREET®.

Visit **www.goldblend-employee.co.uk** for more information.

NESCAFÉ® GOLD BLEND®

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



Entry is online only. Promotion runs from 1st February to 20th December 2010. For full terms and conditions visit www.goldblend-employee.co.uk

NI customers: No purchase necessary. Please call 0800 745 845 to get your entry code.

Promoter: NESTLÉ UK Ltd. St. George's House, Croydon, Surrey CR9 1NR. © Reg. trademark of Société des Produits Nestlé S.A.

News 5-6

Products:..... 7

New products from AF; portable scanning power; portable rubber keyboard; 'good enough to eat' bath bomb gift set; portable laptop speakers

Venues 9

Workplace issues..... 10

Five Simple Ways to Get a Pay Rise
Interview do's and don'ts
Getting Involved in Office Gossip

All about email 12

Email etiquette; email security;
how to sort out your inbox

Do you dread the conference call? 16

It's all about preparation

How to organise the best event ever 18

Event planning tips ... 20

that will save you stress and money

Be creative! 22

Seven ways to have more Creative Ideas
than you thought possible

Body language 24

Understanding people through the
way they communicate

Just do it! 26

Ten steps To overcoming procrastination



PA ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

www.deskdemon.com

Terminal House, Station
Approach, Shepperton,
Middlesex TW17 8AS

Editorial

PR contact: Paul Ormond
Tel: 08704104038
paul@deskdemon.com

Features Editor

Susan Silva

Advertising

Paul Ormond
Tel: 08704104038
paul@deskdemon.com

Design & Production

Jane Bigos
Graphic Design
janebigos@deskdemon.com

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

Suresh Karuppannan
Website Designer
suresh@deskdemon.com

Publisher

Paul Ormond
Tel: 08704104038
paul@deskdemon.com

Managing Director

Mek Rahmani
Founder, CEO
mek@deskdemon.com

General Enquiries

Paul Ormond
Tel: 08704104038
Email: paul@deskdemon.com

Copyright 2010 DeskDemon.com

All rights reserved. No part of this Publication (whether in hardcopy or electronic form) may be copied, transmitted, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior written consent of DeskDemon.com. Whilst every care is taken in the compilation and publication of this publication, DeskDemon.com can not be held responsible for any consequences, mistakes or omissions. DeskDemon.com can not accept any responsibility for any inaccuracies or changes, or for consequential loss arising from such changes or inaccuracies, or for any other loss. Inclusion of any advertisements does not imply recommendations or endorsement by DeskDemon.com

BEWARE: COMPATIBLE TONERS COST UP TO TWICE AS MUCH OVER TIME AS ORIGINAL HP TONERS.



TRUST ORIGINAL HP TONER

Recent tests show that compatible toners can be unreliable and provide inconsistent performance. Original HP toners demonstrated superior reliability, consistent results and greater overall savings than compatible toners. Make a smart choice for your business and buy Original HP toner.



HIT PRINT
INTELLIGENTLY



For more information visit : hp.com/uk/toners

A Quality Logic 2008 study compared Original HP LaserJet cartridges with remanufactured cartridges available in Europe for the HP LaserJet 2300 and HP LaserJet 4350 printers. HP cost calculation based on the average results of 2008 European QualityLogic Monochrome Toner Reliability Comparison Study. Calculation includes paper, cartridge replacement and labour for reprints. Assumes equal number of pages for external, internal and individual use. Labour rate from Mercer 2007/08 Global Pay Study. Assumes purchase price for HP cartridge is €131 and 42% lower purchase price for a remanufactured cartridge. Actual prices, costs and results may vary. For details: www.Qualitylogic.com/tonertest.pdf or at www.hp.com/uk/tonertest.

Find the apple of your eye on the Lovestruck iPhone app!



City dating site Lovestruck aims to prevent love passing you by with the exciting launch of its new free-to-download iPhone application within the iTunes app store. Members can now arrange their coffee, lunch and after-work dates on the move, as the app tells them who's nearby and also who's 'free for lunch' or 'free tonight'.

With Lovestruck's USP matching city singles with others that work close by, this state-of-the-art location-based mobile dating app will no doubt help their members quickly find their perfect partner too. The Lovestruck iPhone app is currently only available for London, but a roll-out across major UK cities, Dublin, Hong Kong and Singapore will occur mid-March 2010. www.lovestruck.com

The cost of obesity

'Overweight Britain' could prompt a dramatic uptake of health insurance packages as the NHS struggles to cope with rising levels of obesity

Rising levels of obesity could see a substantial rise in the number of people applying for health insurance, money saving website www.quoteboffin.co.uk has revealed.

With 20% of the population now classed as clinically obese and more people dying from weight related diseases than ever before, the UK's obesity crisis is adding a heavyweight strain to the NHS that's impossible to ignore.

Causing concern is the effect on NHS resources; waiting times have begun to rocket as obesity related illnesses add even more patients to already

crowded lists. The fear of long waiting lists will be the main driver towards private medical insurance claims QuoteBoffin.co.uk: "With rising levels of obesity adding months, if not years, to already overcrowded waiting lists it's no wonder that more consumers will begin turning their attention to private health cover in order to guarantee prompt and professional medical treatment. Waiting lists can be especially frustrating for those who have strived to live a healthy lifestyle but could still find themselves at the end of a very long queue."

Britain's obesity crisis shows little sign of letting up. "Obesity in the UK is projected to grow by 10% every decade for the foreseeable future. People need to prepare for the future and view health insurance as an essential not a luxury."



New format for Yellow Pages

Yellow Pages directories are to undergo their most significant revamp in more than forty years since they were first produced in the UK, with their publication in a smaller compact size rather than traditional A4 format. The change in size – a reduction of five centimetres in height and four centimetres in width – follows research amongst Yellow Pages users that revealed that the compact directory increased usage by 7% compared with the A4 format.

The reduction in size is a key element of a package of directory design changes to enhance ease of use. These also include a new "local listings" feature making it easier for consumers to find a business in their desired location. The new compact format incorporates a font specially-selected to enhance the smaller directory's readability.

www.yell.com

THISTLE YOUNG ACHIEVER SHINES IN INDUSTRY AWARDS

Thistle Hotels is continuing its award winning start to 2010 with an outstanding win at the Shine Awards 2010. Tara Farnham from Thistle Hotels was one of eleven women who picked up an award at the sixth Shine Awards, which are renowned for recognising women working within the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors, and have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the industry, their businesses and staff.

Tara, Executive Assistant to Heiko Figge, Managing Director of Thistle Hotels, won the Young Achiever Award, beating high performing women from right across the UK to scoop the prestigious accolade. Tara's award follows Thistle Hotels winning the highly regarded 'Excellence Through People' award at the recent HRS.com Hotel Excellence Awards.

Heiko Figge commented: "Tara's award is thoroughly deserved and a real credit to her dedication to meeting and exceeding expectations."

Smart girls are swapping, not shopping

Dump the exercise bike that doubles as a place to dry your washing, get rid of those piles of workout videos and DVDs that make you sweat just looking at the cover, recycle all your Sex In The City memorabilia and, for goodness sake, swap your golf clubs with someone who actually enjoys playing golf! The hot news is that the girls have discovered online swapping in a big way!

Paul Kay, Managing Director of www.swapz.co.uk says "2 years ago we had few women swapping, and then the swishing trend started - swapping clothing. Now we have our ladies swapping everything from make up through to cars. In the last year the balance on our site has changed from 68% men and 32% women to close to a 50-50 split."

Swapz.co.uk has over 150,000 live listings across all the categories you'd expect to find on an online auction site. With the most person to person swap listings on any site in the UK, swapz members swap often and quickly. Swapping should carry a government health warning as it is highly addictive!

www.swapz.co.uk



Glasscubes makes doing business online easier

Glasscubes is an online, password-protected platform that allows colleagues and clients to collaborate and share documents. It brings together a collection of online tools to enable better team working and improve communication with employees at all levels. It is accessible to an unlimited number of users and even provides a discussion forum to collate notes.

