

PA ENTERPRISE

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

November 2012



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and DeskDemon
Community

Summary of Annual National PA Survey

e-Recruitment – what is it really all about?

The Top 10 Most Awful Corporate Gifts

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PA ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

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PA Enterprise is sent to DeskDemon UK e-newsletter, audited by ABCe (5th/6th July 2007) with a net distribution of 70,581 email addresses.

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Health warning for office workers

Take a break to avoid DVT risk

Ten people a day are dying of blood clots as more and more workers eat at their desk.

Nearly 75% of office staff aged 21-30 and working 10-hour days, do not get up to take a break – doubling the chances of them getting deep vein thrombosis.

DVT charity Lifeblood's Annya Stephens-Boal said: "We all do it, work long hours and grab a sandwich at our desk."

The number of DVT victims under 40 is rising rapidly, with 94 dying in 2010 up 40% from 67 in 2007. A total of 3,798 people died of DVT in 2010, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Ms Stephens-Boal fears many cases are never detected. "We believe there are 60,000 DVT cases a year throughout the UK," she said. "The scariest part is that 80% have no signs at all, no swelling, redness or pain. We call it the silent killer."

Experts say the best way to avoid DVT is to keep mobile, lose excess weight, give up smoking and eat a low salt and low fat diet.

Nearly a third of employees admits to cheating on taxi expenses

Almost one in three employees are routinely defrauding their employers and topping up their monthly pay, either by adding extra to their taxi bills or claiming for taxi journeys that are not business related, according to a UK survey by expense management company Spendvision.

Research of 1,000 employees who regularly use taxis for work-related travel, found almost a quarter (23%) of respondents will routinely ask for a blank receipt so they can add a few extra pounds before submitting their



expense claim. One in ten (10%) admit going a step further and filling in claims for taxi journeys that have nothing whatsoever to do with work.

Employees in the North East are most likely to doctor their claims with 45% filling in blank taxi receipts with inflated fares or making claims for personal journeys. The North West was a close second with 44% admitting they had made a false or inaccurate claim for a taxi. Employees from the East Midlands were most likely to play things by the book.

Shane Bruhns, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Spendvision, said: "Most UK employees are fundamentally honest, but the fact remains that taxi fares remain an easy target for the minority of employees who are open to temptation."

"A few pounds here or there might not seem like much to an individual, but if almost a third of your workforce is routinely adding £15-£20 a month to their expenses, the amount companies are losing quickly stacks up."

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Competition



Let your Drawing Skills win you an iPod Nano 8gb!

Test your drawing skills and be in with a chance to win an ipod Nano 8gb! Get creative with the great Sharpie drawing pens and colours in our online competition - it can be as simple, colourful or intricate as you want it to be.

We have three ipods to be won - one each month - and the best drawing each month will win. Your drawing can be of anything and you can enter as many times as you like. Once you have finished your masterpiece and saved it - it is automatically entered into our competition.

Go on amaze us!

Express yourself!

The competition is great fun. You simply choose your pen from the Sharpie range, then your colour - and off you go!

**Hurry - last
chance to
enter**

Click here to enter

Office workers want more flexible work schedule

More than two-thirds of office workers would like to be able to work from home, according to a survey by TeamViewer, provider of remote control and online meetings software.

While companies have talked about creating flexible working policies for years, 25% of the survey respondents never work from home and a further 18% rarely work from home.

Only 26% are able to choose when they want to work from home, while a further 22% said home-working arrangements are flexible as long as they receive prior agreement from their manager.

When asked what would further improve their home working experience, 55% said faster connectivity, 51% wanted access to all documents, as if they were based in the office, and 33% wanted their employer to contribute to their utility bills.

Cycling to work: good for businesses, good for the economy

Chairman of Halfords, Dennis Millard, wants to encourage more people to cycle to work. This would create a 'virtuous circle' for Britain, positively impacting employees, businesses and the economy. The benefits include reduced carbon emissions, improvements to public health and increased employee engagement, as well as the generation of jobs and additional revenues for the Exchequer.



