

PA ENTERPRISE

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

September 2010

- 
- ▶ How to motivate Generation Y
 - ▶ Create a stylish office environment
 - ▶ Interview technique to get your dream job
 - ▶ Give yourself a 'Listening MOT'
 - ▶ Getting the best out of your day

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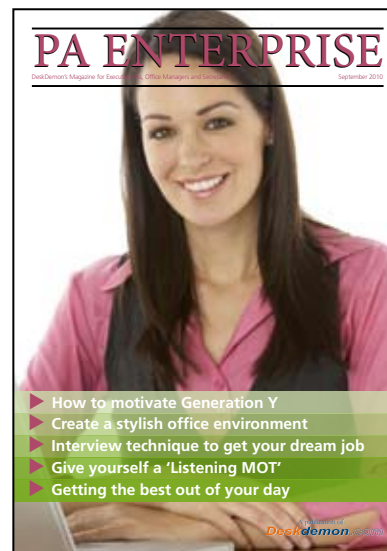
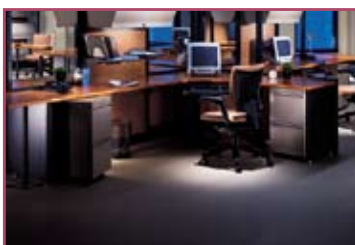
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Jeans for Genes Day with Avery



This year, Avery is sponsoring Jeans for Genes Day, when thousands of people make a donation to wear their jeans to the office. This year the day is Friday 1st October, so make a note in your diary.

The campaign has the support of celebrities such as actress and presenter Amanda Holden, model Amber Le Bon and former Rolling Stone Bill Wyman.

An estimated one in 25 children born in the UK has a genetic disorder – that's more than 30,000 children each year. Jeans for Genes has raised £35 million in the 15 years since it was launched, and the target set for this year is £2.5 million.

The money raised helps to fund vital care, support and respite for those affected by genetic disorders as well as pioneering research into the causes and cures that could change their futures.

Avery is looking for co-ordinators to organise the day at their workplaces. All you have to do is visit www.jeansforgenesday.com

to order a free fundraising pack of ideas, stickers, posters and a collection box. You can also download a range of Avery templates to create customised stickers, bucket wraps and self-laminating signs, ideal for making the fundraising as stylish as the jeans worn on the day.

Train travellers take note

Now this could be really, really useful for regular train travellers. Newly launched, Redspottedhanky.com offers an easy way to find the cheapest UK train tickets online, saving up to 80% on the cost of tickets booked in advance. It is also the first ever British online travel retailer to offer loyalty points for regular business travellers to redeem against future rail travel in Great Britain

All rail fares for every train company operating in the UK are covered, and a real plus point is the ability to buy tickets without reservations to maintain flexibility, ticket collection within two hours of buying online and being able to save favourite journeys to make re-booking regular journeys easier

Also good news is the simplicity of a one-off £1 booking fee per transaction (no credit or debit card fee), with free ticket delivery. Through its Price Promise, Redspottedhanky.com guarantees to match any cheaper fares that business travellers may find - it will refund the difference in loyalty points direct to the business customer's account.

For more information, visit www.redspottedhanky.com



Sexist attitudes in recruitment still a problem for women

A new survey from recruitment specialist Poolia shows that many female recruiters in London's financial heartland believe that sexist attitudes still exist within their companies.

The problem exists mainly for women who apply for senior management roles, with a third of recruiters interviewed believing that women do not have the same opportunities as men. Worryingly, nearly a half felt that women who take their full maternity leave will damage their career. As a result, almost one in four of the female recruiters interviewed think career-oriented women should take a shorter maternity break.

In terms of flexible working, there is a belief that flexible working and work/life balance is a career-losing option, only taken up by junior people or working mothers with no choice. It is thought to send a signal to management that they are not serious about their careers.

"It's clear from the research that many City businesses are providing great opportunities for women," said Andrew Bath, Poolia's General Manager, Banking & Financial Services, "But we were really struck by the fact that even when businesses have women at a senior level involved in recruitment, many still find it difficult to balance the needs of women. However, given the current skills shortages, companies need to work harder to take advantage of the knowledge and experience represented by women working in the City."



Equal pay for women still decades away

New figures show that UK businesses are still more than five decades away from paying men and women equally, according to a report published by the Chartered Management Institute.

The 2010 National Management Salary Survey shows that while female managers' salaries increased by 2.8 per cent over the last 12 months, compared to 2.3 per cent for men, the average UK salary for a male manager is currently £10,071 more than that of a female manager. So it seems that women face a 57 year wait before their take-home pay is equal to that of their male colleagues.

Although this year marks the 40th anniversary of the 1970 Equal Pay Act, data collected from 43,312 individuals in 197 organisations reveals that male pay outstrips female pay by as much as 24% at senior level.

Even at junior level the gap

still persists with male junior executives receiving £1,065 more than female executives. Across the regions, women in the Midlands fare the worst, taking home £10,434 less while those in the North East fare the best, where the gap is smallest at £8,955.

Looking at different industry sectors, female executives would do well to bear in mind when accepting roles in either IT or the pharmaceutical industry that the pay gaps here are higher than any other sectors, at an extraordinary £17,736 and £14,018 respectively.

CMI's Head of Policy, Petra Wilton, said: "Girls born this year will face the probability of working for around 40 years in the shadow of unequal pay. We want to see Government take greater steps to enforce pay equality by monitoring organisations more closely and naming and shaming those who fail to pay male and female staff fairly."

Friday 'is best day to be paid'

Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of employees believe Friday is the ideal day of the week to get paid, new research has revealed.

The majority (85 per cent) of workers would rather be paid on a monthly basis than either weekly or twice a month, the Institute of Payroll Professionals (IPP) found.

Lindsay Melvin, chief executive of the IPP, said: "Employees may prefer Fridays to get paid because it gives them the opportunity to enjoy the financial rewards of all their hard work over the weekend."

"It also makes sense that so many employees prefer to receive their pay cheque on a monthly basis."

He added: "Being paid monthly can help workers manage their money more responsibly. With bills usually coming out of one's bank account once a month, people can then budget what they have left until the next payday."

Hotel alternative

Serviced Apartments are a brilliant alternative to hotels for business travellers. They offer all the facilities of a hotel, but also have that 'home from home' feel, which is great if you need to be away for an extended period. They are also usually very competitively priced.

The Apartment Service is a good place to find and book online, with massive choice in the UK and globally. They have just announced the latest addition to their Roomspace Serviced Apartments brand, Trinity Court in Windsor.

The newly built one bedroom apartments are in the centre of Windsor. All have fully fitted kitchens with integrated appliances and gas central heating and are ideally located for an extended corporate stay – minimum stay is one week.

www.apartmentservice.com

Blackberry Torch coming soon

Blackberry are preparing to unveil their new smartphone, the Blackberry Torch, which is set for imminent release in the UK. Current reviews of the new touch screen smartphone, which is competing with Google's Android devices and Apple's iPhone, are mixed, with critics saying it is a generation behind the industry's leaders. Improvements have been made to the phone's operating system and hardware, but is this enough to set it apart from the rest? You'll have to wait until October to find out.





New retro sweet website will put a smile on your face!

Do you remember Sherbert Fountains, Flying Saucers or even Super Shrimps? Now you can give your tastebuds a trip down memory lane by visiting the newly launched website Sweetilicious.co.uk. It won't be good for our waistlines, but the range of yummy sweets and treats will certainly raise a smile.



Traditional or retro sweets are a great ice-breaker for occasions when guests or delegates may not know one other. From Chocolate Jazzies and Perky Pigs to Black Jacks and Fried Eggs, the sweetie gurus at Sweetilicious have packed the website with all the classics. What's more, there is an array of diet specific sweets including dairy free, gluten free, halal, kosher, nut free, peanut free and vegetarian.

With the disappearance of Woolworths from the high street, the hugely popular pick 'n' mix has become more difficult to find. Now Sweetilicious can fill that gap. So, whether you're planning an event or exhibition or you just fancy reminiscing, you can purchase products in quantities as small as 100 gram bags or as large as one kilo.

