

PA ENTERPRISE

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

November 2011



How to spot fraud in your company

PA interview: Branson's former secretary

Corporate Christmas Hampers buying guide

Personality at work – are you right for the job?

News | Travel | Hotels | Venues | Technology | Offers

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8



14



18

4 News:

- UK workers feel 'taken for granted'
- Facebook is the social media choice for SMEs
- Sickness absence cost for SMEs
- Employers commit to boosting workplace health
- Prontaprint search for 'Entrepreneur of the Year'

8 New Feature: Ten Early Warning Signs of Fraud in Organisations – do you really know how safe your company is?

12 Travel & Hotel news

14 Office Technology:

- Office equipment must multi-task
- Brother helps growing businesses to stand out
- Make your life easier with Avery Multi-function lables
- Staedtler Digital Pen

18 PA Interview: Penni Pike, Richard Branson's former PA, talks about her career

20 This month's fabulous offers

22 Christmas Hampers: the ideal corporate gift

24 Buying Christmas Hampers online - our selection

29 Survey: Coffee in the workplace fails to deliver

30 UK women reveal their beauty secrets

32 The make-up map of Britain

33 Secret Santa gift ideas

34 Personality at work: Why do some people just not fit in?



22



32



34



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UK workforce feels taken for granted by their employers

Employers fail to show appreciation as their workers continue to feel the effects of a limping economy.

Nearly three quarters (70%) of workers feel their employer either takes their efforts for granted or expects them to feel grateful for having a job, as the struggling economy continues to affect morale, according to a survey from Hyphen, the recruitment solutions provider. The survey asked over 1000 UK workers a series of questions about their feelings towards their employer.

Workers say they continue to feel stretched as workplaces feel the pinch. One fifth (20%) of workers are still putting in longer hours than before the recession, surviving on a pay cut (17%) or taking on more responsibility than just their normal role (17%).

As a result, employees are now looking for better pay to match their worth but 67% say a salary increase would encourage them to stay put.

In the absence of increased pay, a significant proportion say a menu of flexible benefits, better work/life balance and clear career development opportunities would discourage them from moving on.

Zain Wadee, Managing Director at hyphen, said: "Employers need to focus on employee engagement to ensure they keep their best people or those staff who feel undervalued will consider moving job.

"Employee retention now deserves attention from employers. If not in a position to enhance pay packets, one powerful option is to maximise the benefits package offered to workers.

"Employers would be well advised to look at the overall experience of working in their organisation. Do their employees leave at a reasonable hour? Are they given the option to choose benefits to suit their situation? Are they engaged in discussions about steps to progress their career?"



Facebook is the social media platform of choice for SMEs

Facebook is the most popular social media platform to promote business for small to medium enterprises, with just over a quarter using the popular social networking website. LinkedIn and Twitter also proved popular with 25% and 21% respectively. Video streaming site YouTube received 10% of the vote. Though the adoption of social media is rapidly changing the way businesses promotes their company, over half of all SMEs (56%) never use social media to promote their own business. Interestingly, there were regional differences in social media take-up – just 39% of SMEs in the East of England never used social media for their business compared to 64% of SMEs in Northern England.

The findings also reveal that the majority of SMEs (88%) do not use a blog to promote their business. However, the 11% of SMEs who use a blog endorse it with 80% agreeing that blogging is successful in terms of using it to promote their business.

Though Facebook is the most popular social media website, the majority of SME decision makers believe LinkedIn is in actual fact, the most successful site for doing so (28%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Twitter and Facebook closely followed with 25% and 22% respectively.

The most popular use for social media is to promote products and services, and the business' brand. Just 21% of SMEs use social media to promote discounts, promotional and special offers.

Sickness absence costs small businesses £1,500 per year, new figures show

New figures from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) show that sickness absence costs small businesses on average £1,500 per year.

Long term sickness absence does not affect the smallest of businesses frequently, but when it does it has a big impact and the costs can be high. The FSB's *'Voice of Small Business'* survey panel shows that on average small businesses only experience 2.4 days sickness absence per employee each year – much lower than the national average 7.7 days per employee – 25 per cent said that they experienced no sickness absence at all and 81 per cent said that they were not at all affected by long-term sickness absence.

However, in the last 12 months sickness absence cost firms on average £1,500, but for nine per cent it cost more than £5,000. So it is important that the Government does more to help with the costs of sickness absence in the smallest firms.

Currently, some small businesses can feel confused by the **Percentage Threshold Scheme** – the current system used to calculate how much SSP an employer can claim back. This means that many small businesses either have to spend time doing difficult calculations or they have to spend money on buying in help.

With 40% of small business employers claiming that dealing with holiday entitlement and sickness absence was one of the most difficult aspects of employment law, the FSB believes that recovery needs to be simplified so micro firms can reclaim all SSP costs more easily to stop them from being hampered at such a difficult time.

The FSB is calling on the Government to introduce a small employer's relief for all firms with an annual National Insurance Contributions bill of less than £45,000 to recover SSP. This relief would be like that used for reclaiming statutory maternity pay and would use the same calculations. As a result, it would ease the administrative burden, as well as helping businesses manage sickness absence better.

All work and no play a new reality for British parents

- New research shows 1 in 5 parents can't take a enough time off work to have a holiday
- A staggering 49% of workers have not used their holiday allowance
- Over two thirds (72%) are home late from work so can't spend time with their kids
- Dads spend over an hour less with their kids than mums each day in a working week

Almost half of British workers have not used their holiday allowance in the last year and 1 in 5 parents can't take enough time off work to have a holiday at all says new research by Thomson Holidays. Work is taking its toll so much these days, that over two thirds are home late so they can't spend time with their kids and for those that do get home, more than 1 in 8 (16%) are working on their Blackberry's, mobiles or laptops. Over a quarter (27%) of parents stated that in an average week they spend less than an hour a day together with their children – despite almost half saying they wanted to spend more time together.

James Martin Gift Hamper Collection

Celebrity Chef James Martin has launched an exclusive range of his own brand products with **Highland Fayre**, creating an exclusive range of luxury gift hampers, boxes and baskets that are not available anywhere else. Highland Fayre are proud to introduce this new exclusive range, that also includes personally signed gift cards and James Martin cookbooks.

James says: "We all enjoy a touch of luxury so why not treat someone to a hamper containing a vast selection of gourmet treats like fine wines, relishes, cakes, preserves, handmade chocolates and much, much more?"

To view the James Martin Gift Hamper Collectio, go to: www.highlandfayre.co.uk/James-Martin-Gift-Hamper-Collection.

See our feature on buying corporate gift hampers on page 22



James Martin Festive Treats hamper, £40.00

Leading employers commit to boosting workplace health

The importance of health and wellbeing in the workplace has been recognised by a number of businesses in the UK and now many have signed up to a new government-led scheme.

Food and drink firms Typhoo and McCain, and utility company Centrica, have all signed up to the Public Health Responsibility Deal, which works with businesses and charities to improve the health of the population.

The deal is designed to use the existing leadership skills of businesses to improve public health and tackle health inequalities through their influence over food, alcohol, physical activity and health in the workplace.

Health minister Lord Howe said: "We spend a big chunk of our lives at work so it makes sense that employers look after us as best they can. And it's good business for them to have a healthy and happy workforce."

Since its launch in March, 285 organisations have joined the Public Health Responsibility Deal, which is also encouraging companies to get staff to use tools such as NHS Lifecheck.

Nutrition Solutions for Optimising Female Health

This easy-to-read book is packed with valuable information and strategies to help deal with the whole range of female health issues, written in a truly empathetic style.

"Women's 'troubles'. They're talked about a lot. In fact, they're often the subject of many a joke. But, for women who are experiencing hormonal changes, breast pain, cystitis or menstrual cramps, it's no laughing matter."

A must-have read for women of all ages, this book provides a definitive guide to natural female health, exploring how simple nutrition and lifestyle strategies can be used to manage common female health issues.

- An explanation of why a healthy liver and digestive system are vital for hormonal balance
- An insight into how blood sugar imbalances and stress can play havoc with your hormones
- Important diet and lifestyle changes for optimising hormonal health

Nutrition Solutions for Optimising Female Health is available from Higher Nature, RRP £5.99.



