

PA ENTERPRISE

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

February 2011



Fabulous offers in this issue!

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**PLUS: Exhibition News / Can you train talent?
Identify your skills / Stresses colleagues**

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COMPETITIONS

14 Win designer shoes worth £500 with Brother!

Nothing feels better than being highly organised... apart from winning a pair of fabulous designer shoes worth up to £500!

14 Best Western offer 2 night break

Sign up online in February or March and you could win a 2 night break in one of Best Western's hotels!

14 Happy 40th Birthday STABILO BOSS!

To celebrate, STABILO are offering you the chance to win a £500 Red Letter Day gift voucher every month

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15 Cheers! Win a Magnum of Bollinger

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News Feature

The Default Retirement Age changes from 6 April 2011

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the **Default Retirement Age (DRA)** is being phased out over a transitional period running until 30 September 2011. Details will be set out in Regulations coming into force on 6 April 2011.

The last day employees can be compulsorily retired using the DRA is **30 September 2011**, so the last day to provide 6 months' notice required by the DRA provisions is therefore the **30 March 2011**.

Employers can still use the DRA between 30 March and before 6 April 2011, but if they do so they must use the short notice provisions, under which an employee could claim compensation (subject to a maximum of eight weeks' wages).

Employers will not be able to issue new notifications of retirement using the DRA on or after 6 April 2011.

From **1 October 2011** no employee can be compulsorily retired by an employer because they have reached the age of 65 unless that retirement can be objectively justified.

Acas guidance

Acas has issued the Advisory booklet, **Working without the DRA Employer guidance**, which outlines the changes and provides advice on how employers and employees can manage both the transition stages and new procedures.

The removal of the DRA not only raises practical issues for employers in managing the older worker but also across the workforce more generally with a wide range of areas such as succession and workforce planning, performance management and ensuring consistency and fairness in their policies and practices. It is important to remember too that the removal of the DRA will have implications for all employees in terms of career expectations and advancement.

The proposed changes will have far reaching implications for the way many businesses work and employers who fail to make the necessary changes to approaches to employee retirement may face claims of unfair dismissal and discrimination.

Key things to remember

- Workers will retire when they are ready to, enforced retirement will only be possible if it is objectively justified
- You must avoid discriminating against all workers on the grounds of age
- This legislation will be applicable to all employers and all company sizes
- These changes do not affect an employee's state pension age and entitlements, which may well be separate from the age at which they retire.

www.acas.org.uk



TV presenter Fiona Phillips to be keynote speaker at the first Workingmums.co.uk Live Event

The free event will be held at the Business Design Centre, Islington, London, from 10am-5pm on Tuesday 8th March, and will celebrate women's achievements in the workplace and give practical advice on overcoming any barriers to their progress.

Mums who are looking to return to the workplace or change jobs will find all the information and advice they need. It will provide a one-stop shop where mums can meet family friendly employers, find flexible job opportunities, and get advice on being self employed, starting a business or franchise and retraining.

Fiona Phillips gave up her job as co-presenter of GMTV after finding herself exhausted from having to balance the demands of a challenging early morning job with looking after her parents and being a mum to two small children.

She says: "Finding the right balance between

work and family life is a very personal decision and it

is up to each individual to make their own choice about what suits them best. Events like this will help a great deal to open up the possibilities for working mums, who often face very difficult decisions about how they deal with all the many demands made on them as mothers, daughters, partners and workers."



The event is free, and you can even bring your little ones as there will be buggy parks, changing stations and crèche facilities to make life that little bit easier.

To register visit www.workingmumslive.co.uk.

Office workers cut lunch breaks and don't claim expenses

Cutting visits to the gym, taking shorter lunch breaks and working harder to cover staff shortages are some of the ways that office workers are responding to pressures at work, according to a survey from Business Environment, a serviced office provider.

31% had felt pressure to work harder and take shorter lunch breaks because of the current economic climate. Over half said they took less than

30 minutes for lunch, and 18% said that they usually worked through their lunch break.

It also appears that most UK workers fail to claim back the expenses that they incur in office time. 60% said they did not claim for what they had spent on team drinks and 50% didn't claim back the cost of taxi fares. Most workers (58%) said that they didn't make an expenses claim because they had lost the receipts or didn't make time to complete a claim form.

On the other hand, many

employees had no concerns about using office facilities for personal use. 71% would use an office phone to make personal calls. Using the Internet for personal use (particularly for online shopping) whilst at work was regarded as acceptable by 54%.

Using the Internet to look for a new job during working hours is part of the office life. Over 60% said they would do so, but only during lunchtime – or if their boss couldn't see what they were doing. However, 38% thought that it was just too risky!

Britain revealed as a nation of milk chocolate lovers

Valued Opinions has revealed that the UK has the second highest consumption of chocolate per person in the whole of Europe, and that the confectionary market is worth a staggering £4 billion.

Apparently two thirds of Brits like **milk chocolate** the best whilst 22% prefer **dark chocolate** and 12% would choose **white chocolate**. Only 1% didn't like chocolate at all, reflecting the fact that for most of the people in Britain, chocolate is a luxury they can't live without!

Although chocolate has traditionally been regarded as a naughty-but-nice treat, recent scientific research into its chemical properties has revealed that it has important health benefits. Raw cacao has the highest antioxidant value of any natural food.

Among other things, it also improves heart function, helps to reduce cholesterol and

high-blood pressure and has a wealth of stress-busting, feel-good and anti-depressant chemicals.