Sweetilicious is also offering a loyalty scheme giving returning customers access to their order histories as well as regular special offers, promotions and discounts. So, to get your taste buds tingling, log on to www.sweetilicious.co.uk

WIN THE 'BRIGHTEST PRIZE' WITH NESTLÉ PROFESSIONAL®

Nestlé Professional® is offering 10 lucky PA Enterprise readers the chance to win their very own brightest prize with the new NESCAFÉ® 'Coffee at its Brightest' campaign.

The first 10 readers to respond to this offer will each receive £60-worth of goodies including a 750g tin of NESCAFÉ® Gold Blend and two boxes of NESCAFÉ® Cappuccino sachets.

The NESCAFÉ® 'Coffee at its Brightest' promotion provides workplace caterers with the chance to win one of over 1,300 prizes – including TEN VIP trips for two to Brazil, the heartland of coffee! The campaign holds the biggest prize fund to date, totalling a massive £120K.

Martin Lines of Nestlé Professional® comments "This promotion will run as part of the £43m 'Coffee at its Brightest™' campaign, launched at the end of 2009. This latest NESCAFÉ® campaign will help drive coffee sales

and increased awareness of the NESCAFÉ® range. The trips to Brazil are the perfect link to the birthplace of NESCAFÉ® – it reinforces the provenance message that NESCAFÉ® is made from 100% pure and natural coffee beans and provides an exceptional prize."



Did you know? NESCAFÉ® coffee is only made from 100% pure and natural coffee beans that are naturally rich in antioxidants.

This offer is exclusively first come, first served!

To enter, send an email entitled 'NESCAFÉ® Brightest Prizes' to nescafe@deskdemon.com by 30 September 2010. In your email, please include your full name, address and contact details for your chance to win. Nestlé Professional®'s decision is final.

For more information visit www.nestleprofessional.com

New directory helps Avanta's clients cut the cost of services

Avanta provide serviced office space in London and around the UK, and have just announced a new service for their clients. The on-line client services directory allows clients to benefit from Avanta's substantial buying power to receive discounted services.

"We know that every pound counts for SMEs," comments David Kinnaird, Avanta's group operations director, "Which is why we are giving clients access to our corporate buying power to help them reduce the cost of services such as stationery; insurance; collateral and website design and IT support.

"All the companies on the directory are trusted existing suppliers to Avanta and we'll be working to expand the number of services available, so that it becomes a one stop shop for our clients. This will give them the peace of mind they are using high quality and dependable suppliers whilst getting the maximum value for money."
www.avanta.co.uk

Win 4 Unlimited Ride Wristbands to the UK's favourite attraction – Pleasure Beach, Blackpool!

Fellowes R-Kive® have teamed up with the UK's favourite attraction to offer you the chance to win 4 Wristbands, so you can enjoy with your family or friends!

There's something for everyone at Pleasure Beach, Blackpool!

For the ultimate in thrills why not brave the UK's tallest, fastest rollercoaster - the Pepsi Max Big One. Hold your breath as you board Infusion, the exhilarating, five looping coaster which is the first in the world to be suspended completely over water. Brave Valhalla - the world's most spectacular dark ride, which features amazing thrills, spills and special effects. If you prefer things a little more sedate why not take a trip on our very own steam locomotive, the Pleasure Beach Express, take a leisurely cruise on the River Caves or enjoy the Spectacular Dancing Water Show.



Simply answer the below question and email the answer with your contact details to fellowes@deskdemo.com

What is the offer that Pleasure Beach are offering on the Fellowes Fun Days Out website?

www.fellowes.com/fundaysout

Senior level secretaries in demand

Senior level secretaries in demand as salaries rise to boom year levels. Secretarial and support recruitment returned to 2007 levels in some areas as firms reacted to increased workloads, the latest Market Update from recruitment specialists Robert Walters reveals.

Julie-Anne Page, Associate Director of Robert Walters' secretarial and support recruitment division, comments:

'We saw a dramatic increase in demand for experienced executive assistants capable of supporting managing directors, chairman and CEO/COOs are highly sought-after. This trend suggests that the market may be returning to the days of the traditional one-to-one PA, after demand declined significantly for these roles during the recession.'

'We also saw an increase in vacancies at a more junior levels too, particularly for administrative and reception roles. This is a sign of



growing market confidence as companies invest in areas previously considered non business-critical.

'Pay for senior PAs has risen in line with this increased demand. Throughout quarter one, they could expect £16-£17 per hour, but this rose to £17-£19 an hour in quarter two. Although permanent salaries remained largely unchanged, we did see a slight increase. We envisage this trend will continue into quarter three as it becomes a more candidate driven market resulting in counter and multiple offers.'

Milky Bar just grew up

Nestlé Confectionery is set to build on the heritage of one its oldest and best loved brands, with the launch of MILKYBAR Raisin and Biscuit. The new bar is specifically designed to extend the brand's appeal to adult consumers.

Backed by a huge £7m media campaign, which is the biggest spend on MILKYBAR ever, the launch will transform the white chocolate market. The media campaign includes new TV and outdoor advertising as well as significant digital support, which is all specifically tailored for adults.



Shoppers give thumbs-down to self-service tills

Self-service tills – do they fill you with dread or do you find them easy, quick and convenient? Do the oft repeated instruction ‘please place the item in the bag’ – when you have already done so – bring on an anxiety attack?

Well, a new survey has revealed that self-service tills are the most unpopular aspect of modern supermarkets with consumers.

Almost three-quarters (73%) of those polled by consumer website myvouchercode.co.uk said self-service tills annoyed them most about the contemporary supermarket shopping experience.

“Whilst the self-scanning machines have been introduced to most supermarkets as a method of easing the stress of a weekly shop, it appears that for a large majority of the British public, they are doing quite the opposite,” said the website’s managing director, Mark Pearson.

“Although they may ease queue congestion, the anger they invoke when they fail to work properly is turning a lot of people off using them altogether.”

Interestingly the shopworkers’ union Usdaw claimed the tills posed a risk to staff who find themselves on the receiving end of frustrated customers’ anger at announcements of ‘unexpected items in the baggage area’, rejection of banknotes and the need for a shop worker to verify the age of anyone buying alcohol.

The survey also revealed that the second disliked aspect of supermarket shopping is ‘other customers’, cited by 65% of those surveyed.

It seems that customers would ideally like a completely isolated shopping experience – perhaps the reason why a lot are turning to buying their groceries online.



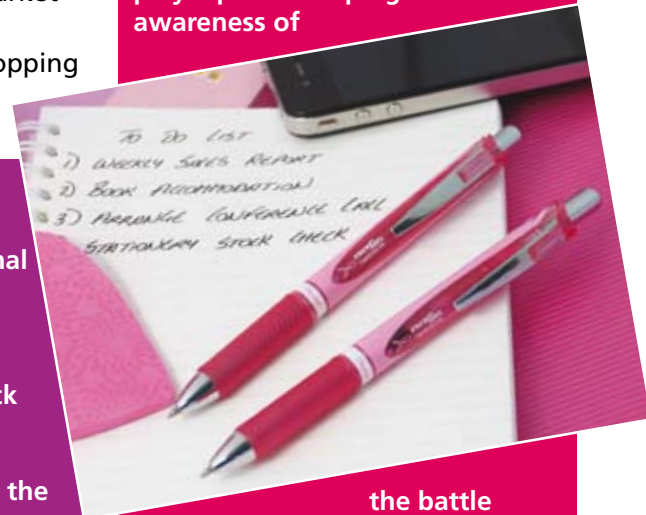
Pentel launches new pen for Breast Cancer Campaign

Pentel have launched a great new retractable liquid gel pen with EnerGel ink in support of Breast Cancer Campaign. The pen boasts all the features and benefits of their EnerGel liquid gel ink range but has been given an individual makeover especially for Breast Cancer Campaign.

The pen has a matt pink barrel with a contrasting dark pink grooved finger grip and also carries the pink ribbon logo.