Glasscubes lets team members edit documents online, preview a document without the need for downloading, send messages directly to each other, schedules meetings, share calendars, arrange conference calls, as well as create or assign tasks to other members of a team. A poll can be created to find out what colleagues think of an opinion or suggestion, and reminder alerts can be sent via e-mail or SMS to draw attention.

Glasscubes was founded to help small and medium-size businesses be more productive without exploding their budget. Glasscubes brings together key tools for all types of businesses, but is priced to attract smaller businesses and entrepreneurs who have limited budgets and lack dedicated support staff. Simplicity is key to Glasscubes, enabling collaboration with colleagues and clients anywhere in the world easily and securely via an Internet connection and Web browser.

www.glasscubes.com

Virus Targets Job Seekers

There has been a recent surge of a spam mail worm that appears in an email, masquerading as a job offer or detailing job-related information. Taking advantage of the precarious state of the global economy, cyber-criminals disguise their malicious payloads as legitimate job opportunities. Known as Win32.Worm.Mabezat.J, the worm uses clever wording to persuade recipients to click through to an infected web page.

According to Alexandru Catalin Cosoi, a senior researcher with BitDefender, in order to stay safe, computer users should ensure that they have installed a complete anti-malware suite with antivirus, antispam, anti-phishing and firewall protection.

"Never open files from unfamiliar locations", he said.

Cosoi said that the worm comes loaded in a spam message with a variety of job-related email subjects, such as 'Web designer vacancy', 'New work for you', 'Welcome to your new work', or 'We are hiring you'.

You have been warned!

Exhibitions

RSVP NORTH returns to Manchester on 21-22 April

Now in its 4th year, RSVP North is the region's premier exhibition for the corporate party and events industry.

RSVPA is a new concept for this year for all PAs who plan their company's events. "With PAs planning and booking everything from their director's meetings to the Christmas party, we have set up speed networking sessions and seminars covering planning, small events, booking business travel, all eligible for IPA CPD points. We are confident that RSVP North will leave you inspired and full of brilliant ideas to help transform your future events," said Event Director John Dare.



Over 100 exhibitors offering everything from venues to catering and entertainment to badging and AV. Come and have some fun in the team-building workshops, create your own individual scent at the fragrance studio or try your hand at pottery making. You can take a breather at the Harvey Nichols Bar and Food Market Café and sample their delicious cocktails.

Register online and you could be a winner!

Win a 2 night B&B stay at the Best Western Moorside Grange Hotel and Spa in the picturesque Peak District by registering online at www.rsvpnorth.co.uk and for your free ticket!



Ideal Home Show

20 March – 5 April, Earl's Court

The new-look **Ideal Home Show** explores the world of home interiors and style with a fresh, new inspiring and entertaining show format that combines EIGHT shows in one, offering; Ideal Interiors, Ideal Home Improvements, Ideal Food, Ideal Gardens, Ideal Home Gadgets, Ideal Shopping, Ideal Woman and Ideal Village, as well as expert advice on everything from DIY and design to fine dining, gadgets and beauty. **For full details and to book tickets visit www.idealhomeshow.co.uk**

Keeping things clean and fresh with new products from AF

AF International, specialist suppliers of ICT cleaning products to the office market, have introduced Foamclene Pump Action, an environmentally friendly foaming cleaning solution, a small handy, hand sanitising gel and a comprehensive whiteboard cleaning.



Foamclene is available in a 200ml eco-friendly pump-action bottle which can also be refilled and reused up to 6 times using the 1 litre refill. Both the pump bottle and 1 litre bottle can be recycled once empty.

Hand-Clene sanitising gel has added vitamin E and blend of emollients minimises the drying effects associated with alcohol-based hand gels. The gel starts to work immediately to kill bacteria, yeasts and moulds and dries quickly in approximately 30 seconds to leave the skin sanitised and pleasantly conditioned. The small, conveniently sized 50ml pump bottle makes the product perfect for personal use, its tiny enough to place inside a handbag, briefcase or school bag taking up minimum amount of space.



The **AF Whiteboard Cleaning Kit** has been developed to meet demands of the education and corporate markets. The kit includes a pump action cleaning solution, eraser, cleaning cloths and multi-coloured pens and magnets.

'Good enough to eat' bath bomb gift set – perfect for Mother's Day

The Bomb Cosmetics range brings us scrumptious handmade soaps, bath bombs and bath melts with amazing natural fragrances. This luxury set of 6 Bath Melts is beautifully presented in a gift box tied with a bow.

The gift set contains a Rose Bath Creamer, Purple Bath Mallow, Marigold Bath Creamer, Rosebud Buttercup, Pink Bath Gem and Jade Bath Gem Bath Melt. Containing Cocoa butter and Shea Butter, these sumptuous Bath Melts will soften skin and help with things like wrinkles and stretch marks!



Use your Brulee Bath Melt up to four times by dropping it in the bath and allowing a portion of it to melt. Your Brulee will fizz very softly, releasing moisturising Cocoa Butter and softening the water. Rub the creamy foam into your skin. Remember to only allow a portion of your Brulee to dissolve and remove it from the bath to save the rest for later!

Priced at £9.99 from www.bombcosmetics.co.uk

Portable Audio for Your Laptop

Logitech have announced the arrival of their Laptop Speaker Z205 — a lightweight speaker with a clip-on design that lets you pump up the volume wherever you take your laptop.

Laptop and netbook computers are portable and powerful enough to do everything you love such as enjoying music, movies and video calls. But as computers have become smaller, audio quality has often been sacrificed. Logitech's new speaker was designed to help people get better audio while enjoying their favourite shows or music without sacrificing portability. The Laptop Speaker Z205 is tiny enough to toss in your bag, but delivers big sound. www.logitech.com



Portable scanning power from the world's smallest document scanner – ScanSnap S1300

ScanSnap S1300 is a compact scanning solution for both Windows and Mac that creates PDF files from double sided multipage paper documents by simply pressing a button. Complete with unique imaging functions and powerful scanning software, the ScanSnap S1300 is suitable for mobile as well as office use.

Its one touch functionality converts paper documents into PDF files, and is also capable of paper size detection, de-skewing, image orientation correction and blank page removal.

Measuring only 284 x 99 x 77 mm and with a weight of 1.4 kg, it is handy, convenient and easily portable. It captures documents from the most common international paper sizes as well as business cards, post cards and letters, making it ideally suited for scanning in the office and on the move.

Must have Portable Rubber Keyboard

This Flexible Portable Keyboard really does have the wow factor! In a fetching shade of pink, it's a full size 109-key

keyboard that can be rolled up, folded, and generally

squished into handy pockets, but due to its fully sealed silicone rubber design, it is waterproof, dust proof, coffee proof – pretty much everything-proof!

It even has caps lock, number lock and scroll lights, just like a conventional 'hard' keyboard.

Available from www.gadgets.co.uk priced at £12.95



MANCHESTER CENTRAL

Conferences ★ Events ★
Parties ★ Networking ★
Awards ★ Product Launches ★
Meetings ★ Seminars

The North's premier exhibition for the corporate party and events industry. Over 150 exhibitors offering everything from business travel to hospitality and staging to venues.

- ★ **RSVPA North** – featuring specially designed seminars and industry talks for PAs and Event Organisers.
- ★ **RSVP Virgins** – get inspired by the new faces at the show.
- ★ **Harvey Nichols Cocktail Bar and Food Market Café** – open for business, or just kick back and relax!
- ★ **Free workshops** including fragrance designing, chocolate and pottery making!