Jobs Detective launches new iPhone app

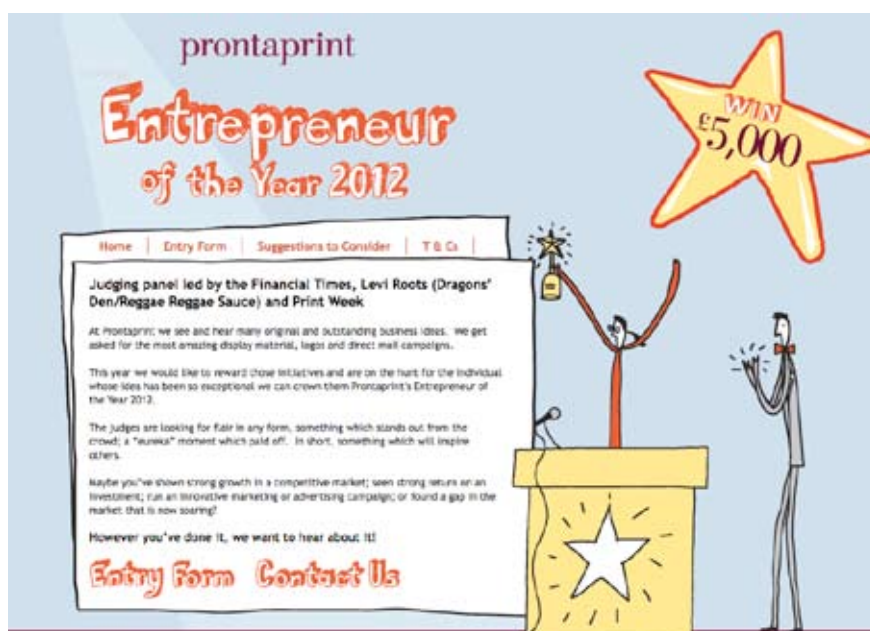
Jobs Detective has announced the launch of its new app, available for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch.

The app has been created to offer users a way of searching for jobs from the site on their mobile devices. Users are able to save jobs which interest them for future reference and set up alerts to keep up to date. With the jobs market being so fast-paced and competitive, the app gives Jobs Detective's users the advantage of looking for jobs on the go.

Sonum Tailor at Jobs Detective said: "Now that Jobs Detective has gone mobile, candidates can view our jobs whenever and wherever they go, making it easier for candidates to stay up to date with the latest jobs available- 24/7. We know how competitive the job market is these days, and how crucial it is to stay on top of the latest jobs. We hope the Jobs Detective app becomes a primary resource for candidates within the mobile and app world."

The new Jobs Detective app is available for free from the iTunes store.





Prontaprint in nationwide search to find "Entrepreneur of the Year"

Britain's longest established network of print centres has launched a search for the UK's top entrepreneur. The hunt is on for the individual whose business idea has been so inspirational they can be crowned "Prontaprint Entrepreneur of the Year 2012"

In the difficult economic climate, it's designed to show that behind the doom and gloom headlines, Britain's entrepreneurs are alive and kicking – or, rather, thriving, and just need to be unleashed.

The judges – including Andy Bounds, of the Financial Times, and Dragons' Den winner Levi Roots – are looking for flair in any form, something which stands out from the crowd, or the "eureka" moment which paid off. In short, inspiration for others.

Sara Jamison, CEO of Prontaprint said: "Maybe someone has shown real growth in a competitive environment; strong return on investment; had an innovative advertising or marketing campaign; an inspired direct marketing or online campaign; or found a gap in the market that's now soaring.

"Entries close on December 12. Judging begins in January and the winner will receive a £5000 cash prize; an engraved glass trophy; and, of course, huge kudos for their business."

Entrants can apply online via www.prontaprint.com or pick up a form in their regional Prontaprint centre.



Apple launch Marshall Bergman 'bags that work' for women and men

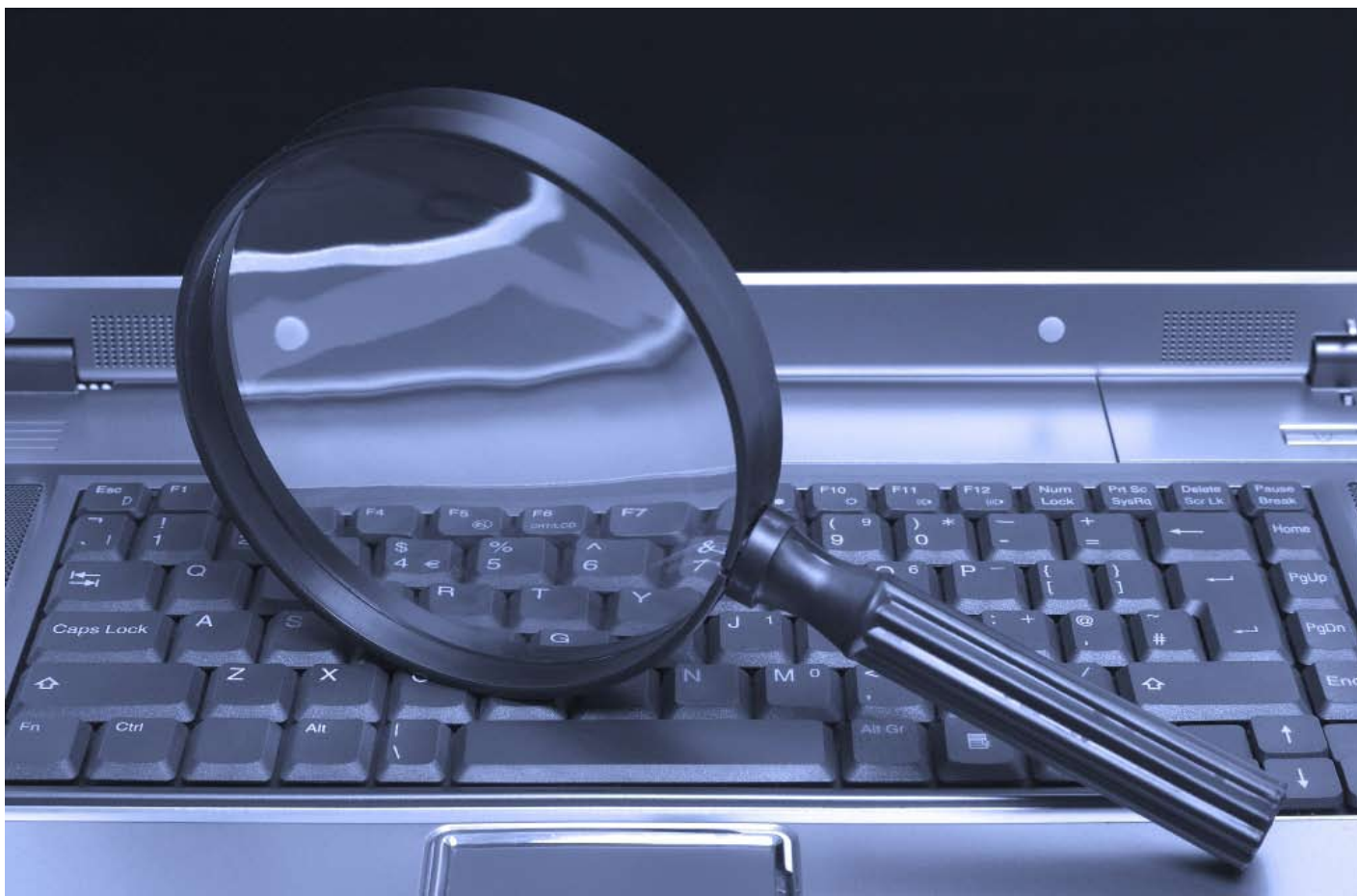
The trend for replacing a designer handbag each season has become a thing of the past. A bag 'that works' that will look insouciantly stylish and have handy pockets for iPads, laptops and personal belongings is seen now as investment-dressing. Still contemporary and high-end but ultimately functional and will cater for all the needs of modern men and women

This exclusive range for Apple by Marshall Bergman is a collection of sleek minimalist designs with inspiration taken from strong architectural forms, to create clean, uncomplicated bags. This pioneering accessory range combines understated luxury with a thoroughly modern 'First lady of cool' look.

The two Marshall Bergman handbag designs in the range are both made from premium Italian leather.. the 'Tahlia' - an elegant shoulder bag or the slightly larger 'Alyssa' (pictured). Both styles come with quilted internal pockets designed to protect and fit whatever laptop you are carrying.