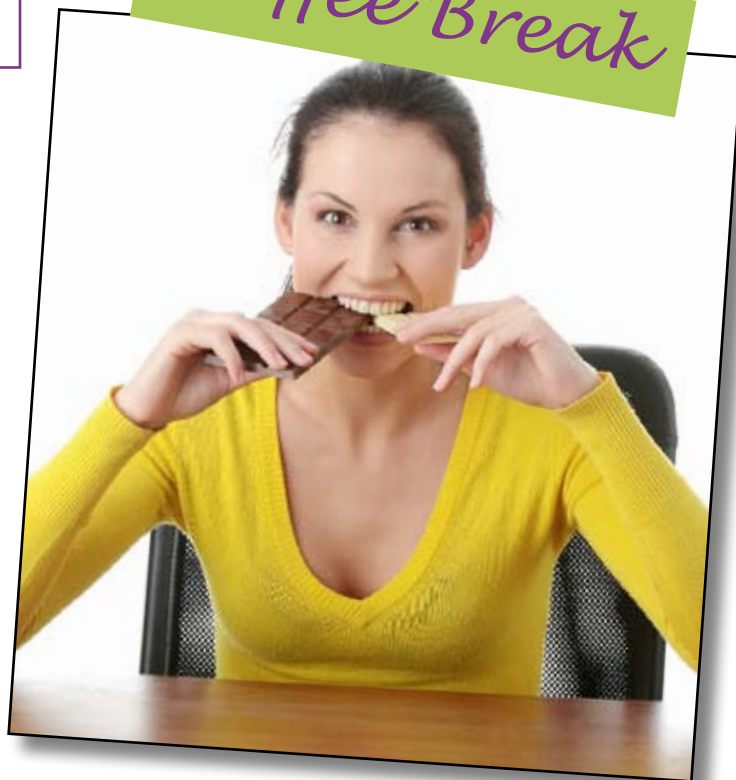
Evidence has suggested that consuming small quantities of **high-quality dark chocolate** has some

measurable health benefits including lowering blood pressure and cholesterol and increasing insulin sensitivity.

However, consumers won't get a chocolate-induced bill of health from the cheaper



Coffee Break



chocolate

bars that stack the UK shelves. The majority of milk and white chocolate is made from cocoa beans that have been roasted, treated with alkalis or other chemicals.

These processes strip the beans of virtually any valuable nutrition. The chocolate is then bulked out with additives such as hydrogenated oils, animal fats, refined sugar, dairy products and chemical preservatives; all of which make it a less than healthy option.

Milk chocolate typically contains around 20% milk fat which aside from being calorie laden also inhibits the body's absorption of cocoa's antioxidants. White chocolate, which contains no cocoa solids, has been found to yield no measurable health benefits at all.

Most chocolate produced for the UK market is milkier and contains less cocoa than chocolate in the rest of Europe.

It might not be good quality and it's certainly not healthy, but market research shows that Britons like cheap, sweet, milky chocolate and the FSA argues that they should be allowed to continue making and eating it!

Hotel Reward Schemes

Macdonald Hotels loyalty scheme now includes House of Fraser



Macdonald Hotels has unveiled its newest partner, House of Fraser, to join a unique collection of well-known brands taking part in the hotel group's new loyalty programme, **Club Corporate**.

The new points-based scheme rewards bookers for their hotel purchases, across room booking, event hire and team building activities. In addition to **House of Fraser**, bookers can also redeem their points at **Marks & Spencer** as well as a choice of short breaks, fine dining, spa

treatments and golf experiences at any of Macdonald Hotel's 4 and 5 star properties across the UK.

"With hotel bookers playing a valuable role in the success of Macdonald Hotels, the new corporate loyalty programme has been designed to offer loyal bookers the very best in retail therapy," explains Ruaridh Macdonald, Sales & Marketing Director, Macdonald Hotels.

"House of Fraser's range of luxury gifts, fashion and home accessories are a perfect match for the scheme and we look forward to welcoming them as our newest partner."

For more information on Macdonald Hotels new incentive schemes visit the website at www.MacdonaldHotels.co.uk/theclub/corporate

QHotels Loyalty Scheme

QHotels, a collection of 21 four-star hotels across the UK, has launched a brand new, exclusive **loyalty scheme** in a bid to increase its share of the business transient market by 10% per cent in 2011.

The loyalty scheme, aptly named **ThankQ Rewards**, allows business travellers to earn points that can be exchanged for a number of indulgent rewards across the QHotels collection. From a room upgrade, chocolate and champagne on arrival to a relaxing massage, business travellers may also save up their points to earn a family break, romantic trip for two or simply use against their next business stay.

The advantages of joining the scheme include:

- ✓ You can jump the queue every time you arrive at your QHotel – your room card will be automatically waiting at reception where you see the sign
- ✓ Collect 2 points for every £1 you spend on your total bill every time you stay at a QHotel
- ✓ Redeem your points against full or part payment of any goods and services within QHotels, against your next stay or a lovely spa treatment



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Office Products



Keep your workplace clean!

AF International, manufacturer of specialist computer and equipment cleaning products, have seen a recent increase in enquires and orders of their surface cleaning range, possibly as a result of new concerns about swine flu.

Both the NHS and the World Health Organisation are advising people to wash their hands regularly and to frequently clean work surfaces.

AF's ranges of product are an excellent way to keep hard surfaces clean and germ free in a working environment.

Tested by independent laboratories, **Phone-Clene**, **Headset-Clene**, **Foamclene** and **Maxiclene** concentrates were all shown to kill 99.9% of various bacteria within only two minutes, and are so effective that the bug free surface they create lasts up to 24 hours, with the reduction in bacteria continuing for 28 days. In addition, the Phone-Clene and Headset-Clene wipes eradicated an entire population of *Staphylococcus aureus* after two minutes!

The 50ml **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 conditioned.

The full AF range can be viewed at www.af-net.com

This month Canon are launching their new i-SENSYS Laser Multifunction Printer range.