Pentel have been a partner of Breast Cancer Campaign since 2006. Initially the company aimed to raise £25,000 for the charity but exceeded this amount within a few months and are now well on the way to reaching a massive target of £400,000. For every new retractable liquid gel pen sold, Pentel will donate 25p to Breast Cancer Campaign.

Pentel Marketing Manager, Wendy Vickery said, “We are truly honoured to be able to support such an important cause and to play a part in helping to raise awareness of



the battle against breast cancer. This fantastic new pen is a must-have for handbags, diaries, pencil cases and everyday writing. It will bring a welcome addition to our successful range of products for Breast Cancer Campaign”.

The new retractable liquid gel pen is now available at all good stationery suppliers and Clinton Cards.

The coolest ever Christmas party?

Spectacular theming, jaw-dropping entertainment and superb dinner – so says Nostrovia, located in Milton Keynes at the National Bowl. It certainly looks pretty amazing, and could be worth checking out for the upcoming Christmas party season.



Apparently, as you arrive you will be given a warm welcome by Cossack guards who huddle around a red hot brazier singing Siberian folk. Traditional Cossack dancers share the stage with whip-cracking burlesque girls; whilst others hang decadently from the ceiling, scattering fairy dust and feeding treats to those that pass beneath.

Wow!

Then guests are led by stilt walkers, fire eaters, poi twirlers, jugglers and acrobats to a luxuriously decadent dining room to enjoy a 4-course menu, followed by after dinner disco with DJ. Certainly sounds spectacular.

More details from www.miltonkeyneschristmasparties.co.uk

Wacky holiday complaints

Holidays from hell – how we enjoy the TV programmes which prove how truly awful some people's holiday experiences are. Most of us have something to gripe about – hotels not as advertised, poor food, travel disruption to name but a few.

Now Thomas Cook and the Association of British Travel Agents have compiled a list of not so commonly heard of, and extremely funny holiday complaints. Read on!

A woman, alleging that she'd been locked in by staff warned of calling police. She had mistaken the "do not disturb" sign on the back of the door as an instruction to remain in the room.

A tourist at an African lodge complained that the sight of the visibly aroused elephant spoiled his honeymoon as it made him feel "inadequate".

Some others complained that the 'Ray-Ban' sunglasses they had bought for five euros (£3.50) from a street trader were fake.

Tourists have also complained about reaching their home in England much later than their American counterparts to whom it took only took three hours to get home from Jamaica.

Another tourist said, "I compared the size of our one-bedroom apartment to our friends' three-bedroom apartment and ours was significantly smaller."

"There are too many Spanish people in Spain. The receptionist speaks Spanish. The food is Spanish."

"We had to queue outside with no air conditioning."

-One tourist blamed the hotel for her pregnancy arguing that it wouldn't have happened if she and her fiancé had been provided twin-bedded room instead of a double-bedded one.

One tourist complained that the beach was excessively sandy

"No-one told us there would be fish in the sea. The children were startled..."

"I was bitten by a mosquito – no-one said they could bite."

Hilarious!



Social Media costs billions in lost work time

New research has revealed the true cost to the UK's economy of the rise of social media as over half of British workers confessed to accessing social media profiles at work, with many spending so much time friending, Tweeting, adding photos and video, as well as updating their profiles, that companies' productivity was suffering as a result.

MyJobGroup.co.uk, which operates the UK's largest network of regional jobsites, polled 1,000 UK workers and found that nearly 6 per cent of the UK's 34 million-strong workforce spent over an hour per day on social media while at work.

MyJobGroup.co.uk warned that Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks could potentially be costing the UK up to £14billion in lost work time, with SMEs likely to be hardest hit by the drop in productivity.

But many polled were in denial about the effect of social media on efficiency. Only 14 per cent admitted to being less productive and 10 per cent even claimed social media had made them more productive.

What's more, there was still widespread resistance to banning access to social networks at work. Only one third wanted sites like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube barred during work time.

Lee Fayer, Managing Director of Myjobgroup.co.uk said: "Spending over an hour per day in work time on the likes of Facebook and Twitter are seriously hampering companies' efforts to boost productivity, which is more important than ever given the fragile state of our economy.

"Companies would do well to monitor use of social networking sites during work hours and ensure that their employees are not abusing their freedom of access to these sites."

Manners maketh man? Not any more it seems...

British manners are fast disappearing, at least in business meetings, if a new survey on behalf of Future Inns is to be believed.

Future Inns found that 41% of British businesspeople think it is acceptable to regularly answer phone calls or respond to emails during meetings while half will go as far as actually getting up and leaving meetings to answer calls. Despite that, of the 41% who admit to regularly answering calls and emails during meetings, more than two-thirds actually consider it rude when others do the same.

The survey also determined that men were the ruder sex. Half of businessmen consider it acceptable to take calls during a business meeting and almost two-thirds will often leave their colleagues or clients waiting whilst leaving the room to attend to a call. A third of men admitted to regularly yawning in meetings and 35% think nothing of arriving late.

In contrast, just a third of women will answer calls and respond to emails during a business meeting and nearly a quarter would consider arriving late.

When questioned about their most memorable 'meeting mishaps', the five most common mishaps revealed by the survey included:

1. Forgetting client names or repeatedly being called the wrong name in a business meeting
2. Falling off chairs (or accidentally breaking them)
3. Spilling drinks. Almost half (45%) of those surveyed had spilt drinks over themselves or others in a meeting - exploding Coke cans and coffee spillages topped the list
4. Falling asleep - in fact 28% of those surveyed said they had fallen asleep in a meeting
5. Arriving at meetings on the wrong day or even at the wrong venue

However, in some cases, the mishaps were more extreme, such as:

- Falling overboard during a sales pitch on a yacht (yet still winning the pitch)
- Walking headfirst into a glass door on leaving a meeting, causing serious concussion
- Allowing an LCD projector to overheat, causing a full scale evacuation of the hotel where the meeting was taking place

William Hanson, an etiquette expert, said: "It's simply shocking to see how many people think it acceptable to pick up a phone in the middle of a meeting or have a laptop open to answer emails."

The survey was undertaken in July 2010 among a "representative" sample of UK businesspeople, although Future Inns did not reveal how many people participated.



Sitting Too Long Shortens Lifespan

The list of all the things which are bad for you has just got longer – and this time the culprit is... sitting. Yup - spending too much sitting at your desk, already thought to be bad for your well-being, is now thought to affect your lifespan according to a study conducted by the American Cancer Society.

In the study, people were more likely to die of heart disease than cancer, but after adjusting for a number of risk factors, including body mass index (BMI) and smoking, women who spent six hours a day sitting had a 37% increased risk of dying versus those who spent less than three hours a day on their bottoms. For men the increased risk was 17%.

Exercise, even a little per day, did tend to lower the mortality risk tied to sitting, the team noted. However, sitting's influence on death risk remained significant even when activity was factored in.

On the other hand, people who sat a lot and did not exercise or stay active had an even higher mortality risk: 94% for women and 48% for men.



Mixing business with pleasure: the new rules of business networking

By Geraldine Brooks

I believe that today's entrepreneurs can gain huge benefits from business networking. When I worked as MD for one of Richard Branson's Virgin companies, I attended countless lunches, launches, cocktail parties and conferences, all with a distinctly corporate feel to them. This is why I understand why many business people today throw up their hands in horror at the thought of networking. But I'm not referring to the stiff corporate handshakes and formal exchange of business cards, but a new, more enjoyable form of networking, which aims to help entrepreneurs and start-ups feel part of a supportive community and gives them a chance to learn from each other's experiences. If you're still dubious, here are some "rules" to help you get to grips with the new business networking:

Thou shalt not start with a card

Networking means more than business cards and handshakes today – it is the sharing of experiences, personal and professional, and the chance to learn from one another and be inspired in an informal business environment, without 'the big sell'. Backing this up, recent T-Mobile research found nearly half (43%) of female business leaders see business cards as one of the least important assets to a company.