For men, the 'Theo' and 'Corbin' messenger bag styles come with adjustable straps and a multitude of pockets in choices of black or brown leather or khaki canvas.

Ten Early Warning Signs of Fraud in Organisations



Anti-fraud consultancy UKFraud.co.uk has published a list of ten common early warning signs which could alert management that fraud may be occurring in their organisation. The list works on the assumption that whatever tools they use, be it IT based cons and false accounting or other traditional scams, the warning signs are often the same. In the list suggested actions that can be taken to counter the risk of fraud are given following each sign. The early warning signs can include:

1 ERRATIC REPORTING

This sign is just as applicable to suppliers and contractors as it is to internal departments and functions within the organisation. Erratic, incomplete, late or excuse laden management reporting is often a classic sign that something is wrong. One of the possibilities is the existence of fraud. Further investigation will reveal that lip service and increasingly tenuous explanations are given assertively to thwart follow up activity.

Common excuses used are often the frequent occurrence of IT failures, technology compatibility issues between different company systems or international systems. It is also

often the case that once reports are complete; there are typically delays in them reaching those who need to review the data.

ACTION

Insist on up-to-date reporting, within a set timetable and then build this into the internal GRC (Governance Risk and Compliance) systems. Wherever appropriate adopt an enterprise-wide approach to technology to help with systems issues.

2 APPARENT PROCESS LAZINESS

A weakening of anti-fraud and data security systems can happen

naturally, over time; and is normal – especially when things get busy. This occurs where the sage precautions and risk-avoidance measures get by-passed or ignored in practice as time goes by. This could just be the natural adjustment of systems to the practicalities of working life and busy peaks or it could be deliberate and sinister. However, with the seemingly right processes in place, top level management are often lulled into a false sense of security that they are actually being used, whilst the fraudster is busy at work getting around them.

ACTION

Make sure you implement the suggestions of your internal



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Do you really know how safe your own organisation is?

compliance managers and organise appropriate training to reinforce attitudes and practise. Ensure that the control processes, especially in tendering, purchasing, invoicing and customer controls and identifications are ALWAYS kept strong, managed and regularly reviewed. Where systems/processes are under pressure when used in practise, introduce a review process – and then adapt them promptly.

3 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND THE DESIRE TO DUMP DATA

A major indicator can be the act of deletion or pressure on staff to delete, remove or otherwise dump past records following a restructure, a new division launch, a JV or acquisition. An excuse of, "oh I'm sorry those files were destroyed." should be cause for alarm. It will be an even bigger problem where international operations are involved as it's far harder to find or recreate evidence in a foreign territory.

ACTION

Take care to establish and log where paper documents are and when they should and should not be stored. Identify who is in control of the system processes and who is responsible for and has ownership of the records. They are not always the same person of course. Ensure that scanning, and indexing works properly and that no-one can intercept/edit documents. Also ensure that storage capacity is enough and controlled properly. Where acquisitions and mergers are concerned, ensure that all documents are available and

stored appropriately and securely, especially those that relate to IP protection, IP development records, audit trails and staff contracts. In particular, if you are acquiring a business make sure that you have indemnities/penalty clauses built into the acquisition agreements that relate to the availability of data, logs, audit trails and so forth.

4 DATA INCONSISTENCIES OR ABSENCE IN THE ARCHIVES

Whether it is archive data or cross reference checks that are missing or wrong; factual inconsistencies will also occur naturally. The cheats who seek to defraud an organisation will use the possibility to explain such inconsistencies and hide their fraud.

ACTION

Make sure that all files are electronically stored, with appropriate back-ups as part of your compliance systems and that no-one has the access to any files that include a DELETE capability. It is also worth having internal or external auditors sample check key files from time to time as a part of the audit programme. In addition arrange for the HR department to make it a gross misconduct issue to destroy data without recorded approval from above. This may not deter the fraudster but if nobody else is doing it the fraudster is more likely to be spotted at an early stage.

5 AUDIT-TIME DELAYS

Excuses, confusion or wild goose chases when disclosing to auditors, be they internal or external, can be a telltale sign too. We need to remember though that the audit

team is not there to find fraud, rather to ensure that the correct processes are in place that will deliver appropriate protection.

ACTION

Ensure that everyone treats audits as important and make sure that they are completed on time and properly, and with appropriate audit skills. Where there have been delays or difficulties investigate why this was the case by drilling down into the detail. Make sure that the business critical and financial exposure areas take a priority and act upon all failings both quickly and completely; with follow-up audits if necessary.

6 BEHAVIOURAL ANOMALIES

These can range from acute defensiveness and resistance to attending review meetings, through to blaming strategies or even aggression when specific questions are asked about processes or figures. These behavioural anomalies have probably already been noticed through the assessment process or by HR staff. Research shows that internal fraudsters are most likely to be either 'youngsters who cut across the processes and systems' or 'middle aged executives with the authority and a gripe'.

ACTION

Get HR more closely involved. Then if you still have concerns about such people upon closer inspection, all the relevant files need to be pulled and checked, or you might even consider a private investigator to look deeper into the processes used by such high risk people.



7 GOSSIP MONGERS IN OVERDRIVE

Staff whispers and rumours "that all is not right" should always be taken seriously. These are, however, so often overlooked by senior management.

ACTION

Listen, take all such rumours seriously and investigate the reality.

8 TWITCHY NON-EXECS

Good non-execs provide a considered, independent and external perspective. Often they bring in specific expertise from outside the board's immediate experience and their skills can vary from financial knowledge through to IT. When their comfort factor 'goes south' or when they have a 'bee in the bonnet' about something that does not add up or make sense, they often have good reason to worry. So must you.

ACTION

It is always good for the business to maintain a fresh supply of new thinking, new approaches and new concerns. Thus if non-execs have concerns about particular issues, one should fund their thinking by allowing them to bring in the appropriate specialist experts that can investigate matters more deeply.

9 UNOFFICIAL IT WORK

Technical staff working around the enterprise conducting unsupervised IT activity, often outside normal hours can also be a worrying sign, both from a risk and a cost perspective. Not every company is large enough to have a full IT department that might spot such issues through system audit trails. This is more common in smaller organisations where some are working more to help themselves than to help the organisation that is paying for their IT equipment and the software they use.

ACTION

Do the IT security staff look and think further than just password expiry issues? Make sure that someone is on the look out for data-theft, IPR theft, time theft (people spending all day on facebook etc.), or simple theft of IT assets. Make sure you have a proper asset register and IT audit system in place.

10 SCAPEGOATING

Where people are given a title but without actual responsibility, it can effectively cover up what is going on with those who do have responsibility or power in a situation. The fraudster's hope is that should the balloon go up the scapegoat takes the blame, at least long

enough for records to be destroyed and evidence removed.

ACTION

Make sure that you have strong and cascaded accountabilities. Ensure that people know what they should be doing, and that they are doing what is required of them. Make sure that everyone is contributing to the business objectives. Make sure HR is involved in creating or reviewing job specifications.

Bill Trueman, CEO of UKFraud.co.uk, says "My first question is always to ask executives 'do you really know how safe your own organisation is? Some do reply confidently. Most do not. Fraud can happen anywhere, anytime, but it is relatively straightforward to deter or discover at an early stage with the right systems and procedures in place.

"It is our hope that having published this list, that those who read it might at least ask themselves if they recognise any of the signs in their own organisations. We hope too that it might help make things that much harder for the fraudster."

If a company is worried that fraud may exist in their organisation can contact UKFraud.co.uk's help-centre by sending an email to fraudhelp@ukfraud.co.uk.

New hotel with conference facilities opens in Yorkshire

Raithwaite Hall Country Retreat is a luxury country house hotel set in 80 acres on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park, and just a few minutes' walk from the historic Whitby coast.

The newly opened hotel is set to become a premier conference venue in Yorkshire. On offer is everything from event planning, conference accommodation, flexible meeting space and excellent team building facilities.



The Raithwaite Suite provides the main function space, accommodating up to 170 delegates in a theatre style arrangement, with the very latest in audio-visual technology.

If you're looking for a venue for team building, Raithwaite Hall offers some of the best outdoor activities in the UK in a unique environment.

www.raithwaitehallwhitby.co.uk

Macdonald Hotels launches new website to click with consumers

Macdonald Hotels & Resorts has launched its new website, offering its business, conference and leisure customers a streamlined, easily navigable 'browse to book' consumer journey.