A must for busy office environments, the new i-SENSYS Laser Multifunction Printers have a whole host of great features. The space-saving units are ideal for producing stunning looking business documents and prints for brochures, leaflets and presentations.

The i-SENSYS MF9220Cdn is ideal for small organisations looking to introduce colour in a cost effective and simple-to-operate format. The i-SENSYS MF9280Cdn offers the same features but with the addition of PCL and PostScript Level 3 capabilities to cater for larger corporates with managed IT infrastructures.

The units have low energy consumption, and a big plus is that there's zero warm-up time, so no waiting. Automatic double-sided printing saves paper, and the units hold 850 sheets of A4, ideal for high print volumes.



Exhibition News

The Conference and Hospitality Show 2011 is using its influence as the only regional exhibition of its kind to help **PAs and event organisers** make the most of their ever decreasing budgets. Research from IRIS Accounting and Business Solutions revealed that 87% of businesses have confessed to tightening controls on office purchases and expenses such as meeting costs. The survey, which questioned over 150 Financial Professionals, found that growing numbers of organisations are scrutinising the behaviour and productivity of their employees, pouring over purchasing decisions and expense claims, as a result of the economic situation.

As a result of this budget pressure **The Conference and Hospitality Show** has launched a Hosted Buyer Programme for PAs in the West Yorkshire area. Radisson Blu is just one venue that has recognised the need to support such an important regional initiative Show. The city centre hotel has offered ten complimentary bedrooms the night before the show, in a bid to encourage PAs from Leeds to try the Radisson Blu experience firsthand and attend the show the next day.

The show which is the leading show for conference organisers in the North is organised by Emma Cartmell from Event Management 360 who said:

CONFERENCE AND HOSPITALITY SHOW 2011

"We are really pleased that venues like Radisson Blu recognise the validity and necessity for a regional show. Our goal is to encourage the highest quality of visitors and offers of this calibre will certainly help to achieve this. Add this to the new hosted buyer programme, which requires visitors to meet certain criteria before being accepted and we are on our way to creating a great platform for venues to promote their offer."

Visitors can register to attend the event for free and apply to the Hosted Buyer programme by visiting:

www.conferenceandhospitalityshow.co.uk

The Conference and Hospitality Show 2011 is being held at Savile's Hall, the Royal Armouries Leeds on Thursday the 17th March from 9.30pm until 4pm.





10th March 2011. SECC, Glasgow
www.themaineventscotland.com

Prepare to be dazzled ...

If you're looking for something extra special for your next event - **The Main Event 2011** is sure to deliver.

This award-winning show will let you plan your event, network & source suppliers, take advantage of exclusive event offers, view innovative industry products and concepts plus attend FREE seminar sessions with top UK speakers.

A variety of Scotland's top suppliers, from unique venues and wonderful food, to cutting edge lighting and staging and inspired entertainment will be there to showcase what they have.

The Main Event will excite, delight, inspire and make future event organising just that little bit easier..

The features for this year's event will make your visit a memorable one...

- MCL Theatre this year will be hosting FREE seminar sessions with top UK speakers with first class experience and a wealth of knowledge of the events industry.
- The Innovation Zone is new for 2011
- Blooming Occasions Restaurant
- Diamond Event Services Bar
- Book an Appointment with Fran McIntyre is a new feature for 2011

"Visiting The Main Event in previous years has allowed me to cover a week's work in one day. Even in these times there is still nothing to compare with meeting a supplier face to face and discussing your requirements, being able to meet so many in such a short time is both efficient and enjoyable. And twice now I have found a hidden gem whom I wasn't aware of prior to the show. I'm looking forward to the 2011 event."

Lynda Forrest, Head of Events DADA





As the UK's leading event for event organisers, Confex brings together people who organise any kind of event with a colourful array of venues, destinations and event support services both in the UK and across the world.

Taking place from 1-3 March 2011, this years show welcomes over 1000 exhibitors, cutting edge educational content, essential business opportunities, a host of networking events and exciting, interactive show features guaranteed to make your events exciting, engaging and cost effective.

For full details and to register free, visit www.international-confex.com

A few of the features on offer are shown below.

International Confex 2011 will again feature a cutting edge **seminar programme**, completely free of charge to all visitors of the event.

Presented by industry experts, this educational programme will address the most topical issues facing the events industry, including the latest market trends, practical advice and real-life solutions for immediate implementation in your own role, event or business. For example:

What's hot for 2011 in events?

Are you REALLY an event professional?

Weathering the storm - dealing with crisis in events

Impact of London 2012 on corporate meetings & event procurement



Thursday 3 March, PA Day will offer specifically tailored content for PAs.



Sample culinary delights created by the industries top caterers as you walk around the show.



45 free seminar enable you to develop professional knowledge and learn the latest industry trends.



Win a host of top prizes whilst discovering all the the international destinations have to offer by taking place in our passport competition.



Take time out from the hustle and bustle of the show floor and enjoy relaxing massages and beauty treatments at the spa.



Meet a number of European destinations in one just one journey by visiting our European Pavilion.

Time for a treat!



Unmissabubble treat!

We can't seem to get enough of the sort of chocolate which tickles our tastebuds (see page 6), and now one of the nation's favourites, AERO®, has a new flavour.

Nestlé® Confectionery has launched its new 'irresistibubble' AERO® Caramel bar which has all the taste and bubbly milk chocolate of AERO® and is now infused with a tempting caramel centre.

At 189 Calories and consisting of five bite-size pieces, AERO® Caramel makes a 'loveabubble' portionable treat.

So go on... treat yourself!