Register online at www.rsvpnorth.co.uk for a free ticket and you could win a 2 night B&B stay at the Best Western Moorside Grange Hotel and Spa in the Peak District.

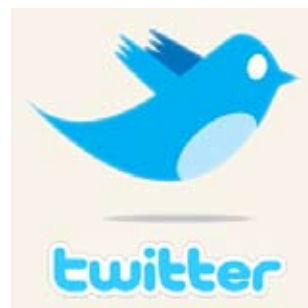
Stylish cuisine based event management

Based in Weybridge, Surrey, **Tapenade** work throughout the UK for team functions and corporate hospitality. From complete event management through to bespoke culinary creations and custom-designed menus, Tapenade can help to tailor make an event to suit your companies' specific needs and provide everything you will need to make your event a success including lighting, entertainment and theming

The company has catered for large scale events including The British Grand Prix, The Farnborough and Paris air shows, Ryder Cup and Decorex Interior Design Exhibition and its services are used by a wide range of clients such as GlaxoSmithKline.

Tapenade's sister company, Best Parties Ever is one of the UK's leading Christmas party specialist. www.tapenade.co.uk

tapenade
exclusive cuisine



Marriott seeks Twitter users' reviews of its revamped hotels

Marriott Hotels is recruiting celebrities and other Twitter users to provide the company with feedback on its recent £120m refurbishment programme.

The campaign has invited users of Twitter to review the refurbished hotels by communicating their thoughts and experiences live on the social networking site.

"Twitter is an incredibly powerful communication tool and whilst we are not attempting to replace traditional methods of hotel reviewing, we want to communicate news of the refurbished hotels in an original and forward thinking way that resonates well with our guests," said Osama Hirzalla, vice president brand marketing and ecommerce, Europe, for Marriott.



Abode Hotels plans to double in size to 15 properties

Boutique hotel firm Abode Hotels, founded by Michelin-starred chef Michael Caines and greetings card entrepreneur Andrew Brownsword, is to double its property portfolio. The company said that it aimed to increase its estate to 15 hotels over the coming few years at locations across the UK. Future potential targets include Salisbury, Oxford and London.

Macdonald Hotels signs up venues to Fair Pricing Charter

Macdonald Hotels and Resorts has signed up to the Olympics 2012 Fair Pricing Charter, which is designed to keep charges at a reasonable level around the Games.

In doing so, the company has become the first national hotel group to sign up to the agreement, meaning 45 of its UK venues will pledge to maintain fair prices leading up to and during the London Olympics.

Macdonald Hotels and Resorts' sales and marketing director Ruaridh Macdonald said that the Games presented a unique opportunity for the company to showcase its offering on a world stage.

Macdonald Hotels opens new property in Windsor

Macdonald Hotels & Resorts have announced the opening, in August 2010, of a new 120-bedroom hotel in Windsor.

The Macdonald Windsor hotel, a contemporary townhouse in the centre of the town, is to be developed on the site of the former Caley's department store, which was originally owned by the John Lewis Partnership.

While some of the store has been demolished, around 25% of the hotel will sit within the original grade II listed building and will retain some of its original features.

Thistle comes out on top at hotel excellence awards

Thistle Hotels has secured a prestigious award at the HRS.com Hotel Excellence Awards, the equivalent of the hotel industry Oscars.

The Thistle Hotel in Middlesbrough scooped the highly prestigious 'Excellence Through People' award, beating the Jumeirah Carlton Tower in London in the process. The award is testimony to Thistle Hotel's continued investment in employee training and development. An increase in profits up 22 per cent, in light of difficult trading conditions, in the judges' words, made the hotel a clear winner.

Managing Director of Thistle Hotels, Heiko Figge commented: "We have been operating in a very tough economic climate, but have focused on keeping our employees motivated and engaged through a number of training and development initiatives. Winning an award like this is a real testimony to the work of the team."



Workplace issues

Five Simple Ways to Get a Pay Rise

While you don't have to quit your current position to fatten your paycheque – especially if it's one you enjoy – you do have to speak up. Here are some steps you can take to obtain the rise you deserve:

1 Build your case

Your desire to buy a new house or goal of paying off student loans are not valid reasons for a higher salary. Instead, you must demonstrate a compelling business reason for being paid more. Document all your responsibilities to date, focusing specifically on how your efforts have helped the company achieve its objectives. For example, perhaps you helped re-design a website that increased traffic and sales by 15 per cent or took on additional responsibilities to save others time. Gathering concrete data, and being able to present this information in an organised manner, is critical to positioning yourself as a valuable asset

to your employer.

2 Research the going rate

It's always a good idea to investigate what others in your area and with your qualifications are being paid before approaching your boss for a rise. Estimating your worth on the open market will ensure you don't under or oversell your services.

3 Build your case over time

Despite his or her best intentions, your boss may not be aware of the many projects you're involved with. To prevent your achievements from being overlooked, consider providing your manager with a weekly status report that summarises the assignments you're working on and have recently completed. A record of consistent performance can bolster your case for a rise.

4 Time it right

While the most logical time to discuss a rise is during your performance review, it could be advantageous to speak with your supervisor about the issue before your next evaluation rolls around. For example, you might broach the subject with your boss after you've successfully completed a major project. Just be sure to schedule the meeting at a time when you know he or she won't be overwhelmed with deadlines.

5 Prepare a 'Plan B'

If a pay rise is not in your employer's budget, consider negotiating other benefits, such as more holiday time, a flexible schedule or a larger performance-based bonus. If these requests are denied, ask your boss how to best position yourself for a future rise and arrange a date for a follow-up meeting to discuss your progress toward this goal.

Like any negotiation, securing a rise requires preparation and finesse.

Taking the time and effort to craft a compelling case and make your value to the company clear will help you increase your chances of getting paid what you're worth.

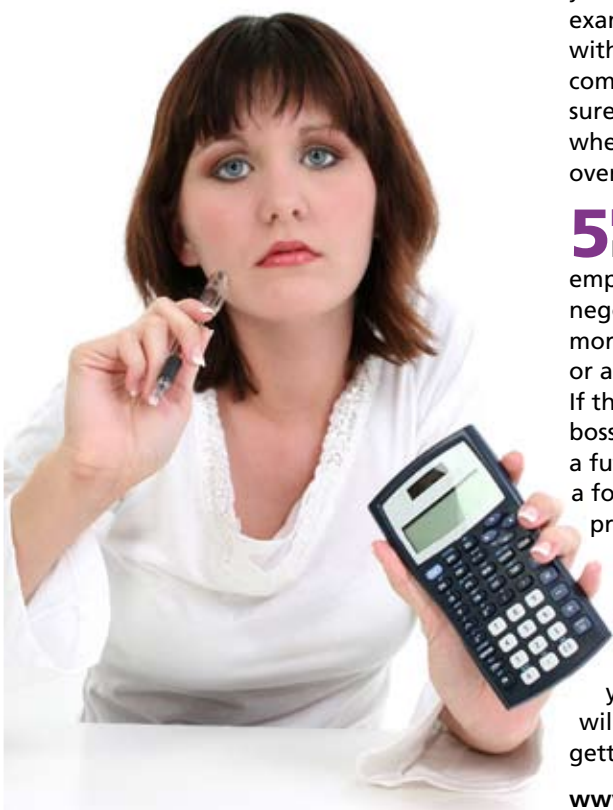
www.careerbuilder.co.uk

Interview do's and don'ts

An interview is a discussion between you and an employer to find out if you can do the job. However, there are certain rules and conventions to follow in interviews. Here's a checklist of the main do's and don'ts.