Browsers can view at a glance and quickly book the very latest offers that are available across the group.

Additional features include a simple 3-step, 'look to book' reservation process and a simple automatic calculator function that allows the user to see at a glance how much a request for specific extras, such as champagne in the room, treatments at spa hotels or a round of golf will add to the cost of a reservation.

Macdonald Hotels & Resorts has a portfolio of more than forty 4 and 5-star properties throughout the UK.

www.MacdonaldHotels.co.uk

Aer Lingus announces extra flights to and from Dublin

Aer Lingus has announced that it is to run extra flights to and from Dublin to London Gatwick airport.

These extra flights now mean that Aer Lingus has more frequency for this particular route than any other airline, after increasing its capacity for passengers on this service by 56%.

As part of its new winter schedule, Aer Lingus will now provide 6 flights per day between Dublin and London Gatwick, an increase from the 4 flights per day that had been offered last winter.

New iPhone App for car rental

Internet-based car hire price comparison specialist Carrentals.co.uk has introduced a new iPhone app which helps people on the move compare and book deals from 50 top name providers in over 15,000 travel destinations.

The online specialist has developed the new app to make it simple for users to compare and book cheap car rental from their handsets at any time. Carrentals.co.uk has helped users to find and reserve more than 650,000 car hire deals so far and the new app will make it easier than ever for people.

Having found the right deal for them the user is then sent a confirmation reference straight to their iPhone plus also a voucher attachment by email - giving the hirer all the reservation information they will need in case of problems. The app also lets people contact customer services and make cancellations if required.

The Carrentals.co.uk iPhone app is free to download from the iTunes store

Easyjet launches Greece service

EasyJet is introducing a new route to Heraklion in Crete for the first time from Luton Airport.

Fares start from £44.99 one-way including taxes.

EasyJet now has 16 aircraft based at Luton and operates 35 routes including Istanbul, Palma De Mallorca, Cyprus, Barcelona and Munich.

In addition EasyJet will begin operating a new route to Corfu twice a week from March 31 with prices from £37.99.

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Workplace technology needs to multi-task

In the current challenging climate, many companies and public sector organisations are looking closely at their work strategies and taking steps to not only survive the present crisis but also plan for the long term. At the heart of these plans are new technologies.

Like the humble photocopier that now doubles as a colour printer, scanner and fax machine that can even email a document to you, office equipment needs to earn its keep. If it doesn't allow employees to work smarter, its days will be numbered.

Mobile phones are of course an essential business tool these days, not just for taking calls, but for email, web browsing, and taking photographs too.

Smartphone manufacturers are in fierce competition to see who can create the most functionality.

This month has seen the launch of the latest iPhone model, together with a new version of the Google Android operating system, with the first Nokia Windows Phone 7 handsets due to be unveiled any day now.

New technologies featured include advanced voice recognition systems that allow the Apple virtual



'personal assistant', Siri, to respond intelligently to spoken questions, and send reminders, texts and emails. The latest Android mobile operating system, (Ice Cream Sandwich) now features voice recognition that allows you to dictate emails, and utilises advances in Near Field Communication (NFC) which allow users to share web pages, videos and maps instantly by simply tapping two phones together.

With advances like this happening on such a regular basis, today's users expect their mobile phones to allow effortless multitasking, however complex their requirements.

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BROTHER HELPS GROWING BUSINESSES TO STAND OUT

Ambitious growing businesses now have access to design and colour advice to help their company stand out from the crowd thanks to a new blog.

ColourWorks, launched by Brother UK, contains useful tips and tools on design and graphics, providing businesses with an online resource for in-house printing requirements. It also provides free design templates which enable businesses on a budget to create professional marketing materials such as letterheads, posters and booklets.



Phil Jones, sales and marketing director at Brother, said: "Branding, product packaging, advertising and websites are all important considerations for any business, and colour is a key factor in all of these. Our blog aims to support businesses in creating the most effective materials possible."

As well as colour advice and printing tips, the blog will feature guest posts from design industry professionals.

Phil added: "ColourWorks is further evidence of how we strive to be at the side of ambitious businesses and, along with our evolving range of products, we'll continue to find new ways of helping businesses to increase productivity and efficiency."

To launch the blog, Brother is giving away an iPad to an ambitious business or individual who describes the colour they would choose for their own logo and why.

Visit the blog at www.colourworks.brother.co.uk



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Here's a great gift idea for students, designers, technology addicts or just plain nerds – the award-winning digital pen from STAEDTLER.

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From Branson to Barnaby:

The fascinating career of Penni Pike

By Lauren Harrison

Penni Pike is well known in the world of business for her excellent time keeping and ultimate professionalism. As the former Executive Assistant to global Entrepreneur, Richard Branson, she played a pivotal role in the setup of Virgin Atlantic and proved herself invaluable to Branson in his endeavours. So good were their working relations, Branson was once quoted as calling Penni a second mother and upon her retirement famously gave her his houseboat as a thank you for a job well done.

But in the early days of retirement from the company, Penni suffered a stroke which would leave her debilitated and doctors were unsure whether she would ever walk or talk again. Displaying similar amounts of mental strength and perseverance which made the Virgin Empire great, Penni underwent an exhausting rehabilitation programme, and surpassed everyone's expectations. Not long after, a chance meeting with up and coming 'Time Etc' founder Barnaby Lashbrooke, gained Penni her next new venture as a Virtual Assistant, and ensured she was back doing what she does best. Penni talks to us today about 31 years with Britain's most famous businessman, her new role as a Virtual Assistant and how it very nearly, never happened.



How did you begin working as Richard Branson's Executive Assistant?

I was at work when one day he came in into the office and just kept on talking and talking. I'd heard beforehand there was a job opening at Richard's company and that it was going to be an absolutely wonderful position. At the time I was really ready for a change, as I was working

for a Financial Director and I'm really not a financial girl. I asked him if there was anything I could do for him and he simply replied with "Come and work for me". I was excited and dancing in my seat and I immediately said yes, but told him I was getting married in a week to which he responded with "Oh drat!" it was actually my first time working for a Chairman. I had gone

for another job, which later went to another girl in the office I currently worked at so if I had been given that one instead, it all could have been completely different.

What, in your opinion, makes for a good working relationship, between yourself and your employer?

Definitely trust and humour, it was wonderful working for a company

where every day was different and you never knew what could happen next. Richard was brilliant and just the person I wanted to work for. He was an amazing boss and we got on like a house on fire.

What is the most important quality for an Executive Assistant to possess? Additionally, in your experience, what is more important- academic qualifications or work history?

Definitely work history. That is paramount. However it's also important to be able to trust and be trusted. The ability to work well under pressure is definitely important too. Though having a boss that is amazing and likeable also helps! Without these factors, you're nothing.

What is the oddest task you have ever been asked to complete for an employer?

Being asked to set up Virgin Atlantic in six months definitely! On the 21st June 1984 we had our first long haul flight. It was stressful but simply fantastic as he really wanted it very badly. The vicar actually

approached Richard to purchase tickets directly from him!

What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

Obviously working for Richard was always going to be a challenge and never 'normal'. One Christmas he told me he wanted to spend his holidays in Cuba so I called the Travel Agents and fixed up the hotel. Four days before he was due to leave, the Agent called and told me she had forgotten to place the deposit. This was the only time in my employment did I feel my face go white. I tried everything but nothing could be done to rectify it. In the end I told Richard and he simply replied with "Penni, I don't mind. See if you can get me a boat?"

What is the most rewarding part of being someone's Executive Assistant?

My experiences at Virgin have meant that my life will never be the same or normal again. It was a wonderful journey, full of ups and downs. Being Executive Assistant to one of the most charismatic businessmen in the UK (and beyond!) was always going to be a challenge.

How do you decide which tasks are urgent and what is merely important?

I quickly developed a strong judgement over time and used that when negotiating tasks though obviously what was happening on the day also played a role. For the first 10 years it was just me and after the launch of Virgin Atlantic in 1984,

I received a secretary. By the end of my employment there were four of us working under Richard.

What advice would you give to someone wanting a promotion or pay rise?

A very good reason! If you have a reason and the rise reflects this, then go for it. Richard was always very good at negotiating and was always fair.