Mixed views on VAT rise for SMEs

New online research from YouGov's SME Omnibus survey reveals that over half of all SME senior decision makers surveyed (57%) agree the recent VAT rise will make no difference to their business. London SME decision makers proved to be most confident about the 2.5% rise with 65% believing that it would not make a difference to their business. However, 41% did believe that the VAT rise would have a negative effect. SME decision makers in the East of England were most pessimistic with 46% saying VAT would have a negative effect on their business.

It was also revealed that regardless of their views on the matter, the majority were ready for the rise with 86% agreeing that they were well-prepared. In contrast, only 10% of SMEs decision makers disagreed that they prepared for the rise.

P-touch

brother
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Nothing feels better than being highly organised...

...apart from winning a pair of designer shoes worth £500* with Brother electronic label printers



PT-2030VP



PT-1290DT



PT-2730VP

By using a Brother P-touch labeller around the office you'll be more organised and no longer waste valuable time trying to find files, documents or office equipment. Plus, our must have labels now come with the chance to win one of three pairs of designer shoes worth up to £500 – just enter our competition today by visiting www.deskdemon.com/shoes

To buy a Brother labeller contact your preferred supplier today, and for a chance to win a pair of designer shoes or to find your nearest retailer, visit www.deskdemon.com/shoes

* Terms and conditions apply, see www.brother.co.uk/shoes for details.

ENTER NOW FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN

£500 designer shoe vouchers; Weekend break for two in Amsterdam or Mallorca; £5

Brother Shoes Competition

Nothing feels better than being highly organised...apart from winning a pair of fabulous designer shoes worth up to £500!

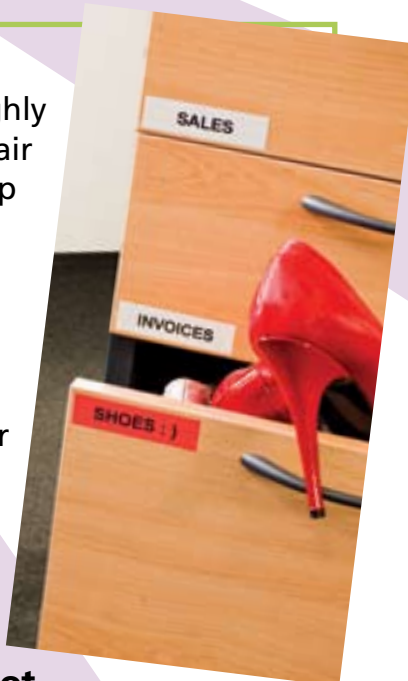
Using a professional electronic Brother labelling machine around the office can make it easier to locate files, documents and equipment and helps you stay super organised.

And, if you're trying to stay one step ahead in the office, then you may as well do it in style... To ensure you're always putting your best foot forward, **Brother have got three fantastic £500 designer shoe shopping vouchers** to give away to you label lovers out there.

The lucky winners will be able to treat their feet to some top class footwear, so you'll soon be racing ahead in the fashion - as well as the organisation - stakes.

All you need to do is answer a simple question and submit your details and you'll be on your way to those long lusted over shoes.

CLICK HERE TO ENTER



£500 Red Letter Day Gift Voucher

Happy 40th Birthday

STABILO BOSS! To celebrate, STABILO are offering you the chance to win a **£500 Red Letter Day gift voucher** every month so that you can experience being the BOSS of whatever you like. There is also the chance to win a BOSS mini USB stick. Just visit **www.boss-wanted.com** to find out how you can win!

As an added bonus, throughout its 40th year, get limited edition stickers to personalise your BOSS highlighters in every STABILO BOSS packs.



CLICK HERE TO ENTER

Great savings for the boss and perks for you!

Get more beds for your budget with Best Western Hotel's loyalty scheme, Best Business. Your company will get a rebate on all stays, our lowest prices and centralised billing while the booker and the stayer will get loyalty points to spend on fantastic treats!

Sign up online in February or March and you could win a 2 night break in one of Best Western's hotels!

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Business

WIN IN THESE FABULOUS COMPETITIONS!

100 Red Letter Day voucher; Magnum of Bollinger; Weekend break with Best Western

Win a Magnum of Bollinger!

Centreline Air Charter have been operating Private Charters for well over 20 years. With 5 jets based London and Bristol, Centreline has become the first choice for cost effective reliable light jet charters.

In the current economic climate efficiency in our flight programmes have allowed us to reduce the cost of chartering a jet by increasing utilisation and the sales of our empty flights through our notification service where individuals can subscribe to their empty leg newsletter and purchase private jet charters for as much as 80% off the full charter price.

To subscribe simply visit **www.centrelineair.co.uk** and fill in your details, then simply pick a flight that is in the same general direction as your needs and you will receive a charter quote within a few minutes.

If you are interested in finding out more about the ease and cost effectiveness of chartering a jet, simply answer a few questions and you will be rewarded with a **Magnum of Bollinger** with your first booking.



[CLICK HERE TO ENTER](#)



WIN A WEEKEND BREAK FOR TWO IN EUROPE

Fancy a fantastic trip to either the Mallorca Marriott Son Antem Golf Resort & Spa or Renaissance Amsterdam Hotel?

Marriott offers over 150 hotels throughout Europe and now you have a chance to stay at one of their exciting properties. Increase your chance to win by entering once everyday. Simply answer a few quick questions about Marriott's "One for You" promotion and the two hotels.