Thou shalt mix business with pleasure

It is a reflection of how busy our lives are that we can no longer distinctly separate the personal from the professional. If you ask me, we should embrace the fact that we can now socialise and informally enjoy our peers' company within a business context – why shouldn't an educational discussion about a tax return at a networking event be followed by a burlesque dancing demonstration, for instance?

Thou shalt shout about thy achievements

It is amazing how modest many entrepreneurs can be, particularly those in the creative industries, who may naturally shy away from corporate formalities. With the help of a supportive business network, their achievements can be publicised for them, as word of their talents spreads organically through the group.

Thou shalt admit thy weaknesses

On the flip side to this, by admitting our failings to our peers we are effectively asking them for help. There is a real sense of community spirit amongst entrepreneurs today and many will volunteer their time and services to help you, in the hope you'd do the same for them.

Thou shalt not have a masterplan

Business networks are a great place to start if you are looking for inspiration for a new business, particularly for those who lost their job during the recession and are feeling unsure of their options. This can lead to dramatic and exciting career changes. They also offer an accessible talent pool to find your ideal business partner – for instance, one of my meetings brought together a nutritionist and a personal trainer, who have now formed a healthy lifestyle company.

Thou shalt get out of the office

Don't feel guilty for abandoning your office duties and attending a networking event. The knowledge and contacts you gain through getting out and about are worth the time away. Having access to a smartphone means you won't feel too guilty. I was late to join the BlackBerry party but, having just completed a week's challenge to work out of the office with T-Mobile, I'm now an addict.

Thou shalt get on the net

Business leaders should see social networking as a cornerstone of the new business networking; a way to help them build a far wider array of contacts and gain more knowledge than was ever previously possible. However, they should not rely on it as their only means of networking. Face to face meetings will always be important.

Thou shalt make thy own rules

The great thing about today's business networks is their diversity. A small amount of research will help you identify the type of network that is right for you and meet like-minded business people. The new business networking is all about breaking away from convention but don't take my word for it – try it for yourself and make up your own rules!

**Geraldine Brooks is founder of women's business networking group, the sugargroup
www.sugargroup.co.uk**

How to motivate Generation Y

Who falls into the Generation Y category - and how best to motivate them in the workplace? Neil Atkinson draws on his experience to offer some advice.

I've got a number of younger folk working for me and for a time I really struggled to work out how to motivate them and get them excited about coming to work. I'd heard all about the differences between Gen Y, Gen X and baby boomers and now I was managing it in reality.

Generation Y are those born between the years of 1982 and 2000 and are currently ages 10-28. When you think about it, they are the most technologically savvy of all generations and possess multi-tasking skills that many of us only dream about. They volunteer in the community, work part-time, and start their own businesses as early as age 10.

I need the particular skills they can offer in my workplace - particularly networking and help with technology. So I did some research and came up with my very own managing Gen Y checklist and here it is.

1 Set clear expectations about day to day work patterns

Work hours: if there are standard hours that all employees are expected to work, tell them. Also, let them know if there is flexibility

in the hours of work or if they can work remotely. Flexibility is the most important issue for Gen Y'ers and whilst it's not always possible to offer it, you should attempt to wherever you can.

Dress code: Gen Y is typically more casual in their dress. Don't assume that they know what business casual means. We're talking about the generation who spend a lot of their time in flip flops and yoga pants. They are not opposed to dressing a certain way; they just need to know what it is.

Use of technology: This generation is great at multitasking. They can work on a report, engage in multiple conversations through instant messaging and surf the web at the same time. Be sure to make clear the policies around use of technology including the company computer and internet. If you would prefer that they do not text message their friends during work hours, tell them.

2 Leverage their strengths - get them to do things you can't

Provide them with projects and assignments where they can add value. I recently was told a story by a manager who said that her Gen

Y employee was "in 30 minutes able to electronically streamline a process that we had been doing manually for years." Gen Y's enter the workplace excited, passionate and with lots of great ideas. If you can find ways to utilize their skills and channel their energy, you will experience productive results and they will feel valued.

3 Show them respect

This sounds so basic but it's not. Gen Y tends to ask a lot of questions and challenge the status quo. This generation has been coached to get involved and they participate in major family decisions. At very early ages they set up the cell phones for their parents, hook up the family computer and provide consultation on the best web sites. Resist the urge to brush them off because of their age and show them the respect that everyone deserves. Ask them for input and their advice on the areas they know about - communication for one!

Managing Gen Y doesn't have to be as difficult as some make it out to be. They will be the future leaders of the business world someday. Let's take the time now to foster their success.

London Underground

FACTS

By Javaria Akbar

The London Underground is the staple mode of choice for commuters when it comes to transport. Deemed the oldest underground railway system in a city, the tube has served its residents since 1863.

Here are some nice (and nasty) facts about the dazzling system

- Almost half a million rodents live in the London Underground.
- Fifty people kill themselves each year on the tube.
- In 1926 'suicide pits' were built into the railway lines to prevent the number of deaths. The Jubilee line has glass screens to prevent passengers from jumping onto the tracks.
- Commuters who don't wish to walk up escalators always stand on the right to allow others to pass.
- The deepest tunnel on the tube is on the Northern Line at Hampstead.
- The first ever tube crash occurred in 1938 between Waterloo and Charing Cross.
- The earliest tube runs at 4.45 am and continues until 1am on the Piccadilly Line. The lines run for 24 hours during the New Year celebrations and will stay



open for parts of the 2012 Olympic ceremonies.

- Tunnelling for the Victoria line resulted in diggers finding fossils and human bone remains from the plague.
- Talk show host Jerry Springer was born on the Underground.
- The famous stylised Underground map was designed by engineering draughtsman Harry Beck who wanted to create a simple map that highlighted directions rather than distance.
- Busking on the Tube was illegal until 2003.
- The phrase 'Mind the Gap' started in 1968 and was spoken by recording company owner Peter Lodge. Today the female voice of Emma Clarke and the tones of Tim Bentinck are also used.
- The longest journey without a change is between West Ruislip and Epping on the Central line.
- The longest escalator stands at 60 metres with a vertical rise of 27.5 meters at Angel.

<http://londonoffices.com>



Top Tips

Microsoft Office 2007: How to Turn Off Automatic Spell Checking and Automatic Grammar Checking

Sometimes you really don't want your programs telling you (in they're own little way) "hey you misspelled that" or "that's not the proper way to say that." Remember, computers are only as smart as the info given them. Sometimes, it's as simple as three possible options could be correct and it doesn't know which one YOU want, so the program marks it to get your attention. Now if you're using a word or a phrase that the system doesn't recognize as correct, it will give you that little red squiggly underline letting you know something is wrong/should be checked. For example, the program is telling me that AutoCorrection is misspelled, but this is the name for the action. So, HOW do you get the various programs to stop doing that? Well the following are the steps for Word, Outlook and PowerPoint for turning off the automatic spell and grammar checking.

Word 2007

1. In the upper left corner, click the Microsoft Office Button, and then Word Options.
2. Go to Proofing.
3. Unselect the Check spelling as you type check box.
4. Same with the Check grammar as you type check box.

IMPORTANT: The Check spelling as you type and Check grammar as you type settings will affect your open documents in Word 2007. If other people use the documents, you may want to notify them that you made this change. No sense in making others wonder where the auto correction options went - they may count on that part of the program!

Outlook 2007

1. On the Tools menu, click Options.
2. Go to the Spelling tab, and click Spelling and AutoCorrection.
3. Deselect the Check spelling as you type check box.
4. Then deselect the Check grammar as you type check box.

PowerPoint 2007

1. As in Word, go to the Microsoft Office Button, and then PowerPoint Options.
2. Go to Proofing.
3. Deselect the Hide spelling errors check box.
4. Deselect the Check spelling as you type check box.

Of course, if you decide you miss those little hints as you type, then just go back and re-set them. It's amazing what one can get used to and miss when it's gone.



Research compiled and written by Liz LaClair, President of Virtually Helps, LLC.