How did you make the transition from working with Virgin to Time Etc? How did you find this change?

Barnaby has given me a great opportunity to be an advisor for Time Etc, which came at a fantastic time in my career being 3 years after my stroke. Barnaby needs no encouragement to make others work very hard for him. Time Etc is an organisation which is, and will continue to be, a leader in its own field and I am really enjoying it. Barnaby is completely different to Richard and he gave me the chance to work again. He lets me get on with things and we meet every six weeks in London. Having said all that my thirty one years with Richard were amazing and I would not change a thing.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to become an Executive Assistant?

You have to realise that you are essentially giving up your life for the job so it's important that you can work under stress and be able to deal well with time and pressure. Being indispensable to your employer. I work 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year and work well under stress but there were times when I wished I could've been leaving early. But then Richard would come over and thank me and I would forget all about it! He really was so nice.



This month's fabulous offers



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WIN your very own office barista!

The Great British love affair with coffee shows no sign of slowing with an estimated 70 million cups of coffee consumed every day. Now you can enjoy café style coffee without having to set foot outside the office with the new NESCAFÉ® Alegria coffee machine. Choose from Cappuccino, Latte Macchiato, Americano, Lungo or Espresso and you'll have a delicious café style coffee ready in seconds.

For your chance to WIN a NESCAFÉ® Alegria coffee machine and a month's supply of coffee for you and your colleagues, answer the following question: How many cups of coffee are consumed in the UK every day? Send your answer along with your name, address and telephone number to nescafe@deskdemo.com

And, if you really can't wait, the machines are already widely available through leading wholesalers; Booker, Makro, Viking and Staples. Visit www.nescafe-alegria.com for a sneak peek.



[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

The ultimate road-test for P-touch labellers

Brother UK launch a major UK-wide marketing campaign that follows the 'ultimate road-test' of Brother's P-touch labelling machines on a road-trip along America's Route 66. The road is an iconic global label itself, providing a unique way to amplify the theme of labelling and explore the unexpected versatility of the product range. The Brother labelling machines are ideal for the office to produce professional labels helping identify folders, CD, ID badges, signage and more.

Labels are powerful - what does yours say?

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



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Christmas Hampers – the ideal corporate gift



Think of the word 'hamper' and perhaps thoughts of picnics come to mind; woven baskets full of sandwiches and sausage rolls, lemonade and a flask of tea. Hampers themselves have been around for centuries, though perhaps making their biggest comeback in an Edwardian England when eating outdoors became the fashionable thing to do – their open ventilation and sturdiness makes them the perfect container to transport food. But modern hampers have come on a long way since Edwardian times, and these days tend to be associated more with luxury and decadence. One thing that remains the same, is that hampers can make the ideal gift for just about anyone.

Buying a hamper is easier now

than it has ever been thanks to the internet. There are a number of companies and retailers that produce hampers as gifts or for home use, allowing the customer to select either a choice of what goes in them, or selecting from a range of popular choices. A simple search on a shopping website found several companies that specialise in hampers and all of them have something unique to offer their customers.

Making a decision about what type of hamper you want to buy is perhaps the hardest part; with a choice of fruit, flowers, wine, savoury or desert, the lists can seem endless. Most of the specialist hamper websites categorise their range, making it easier to make your selection - for example, traditional,

luxury, wine and cheese, gourmet, fruit or even 'healthy'. Nearly all offer a corporate service, which can offer multiple orders, personalise with business cards or company logo, and package using a company's corporate colours.

Most of the websites offer a bespoke service which allows the customer to design their own hamper. If you're still not quite sure what to put in it however, many of them will allow you to simply give a budget and details of the occasion or recipient and then tailor-make the hamper to suit. Most of the websites offer a free consultation service, inviting the customers to get in touch either through telephone or e-mail and discuss with an experienced member of staff the sort of items they want to be included in the

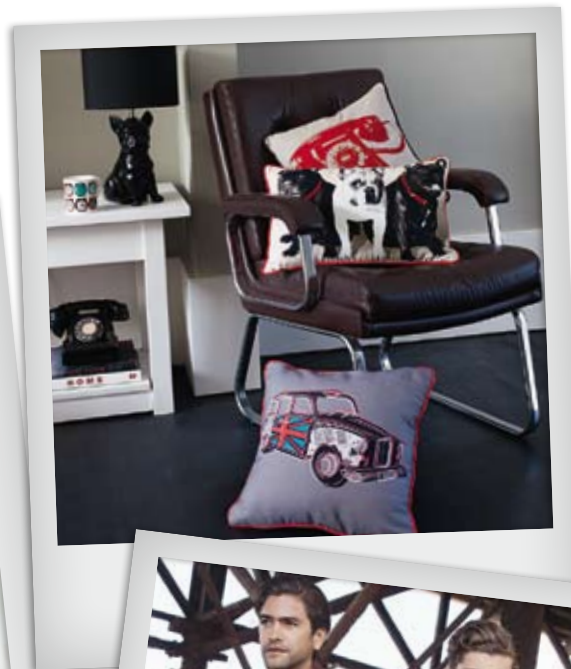
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Email: corporate@debenhams.com

Phone: **08445 61 61 70**

Web: www.debenhamsbusinessrewards.co.uk

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Please contact us for more information.

hamper and get advice on costs.

The range in prices can be quite big but again this is highly dependant on the quality and volume of items going into the hamper itself. One retailer offers some real luxury items including jewellery, vases and gift experiences such as a day trip to a health spa, while another specialises in more traditional hampers sourcing from local produce and luxury ingredients. Hampers that include items suitable for anyone with specific dietary requirements can be made up too. Simply give details on the website and a vegan, vegetarian or dairy free hamper can easily be put together.

Because of the potentially varying sizes and weights of a hamper, the costs of delivery may vary from

retailer to retailer, so it is always worth reading through the terms and conditions before making the purchase. Some of the websites offer a next day delivery though orders need to be made before 4pm the day before, and the costs of delivery may be a little higher than average.

Though hampers can make great gifts all year round, naturally they tend to be very popular at certain times of the year too. If buying a hamper as a Christmas gift for someone, check to see what the cut off point to make orders are, as busy periods may need more advance to ensure delivery on time.

Ordering online is easy and quick but best of all, it may save some money in the long run too. Many of the companies selling hampers

tend to be web-based retailers, and as ordering online can be cheaper for them; online prices tend to be cheaper too. It would be advisable to compare the costs between different retailers before making a purchase; check to see who offers the best hamper to suit you and if they offer any other form of discounts such as free delivery or a reduction in total cost.

Check the retailer's website for as many details as possible; pictures, information, customer services and of course, any recommendations from previous customers. A good and reputable company will be happy to answer queries you might have in order to make the experience of buying a hamper as straightforward as possible.

If you are looking to buy hampers online, you'll be spoilt for choice. There are a whole host of specialist hamper companies out there, all offering extensive ranges. Here are a few of the best...

Lewis & Cooper

Whether you request a single hamper or place an order for thousands, select a ready made hamper, choose to create your own, or challenge them with a bespoke request, Lewis & Cooper's team of hamper pickers are on hand to carefully pack your gifts and deliver them in tip top condition.

The Christmas Cheer Hamper, priced at £61.50, includes Christmas chutneys, preserves, brandy butter, fruit cake and Wensleydale cheese with cranberries, all presented in a gorgeous L&C red gift box.

www.lewisandcooper.co.uk



Clearwater Hampers

Clearwater Hampers are well placed to help with your corporate food and wine gifts, promotions or incentive schemes. Their expertise and imagination combines to tailor corporate gifts from the inexpensive to the most luxurious. Increasingly popular are "team gifts" - a selection of goodies to be given out and enjoyed in the office team area or rest room.

There is a wide range of hampers to choose from, covering all tastes, or there is a 'Create your own' hamper facility.

Illustrated is the Frankincense priced at £74.04 - the ultimate gift for Wise Men, corporate clients, staff, friends and family. All will appreciate this generous collection of Christmas goodies.

www.hamper.com



Highland Fayre

Corporate hampers are a fantastic way to show your appreciation - whether you are looking for a gift suitable for a business associate, client or an employee. If you want to impress an important client, or just say thank you to loyal customers, then corporate hampers are perfect. Highland Fayre have a wide selection to choose from magnificent corporate gift hampers or they can create bespoke corporate hampers, branded with your company logo and colours if required.