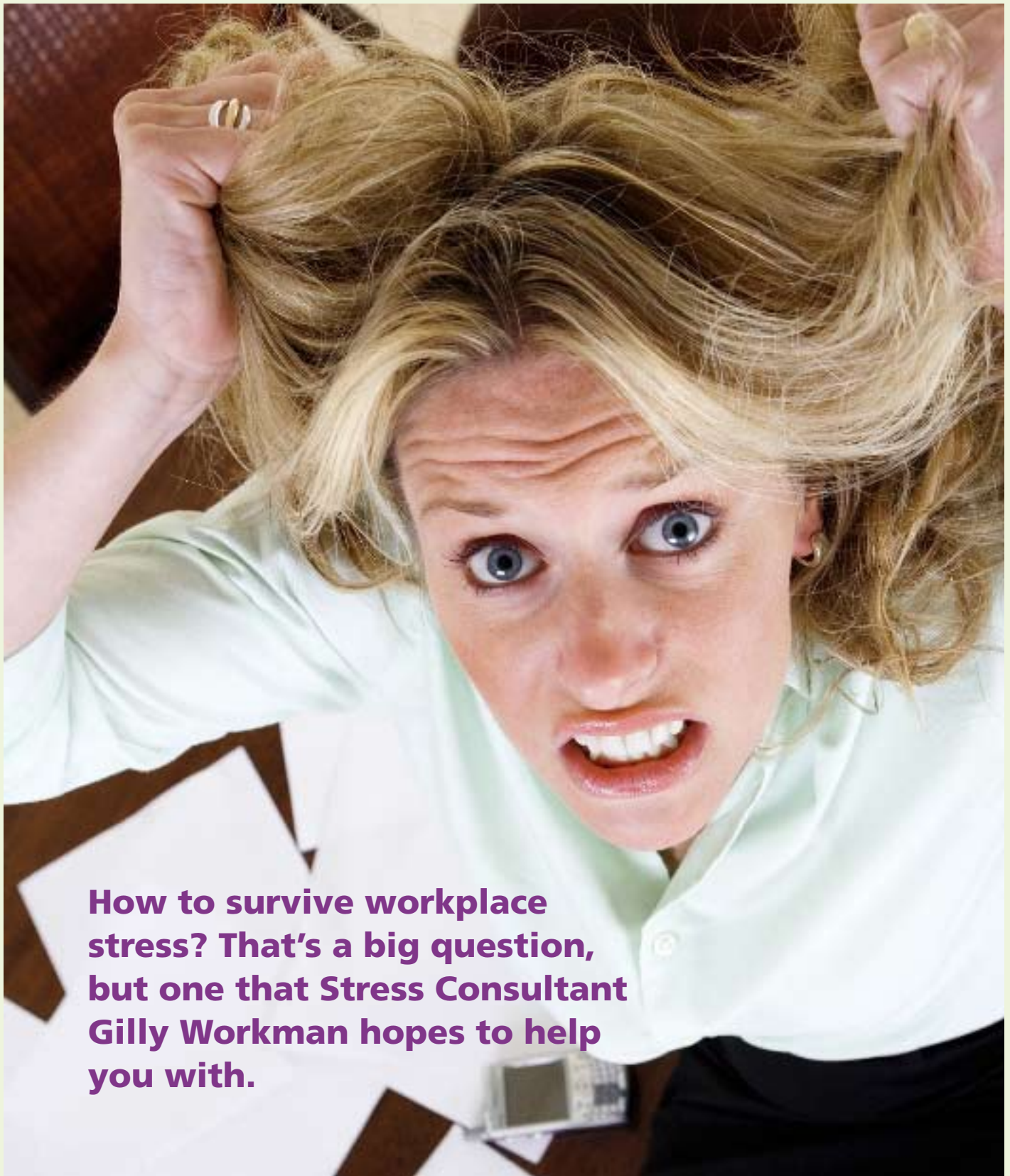
If you are selected as a winner, you and a companion could be exploring the sights of Amsterdam or the beaches of Mallorca.

[CLICK HERE TO ENTER](#)



Stress Awareness and Workplace Health

How to survive your stressed boss and colleagues



How to survive workplace stress? That's a big question, but one that Stress Consultant Gilly Workman hopes to help you with.

In my last article we looked at how to survive stress in the workplace on a personal level; now we will examine how to recognise and survive the stress experienced by your boss and colleagues.

And believe me, you will benefit personally from learning how to do this. Feelings, emotions, especially negative ones, can be 'contagious' – that is if co-workers are feeling angry, negative or stressed, those feelings can be 'picked up on' by everyone around them. You can all be affected by them, and feel negative and stressed yourselves. Supporting your boss and colleagues can lead to positive results and improvements for you as well.

After reading my last article, I hope that you are now feeling better placed to recognise stress in yourself, intervene early and do something constructive to change that. But how do you spot stress in those around you?

The signs may well be quite different, you will not necessarily know if your boss or co-workers are sleeping badly, having digestive problems, experiencing poor concentration, having difficulty making decisions or consuming more alcohol than usual. It is more likely that you may see behavioural or psychological changes. The sorts of changes you may notice could include:

- **Increased anger**

- **Mood swings**
- **Presenting as low or depressed**
- **Increased irritability**
- **Poor time management**
- **Reduced work performance**
- **Increased absenteeism**

If you recognise some or all of these behavioural changes in your boss or colleagues, then they may well be feeling very stressed and that they have little or no control of events around them. It could be that they are unfortunate enough to also be coping with pressure in the home environment. A double whammy is tough to cope with and could become overwhelming.

So what action could you take, that would help and support your boss and or colleagues, which will also help everyone in the long term?

If a co-worker is displaying any or all of the above symptoms, **invite them out for a coffee** (away from the workplace if at all possible) and allow them space to talk. Do check with your line manager first that it is okay for you to leave the office, or do it during the lunch break.

Do explain that anything they share with you will remain **confidential** – they need to feel safe enough to off-load. Trust is important for all of us.

Encourage them to **take breaks** away from the

workstation – lunch breaks are especially important. Perhaps invite them out to lunch with you, and then take a walk together.

Share with them the **stress reduction tips** you learnt about in my last article.

Lead by example – if they see you practicing what you share, they are more likely to do it themselves. It also encouraged you to take better care of yourself.