What to do:

- Dress smartly, look bright and attentive, and speak clearly and confidently. Don't forget that only 7% of the interviewer's opinion of you is formed by what you say - the rest is judged on how you look, act and sound
- Find out where the venue is beforehand, how to get there and how long it takes
- Find out what kind of interview it will be so you can prepare
- Examine the person specification and your CV/application form, and think about what type of questions they will ask you
- Prepare answers for the main questions - for example, why do you want the job, what are your strengths and weaknesses, what are the main tasks in this job
- Quote real examples of when you've used certain skills - just saying you've got a skill isn't enough
- Take your time when answering the questions. Make sure you understand the question and take your time if you need to think
- Sell yourself. No-one else is going to! Be positive about yourself and your experiences
- Prepare some questions to ask at the end - use it as an opportunity to find out more about the role and the company. But don't ask about money or perks just yet!
- When discussing salary, know your market worth and start by quoting a little higher than this
- Get feedback on your performance, whether you were successful or not
- Turn off your mobile! Treat the



interviewers with respect and give them your undivided attention

- Keep your answers focused on what you can do for the employer, not what they can do for you

What not to do:

- Don't be late!
- Don't swear or use slang words
- Don't slouch in your seat or do anything else that makes you look disinterested
- Don't lie! The interviewer may see through you. Even if you get the job, your employer can dismiss you if they find out
- Don't let your nerves show too much. A few nerves are normal but extreme nerves will affect your performance. Use breathing techniques and try to remember that it's not a life and death situation - there are plenty of jobs out there!
- Don't be arrogant and assume you've got the job. Nothing turns off employers more than someone who is disrespectful and over-confident
- Don't discuss controversial topics such as religion, politics and gender relations
- Don't read from notes or your CV. You should be familiar enough with your own history to be able to talk about it unprompted
- Don't criticise former employers or colleagues. Interviewers may mark you down as a troublemaker and a gossip
- Don't argue with the interviewer, no matter what. Remember to keep things positive!

These rules apply for most jobs. However, employers in some industries can use more relaxed and informal interviewing techniques. In some creative fields (design and media for example) it may be expected that you turn up for the interview in casual clothes, as that is the dress code in the office. If you're in any doubt, do some research on typical interview technique in your line of work.

Above all, preparation is the key to performing well in interviews. Research the role and organisation, and prepare evidence and examples of your skills and competencies.

For more careers advice go to <http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk>



Getting Involved in Office Gossip

Before we talk about all that is wrong with gossip and why you shouldn't, let's just take a minute to say what's right with it. Gossiping can be such a lovely way to pass some time, especially if tat tie happens to be a Friday afternoon when the boss has gone home and we're getting paid for it! Oh, what a joy to hear about someone else's misfortune, or how Becky on reception really fancies Mike the sales manager and won't tell him when his wife calls.

As long as it's not about you, gossip is a wonderful thing, the problem is, one day it will be about you and you will regret getting stuck in to other people's troubles.

So, gossip and what's wrong with it. Firstly, you don't look very professional when you are the one with all the office juice. At the risk of sounding like a killjoy, you are there to work, so the less work you actually do, the less you will be respected as a competent member of staff. Secondly, if you are known for being a gossip, people are more likely to turn their backs if you need their help one day.

However, it does not necessarily mean that it a good idea to have nothing at all to do with office gossip – it can be a useful source of information about potential promotions, company troubles and new initiatives. What you need to know is what and how much gossip to get involved with.

Don't get carried away

If you hear some juicy gossip, don't pass it on if it will hurt anyone, including you and your reputation. If it won't, pick your receivers carefully – you can gain and loose valuable credibility points by picking the wrong people.

Don't be cruel

Even if there is someone you really don't like, gossiping about them is not the best way to handle it. Speak to HR or talk to them directly if you're brave enough, but being the office bitch won't help anyone, least of all you.

Don't be the subject of gossip

Other people may not be lucky enough to have read this, so if they hear something tantalising about you, they will possibly pass it around like a hot potato. Don't make gossip and you can't be gossiped about.

Don't loose sight of why you're there

It's a workplace and you are supposed to be working. Some things like going to the warehouse or ordering stationary can be a welcome diversion to your day, but a good old gossip isn't productive.

Do know your limits

If someone tells you some gossip, tough as it may seem, make them stop before you know something you can't 'un-know'.

Do realise the value of being a good listener

If you are known as giving good advice and not being a gossip, you can learn all sorts and not spoil your position – just remember you're at work.

Do keep your work and private lives separate

You can do whatever you like out of work just don't bring in your troubles to the workplace and expect people to be sympathetic.

Do enjoy your job

A little gentle gossip can go a long way in making your job more enjoyable – just don't get carried away.

www.workrelationships.co.uk

email ETIQUETTE

It is amazing to find that in this day and age, some companies have still not realized how important their email communications are. Many companies send email replies late or not at all, or send replies that do not actually answer the questions you asked. If your company is able to deal professionally with email, this will provide your company with that all important competitive edge. Moreover by educating employees as to what can and cannot be said in an email, you can protect your company from awkward liability issues.

Be concise and to the point

Do not make an email longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an email is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very discouraging to read.

Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation

This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of your company, it is also important for conveying the message properly. Emails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.

Make it personal

Not only should the email be personally addressed, it should also include personal i.e. customized content. For this reason auto replies are usually not very effective.

Answer swiftly

Email should be replied to within at least 24 hours, and preferably within the same working day. If the email is complicated, just send an email back saying that you have received it and that you will get back to them.

Do not attach unnecessary files

Sending large attachments can be very annoying to the recipient and even bring down their email system.

Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive.

Use proper structure & layout

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and lay out is very important for email messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview.

Do not overuse the high priority option

We all know the story of the boy who cried wolf. If you overuse the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it.

Do not write in CAPITALS

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail.

Don't leave out the message thread

When you reply to an email, it's often useful to include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. If you receive many emails you obviously cannot remember each individual email. This means that a 'threadless email' will not provide enough information and

you will have to spend a frustratingly long time to find out the context of the email in order to deal with it. Leaving the thread might take a fraction longer in download time, but it will save the recipient much more time and frustration in looking for the related emails in their inbox!

Add disclaimers to your emails

It is important to add disclaimers to your internal and external mails, since this can help protect your company from liability.

Read the email before sending

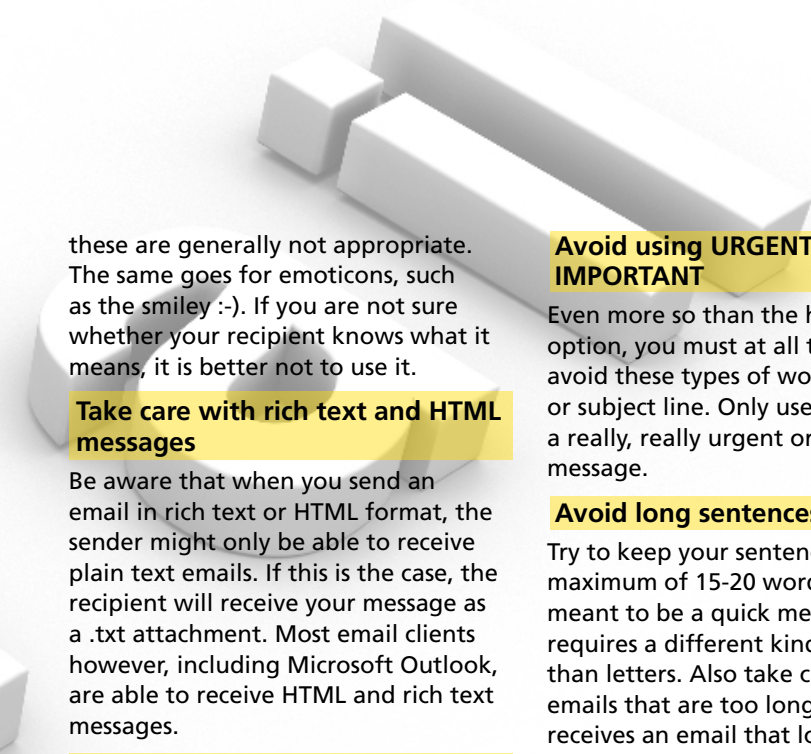
A lot of people don't bother to read an email before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

Do not overuse Reply to All

Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

Take care with abbreviations and emoticons

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails



these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

Take care with rich text and HTML messages

Be aware that when you send an email in rich text or HTML format, the sender might only be able to receive plain text emails. If this is the case, the recipient will receive your message as a .txt attachment. Most email clients however, including Microsoft Outlook, are able to receive HTML and rich text messages.