Illustrated is the The Cheese Course Gift Hamper priced at £42, which has everything you need to finish off a meal. With two great cheeses, crackers and chutney... wash it all down with a bottle of wine...what more could you want?

www.highlandfayre.co.uk



BasketsGalore

BasketsGalore is a family run business which supplies made-to-order Gift Baskets and online Hampers using the finest ingredients. They offer a complete corporate service, whereby orders can be customised and bulk orders catered for.

Illustrated is the **Christmas Great Taste Award - Gold Hamper**, £109.99, which contains organic Irish smoked salmon & ham, and an assortment of savoury and sweet artisan gourmet foods, all of which are Speciality Fine Food gold medal winners. The end result is a truly sumptuous gift basket of gastronomic delights, making it the perfect gift for a food connoisseur.



www.basketsgalore.co.uk



John Lewis

It's no surprise that John Lewis offers a fabulous and extensive range of hampers to suit all tastes and budgets. For example, all of the traditional festive favourites come together in their Winter Warmer Christmas Hamper, £75 (illustrated). Treat someone special to scrumptious mince pies, chutneys, fruit cake and red wine. All of the goodies are packed into an old-fashioned hamper basket along with four festive 'Noel' candle holders. All contained in a banana leaf basket.

www.johnlewis.com

M&S

M&S Corporate Hampers range is extensive and priced to suit all budgets. The range is split into three categories - wine, wine and food, and food hampers. Closing date for orders is midday on Saturday 17th December 2011. Discounts are available on bulk orders.

Illustrated is the Festive Favourites Hamper, at £40. All the Christmas essentials are in this seasonal selection. Contents include Red Mulled Wine, Brandy Butter, Christmas pudding, Christmas tea, Christmas chutney, iced Christmas cake and a milk, white & dark chocolate selection.



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Diverse Hampers are passionate about their products and have created each presentation hamper with an exclusive combination of extravagant contents and unique packaging. More than just a grouping of superior products, Diverse Hamper gifts are distinguished by their outstanding, indulgent products, contained in striking tower formations, luxury faux leather boxes and quality wooden crates.



This Christmas Hamper has a star theme, containing star products and silver stars in the presentation. Featuring the best gourmet flavours for Christmas, this gift exudes class in both presentation and taste. Prestigious producers include Artisan du Chocolat, Godminster Organic and Simply Delicious Cakes.

www.diversehampers.co.uk



Hamptons Hampers

Hamptons create and sell an extensive selection of pre-designed gift and corporate hampers in a wide price range. They can create bespoke corporate hampers with the contents of your choice. The Cotswold Hamper, illustrated above, contains foods which are produced mainly in this renowned part of England, including Three Choirs white wine, Coln Valley smoked salmon, Oxsprings air dried ham, Shaken Oak Old Hookey mustartrd and Cotswold honey.

www.hamptons-hampers.co.uk

Ripley Hampers

Ripley Hampers specialise in the supply of corporate gifts and hampers throughout the year.

Each of their christmas gift hampers is prepared to order by hand, packaged in the finest traditional wicker baskets ready for delivery anywhere in the UK, Europe and around the globe.

The Christmas Cracker Hamper is presented in a traditional lidded wicker basket, and includes Willowglen Brut Sparkling Wine, Buiteman Salsa Baguettes, Maxwell & Franks Top Iced Christmas Cake, Maxwell & Franks Delicious Christmas Pudding with Cider and The Jolly Good Pickle Company Poachers Chutney.

www.ripleyhampers.co.uk



Simply Cornish Hampers

Containing the finest Cornish produce, Simply Cornish Hampers are the perfect gift or treat for anyone with a connection to Cornwall. All the ingredients are sourced or produced in Cornwall from a range of selected food and wine suppliers.

If you want to create a tailor made hamper you can choose from a range of wines, beers, ciders, preserves or even cosmetics and clothing to create your own unique gift.

Illustrated is the Simply Cornish Cider Hamper, £31.08. This hamper contains a selection of seven ciders of varying flavours to suit the most dedicated lover of cider. It is presented in a padded black gift box with gold ribbon.

www.simplycornishhampers.com



The Organic Gift Hamper Company

Christmas hampers from The Organic Gift Hamper Company are the ideal organic gift, hand packed with the finest organic ingredients. Choose from breakfast hampers, after dinner hampers, celebration hampers and office party hampers, to name but a few.

The Office Party Christmas Hamper, £59.00, is extremely popular for workmates to share, or as a special christmas gift to a client.

It includes: Millers Damsel Mixed Seed Biscuits, Godminster Vintage Cheddar, Westons Ciders, Kalamata Olive Pate, Veneto Pinot Grigio and Geoorganics Apple and Apricot Chutney and is presented in an open wicker tray and comes with a message of your choice.

www.theorganicgifthampercompany.co.uk

Scottish Food Overseas

With over 10 years experience in providing a fully tailored corporate gift facility, Scottish Food Overseas pride themselves on fast, flexible and efficient service. From individual personalised client gifts to multiple staff rewards they can design a package to suit you. Also on offer are bulk discounts, fully bespoke selections and worldwide delivery.

Their Luxury Christmas Hamper, £129.99, is the best seller from their range. Hugely popular and with something for everyone, it includes an impressive selection of festive treats featuring wonderful wines, chocolates, cheese, biscuits, cakes, soup, pate, haggis.

www.scottishfoodoverseas.com



Workplace coffee falls short of employee expectations

The coffee offering available in UK workplaces is still failing to hit the mark, according to recent research from Nestlé Professional®, which revealed that almost 60% of employees are settling for second best while at work.

Only 42% of staff said that their preferred coffee choice is available to them in the office, while half of those surveyed aren't happy with the selection of hot drinks available.

As a result, around half of those workers surveyed are buying their coffee or tea outside the workplace every week. Katrina Webb, Category Channel Manager, from Nestlé Professional® said: "Businesses are missing a trick by not getting their hot drinks offering right. A great quality coffee can be a simple way to make staff feel appreciated. There's a business benefit too, serve a good cup of coffee; keep staff on-site and reap the rewards."

The research also found that only 37% of businesses provide their employees with access to a contemporary hot drinks machine. According to Webb, this is an important insight: "The tabletop machines market has come a long way in recent years, with a number of sophisticated hot beverage machines now available that are capable of producing a range of coffees that consumers would expect from the high street."

"With people's thirst for hot drinks showing no sign of slowing - our research found that 90% of workers drink a minimum of two cups a day while at work - there is a real

opportunity for businesses to improve their hot drinks offering. Not only will this help keep staff on site, but will also show them you care, while at the same time giving the right impression to clients."

The research was commissioned by Nestlé Professional® to mark the launch of the **NESCAFÉ® Alegria A510** machine. The tabletop coffee system has been developed to suit a wide range of small workplaces, from hair salons and estate agents to car dealers and doctors' surgeries.

Already widely available through Booker, Makro, Viking and Staples, the machine produces five café style coffees – Cappuccino, Latte Macchiato, Americano, Lungo and Espresso – all from the same coffee cartridge, making the average cost per cup significantly less than other small machines¹. The self-serve machine produces five café style coffees – Cappuccino, Latte Macchiato, Americano, Lungo and Espresso – all from the same coffee cartridge, making the average cost per cup significantly less than other small machines. Each coffee cartridge goes a long way and can deliver up to 120 Espressos; or 60 Latte Macchiatos or Lungos, or 40 Americanos or Cappuccinos.

The entire coffee cartridge is dispensed into the machine in one go, so there's

no need to refill after every drink. For Cappuccino and Latte Macchiato the product's unique jet system automatically warms and froths fresh milk directly in the cup for maximum convenience and minimum cleaning.

The machine is already widely available through Booker, Makro, Viking and Staples. For more information visit www.nescafe-alegria.com.



* Reg. trademark Société des Produits Nestlé S.A

1. NESCAFÉ® ALEGRIA A510 retails at a standard RRP of £119. Additionally, the coffee cartridge RRP is £10.99. The resale price and offer is at the sole discretion of the reseller. Pricing suggested is for recommendation only.

UK women reveal their (sometimes bizarre) beauty secrets

Researchers who carried out a detailed study into beauty regimes, habits and rituals found four out of ten women utilise goods found in kitchen cupboards to look good. The study involving 2,000 women was carried out by sophisticated dairy drink Modern Milk.