Encourage them to **leave work on time**, pushing themselves to work later and put in extra hours will not achieve more; quite the opposite. It will only serve to increase stress levels and reduce their workplace effectiveness and efficiency.

Remind them that we **work to live**, rather than live to work. No one went to their grave wishing they had spent more time in the office.

Find out if there is a local, evening **meditation class**, yoga class or swimming session you could go to together.

OR Organise a regular lunchtime/ after work meditation, yoga or Thai Chi class in your workplace. This will benefit everyone who attends and the ease of accessibility may encourage more people to participate.

I teach regular evening meditation classes and the majority of people that come on a regular basis, suffer with stress. Many of them came in pairs, as it feels easier for

them and of course, they can encourage each other to attend.

All of the students find the exercises we do relatively easy, enjoyable and very relaxing. They leave feeling much better than when they arrived and practice some of what I teach in between classes; as they experience the benefits even if putting in just a couple of 5 – 10 minute practices a couple of times a week. It is a start and it does make a difference.

One young man has recently been off work long term with stress; following a series of only what I can describe as 'traumas'. He started attending regular yoga classes recently, added my meditation classes to his list of well being activities; and

now realises that even when he is completely well again; regular, sustained practice of both will give him protection against stress-related illness in the future.

Wise choice. We cannot prevent stressful situations happening, but we can take care of our own well being in such a way that when stress happens, we can ride the stormy waves rather than be overwhelmed and tossed around by them.

And how many times have a number of stressful events or traumas all arrived in your life within quick succession? Not unlike a number seven bus – they all arrive at once.

Reach that peaceful inner space, and what ever life throws at you, you will be calm and relaxed enough to

see the solutions. Honestly, it is possible, I have achieved it and now I teach and support others to reach that place as well. More importantly, to stay there!

If you have specific questions relating to workplace stress and well being, please do send them in, I will be happy to advise.

About the Author

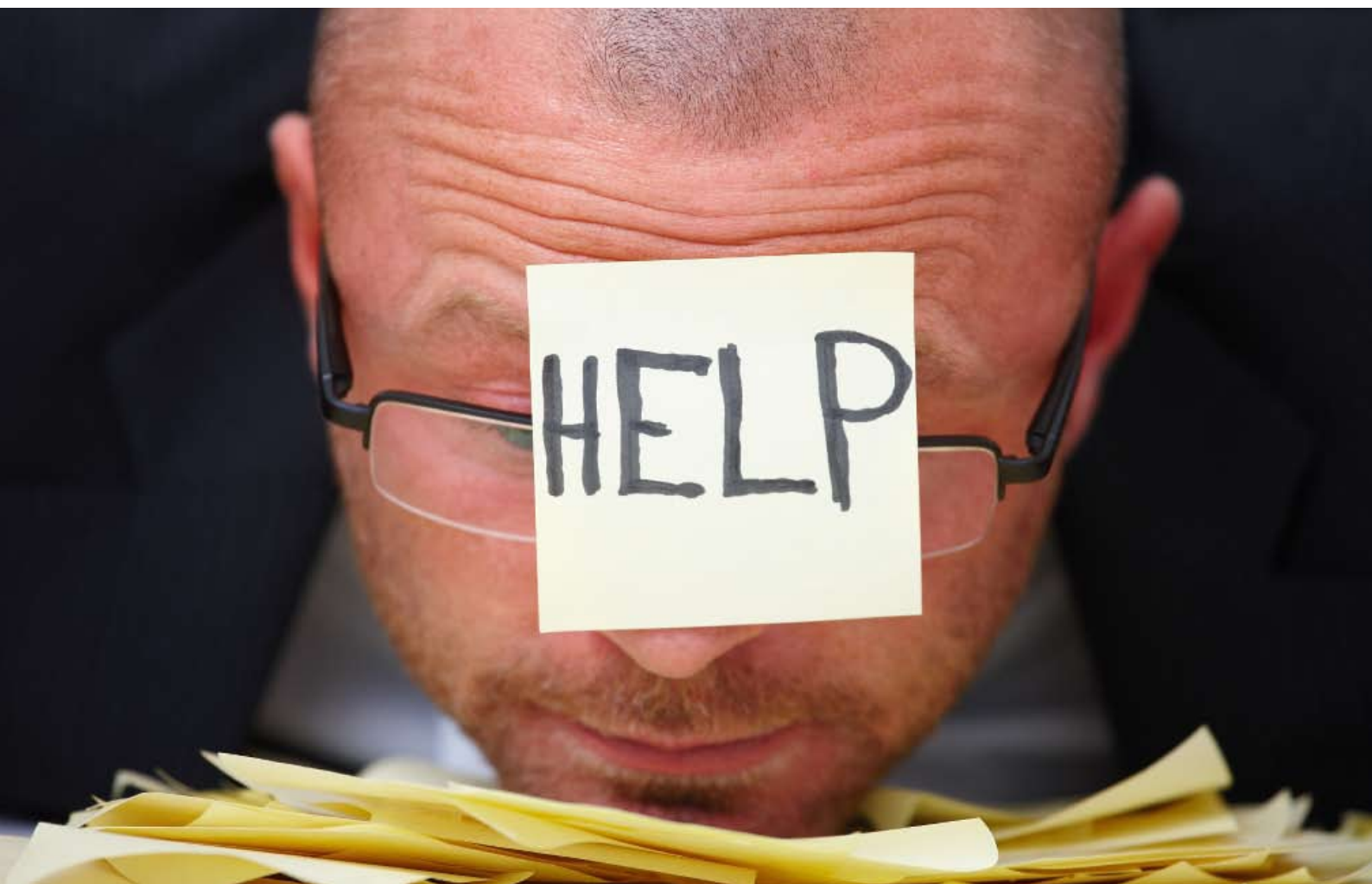
Gilly Workman is a Stress Consultant and active member of the Associated Stress Consultants. She runs The Advanced Stress Consultancy based in West Oxfordshire and specialises in offering stress reduction work to businesses, organisations and individuals.