Liz LaClair is the President of Virtually Helps, LLC (a virtual administrative assistant services company). She is passionate and driven to make her clients "look good" to their clients and assists her clients in various ways. Liz enjoys her work and believes that you have to have fun! Go to her virtual office executive assistant site, at www.virtuallyhelps.com and download her free ebook: Tid Bits of Help for Microsoft Office

Top Tips

Excel 2007: Finding & Correcting Errors in Calculations

Hurray! A way to check to make SURE those formulas are always right! Sometimes mistakes happen and an error of some sort finds its way into your formula. Well, the newest version of Excel has an easy way to find the source of the errors in your formulas by identifying the cells used in a given calculation and describing any errors that have occurred. This process is described as AUDITING.

Excel finds errors in various ways. One is to fill the cell holding the formula with that pesky error code I know you've seen at least once. Another audit would be ensuring the appropriate cells are providing the values needed. For that you'd use a trace of the cell's Precedents to identify which are the cells with values used in the active cell's formula. Excel highlights the cells and draws a blue tracer arrow from the precedent to the active cell. Or you audit the worksheet by identifying cells with formulas using a value from a given cell - known as Dependents.

Great you say, but how do you do all that?

In the Formulas tab in the **FORMULA AUDITING** group there are a series of functions to use to find and correct errors in your calculations. They are:

TRACE PRECEDENTS:

Let's say cell D8 has a value (and is a subtotal) telling you that it equals C3:C7. The Trace Precedents will show you that it really does - encloses the box and draws a blue arrow from the box to cell D8.

TRACE DEPENDENTS:

Let's say you know that your D8 subtotal is going to be a total in the worksheet somewhere. Click the cell, and Trace Dependents and the blue arrow will show you where the total is that D8's value is part of the correct total calculation.

REMOVE ARROWS: That's self-explanatory

SHOW FORMULAS: Also self-explanatory.

ERROR CHECKING:

For this function you will want to be in cell A1 and then click on Error Checking. This function takes you to the error code. Then click the Error Checking button down arrow and click Trace Error. Now you know that you entered a blank cell for part of the formula instead of one with a value.

EVALUATE FORMULA:

After you've fixed the error, click on Evaluate Formula and the dialog box opens with the formula for that cell, click thru each of the steps for the formula's elements then click Close.



Work smart... Work clean

Work Green

AF International provides a full range of specifically manufactured cleaning products for use around workstations and offices.

Many of the AF products have been independently tested for anti-bacterial efficacy including the following:

Phone-Clene
Head-Clene
Maxiclene
Isowipes

PC-Clene
Foamclene
White Boardclene
Lens Clene

Headset-Clene
Screen-Clene
Multi-Screen Clene
Clene-Swipe

Supporting



Believe in children
Barnardo's



The results indicated that the above products achieved a **99.9% reduction** of each of the following:

Bacteria: Staphylococcus Aureus, Pseudomonas Aeruginosa, Escherichia Coli (better known as E-Coli)

Mould: Aspergillus Niger **Yeast:** Candida Albicans



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Getting the Best Out of Your Day

Everyone gets the same allocation of time in a day. Nothing more, nothing less. Have you ever wondered how others seem to make the best of the time they have while you sometimes grapple to get one meaningful thing done in a day?

Businessman and author of the book *The Greatness Manual*, Rabison Shumba writes about his tried and tested ways to getting the most productivity out of your day.



You will not only become more fruitful but your days will be fulfilling. I used to wish one hour was added to the twenty four that are guaranteed but I soon got used to the fact that this constant would never change. What could change however, was how I chose to make the best of every minute that passed. I could either chose to live it the usual, non productive way or live it in a calculated, fruitful and productive way. It is unfortunate that when you lose time sometimes you don't even have the time to realize that you are losing it. You are focused on losing time such that nothing else matters. When you then look at results you are found wanting even in situations where your job actions are the same. Below are guidelines to utilize your time effectively.

1 Focus on what you can control

It is of no use crying over things that you have no control over. You will certainly not stop the sun from going down nor stop the clock from ticking one more second. You have control over what you do within the second. You have control over what you think and process as the day progresses. I used to have very bad days. When I look back, it was really because I chose to have them that way. I would worry and focus on trying to change issues that were of national interest in terms of how they had affected almost everyone. How can you try and focus on inflation and hyperinflation when 100% of the population faces the same challenge? These were matters beyond my control but I lost time

worrying not even focusing on how to get out of financial turmoil.

2 Think positive thoughts that drive you to action

Productivity belongs to those who have mastered the art of thinking right and acting accordingly. It is wisdom to train your mind to focus on what you desire, what you feel you need to achieve rather than thoughts of hatred, bitterness, depression, anxiety and so on. Such thought wear you down and they eat into your time and your health. Your day may sometimes come with tension and pressure but realize that the people you meet are not the enemies, refuse to express your frustration on innocent people. Be unshaken by circumstance. People can actually dismiss this statement and say "its easier said than done". I know that when you face challenges, the last thing you want is someone telling you to think positive when the challenge is yelling and boasting before you. One always feels like saying "just because you are not in the problem...". There is no other way to "sugar coat" this fact. You have to make a choice to think of things that edify your body, things that uplift, memories of victory and so on. Your day's complexion will brighten and all the bleakness and impossibility falls away.

3 Plan your activities - do not just plunge into the day

Some people believe in instincts that say "I shall see the day as it progresses". They may have bouts or pinches of excitement as they

achieve one or two things. However unknown to them, if they only planned their day as it begins, they would have achieved 10 times more. Write down everything you need to do, reorganize according to priority and location. Act on the plan. Whatever is left over forms your work activity plan for the following day so; do not worry. Planning ensures that nothing is forgotten in the process. I have noticed that the days I get frustrated the most are days when there is no plan in place and I am simply "shooting as they come". Sometimes I carry a diary and as long as the specific day in question is blank, I fail to realize or reach productive capacity. I hit myself on my forehead when I am on my way home and I now remember all the calls I was supposed to make. Sometimes I then remember what my wife you have asked for in the morning just as I open the door to say "Good evening."

4 Delegate tasks to those who are available to help

I am one of those people who never enjoyed this term. I am usually content with the feeling that says "I did it all alone and look what I produced". I realized later in life I had not been promoted as a result of my personal effort but by the fact that I ensured results were achieved, regardless of the fact that I would outsource skills where I fell short. I remember rolling out training in a multinational company in a very short period. I didn't need to train all 600 computer users. I trained a few key people I selected from each business unit and simply

If you are insecure, you will always feel better when you do it yourself. Sooner or later, your days will be boring and exhausting. You can actually gain power by shedding some off to others.

went around to monitor. Empower and monitor and evaluate. You gain power by delegation contrary to common fears in people who lead others. Delegation frees your time to focus on major and core issues in a more detailed manner. No matter how available people are to help, if you are insecure, you will always feel better when you do it yourself. Sooner or later, your days will be boring and exhausting. You can actually gain power by shedding some off to others.

5 Seek clarity on what you must deliver

There is no use doing anything whose expected results you are not certain of. You are measured on the outcomes of your work as they compare to what you are employed to do. You could be the most hard working employee yet always be cautioned for overstepping your scope. Lack of clarity is dangerous in any area of life you will ever be involved whether in the home setting, society or in the business domain / sector. Your actions are limited by the expectations you carry and the time you have to do all the tasks. The person that gives you tasks is usually the person to ask for clarity. I often see subordinates who go about asking each other "Did he mean...? What did he imply by saying this...?". It is pointless to wait when the person who assigned the tasks is present. You will save yourself time and turn the effectiveness key in the correct direction.

6 Entertain people who stand to help you to achieve more

It is easy to have a sour day by counseling people who leave you with a sour after-taste. If someone adds value to the areas of expectation then you can entertain or accommodate them. Always find creative ways

of letting people realize that you are serious about your time. If you always entertain people who show up with no appointment, you are communicating your own standards, people will simply follow that blueprint and before you know it, you don't have time for the important things as you service queues of non-critical issues which show up with the "Urgent + Important" tag.