A spokeswoman said: "Some of the beauty treatments in this list are more extreme than others and it's clear the lengths some women will go to to look beautiful. Having some little hints and tricks up your sleeve is one thing, but trying to constantly sleep on your back to avoid wrinkles or spraying your face with hair spray are quite severe.

"We wanted to poll women to find out what alternative beauty treatments they use and whether people make use of ingredients from kitchen cupboards. The age old trick of putting cold teabags or cucumber on the eyes to reduce puffiness is clearly still used today."

Other tricks of the trade include placing cold teaspoons on puffy eyes to sooth swelling and spraying perfume on a hairbrush to give the hair an alluring scent. Smearing toothpaste on spots and blemishes and sleeping in bed in socks full of moisturiser are also common.

The research revealed the majority of women stick to tried and tested beauty rituals passed down through the family or gleaned from female friends and colleagues. They include drinking two litres of bottled water every day and drinking a glass of milk or two when possible to give the body a calcium boost.

The survey also revealed that tomatoes (74%) salmon (59%), olive oil (56%), oats (54%) and avocado (40%) were foods that women consider an important part of diet in terms of beauty. Top of their list was that old favourite milk, which 77% of women in the UK believe is the most important beauty food, especially

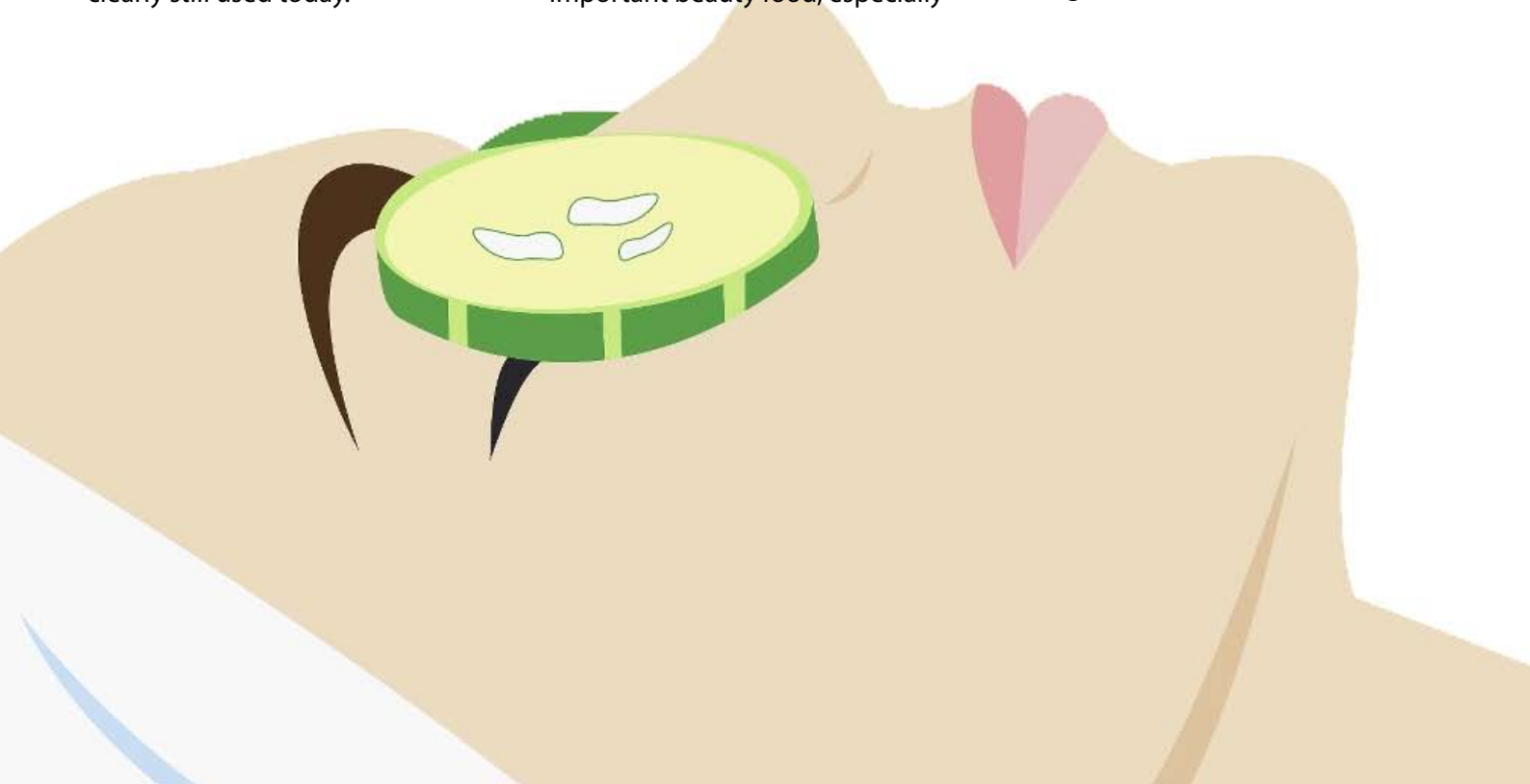
when it comes to their skin, hair and nails.

This was pleasing news to TV Doctor Dr Hilary Jones, a big fan of milk, who believes women shouldn't be wasting money on cosmetics but spending it on foods that are rich in calcium and essential nutrients.

Dr Hilary said: "You need milk in your diet for health and as an additional bonus it has beauty benefits and doesn't cost the earth. I support supermarkets like Tesco putting really great offers on beauty foods such as Modern Milk, which contain added vitamins and minerals and are one of life's natural beauty products".

He added: "Milk is the nearest thing you can find to a totally complete food containing, as it does, a perfect balance of protein, minerals, vitamins, essential fats and carbohydrates".

Along with traditional methods,



The UK's TOP BEAUTY SECRETS

the study also revealed a plethora of more modern unconventional habits undertaken by women in the privacy of their bathrooms.

It found many shave their legs with hair conditioner.

Others admitted to splashing lemon juice on their hair in the hope it will develop a lighter tint when exposed to the sunlight.

Brushing hair with talcum powder to freshen it up and using lipstick on the cheeks when blusher runs out also emerged as common tricks.

Vaseline is regularly used to smooth out frizzy hair and many women also use toothpaste to soothe insect bites.

Among the other weird and wonderful techniques was pinching cheeks before entering nightclubs, bars or restaurants to give them a radiant red glow, using tea tree oil on ingrowing hairs and steaming the face in herb water.

- Drink 2 litres of bottled water everyday
- Drink milk every day
- Toothpaste on spots
- Cucumber on eyes to freshen them up
- Shave legs with hair conditioner
- Sleep in socks filled with moisturizer for soft feet
- Cucumber slices on eyes to reduce puffiness
- Tea bags on tired eyes
- Brush talcum powder through hair to freshen it up
- Pinching cheeks to give a natural blush
- Hairspray on face to fix make-up
- Lipstick on cheeks when you have ran out of blusher
- Toothpaste on insect bites
- Lemon juice to lighten hair
- Spray hairbrush with perfume
- Lemon juice on highlighted hair
- Heat up eye lash curlers before using them
- Cold teaspoons applied to eyes to make puffiness go down
- Tea tree oil on ingrown hairs
- Steam face in water with fresh herbs added
- Sleep on back to avoid wrinkles
- Keep nail varnish in fridge to make it last longer
- Vaseline to smooth out frizzy hair
- Add sugar to soap to exfoliate
- Eat a jelly cube a day for strong nails
- Mix a drop of serum with foundation to make skin look glowing
- Lemon juice to whiten tips of nails
- Hemorrhoid cream on under-eye bags
- Super glue fingers nails rather than rip them off
- Final hair rinse in vinegar
- Whitening toothpaste to get rid of fake tan on palms
- Use the cold setting on hair dryer to set mascara
- Coffee as a body scrub to beat cellulite
- Pouring milk in to the bath or on skin
- Mash up avocado and use as a body scrub
- Apply whisked eggs to hair to make it shiny
- Hair removal cream takes off fake tan
- Burst an evening primrose oil capsule and apply to spots to make them heal much faster
- Brewer's yeast mixed with water to bleach facial hair



Milk still regarded as important 'beauty food'

Make up map of Britain – glamour reigns in the north ... and Essex (of course!)