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How to get the career you want and deserve!

Identifying your skills

By Diane Hope

Effective career planning takes time and it should start well before job changes are imminent so that career moves are through choice and not just a reaction to circumstances.

Even if you are not expecting or wanting to change your current job, you have to recognise that, inevitably, your role will change and you need to anticipate that change and prepare accordingly.

Successful career management depends on a firm foundation of realistic planning based on good decisions. To ensure that your decisions are good decisions you must obtain comprehensive and reliable information about yourself, your organisation and any external influences that can affect you or your industry.

As well as the skills you use in your work it is likely that you also have a range of other skills and abilities (lifeskills). People often have hobbies and interests which may offer further opportunities or even

lead to a complete change of direction.

We are generally happier in a job which plays to our strengths and allows us to do the things we like doing and are good at.

Is your preferred work:

- **Data** e.g. understanding and collating information
- **People** e.g. communicating, influencing, negotiating, supporting
- **Material** e.g. working with your hands, building
- **Ideas** e.g. being creative, innovative, problem solving?

The following exercise will help you identify these skills and produce the evidence to show how and when you used these skills successfully.

STAGE ONE

Write out what you consider to be your 10 most important achievements. They can be work or life related but must be meaningful to you.

Make brief notes on why

each was important to you.

Write how you or others benefited and anything else that springs to mind.

STAGE TWO

Think back through the achievement.

- **How did you start?**
- **What problems did you encounter?**
- **How did you overcome these problems?**
- **What resources did you use?**

For example, did you talk to a lot of other people to get advice and help, or did you work alone? Did you do a lot of research or jump straight in? This exercise should give you a good idea of your style and approach. If you spoke to a lot of people it could suggest you are a "People Person" and likely to be a good communicator. If you jumped in, it may be that you are very independent and/or creative. Once you have honestly explored the route that led to your successful achievement,

maybe with a coach, or a good friend, you should then have a list of all your skills.

N. B. If your particular discipline has other technical skills you should also list these.

STAGE THREE

Choose three achievements that you feel are particularly important.

**Describe the background
What was the problem or issue?**

**What did you achieve?
- What difficulties or obstacles did you have to overcome?**

What was the outcome?

How did you feel?

This in depth analysis will allow you to understand more about the environment which motivates you to use your skills effectively and should be used when you are deciding what options to take.

Further questions to help you make sense of all this information:

Which skills do you keep using?

Is there a recurring subject matter that you deal with?

What role do you like to take?

What are the payoffs for you in the activity?

Which circumstances keep

recurring?

What sort of people are around you?

What type of environment do you like operating in?

STAGE FOUR

Review the information gathered in the previous three stages and list the 5-6 main skills. List the skills and fill in your own definition for each skill.

STAGE FIVE

Your achievements may seem to be a collection of unrelated events but they are evidence of when you used skills and were motivated (i.e. when you are good at doing something you enjoy doing.)

At the end of this exercise you should have a comprehensive portfolio of skills.

Write notes on 3 examples where you used this skill in the past. This will form the basis of your personal record keeping and provide the evidence that can

readily be referred to when "selling" your abilities and experience for career growth opportunities in the future.

Most organisations today use behavioural interviewing for selection. The belief is that past performance is the best indicator of future behaviour. It is therefore important to prove that you have successfully used particular skills in the past.

Once you have completed these five steps you will be ready to apply for that promotion or new job with confidence.

So at the interview when you say you are good at planning, for example, you will be able to demonstrate this with an excellent example of when and how you used planning in the past to achieve a successful result.

So do this preparation - even if it is not your preferred approach - and get the career you want - and deserve!

Diane is a Professional Coach and Business Mentor with many years experience, specialising in helping clients move forward in their career or their business, through analysis, self determination, goal setting and action planning. For more information on career management, behavioural interviewing or other related matters, you can contact Diane by email at diane.hope@tiscali.co.uk

Diane, together with her associates, also runs a range of workshops from Management Development, Team Building and Creative Problem solving to Personal development programmes including, Assertiveness, Stress Management, Time Management, Goal Setting etc. Contact Diane by email for further information at: diane.hope@tiscali.co.uk



Can you train talent?

Most organisations of any size that are looking to their future sustainability will have a plan in place for talent management. But is it really working?

Robin Hoyle, head of learning at Infinity Learning explores how effectively companies are nurturing talent within their organisations.

The process of identifying **hi-potentials** (the so called hi-pos) through succession planning and career development workshops are well known. However, increasingly organisations are looking outside their own organisation when senior roles become vacant. Fresh ideas are needed, new blood, something to shake things up a bit. Perhaps these are valid points, but doesn't that indicate something of a problem with the existing talent management and development process and the investment which underpins it?

Talent management starts with recruitment

The talent management process begins, inevitably with recruitment – bringing people into the organisation with the right mix of skills, drive and desire to carve out their own career while adding value through their endeavour and application. A fact which organisations often overlook is that the graduates they recruit

and invest in during 2010 will be retiring in 2060! One would hope with the level of investment of a graduate training scheme, organisations would be looking to keep that talent on board for as long as possible and maybe, in an uncertain world, their entire career. Recruiting people who can be developed to do the jobs we have now rather than the jobs we will have in a radically different future is at best short sighted. So once on board we need to think about how this latent talent will be nurtured and shaped to work within the organisation but also to transform it to ensure it is fit for the future.