7 Dress your best, feel it

When you start a day without a sense of "I am looking good", you tend to be sensitive to other people receiving such comments. When you feel it within yourself that you look good then you won't crave for any affirmations from anyone. You just flow in your confidence as you do your work. I know I have done a separate article on dress and etiquette but you can feel so much better if you also carry mouth wash in your car and rinse your mouth before the next meeting. You will speak without mumbling as you will be confident of your breadth. After 3 hours of silence, your mouth tends to lose its freshness from the last time you brushed your teeth. Make it a habit to find ways to freshen up not just the breadth but face and other areas of importance to you.

8 Know how to deal with impromptu events

Not every suddenly is important no matter how urgent. Anticipate that there will be unplanned things that happen. While it is good to be flexible, "suddenlies" must not be the norm by which you run your day or else it defeats the whole purpose of planning and getting organized.

9 Act on one thing at a time

Divided attention normally leads

to results that are not excellent or projects that are abandoned mid way. You rather do 4 things in a day but do them excellently than attempt to multi-task and in the end have nothing to show for the sweat and effort. There is usually so much joy associated with a sense of achievement. Achieve tasks and tick them off and sense the urge to push for the next item on the list. I am one person who enjoys doing many things at a time. Many that have imitated me feel the "impossibility" that comes with splitting your mind into many segments each at different levels of progress.

10 Take time to relax and do something you enjoy

For some it's a 10 minute walk in the park, for some its sitting at a restaurant and having a favorite dish. In some instances you want a few minutes away from the office, alone, with the phone off while for others they go to the prayer room. Whatever it is that reduces tension in the body, do it. You can try having a massage done. I used to feel good after a haircut, scalp shampoo and massage of the head. I would leave the barber shop feeling like someone who could take on the world. This revitalized me such that an afternoon seemed like morning.

Rabison Shumba is a writer, businessman and philanthropist. Writer of the book The Greatness Manual which you can preview on <http://greatnessmanual.wordpress.com>. Founder and CEO of Infotech Solutions and Greatness Factory Trust. Rabison speaks about success, leadership, motivation and inspiration. His trust works with disadvantaged school children supporting them with school fees and general livelihood. He also helps to network artists (musicians of all genres) to facilitate information sharing and building of future celebrities. Rabison is well traveled having been to Asia, America, United Kingdom and all over Africa. He is married to Jacqueline Edwards and they have two children. They reside in Harare, Zimbabwe, Southern Africa.

How to interview brilliantly

to get your dream job



Learn how to interview well and get the job you want rather than waste your energy applying for every suitable job available. This can drain your energy and leave you with insufficient time for interview preparation. Think of interview preparation as project in itself, with various stages. Elizabeth Conley brings you her key Interview tips to help you prepare and get the dream job you want.



How to be amazing

- Focus on one industry sector at a time so that you can become knowledgeable in your specialist area before the interview. Read and subscribe to relevant blogs, trade journals magazines, and newspapers. Use web feed subscription tools such as Google reader to keep up-to-date on industry news.
- Know what impression you want to make. In an interview you're essentially asking people to 'buy into you' so you need to know what 'added value' you offer before you go for an interview.
- Know your competences and transferable skills and this will dramatically improve your CV and how you interview. Competences are the specific skills which are needed to perform the job and are usually outlined in the job application pack or advertisement. Transferable skills are your unique skills which you've developed through other jobs and personal interests and can differentiate you

from the competition

- Check that your social media profile is consistent with your CV profile as many employers now check out applicants online. For example, Facebook, Linked-in, trade and professional networks. Social networks can also be used effectively to network for work opportunities.
- Work as a volunteer. Only one thing gets people stressed more than work and that's not working! You can use the experience to broaden your skills and demonstrate self-motivation.
- Join a local business or social network. They offer a great opportunity to practise social skills with strangers such as: starting up a conversation, smiling, actively listening to others, asking questions and promoting yourself. These are key interpersonal skills which will improve your confidence in an interview.
- Setting career objectives. Be clear about your career goals and take a step by step approach to

achieve your dream job. Learn your personal career barriers and how to overcome them.

- Improve your interview self-confidence whilst you're looking for a job. Use the help of subliminal messaging software to keep up your motivation and self confidence during the job hunt.

Your CV is the basis for every interview

Initially a recruiter will spend about a minute looking through each job application but once you're selected for an interview your CV will directly influence the interview questions you'll be asked.

- Don't bluff on a CV as the interviewer will almost certainly trip you up in the interview and you'll have done yourself no favours.
- Keep your CV relevant and consistent with what they'll discover in an interview. Focus on your competences that match the competences outlined in the job application pack.



- Include transferable skills on your CV as these strengths can give you a competitive edge.
- Tailor your CV for each job application and use the best format for the job depending on your experience. Chronological CV are the most common but a Qualification Based CV can promote your skills better if you have recently qualified or retrained. A Skills Based CV is good for people who've had a career break or are changing careers. However if the company asks for your CV in a specific format you must comply.
- Avoid the most common CV mistake. Substantiate your CV. This is one of the most important interview tips because if you do this it will differentiate your CV from the majority of applications. Go through your CV with a 'fine-tooth comb' and ask yourself, 'How do I do this?' against each statement. Descriptive words such as 'innovative' 'good with people' are meaningless unless you can substantiate them.

How to interview brilliantly

- Interview preparation is the best way to dispel interview nerves and improve your chance of being offered the job.
- Prepare answers to interview questions. Draw up a list of interview questions which challenge every claim you've made on your CV. If it says on your CV that you managed a sales campaigns ask yourself, 'What quantity of sales?', 'How profitable

were they?', 'How did I manage?', 'What did I learn?' Practise your answers.

- Prepare answers to common communication interview questions. Communication skills are an essential competence for most jobs so be prepared to interview ten of the most common communication questions before you go to the interview.

- Try using the STAR system for responding to competence based questions such as 'Describe a situation where a conflict arose in your team. What did you do?'

S: First describe the situation you were in

T: Describe the task that was involved

A: The action that you took (be careful to say I and not we in this situation)

R: Explain what the result was

- Identify two anecdotes to support each of your key strengths. For example, if you're applying for a leadership position you might focus on achieving goals and motivating others. Practise telling the anecdotes out loud in the much the same way that you would tell a story to a senior colleague at work. Keep the anecdote brief and to the point.
- Acknowledge a genuine weakness or failure in a project. This is more appealing than candidates who try to disguise difficulties with trite answers. Show how you've learnt from the experience and gained empathy with others.

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the company when answering interview questions such as 'Why do you want to work for us?' and 'What will you be doing in five years time?'.

- Always have questions to ask the interviewer otherwise it looks like you're not interested in the job. Use research to strengthen your questions. For example ask, 'How will my performance be

measured?', 'How will you know if I'm doing well?', 'Are there any aspects of my application where you need further evidence?' This gives you an opportunity to address any of their niggling concerns.

- Know how to dress for an interview. This doesn't mean you have to dress in a dreary way. Select your outfit by dressing for the role, culture, interviewer and yourself.

- Spend more time on personal grooming on the day of the interview. This will help you feel more confident and relaxed.

- Practise your answers to the questions out loud. Video yourself in a mock interview. This is particularly useful for checking body language. You need good eye contact and an open stance (no folded arms), sit up straight but relaxed and without fidgeting.

- Double check all interview arrangements a day before the interview.

- On the day, relax. You've done your interview preparation. Smile and go in to the interview looking to build up a rapport. Generally it's not your qualifications or experience that will get you the job but what the interviewer thinks of you as a person. Even if you don't get this job, if they like and trust you, they may call you back for another role.

- Follow up the interview with a short letter saying that you're enthusiastic about being offered this job and determined to demonstrate the contribution you can make to their company. It may sound 'cheesy' but reinforcing your commitment could help you get your dream job.