Do not request delivery and read receipts

This will almost always annoy your recipient before he or she has even read your message. Besides, it usually does not work anyway since the recipient could have blocked that function, or his/her software might not support it, so what is the use of using it? If you want to know whether an email was received it is better to ask the recipient to let you know if it was received.

Do not use email to discuss confidential information

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

Use a meaningful subject

Try to use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. For instance, when you send an email to a company requesting information about a product, it is better to mention the actual name of the product, e.g. 'Product A information' than to just say 'product information' or the company's name in the subject.

Use active instead of passive

Try to use the active voice of a verb wherever possible. For instance, 'We will process your order today', sounds better than 'Your order will be processed today'. The first sounds more personal, whereas the latter, especially when used frequently, sounds unnecessarily formal.

Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT

Even more so than the high-priority option, you must at all times try to avoid these types of words in an email or subject line. Only use this if it is a really, really urgent or important message.

Avoid long sentences

Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters. Also take care not to send emails that are too long. If a person receives an email that looks like a dissertation, chances are that they will not even attempt to read it!

Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks

By sending or even just forwarding one libelous, or offensive remark in an email, you and your company can face court cases resulting in hefty penalties.

Don't reply to spam

By replying to spam or by unsubscribing, you are confirming that your email address is 'live'. Confirming this will only generate even more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically.

Use cc: field sparingly

Try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message. Also, when responding to a cc: message, should you include the other recipient in the cc: field as well? This will depend on the situation. In general, do not include the person in the cc: field unless you have a particular reason for wanting this person to see your response. Again, make sure that this person will know why they are receiving a copy.

www.emailreplies.com explains how to send effective email replies. It discusses why email etiquette is necessary and explains how to enforce these rules by creating a company email policy

Email security

1 Never open any email attachment unless you are expecting it and you know what it contains. If you are unsure, contact the sender by e-mail, text, phone or some other method to confirm that what they sent was not a virus.

2 Never click on a link in an email message unless you are expecting it and you are 100% sure of its authenticity. If you are unsure, contact the sender by e-mail, text, phone or some other method to confirm that they sent it to you. Clicking on a link to a web site, amusing video clip, etc can install a Trojan Horse on your computer.

3 Never run any program that is emailed to you, no matter who has sent it to you. "Free" screen savers and games are used to infect computers with viruses, Trojan Horses, Spyware, etc. These screen savers and games can work perfectly well and the infection that they carry may not become obvious for months.

4 Beware of email scams and hoaxes - they come in many forms but you should never respond to any of them. Some pretend to be from your bank or other organization and ask you to click on the link in the email and re-enter your account information, including your PIN or credit card details. Clicking the link takes you to a web site that will look like your bank or other organizations web site but is designed to capture your account details. These details are then used to empty your bank account or charge items to your credit card.

Other hoaxes purport to be from Microsoft and request that you click a link in the email to update your security protection. When the link is clicked a Trojan Horse is downloaded on to your computer and installs itself. Remember, reputable organisations like banks, Internet service providers, Ebay, etc who hold details of your bank account or credit card will never email you to ask you to re-enter your account details. And Microsoft never send emails about security updates.



How to get control over your email

Is your inbox overflowing? Open it now. How many emails do you have sitting in there? 2? 12? 52? 200? 500? How many of those are still relevant and require actioning today? Interesting question isn't it!

Controlling your email is like any other aspect of your job, you need to be really good at it and if you're not, you need to learn some new strategies so you can become better. Letting your email get out of control is no different to having piles of paperwork spread from one end of your desk to the other. It's messy, it's disorganised, it causes you to lose time searching for things and it ends up causing you stress.

How long does it take to delete an email? A second, half a second maybe? Think about how quick this is compared to how long it takes to search for an email from three or even ten days ago that's now lost in the black hole of your inbox.

Tips to sorting out your inbox:

► Answer your email only after you've planned your day

It's important to prioritise your action list and make sure you know what you've got on for the rest of the day before you go spending time addressing a pile of emails. Could some of the emails sitting in your inbox be left until later in the morning or early afternoon? Many emails can wait to be answered later on that day, especially if the email is not urgent or important. Remember that if an email is really

urgent, most people will call you as well.

► Turn off your email notifier

Don't you have enough beeps and buzzers in your life? Don't let the beep of the email notifier distract you every few minutes. You need to keep control your email and not the 'bing... you have new mail' control you. Check email when you are ready, not when you hear the bing.

► Use A,B,C,D,E when checking your email

Work on the A and B email first and leave the C email until later. Remember, D is for delegate and E for eliminate.

► Clear your inbox at the end of each day

Set aside five minutes at the end of your day to clear out your inbox and organise your remaining emails. It may seem like an annoying chore at a time, but you will be thankful for it in the morning when you have a clean slate to start with. It's also a good way to make those last few minutes of the day go by faster.

► Set up folders within your email program

Make folders for everything and everyone. Give each of your clients and associates their own folder. Have a 'To Do' folder, a 'Miscellaneous' folder, an 'Accounts' folder and something like a 'Travel' folder.

Have as many folders as necessary; it will make your life a whole lot easier when you're trying to clear your inbox at the end of the day, as well as when you are searching for older emails.