"Cycling is a large, vibrant and growing industry, contributing approximately £3bn annually to the UK economy", said Mr Millard.

Mr Millard's comments were made at the Houses of Parliament during the launch

of Businesscycle, a new national online information resource for employers, that provides guidance on how they can encourage greater numbers of their staff to ride to work.

Mr Millard highlighted the vital role played by the Cycle to Work Scheme that provides savings for employees of up to 42% on the cost of a bike and that is simple and cost effective for employers to operate. He encouraged more businesses to offer the Scheme so that both they and their employees could enjoy the benefits.

"Everyone can be a cyclist – enjoying the thrills and fitness benefits. Cycling to work is one of the best ways of incorporating cycling into everyday activity."

Armor: a sustainable way to print

Armor offers you cost effective and environmentally friendly compatible solutions that guarantee you a similar performance to the OEM printer cartridges.

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Arcadia



Accepted in eight top-name high street stores, the Arcadia Group Fashion Gift Card is the easy way to reward your staff this season.

So whether you want to say a special 'thank you' to a hardworking member of staff, or incorporate it as part of a loyalty or incentive scheme, you'll be able to offer a gift that lets them shop whenever and wherever they want in our participating stores.

This gift card isn't just about fashionable clothing, it also opens the door to a world of contemporary footwear, accessories, jewellery, workwear - whatever suits you and your style.

Available in Sterling and Euro currencies (Euros are redeemable in Eire and Northern Ireland stores only) Arcadia Gift Cards and Vouchers can be topped up over and over again. Of course, they also offer brilliant choice combined with customer service that's tailored to meet individual needs.

You can even get a discount rate on bulk purchases:

Value:

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Discount:

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8%

It's ready to use in Burton, Dorothy Perkins, Evans, Miss Selfridge, Outfit, Topman, Topshop or Wallis and it can be topped up with any amount from £1 to £300. (or €1 to €450 in NI and Eire) In fact, this gift card is everything you want it to be.

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Britain is a nation of GOOFS!

Britain is a nation of GOOFS - Gadget Obsessed Over Fifties – with the over 50s now owning almost as much technology as consumers half their age. This is according to a survey carried out by Gadget Show Live Christmas, which takes place at ExCeL on 30 November to 2 December.



The research shows that more than nine in ten over 50s in the UK own a digital camera, three in four possess a smartphone and almost a third play on a portable games console. Proving that you are never too old, one in five uses a fitness app and 22 per cent own a PS3, Wii or Xbox.

The research suggested that some gadgets could have been designed with this generation in mind. 40 per cent of the over 50s own a Kindle and 64 per cent a digital radio; almost one in five (20 per cent) have a digital photo frame and more than six in ten

(61 per cent) have an MP3 player such as an iPod.

Other popular items for the GOOF generation are satnav systems and non-factory fitted in-car stereos while a healthy eight per cent own a treadmill and six per cent a GPS running watch. One in ten (10 per cent) even have their own home cinema!

"This proves that gadgets hold as much, and sometimes more, appeal to older generations than younger ones. The over-50s often have more disposable cash for high end products such as

tablets and flatscreen televisions and have more time to enjoy them, too," said Matt Hodgins, event director, Gadget Show Live Christmas.

"But many also enjoy the greater freedom and convenience that young consumers may take for granted. Older people can use the internet connection of a laptop, tablet, phone or PC to keep in touch with friends and family, shop online and keep abreast of current events."

Gadget Show Christmas Live is on for three days at ExCeL arena in London from 30 November

featuring the latest technology must-haves from names like Windows, Nintendo, PlayStation, Xbox and TomTom.