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If you would like more help on how to interview successfully sign up for my How to Interview Training Newsletter. This is packed with interview tips and techniques on how to answer interview questions. You'll immediately be sent a free video 'know yourself' coaching session which will help you identify your unique strengths to promote in an interview. <http://www.howtointerviewtraining.com>

Tips for listening on the telephone

By Paul Archer

Two way conversations are great - you say something, the other person listens, then responds ... and on it goes. Very satisfying. Not so good is when the conversation is clearly one-sided, with your friend or colleague glazing over whenever you have your say. It's all about listening skills - and some people just don't seem to get it! How you listen and respond during telephone conversations is as important as face to face - if not more so, as there is no body language to observe. This article gives you a Listening MOT - and tips to improve your skills.



A Listening MOT

Look at the following questions. How do these apply to you and the way you listen? Please answer honestly. Ask yourself...

1. Are you doing something else while the customer is talking? Yes/No
2. Are you thinking about the next call, going out that evening, what you will be eating for dinner? Yes/No
3. During your conversation with a customer, do you wait for a pause, so you can say something? Yes/No
4. How difficult is it for you to stay quiet - do you say something without thinking first? Yes/No
5. Are you faking your listening to the customer, just so you can get in your comments? Yes/No
6. Do you practice selective listening? Do you only hear the things you want to hear? Yes/No
7. Are you unaware of the message being sent by other means than just the client's words (e.g., language, key phrases, mood, vocal intonation)? Yes/No
8. Do you allow background noise or your environment to hinder your ability to listen? Yes/No

Maybe I've insulted you with some of these questions but this was not my intention. I just wanted you to be aware of how difficult listening can be and how easy we can slip into bad habits.

Self awareness is the first step to improvement.

Your Own Volume Control

Listening on the telephone in fact listening in general, has to be one of the hardest things to do continuously. Yes we can all listen for five minute bursts but to do it all day every day, just has to be hard graft.

So next time you feel your listening ability has taken an early bath imagine your very own personal volume control.

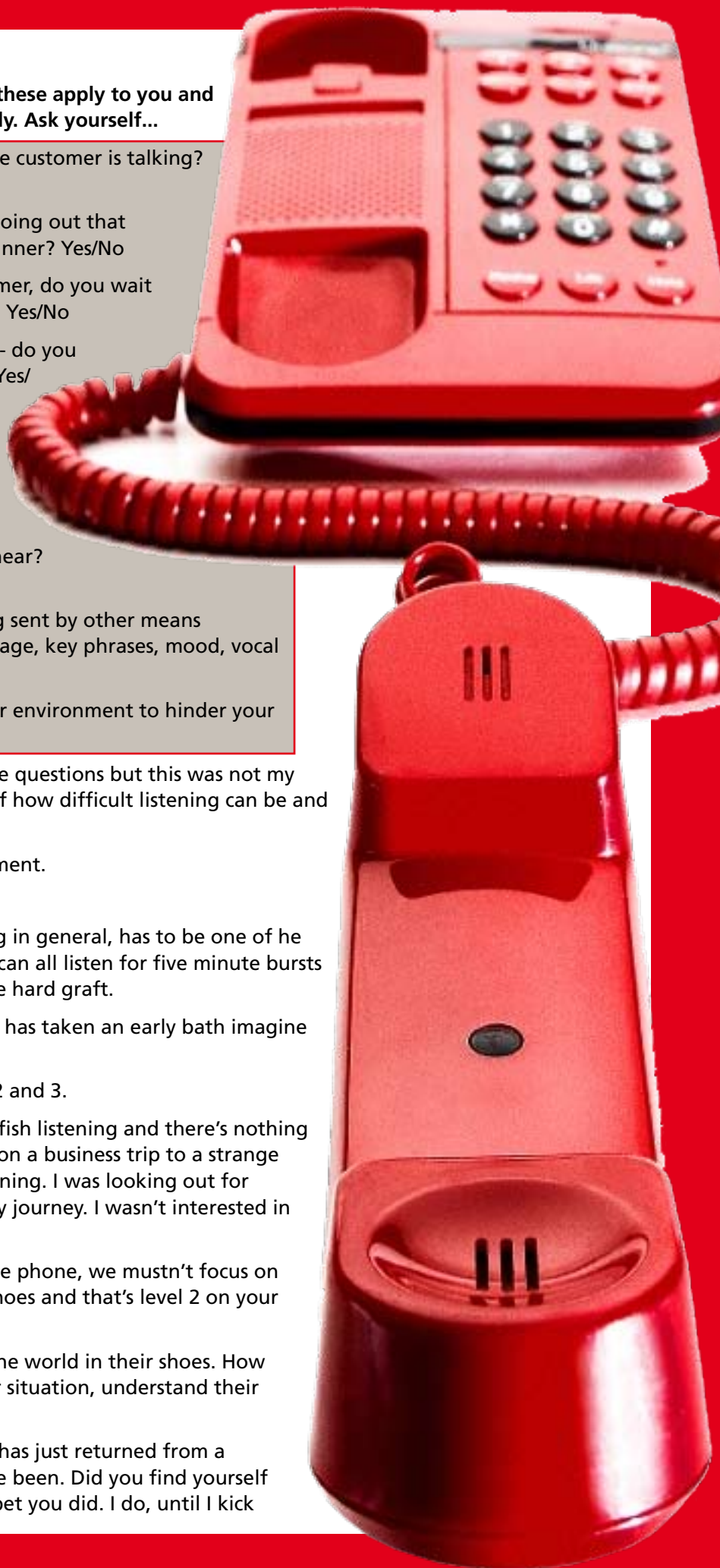
Now your volume control has 3 levels - 1, 2 and 3.

Most of the time it's on level 1 which is selfish listening and there's nothing wrong with this. Only the other day I was on a business trip to a strange airport and I was operating on level 1 listening. I was looking out for signs and noises that would help me on my journey. I wasn't interested in anyone else just myself and my next steps.

But in selling or dealing with people on the phone, we mustn't focus on just ourselves. We need to get into their shoes and that's level 2 on your volume control.

Turn up the volume and start to think of the world in their shoes. How do they see things, have empathy for their situation, understand their world.

Have you spoken to a friend recently that has just returned from a holiday abroad to the same place as you've been. Did you find yourself comparing their experience with yours? I bet you did. I do, until I kick



myself back into level 2 listening. Finally there's volume level 3. Rarely do we cross into this level. Here we begin to hear and see things around our customer that are not obvious. We develop a kind of sixth sense so we can hear what's not being said as well as what's being said.

They call it intuition. Trust it, as it won't let you down.

So next time you're on the telephone and you're struggling to listen, think of your imaginary volume control.

Reflective Statements

These are very handy little devices that show the customer that you're listening and help to build empathy.

These are used to reflect emotion; they can act as a valuable tool in building rapport. If someone is perhaps angry, or very excited, or anxious - this emotion is probably

going to get in the way of our discussion. Until we have in some way handled this emotion, we may not get their full concentration on what we need to find out.

"I can understand how that could be frustrating"

"I can see how that would be upsetting"

"You seem annoyed about something"

It gives the person the chance to vent the feelings and emotion. Make the statement and pause for 1? seconds for a response. Learn to be comfortable with a little bit of silence before you have to signpost your way through it.

Verbal Nods

Imagine having a conversation with a good friend in a coffee shop and she gets to the best bit. What do you do? Yes you lean forward, give eye contact, nod your head, match expressions.

Yes you are showing good non verbal listening skills often called active listening.

The disadvantage of the telephone is we don't have body language to help us listen, or show that we're listening. Classics such as nodding, eye contact, eye brow movement all help to show we're listening.

But without sight we have to go totally verbal.

"Uh hur"

"I see"

"keep going"

"that's interesting"

"oh dear"

The list goes on and each one tells the customer that you're listening to them.

Care though you don't use the same one as this will soon become what's known as a "verbal tic".



Eliminating Distractions

One of my first sales jobs was working as a financial adviser for a busy estate agent in a major city. My desk was right by a large picture window opening up to Guildford High Street. On a Saturday or a busy lunchtime, hundreds of people would walk by, some would stare in at me. Cars and trucks would drive by and there would always be some movement going on outside.