The focus of talent management needs to be about recognising those crucial change agent and adaptability skills. Where the graduate training and talent management relies on a steady rise through the ranks, the outcome is never good enough. The recruitment of mid-level managers who have cut their teeth in some other

organisation should always be a worry for L&D teams. If we have to go outside to gain some new ideas, the work we're doing inside is simply not good enough in the rapidly changing environment of the corporate world.

Feed your talent pool well

One way of supporting a home grown route to talent is to recreate the career path which was so favoured a few years ago of working in different departments. The idea, borrowed from Japanese organisations which had embraced continuous improvement and Kaizen was that high potential individuals would follow a structured career path, not moving inexorably up the organisation but moving inexorably round the organisation. Hi-pos would spend more time in different functions and departments, learning the ropes, constantly being taken out of their comfort zone. This had the benefit of honing the individual's learning skills,



provided evidence of their adaptability and gave them a thorough grounding in all the different functions that one day they might be called upon to lead.

Add to this experiential development process a **Learning Management System** (LMS) and an enterprise wide approach to **Learning and Development** (L&D), water well and fertilise with interesting and provocative inputs, and harvest the results. If your enterprise wide approach to L&D involves interlinked departmental curricula and organisation wide leadership development so much the better. Through a well designed LMS, the resulting well rounded individual can have their progress tracked and their learning accredited. More importantly, this enterprise wide approach ensures duplication is avoided – why would you want to waste the time of these talented future leaders?

In very enlightened organisations, placing staff in different departments is accompanied by some time in special projects or activities outside the organisation. For instance, I recently spent time with the HR director of a leading supplier of building materials. In this relatively unglamorous organisation, the leaders of tomorrow were involved in project work overseas with completely

different companies in different industries, looking at the management and organisational challenges outside their own experience and their relatively traditional world.

As part of their **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) programme, these same managers also worked with community organisations in developing countries. The communities in India and Africa where raw materials are quarried benefit from the management input of creative individuals to community schools and civic organisations. The sponsoring company also benefit from different experiences and learning opportunities and have the chance to assess their

In very enlightened organisations, placing staff in different departments is accompanied by some time in special projects or activities outside the organisation.

talent in unusual and challenging situations and, by strengthening these communities, add security and sustainability to their own supply chain.

To teach is to learn twice

One of the things to look for from these development projects and programmes is how effectively the talented individuals bring their learning back to the

organisation. It's relatively easy to see whether the experience has led to new ideas, new effectiveness and a new appetite for their own development. The results they achieve will either improve or not. More difficult to assess, but far from impossible, is whether these individuals come back and can share their experience with others – the cascade effect.

Increasingly, this cascade of experience, the sharing of learning, will be important. Vital for the individual themselves in helping them embed their experience, analyse it and reinforce the desired behaviours. For the individual, it is a crucial learning process. Constructivist learning

theories identify this process of making a representation of what you have learned as an essential part of truly learning something.

In a networked world, it will become even more common for this representation of these

experiences. The lessons learned and the relevance of novel undertakings to the day job will be performed digitally. The use of wikis, blogs and other web 2.0 tools to share and amplify this learning will not only spread the benefit, but create an auditable output to support further assessment of those who demonstrate their ability to apply a breadth of experience to the challenges

of the future.

Of course, the use of these tools is not yet embedded into, or taken seriously by, many organisations. It is still an immature technology for all but a few. Those who have yet to make use of the possibilities of web 2.0 technologies often cite the lack of time to be able to contribute or utilise the potential treasure trove of knowledge which an organisation's intranet could provide.

I am a sports fan.

When watching television sport and listening to ex-players now converted into pundits, they describe peak sporting performers as 'having so much time.' Whether receiving the ball in midfield, returning serve or moving their feet to a demon fast bowler, these individuals seem to have more time to react than their less successful counterparts. Is there a lesson here for talent managers? Perhaps peak performers who have the learning skills we require for a different future and who add value not just by learning but by sharing their insight and knowledge also 'seem to have more time?'

Getting things right first time

First and perhaps most importantly, they do things quickly and correctly. Right first time is actually one of the best ways of generating more time to do other things.

Also, these individuals prioritise the act of sharing knowledge and continually learning. They make time for these activities. In some respects, this is a selfish act. As the old Russian proverb says, to teach is to learn twice, so sharing

The individual talent who is being nurtured is also developing those who will work with them as they grow into the leaders that the next generation will demand.

your knowledge is never purely selfless. But they also recognise that work is a team sport, the chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Developing others, having a hymn sheet that everyone can sing from and honing ideas into the cauldron of informed debate builds a better team and delivers better performance.

Add to this the concept of capturing this shared knowledge through web 2.0 tools – wikis, blogs and published online conversations. The individual talent who is being nurtured is also developing those who will work with them as they grow into the leaders that the next generation will demand.

If you want something done, find a busy person to do it

For talent managers everywhere, reviewing the

input which these high fliers make into your corporate knowledge bank, the way they promote debate and thinking in an uncertain future and the way they embrace available technology to do so, will be useful indicators of potential. Those

leading our organisations into the second half of the 21st Century will have mastered these ways of working and will be ready to adapt to building the skills and knowledge of their organisations to face whatever challenges may

be thrown up over the course of their career.

They will also be digital natives and happily adapt their communication and knowledge sharing skills to whatever new technologies appear over the next fifty years. As a start point, organisations wanting to identify and nurture talent ought to be making contributions to these systems an essential and highly valued behaviour from those they develop.

About Robin Hoyle:

Robin oversees all learning design activities within Infinity Learning. He acts as a consultant to clients – especially with regard to learning and training strategy and developing solutions/ responding to client briefs.

About Infinity Learning:

Infinity Learning is a learning design company that embraces new technologies to deliver learning solutions to suit its clients' individual needs.

www.infinitylearning.co.uk