To learn more about managing your time and priorities, visit www.success.net.au



89%
*recycled**

Excluding replaceable parts

**Mainly made from recycled plastic bottles.
Made in France in an environmentally
friendly factory (ISO 14001).*

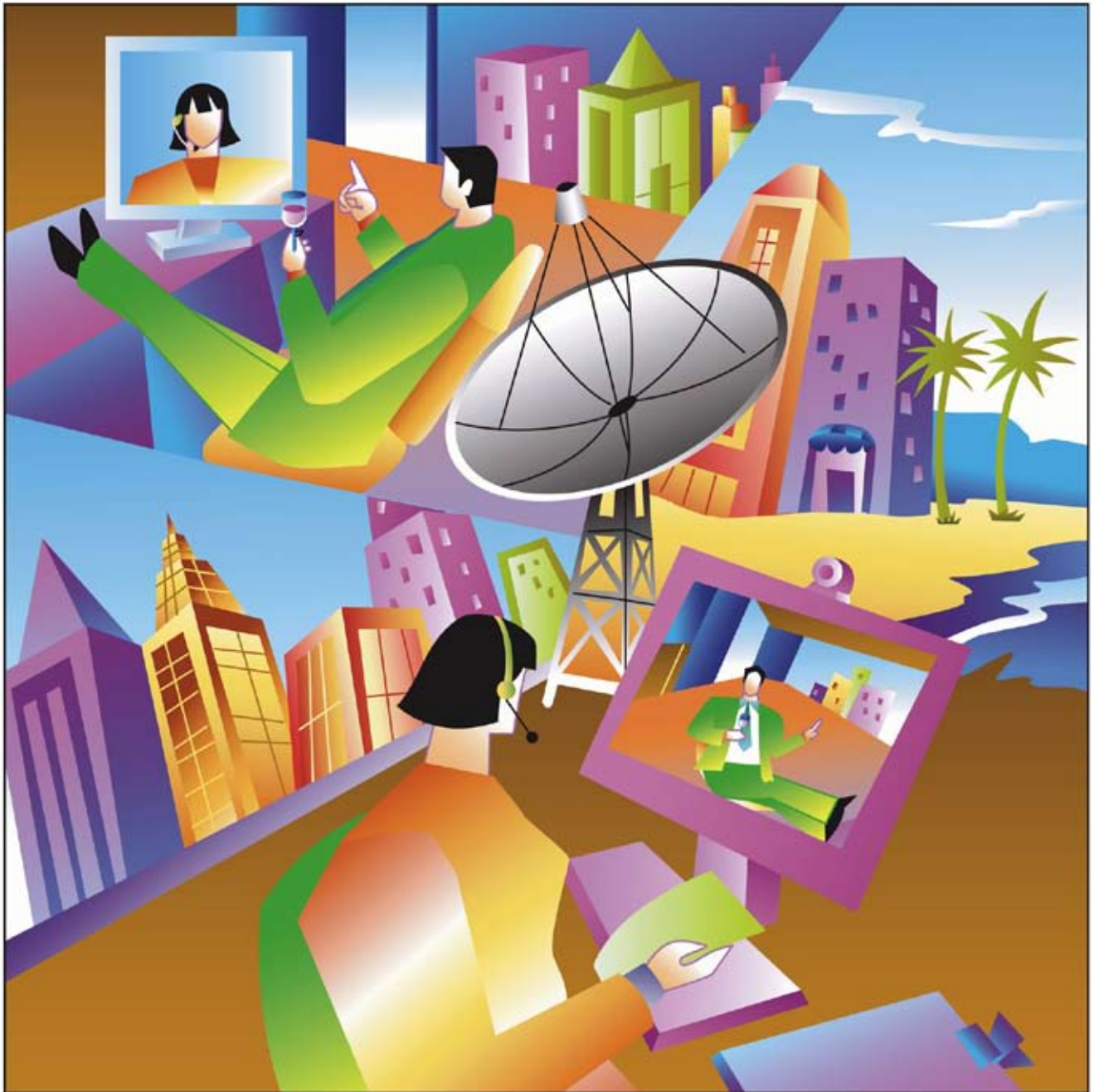
From Bottle to Pen

- **Refillable** retractable gel ink rollerball pen
- Smoothest writing
- Vivid colours
- Available in fine & extra fine



 **PILOT**
BEGREEN 

Do you dread the Conference Call?



Just the very mention of a conference call can strike fear into the most experienced and competent of people. Those stilted conversations, the strange grey triangle phone and the lack of understanding British humour. Not to mention the colleague who desperately tries to talk the most, sucking up to the boss, or the international colleague whose accent you can't understand. Conference call etiquette really is important – here we look at some of the issues.

► Preparation is Key

As the very nature of a conference call requires a certain number of people to be in a certain place at a certain time, it is likely that you will have plenty of notice to prepare for the call. It may be that your office has a set day and time each week to speak with an international office, or a member of staff in another location. If this is the case, the first call you are part of will be the most embarrassing. That may sound a bit dramatic, but rest assured that the first conference call you are involved with will be the worst as you have yet to learn the little looks, delays and enforced laughter that are all part of conference call etiquette.

► A New Way of Talking

In order to lessen the impact of your first conference call experience, first you must accept that this is an entirely other worldly experience, one in which people talk in a whole new manner. In order to not look like you are poking fun at your colleagues or not taking your job seriously, you will need to talk the same. Try to imagine that you are being interviewed on radio – the pace of conversation needs to be clear to those at the other end, rather than for those in the room. Of course, how you come across to those in the room is important too as it will inevitably be your boss, plus significant others.

The preparation for your first conference call should also include understanding the subject which is to be discussed. If it is a weekly project update type call, make sure you know the details of the project and any specific areas you are responsible for. If it is a call to discuss a set topic, make sure you ask the person hosting the call, or your boss, what the purpose of the call is and what they hope to achieve from it.

► Confidence and presentation

Conference calls tend to include senior members of staff and can be both in-house calls between offices and calls to and from clients. This is fast becoming a more green, cost effective way for international communication, so can involve all sorts of technology – video conferencing is gaining popularity, so personal presentation needs to be considered here too.

On a practical level, if you have notes that you have prepared yourself or been given by a colleague, do not rustle them, or cough, or shuffle about. These

noises can be picked up and can be irritating.

If you are asked a direct question and can feel everyone looking at you, take a deep breath and remember that you are fully prepared. You will know the answer, so you can say 'I'm just consulting my notes' if you need to buy some time. Speak clearly, with your face in the direction of the crazy triangle phone. Try not to over explain.

After your first conference call, you will be far better equipped to prepare yourself for subsequent calls.

Powwownow targets Anti-Social Conference Calling Behaviour Order

Recent research conducted by **Powwownow** has found that people are put off using conference calls by other attendees' anti-social behaviour.

The behaviour, including noisy eating, swearing, sniffing, and heavy breathing, uncovered by Powwownow was deemed unsuitable on conference calls during the poll of their Premium customers. Those who have regular calls with serial offenders have reported that it discourages them from using conference calls to conduct their business.

In order to tackle this growing national problem Powwownow are announcing the ASCCBO (Anti-Social Conference Calling Behaviour Order). The ban runs on a '**three strikes and you're out**' rule and started on 1st March. It will encourage users to be more considerate to other people on conference calls.

Oliver Thompson of Oliverthompsontraining.co.uk, a regular user of the Powwownow's conference calling service commented, 'I find it really off putting when you are trying to hold a training seminar and there are people sniffing or worse you can hear them eating down the phone! I don't feel I can start telling people off so I am really pleased Powwownow are imposing this ban'. Responding to recent customer survey results, Powwownow are attempting to help their user's conference calling experience.

'Conference calls are a great way to have a more relaxed meeting, we don't care if you stay in your PJs or even stay in bed, no snoring though please! By introducing this ban we just hope to make conference calling more pleasant for everyone!' says CEO Andy Pearce.

So, If you think someone deserves to be served an ASCCBO go to www.powwownow.co.uk/ASCCBO and report them!



How to organise the **Best Event ever!**

by Jackie De Burca



By nature most of us are social animals who like to be stimulated by interesting surroundings, great conversations, fine food and drink and a lovely environment. When it comes to organising an event these are the most important ingredients to take into account. Firstly to put together the best event you need to analyse the target market honestly regardless of what the occasion. Next give yourself plenty of time to plan as well as a realistic budget throw these together with some creativity but don't forget the necessities such as event insurance.

The most creative and positively talked about events come from organisation based on lateral thinking and then drilled down into a huge amount of attention to detail.

Who is your target market?

This may sound like an extreme term but actually any group of event goers are best seen as a target market as this means that you will have really thought about them as an overall group dynamic and not just a random bunch of party goers. This puts you in the driving seat at the beginning and can even help out a lot with savings on the event budget. Naturally some target markets seem more difficult to categorise perhaps with different age groups from generations of a widespread family being one example of this.

Lateral thinking

This leads onto to the next event organisational tip of lateral thinking. The most creative and positively talked about events come from organisation based on lateral thinking and then drilled down into a huge amount of attention to detail. To take the family example one way to apply both this target market with lateral thinking is to consider a family tree theme. Since the census information went online this is a huge trend in the UK so therefore likely to be well received by family members.

Even if you don't have a huge budget this is an easy theme to work with but you will need to do some research first but then you could have paper placemats with the family tree printed on them or menus which people can take home afterwards. Depending on the budget you can take this further and send family members out a predecessors name and description prior to the event and request that they come in fancy dress according

to the character and time period.

This will lead to a great mix of costumes, fun and at the same time people getting to know something more about their ancestors.

Remember it was unlikely that your ancestors had mobile phones or cheap event insurance in their days, so leave the mobile at home or hide it well turned on vibrating somewhere inside your costume!