The North/South divide is ringing true for beauty hall tills across the country with Northern lasses snapping up the longest of lashes and glossiest of lips and Southern ladies opting for a more natural look, with the exception of Essex.

Research into regional beauty buying habits by Debenhams has revealed that different areas of the country favour a varying amount of slap.

Northern women are aficionados of the 'more is more' style with fake tan, false eyelashes and pink lip-gloss the runaway bestsellers. Northern celebrities, particularly the ever-groomed WAGs Coleen Rooney and Abbey Clancy are no exception.

Scottish lasses follow suit with their love of tanning and bronzer, perhaps making up for the chillier climes.

Back **down South**, women are devoted to creating perfect skin.

Cult product YSL's Touche Éclat, flattering tinted moisturisers and pore-perfecting powders fly off the shelves in London, Exeter and Brighton.

Bucking the trend comes the county of **Essex**. Instead of echoing the simpler slap of their Southern sisters, Essex girls align themselves firmly with the Geordies and Scousers.

Their devotion to a full face of makeup means Debenhams stores in **Lakeside, Romford and Chelmsford** have reported local girls wearing three pairs of lashes at the same time and spending hours in store getting ready for a Saturday night out.

In contrast, the simple but effective red lipstick reigns supreme in the **Midlands** - the classic look sells best in Birmingham and Nottingham. The Midlands women also know how to apply it with matching lip-liners also

featuring regularly in their shopping baskets.

Irish (and Welsh) eyes are smiling thanks to a love of mascara and eyeliner. Mascara is the enduring favourite of the Celtic regions as best demonstrated by Welsh songstress Katherine Jenkins and Irish television presenter Christine Bleakley.

Research from Debenhams also showed that:

- **Northern women buy on average a new pair of false eyelashes every fortnight.**
- **Midlands women own on average ten red lipsticks.**
- **Irish women tend to reapply mascara three times a day.**
- **British women are most likely to apply fake tan on a Thursday evening, leaving enough time for the colour to develop before Friday and Saturday nights out.**
- **Southern women spend three hours carefully choosing the correct skin tone match of foundation / tinted moisturiser.**

"When it comes to starting the Saturday night getting-ready ritual in store, The Only Way really is Essex"



Ruth Attridge, spokesperson for Debenhams says, "British women's love of lotions and potions has ensured that our beauty halls are busy all over country. However, when it comes to starting the Saturday night getting-ready ritual in store, The Only Way really is Essex".

Secret Santa gift ideas for the office

The perfect Secret Santa for the office fashionista

If you're hunting for the perfect 'Secret-Santa' solution for stylish colleagues look no further than these unique Scotch and Post-it Brand gifts from 3M, both priced at under £10.



The stylish **Scotch Tape 'Stiletto' Dispenser** (£7.99) is shaped like a black stiletto, whilst the **Post-it Note 'Handbag' Dispenser** (£8.99) takes the form of a trendy mock-croc style handbag. These elegant, yet practical desk accessories are ideal for dressing up a desk whether at home or in the office.

The refillable Post-it Note Dispenser is perfect for personalising any desk space. To make it even easier to use it is weighted so this favourite

stationary essential stays put on the desk and is always close to hand.

If shoes are the fashionista's favourite accessory, then step up the style stakes with the chic Scotch Tape Dispenser. Having tangled tape everywhere is not a good look so with this dispenser there'll be no more sticky situations.

Both products are available from Tesco, Staples and Amazon.



Turn your sticky notes into works of art!

Origami Sticky Note Pad is a little something for those dull moments at the office. Recycle your old sticky notes and turn them in to fun 3D models! Each pad has instructions for 10 different shapes, including: pig; penguin; boat; crane; butterfly; squirrel; lily and water bomb.



Henry will keep your desk spotless!

Henry Desk Vac is a scaled down version of the original Henry Vacuum Cleaner first launched in 1980. At just under 10 centimetres tall, Henry Desk Vac is perfect for use in the office. He'll remove all sorts of crumbs and dust from your desktop and ensure it's kept spotless. Henry even comes with a handy crevice tool to help you reach all those hard to reach areas on your keyboard. No bags required, simply unscrew top to empty.



Perfect for the boss!

A great gift idea for the boss - cufflinks which say it all! "I'm the boss - I'm never wrong"



Like & Dislike Self Inking Stamps

Like & Dislike Self Inking Stamps offer a fab way of 'okaying' ideas at work in a simple manner, making them a fantastic office gift. These rubber stamps come in a set of two and feature the classic thumbs up or thumbs down symbol with 'Like' on one and 'Dislike' on the other.

If you are looking for novelty office stationery to make the workplace more tolerable and your job more fun then you've found it!

Personality At Work

By Alistair Miller

Have you ever worked with someone who was bright, but for some reason they just didn't seem right for their job? They didn't lack intelligence or common sense, but for them work just seemed to be a constant struggle. Well their personality type may provide clues as to why they were a bad fit for their work, the workplace, or even both.

Psychiatrist Carl Jung discussed the idea of people having different personality types. His work was then further developed by Isabel Briggs Myer and Katherine Briggs who came up with 16 different personality types. These 16 personality types are based upon aspects of the human personality, and these have some bearing on how we like to work. So doing a questionnaire to find out which Myers-Brigg personality type you are is a useful starting point for finding out which work you are ideally suited for.

To find out which type you are, a Myer-Briggs Test will look at these 4 main preferences:

- **Are you naturally introverted or extraverted? (Introvert v Extravert)**
- **What kind of information do you naturally take in? Do you like measured or documented facts (Sensing), or do you like to rely more on your gut feeling? (Intuition)**
- **Do you make decisions based solely on logic (Thinking), or**

do you look more to your own personal values before coming to a conclusion? (Feeling)

- **Do you like to work in a very structured way (Judging), or do you prefer your work to be more spontaneous (Perceiving)?**

Answering these questions will shed some light on what work and what kind of environment will bring out the best in you. For instance, if you are an introvert, would you want to work in an office where everyone is extremely loud and noisy? Would you find working day after day in a noisy office quite draining? Or if you were an extravert, how would you cope with a job where you were on your own for the vast majority of the time? Would you badly miss the stimulation of other people around you?

Perhaps you like to do work which is very regimented, with lots of procedures? Or is that too suffocating for you, not giving you enough of a free rein? If you are idealist then your main motivation might be helping people. Or perhaps you want to be a high

achiever, with a big salary and lots of recognition.

So you can see that asking these questions can help you start to think about which careers would work well for you. You can also get an idea on who might be a great fit for you to work with. If you're a bit of an idealist and tend to get a bit carried away with possible ideas for your business, then it's probably a good idea to have a realist in your team who is a bit more grounded. Someone who will challenge some of your more fanciful ideas.

Your personality type is not rigid though. For example, there are different degrees to which you are introverted or extraverted. Not everyone in the same personality type is exactly the same. Also, your type should not be used as an excuse for your behaviour. But understanding your personality can help you accept yourself better, in particular your behaviour at work. For instance, a lot of work places can be more favoured towards extroverts. Companies seem to value more extroverted qualities such as being good talkers, or being adept at networking. There

doesn't seem to be such an overt appreciation for the quieter, introverted qualities, which, by their nature, are not as immediately noticeable.

This apparent lack of appreciation can cause some introverts to feel undervalued or basically wonder if something is wrong with them. But if you find out your core personality type then you can:

- **Realise that your basic personality is introverted.**
- **Understand why you're introverted and what the implications are for you at your workplace.**

- **Look to manage your introversion at work so that you work well and also attain the recognition you deserve.**

One point to note is that whilst someone can manage their introversion at times, their core personality type won't change. So whilst an introvert can make an effort to have a more visible profile at work, it won't be their natural preference. And behaving like that all day long would be exhausting and they would need to manage their energy levels.

So looking at your core personality does get you asking some important

questions about what is a good, natural fit for you at work. What kind of work will you be more energised by? Which kind of work environments will suit you best?

When you have more clarity on the work you are more suited for, and the environments you will be happier in, then you are able to make better decisions on which direction to point your career in.

Alistair is a Career Coach who specialises in helping people find work and change career.

In particular, he deals with mid-life career changers, helping them find the work which they will find meaningful and the marketing tips on how to find work opportunities.

His website is www.alistairmiller.co.uk