Apart from GOOFs, the Gadget Show research into thousands of consumers identified other groups including:

- **GAGS: Gadget Addicted Girls**
- **NOTS: never off the sofa - gadget-loving teens**
- **iTods: gadget-loving toddlers**
- **Tom Thumbs: gadget-loving children**
- **Geriapptrics: gadget-loving senior citizens**

The technology owned by Britain's GOOFs:

1. Digital Camera - 94%
2. Laptop - 81%
3. Smartphone - 73%
4. Flatscreen TV - 71%
5. Digital radio - 64%
6. MP3 - 61%
7. Tablet - 40%
8. Kindle - 40%
9. In car stereo - 39%
10. Portable games console - 31%
11. Games console - 22%
12. Sat Nav - 20%
13. Satellite TV - 20%
14. Use fitness apps - 20%
15. Digital photo frame - 19%
16. iPod docking system - 13%
17. Home cinema - 10%
18. Treadmill - 8%
19. 3D TV - 6%
20. GPS running watch - 6%

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Summary of Annual National PA Survey



The latest findings of the survey, which was completed by a sample of 1,430 PAs working across the UK, offer a succinct reminder of the importance – and necessity – of a strong, close working relationship between a PA and their boss. Given that more than 56% of last year's respondents felt more loyal to their boss than their company or colleagues, many of this year's questions were framed to explore that relationship more fully.

With recent advances in technology having taken over many of the more traditional PA roles, the last fifteen years have seen a shift in responsibilities and the majority of PAs (56%) now considering their role to be of greater importance. Naturally, that also means that expectations – and workloads – have increased in kind.

Traditionally the link between senior management and the outside world, as well as other departments and staff inside an organisation, PAs have always been the confidante of some of the most sensitive information in any company. When asked to consider the most important qualities of a successful modern PA therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, 64% of this year's

respondents placed 'discretion/confidentiality' firmly on top. This is followed by 'multi-tasking' at 40% and 'initiative' at 28%, with many PAs commenting that their role is now more much complex and that they are more dynamic members of their company's management teams as a result. 'Presentation' meanwhile garnered less than a single percent.

When asked how well these additional responsibilities and general expectations of their role were reflected in their pay, over half (51%) of PAs said good or excellent, compared to 35% reporting it is average. While a question on salary bands, showed the majority were split evenly between £21,000 and £35,000, with the average salary around the £30,000 mark. However, there was a stark comparison between respondents at the top and bottom ends of the pay spectrum, with 2% earning less than £15,000 and 2% earning in excess of £50,000; with the highest reported salary given at £75,000.

Overall, the results of the 2nd annual National PA Survey paint a distinctly positive picture of how the UK's PAs feel about their role and the importance of the work they do, with 63% of respondents stating that they felt 'appreciated' by their boss. A resounding 81% said that they felt that their boss was 'very good or excellent' at their job, with many leaving glowing testimonials. The

majority (54%) would also feel 'disappointed', or even 'betrayed and angry' (7%), if asked to work for a different boss 'tomorrow'.

By comparison however, PAs don't view their career prospects or development opportunities so favourably. Nearly three quarters of all respondents (72%) said that they felt being a PA was undervalued as a professional career choice. It is this strength of feeling and perceived lack of professional recognition that first led to the launch of National PA Day last year.

Results in Full:

How well do you feel your pay reflects what is expected of you in your role?

Excellent: 10.7%
Good: 40.8%
Average: 34.6%
Poor: 13.8%

What would you consider to be the most important qualities of a successful PA?

Loyalty: 15.9%
Accuracy: 17.9%
Discretion/Confidentiality: 64.2%
Presentation: 0.5%
Initiative: 27.6%
Time Management: 20.9%
Multi-tasking: 40.4%
Leadership: 2.2%
Confident Personality: 7.7%

On a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest, how appreciated do you feel by your boss?

1 – 3.0%
2 – 7.4%

3 – 26.6%
4 – 38.2%
5 – 24.8%

On a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest, how good do you think your boss is at his job?

1 – 1.2%
2 – 4.7%
3 – 13.4%
4 – 40.1%
5 – 40.7%

How important do you feel the PA role is compared to 15 years ago?

Much less important: 5.6%
Slightly less important – 13.2%
Same importance: 16.4%
Slightly more important: 17.9%
Much more important: 38.2%
Not sure: 8.7%

Do you feel that being a PA is undervalued as a professional career choice?