With events which have a well defined target market then you have lots of scope. If you do not come up with a creative idea which excites you at first then brainstorm with a select few and after a session you are sure to have come up with a stylish but memorable theme which is fitting to the target market. Now remember to always go deep into the details as this really will impress your event goers, even if done on a cheap budget it is this level of thought which makes an event special. Lots of people with money can lay on a lavish event but this does not mean it has the class and style of a well developed event concept.

Whatever the event, once you have the concept that you know people will love then you will be naturally passionate about organising it. This takes away an element of the hard work involved as you will feel driven by the excitement.

Brainstorming

For the event concept sketch out on paper or do a document on your computer which is like a brainstorming document. It can work out from a circle which is the main theme then with various smaller circles coming out which are the ingredients bouncing out from

the theme.

Include as much detail as possible and when you are 100% finished transform this into a list so that you can categorise what you need to do such as decorations, food, drink, fancy dress, guest list, event insurance, transport organisation and so on. Whenever budget allows consider transport or if it is a bigger budget than of course overnight accommodation, but at least transport so that people have the chance to enjoy themselves knowing that they can take a drink and get home safely at the end of the event. If the budget does not allow for minibuses or some form of transport then supply the guests with numbers of taxi firms when they are not familiar with the area.

Do not underestimate the amount of work involved and be sure to delegate some tasks in the early stages so as not to panic towards the end. Of course you can oversee everything yourself but be realistic about how many hours there are in a day!

Timing is key

Last but not least is the timing of an event, as they say timing is everything. So make sure that the timing is suitable for the event goers but at the same time gives you plenty of time to organise the best event. Throughout all of the time spent planning refer back to your checklist keeping it up to date and tick off the vital tasks such as event insurance in the early stages so they are never overlooked.

For event insurance go to www.arthursavage.co.uk/event-insurance.html

Planning events is major responsibility, and one that few people accomplish successfully on their first try. However, as an administrative assistant, your job may depend on your ability to plan and organize events such as seminars or other meetings in a clean, professional and efficient manner. There is often no time – or room – for error in these types of circumstances, so always factor in the following tips and tricks to have a successful event planning track record from day one.

1 Always read the contract – and be ready to refuse to sign

Many people sign contracts with hotels, caterers and other service providers without fighting for the terms that meet their needs. This can be because the service providers exert pressure on you to go ahead and sign, then work out the details later, or because they are concerned about being rude. Always remember, once you put ink to paper, you are obligated to fulfill the requirements of the contract even if you do not like them – and the service provider is under no obligation to work anything out with you after you sign. Major pitfalls include guaranteeing rooms and paying a set price “per head” when it comes to food and drink. You can make that contract say anything you want, so do not be afraid to negotiate aggressively to save yourself money in the long- and short-term.

2 Book your event to suit your budget

If it is not vitally important to have the event on a given date, try to work around the dates that are in major demand. You can often get serious discounts on rooms and meeting facilities if you have the option of booking last minute or if you can steer around the “busy season” so that the facilities and service providers need you more than you need them.

3 Make things easy for the participants

Long after people have forgotten what type of food you provided or the flowers and mints on the tables, they will remember the ease and comfort of the meeting experience you provided. Work with the local convention and visitor’s bureau to get maps of transit options and other informational flyers to provide to guests to make sure that they know what entertainment is available to them and also how to get around the general area.

The ability to plan and execute a successful event is fairly uncommon in the business world. However, by using these tips and your own common sense, you will soon find that the process can be smooth and even enjoyable.



Event Planning tips that will save you stress and money

WHY I LOVE MY BROTHER LABELLER

Diane Lofthouse
The Raft

**ONE ROLL PRINTS
ANY LENGTH**
FROM LABELS TO SIGNAGE

**YOU CAN PRINT
DIRECT FROM**
WORD, EXCEL & OUTLOOK

"We've not had our QL machine for long. But it really has been a godsend. I used to spend ages producing address labels for our mail, but since we invested in a QL machine, I can do it in no time. I simply print all the labels I need instantly at the touch of a button and WOOSH! - they're ready!"

Contact your usual stationery supplier or visit www.brother.co.uk/office

All Brother label printers come with a 3 year warranty upon registration.



QL-570

Seven ways to have more **Creative Ideas** than you thought possible



By Dan Goodwin

Anyone who creates needs a steady influx of new ideas. Everything ever created, everything ever invented, began with a tiny gem of an idea in someone's mind. Every single one began the same way.

So it follows that if we don't have any ideas to work with, we're not going to be able to create anything.

Here to help you out are seven brilliant ways to have more creative ideas than you thought possible.

Ready to be more creative? Then sign up to *Create Create!*, creativity coach Dan Goodwin's free twice monthly ezine, and get your free copy of the *Explode Your Creativity! Action Workbook*. Just head over to www.coachcreative.com

1 Use your senses.

We experience the world through our five senses, and we create using them too. But often we ignore our surroundings so much that we might as well be wandering around with a bucket of jam on our head!

Wherever you are, the world around you is thriving with stimuli. Focus on just one of your senses, for example your sight, for five minutes, and write down everything you experience, every last detail. The more you do this simple exercise, the more alert and aware you'll become, and you'll realise that stimulation for new creative ideas is everywhere.

2 Write lists

Ideas often come and go in our minds, and the problem is not actually manifesting the ideas, but capturing them before they disappear. How often have you had a flash of inspiration, vowed you'll work on it later, only to completely forget it moment afterwards?

Writing lists firstly is a way of recording those ideas as soon as they occur, but the added benefit is that once you have a few items in a list, your mind naturally wants to add more. Plus you're creativity will begin looking at different things in your list and ways of combining or cross pollinating them. A very powerful idea breeding ground. Try it!

3 Read a range of materials

If you read the same magazines, articles, websites and books, then although you are getting new content, it's likely to be in a very similar style and tone to that you've already seen. So after a while, its ability to stimulate new thoughts in you will diminish and eventually dry up. Which isn't very helpful for generating new ideas.

There's an easy solution. Read a range of materials, and especially in areas you've never read before. Try a gardening magazine, a carpentry blog, a biography of a racing driver, or a novel set in 14th century Japan. Find stuff that's very new to you, and it will instantly stir up new connections and ideas in your mind.

4 Visit new places

When we visit the same places

the whole time, travel the same routes to work, or college or to our favourite haunts, we can become blind to everything around us. It's as if we travel on autopilot and become immune to any fresh stimulation.

An obvious remedy is to visit a few new places, where your mind and senses are going to automatically be more alive, because of the different surroundings. Even better, take a camera, sketchbook or notebook and record everything that interests you. New ideas will be triggered left, right and centre.

5 Write freeform, edit later

Sometimes the best ideas aren't right on the surface, beautifully formed and waiting to be plucked like a fresh juicy peach on a low branch of the tree. Sometimes the best ideas take a bit of probing, a little digging up.

A great way of doing this is to just write freeform about whatever you wish to. Even if your first few lines seem boring, or even nonsense, keep writing non-stop for at least ten minutes. As you go, you'll find your creative mind going off at intriguing tangents that will spur exciting new thoughts and ideas. Then, simply pluck out the best bits and expand them into new creative projects.

6 Keep an ideas journal

Your mind is just as capable of having an endless supply of creative ideas as the next person, but sometimes it might not feel like that. The main reason is nearly always that you're not capturing the ideas you do have.

Get a simple notebook or journal to become your Ideas Journal. Every time you have an idea, write it down. The more you use the journal, the more ideas you'll notice. An added bonus is the ideas you record will magically begin to grow, so when you return to them you'll find all kind of offshoot thoughts appearing too. Start your Ideas Journal today!

7 Believe you're capable of having ideas

This is crucial. If you're going around with an inner monologue that goes something like: "I'm not creative, I NEVER have any good ideas" then guess what? You'll never have any good ideas! By believing you're creative, you greatly increase the frequency of ideas you have.