And meanwhile I had to use the phone to speak with customers.

I also recall the very next day being told in the morning that the company I worked for was up for sale. Suddenly the external distraction of the window didn't matter, as my head was full of internal distractions this time to prevent me from listening to my customer.

External Distractions

I'm always amazed when I'm coaching people who use the phone all the time, how many distractions there are that can prevent you from listening 100% to the customer. There's always people coming up asking if you want a cup of tea, people wandering around, some people making lots of noise. A general buzz.

A useful exercise is to make a list of all the external things that can cause you a distraction and then make some decision about what you can do about them, so as to minimize their effect. Here are a few examples.

Distractions on desk

Distractions on screen

Noise in the office

Colleagues interrupting

Watching colleagues

Internal Distractions

Equally annoying are the internal distractions that dominate our thoughts. The fact is we speak at about 150 words per minute, but think at 750 words a minute. So you can see why our head is always so full of words and self talk.

So how do we fill the gap? Here's some examples of internal distractions:

Daydreaming - half listening though mind wandering off

Filtering - hearing what you want to hear

Making assumptions - you know what they mean already

Rehearsing - thinking about what you are going to say next

Placating - right...yes...I know... absolutely...you are being nice and agree with everything

Easier said than done, but the key here is to understand your internal distractions - identify them and then make a decision to fix them.

Summarising to Listen

Because using the telephone eliminates the body language side of communication we have to accentuate certain other communication skills to make up for this.

One of these is the art of summarising.

Observation of excellent call handlers and telephone salespeople shows that not only do they summarise what's been agreed at the end of the call, which many of us do, but they regularly summarise throughout the call.

Summarising throughout the call can:

Show the customer you have listened

Allow you to keep control of the call

Helps you direct and signpost the call

Shows empathy with the customer

Helps to interrupt long-winded customers.

So how do we summarise? That's like saying how do you eat Cornflakes for breakfast? It's easy...you pour in the cornflakes and then follow up with the milk.

Likewise summarising is not difficult...you start one with a phrase such as:

"Let me see if I've followed you so far...."

"OK, let me recap...."

"Let me check..."

"Let me check I've got everything...."

"What you're saying is..."

"Can I just go over your main issues...."

"Can I stop you and make sure I'm with you..."

Then you summarise and ask the customer if I missed anything.

Remember to summarise a little bit more during the call and not just at the end.

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Office Decoration

Adding the Final Touches to Your Office Refurbishment

By Graham Dixon

Getting the decoration of your office or business premises right is essential to both provide staff with a pleasant and motivating workspace and create a positive impression to clients. In today's tough marketplace, investing in an inspiring and fresh office design can help achieve greater levels of productivity and creativity, win more contracts and hold on to existing clients - all helping to improve a company's bottom line.

When redecorating your office, there are five main things to consider.

Wall Decoration

When faced with an expanse of blank wall, the possibilities for decoration are endless. The full spectrum of paint colours and finishes are available to you, as are the many patterned paper alternatives. So how do you go about choosing the office design that's right for you?

Within an office environment, a number of factors need to be considered that may not necessarily feature in any home based decorating decision;

How many people are likely to use the rooms/corridors on a daily basis?

What is the age demographic of the majority of users?

How much and what sort of hardware or equipment will be moved through the rooms?

Will the walls be dressed with pictures?

Will you be using an OHP on the walls?

Will the walls be used for signage or display purposes?

Will the walls need to be re-covered often?

Answers to all of these questions will help you to decide upon the type of wall covering that is most suited to your office or workspace.

There are many different types of wall covering available, from simple paints to strong, fabric backed wall coverings which are extremely durable. For heavy traffic areas like reception areas and stairwells, these are ideal. Paper backed wall coverings are well suited to lower traffic areas like offices and boardrooms etc.

Some companies are even able to supply a range of wide, paper backed wall coverings that have been designed specifically for the purpose of decorating office partition systems. These coverings, when used in conjunction with a specifically patented fire protection system, will meet Euro Class B fire certification requirements.

Beyond the paper and fabric backed products available, there



is also a range of modern, eco-friendly alternatives using high-end materials such as woven grass and fibreglass. These environmentally friendly materials are extremely durable, attractive and fire retardant.

Turn your walls into whiteboards and scrawl all over them. A wall covering exists that will let you do just that. This is ideal for boardrooms, meeting rooms, training rooms and educational establishments from junior schools to universities.

You could even turn your large blank wall space into an art installation, your company logo could be repeated across the wall ad infinitum or blown up and centralised as if one giant advertising hoarding. The possibilities are endless and the effect is truly amazing.

Colour Schemes

Your office colour scheme needs to portray the right image for your business and it is therefore important to choose colours that reflect the style of your business, its role within the marketplace and your target audience. The company image must speak to your target audience.

Ad agencies and creative types can

get away with fluorescent pink, undertakers, possibly not. Advisor type businesses such as legal firms or consultants need to exude an air of professionalism and stability, so neutral colours such as white, cream, beige or light green make good choices here.

Office colour schemes, designed around corporate colours can also aid in staff integration, making them feel part of a team, which can reduce staff turnover.

Lighting

Natural lighting has been proven to have beneficial effects on the morale and productivity of staff and therefore, a natural light scheme should be integrated in to your office and workplace design wherever possible.

If the use of electric light cannot be avoided and it is needed to assist those working in windowless offices or into the evening and throughout the night, it is best to steer away from fluorescent lighting, which can be quite harsh. Use track or pendant lighting instead or individual desk lamps if possible. These will deliver a stronger, more directed light that will reduce the risk of eye strain, particularly for those working at computers.

Office Flooring

The addition of new flooring to your office will make a huge difference and instantly smarten up your workspace. The wide range of flooring options available include carpeting, laminated flooring and vinyl flooring and much like the wall coverings mentioned above, these too come in a vast array of colours and styles. Prices will vary tremendously depending on durability and quality.

If carpet is chosen, a hard wearing design in a reasonably dark colour is the most cost effective option as it will need replacing less regularly than a lighter colour.

Other options include vinyl, which is hard wearing, or for a modern, contemporary look consider using laminate flooring. This also lasts a long time, looks great and is much less likely to scratch, than real wood floors.

Window Coverings

It is very unlikely that curtains or any kind of fabric window covering, would be used in an office or workplace environment. In a relatively short space of time these will become grubby and need washing. The removal and replacement process may well result in damage and once up, it is



unlikely anyone will volunteer to remove them anyway.

Window blinds or shutters are far more effective as window coverings for the office or workplace and much easier to maintain. If set up at exterior windows, the amount of natural light allowed into a room can be easily regulated and if set up between departments, in conjunction with office partitioning, security and privacy can be regulated too.

Office Furniture

Choosing new office furniture requires careful planning in order to maximise the comfort and efficiency of your employees and make the best possible use of the space available. One of the first things to consider is the legroom your employees will need in order to perform their duties comfortably and to the best of their abilities.

Another equally important consideration is that of safety. There must be sufficient room to enable any and all employees to escape the room quickly, in case of emergency. A tip is not to rush out and buy the first desk, chair, or workstation that you see; instead, properly evaluate your office furniture needs along with the safety of your employees and install your office furniture accordingly. Or better still, have your office refurbishment company carry out an assessment and let them source and install the appropriate furniture for you.

The finishing touches

Often times it's the finishing touches that make all the difference in an office refurbishment project. Here are some ideas to complete your new office design:

Company success stories, such as framed press coverage or client logos given pride of place on a wall are great finishing touches. These will help to motivate staff and



are sure to impress visitors to the building.

Other inspiring artwork can include natural imagery to bring a sense of peace and tranquillity into the office environment, or motivational pictures with inspirational messages.

Well cared for plants also help to soften an office interior and provide colour and stress reducing properties.

Magazines featuring company articles can also be added to the reception area coffee table to boost credibility with visiting clients.

GDL Interiors provide office partitioning and office refurbishment to clients in the UK. Visit their website for detailed information on the services we provide, as well as useful articles and client case studies.

www.gdlinteriors.com