Here's a simple way to prove you're creative. Imagine a small boy called Peter, who wears blue shorts and has a magic horse. Now I guarantee that you've already pictured Peter and his horse in your mind, and are wondering what he's like, why the horse is magic and what adventures they might get up to. Am I right? See! You're far more creative than you think, believe in yourself and your creativity!

These are 7 ways to have more creative ideas than you thought possible. Which tip are you going to pick and put to use first?



Understanding People

through the way they communicate

Have you ever wondered why someone's words don't always match their body language? Observing the way people communicate, both verbally and nonverbally, can help you to assess what they might be feeling at the present moment. It can also help you to get to the heart of the issue, make someone feel more comfortable, or diffuse a potentially explosive situation. This article provides some tips on recognizing and understanding verbal and nonverbal cues, and using this information to improve communication.

By Sharon L. Mikrut

When conversing with someone, there are verbal cues that indicate what their current mood is and/or how they may be feeling about a specific subject or issue. Verbal cues can include, but are not limited to, the tone or pitch of the person's voice, and how fast or slow they speak.

The following examines both of these **verbal cues**:

► **Tone/pitch of voice**

Listen to the person's tone. Do they sound excited, is their tone devoid of emotion, are they loud or yelling, or do they sound like they normally do? If a person sounds excited, they may have just received good news or had a positive experience. If their tone lacks emotion, they may be tired or depressed. If they are short and abrupt, they may be in a hurry or upset about something. If the person's tone is different from what it normally is, ask questions

to get at the root of the issue. For example, if someone sounds sad, and they are normally upbeat, address their tone. Share your concern that they don't sound well and inquire about their current situation.

► **Talking fast or slow**

Is the person speaking rapidly or slowly? If the person is speaking fast, they may be excited, apprehensive, or scared. If their speech is slow, they may be lacking energy, not sure what to say, or choosing the right words so they don't come across as being offensive. If the person is normally a fast talker, but is speaking slowly, this might be your cue to inquire about the person's mental or physical condition.

When communicating with people, also observe their **nonverbal behaviours**. The following is a list of some nonverbal cues to look for, especially when the person's words seem to conflict with their body language.

► **Eye contact.** Is the individual looking you directly in the eyes or avoiding eye contact? Looking into someone's eyes generally reflects honesty and competence. If a person avoids eye contact, they may be nervous, angry, or lying.

► **Posture.** Is the person sitting or standing straight/erect or are they slumped? If a person's posture is straight, this is usually a sign that they are confident and ready for action. If the person is slumped, this may indicate that they are exhausted or depressed, lack confidence, or are trying to hide from something.

► **Crossed arms and legs.** When people cross their arms or legs, this may indicate that they are closed to communication. However, many people cross their legs when relaxing so it is recommended that you look at more than one nonverbal cue when assessing the individual.



► **Person's body is turned to the side.** If an individual is slightly turned away from you, they are probably seeking the first opportunity to exit the conversation. If they face you directly, they are most likely engaged in the conversation and will finish it.

► **How the person is dressed.** Although the way a person dresses can express their individuality, it can also speak volumes about how they are feeling. For example, if a person goes to an interview with wrinkled or dirty clothing, their poor hygiene will be noticed and they may be perceived as not truly caring about securing the job. On the other hand, if the person attends the interview well groomed and in professional attire, the attention they gave their appearance will be noticed and they will be perceived as interested in the position.

► **Excessive movement.** If you are engaged in a conversation with someone, and they are constantly tapping their fingers or feet, or swinging a leg, this may be an indication that they are nervous or in a hurry.

By listening to a person's words and watching their body language, you will be able to observe whether or not their words and body language are in concert or conflict. If you detect a conflict, ask questions to assess what is occurring with the individual. By asking questions and demonstrating concern, you may be able to help someone feel comfortable or resolve an issue, or diffuse a potentially negative

When people cross their arms or legs, this may indicate that they are closed to communication

Ten Steps To Overcoming **Procrastination**

by Kristin Hutchings

It can take a little work to change your habits and start overcoming procrastination but if you follow the ten steps listed below you will soon be on your way to a life no longer held back by fear.

The key to overcoming procrastination is to realise that what lies behind every bout of procrastination is fear. This might come as a surprise to you – perhaps you tell yourself that your procrastination is the result of a lack of time, or that the task is too dull, too difficult or not really important. Despite these excuses, procrastination is all down to fear – a fear that you will not succeed

in completing the task, a fear of success as well as failure, a fear of the hard work that is possibly required, a fear of change, a fear of the unknown, a fear of what others will think of you. The list could go on. It is this fear that keeps us stuck, stops us fulfilling our goals and dreams. And the more we procrastinate, the less confident we feel about ourselves and our capabilities.



It is fear, not lack of time, that keeps us stuck, stops us fulfilling our goals and dreams. And the more we procrastinate, the less confident we feel about ourselves and our capabilities.

STEP 1

Admit you procrastinate

This is the important first step. Admit that procrastination is a habit you have developed and acknowledge that you allow things to get in the way of completing your goals. Try to not make excuses as this will simply prolong your habit of procrastination.

Step 2 - Acknowledge your fear and carry on regardless

Don't let your fear keep you stuck! The best way to combat your fear is to meet it head on and start taking action to fulfil your goals. Small steps can work wonders, so take action today. For example, if you want to get a new job, start looking through employment advertisements and polish up your CV.

STEP 3

Remind yourself of the importance of your goal

Overcoming procrastination requires that you tell yourself regularly how important your goal is to you and why you want to complete it. Tell yourself that a new job will give you more money and satisfaction, additional skills and experience.

STEP 4

Break your goal down into manageable pieces

Goals often have difficult and easy aspects and most people fear the hard parts. Once again, action is the key, so break those hard or laborious tasks down into manageable pieces and work your way through them. Small steps can still take you far and before you

know it you have accomplished more than you realise.

STEP 5

Take one day at a time

This is crucial. Goals take time and persistence. It is easy to begin a task with enthusiasm, only to peter out as the journey progresses or things go wrong. We all have good and bad days and at times it might feel like your goal is doomed to failure. Don't let this fear get to you. Carry on and remind yourself that taking one day at a time is all you need.

STEP 6

Set a schedule

Writing down what you need to do can help you visualise your tasks more easily and also remember what you need to do. Writing stuff down helps you to commit to acting on them - your tasks seem more "real" if they are written down in front of you.

STEP 7

Delegate when you need to

Don't be afraid to ask for help sometimes. Perhaps you need time to re-write your CV but the dinner needs cooking too. Ask your partner to help prepare the meal or play with the kids or do the shopping so that you have precious time to focus on your task at hand.

STEP 8

Say no to perfectionism

Perfectionism is the enemy of action so avoid it. No one is perfect so do not allow the misguided belief that you have to do everything perfectly or not do it at all. This belief is pure madness and based on fear.

STEP 9

Don't wait for "the right time"

It is guaranteed that there is no "right time" and waiting for it will never help you in overcoming procrastination. So stop waiting and wasting your time and just go for it. This also includes waiting for the approval of others. Don't allow your fear of what others think of you stop you from fulfilling your dreams.

STEP 10

Act the part

This step is about visualisation and how important it is to believe that your goal is already a success. If you think you can't do something you will usually prove yourself right so start thinking positively about your goal. Act as if everything is a success and this also goes for tasks that you don't enjoy - pretend that you do enjoy them. By doing that you will complete them not only more quickly but more also competently. Positive thinking is the key here - it will aid you in overcoming procrastination and assist you in boosting your self-confidence. It won't be long before procrastination disappears from your life altogether.

About the Author

If you think you spend too much time worrying about what others think of you and believe it is attributing to your procrastination, you need to check out these complimentary super-confidence videos fast. Go to www.self-confidence-matters.com for your downloads.