Yes: 71.9%
No: 21.7%
No opinion: 6.4%

What is the best thing you have been asked to do?

The responses to this question show how satisfying it can be to work as a PA or EA – with the occasional glamorous 'perk'. Here are just some of the highlights:

- Attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace as a guest of the Duke of Edinburgh
- Arrange a Christmas party with a budget of £25k

- Appear in a popular TV programme as one of our Board Directors is a celebrity
- To simply be the representative for my boss when they are not there, it is great to know that you are valued and trusted
- Contribute to an employee engagement panel. It was nice to feel that my opinion counted, and that I could make a real difference, if only for a short while!
- Organise a customer corporate event at the Monaco Grand Prix
- Incorporate Group HR into my role
- Organise a company 75 year celebration in Disneyland Paris which involved charter flights, organising a celebration dinner, accommodation and activities
- To be involved in our Queens Award for Enterprise – it made me feel very proud to be part of our company's achievement.
- Represent my boss at a meeting in the US
- Carry out my own projects with total responsibility for budget control, without micro management
- Being asked to attend a meeting with my boss because, and I quote, "it makes me feel more confident just having you in the room"

Source: Office*

That's NOT in my job description!

For some light relief the survey also asked what the most ridiculous thing respondents had ever been asked to do. Here are just a few excerpts:

Sit in at boss's flat and wait for a Sky installation man

Clean a house when the cleaner was ill

Homework for my boss's child... and also homework his wife's teacher training course

Booking a bikini wax

Buy some puppies for my boss!

To buy a client some pyjamas

My boss asks me to print docs for him, single page and asks me to check it has been printed properly. He doesn't allow me to do anything more responsible than this each day

Intervene in an argument between my boss's mother-in-law and her daughter

Go to a pet shop to ask whether goldfish can go blind!

Contact the CEO of Whittards to find out why they had discontinued a certain tea

Type up the minutes of a Freemason's meeting!

To source the best HRT treatment for my bosses wife

Phone Apple to try and secure early delivery of iPads

Arrange "escort girls" for a boss I worked for

Buy socks for a Board member who hadn't packed any

Take my boss's Dad to the seaside for a day out!

Take part in It's a knockout dressed as a penguin

Clear leaves blocking a drain and causing a leak in the roof by hanging out of 3-storey window in the pouring rain

Hold a plane at the airport due to boss being held up in traffic



Get tough with the NEW Sharpie Pro marker 1000 samples to give away!

Sharpie



SHARPIE®, the nation's favourite permanent marker, has launched the toughest SHARPIE® markers yet... SHARPIE® Pro. This new range is an absolute must-have for all desks, warehouses, factories and tough environments.

Teaming performance with durability the SHARPIE® Pro range is a selection of markers that have been perfectly created to withstand intensive as well as intricate usages. Extremely lightweight, the tough aluminium barrel stands up to heavy and prolonged use and the durable block tip is pressure resistant. Plus, the ink is designed to write on wet and oily surfaces... SHARPIE® Pro is up for a challenge!

What's more, they are available in a range of colours, formats and a choice of bullet or chisel tips so you can specifically match your marker to whatever your marking need!

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a New SHARPIE®
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don't forget to add
a pack to your next
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Deskdemon.com

The World's Largest Website for Executive PAs, Secretaries, Administrators & Office Managers

Our History and the Future

As our PA Enterprise e-newsletter drops into your email inbox, you probably have never wondered about how it originated, and why would you, you probably are inundated with newsletters, updates, offers from many other websites and newsletters that you have subscribed to over the years. But we thought it would be nice to tell you a little more about us, here at DeskDemon, about why and how it was set up and our thoughts for the future.



Back to the Future

We were tapping our feet to Rock DJ by Robbie Williams, Music by Madonna in August 2000 while Sophie Ellis-Bextor was catapulted into the limelight with Spillers' Groovejet - can you really believe that was more than 12 years ago! Coyote Ugly film was released, the Slater family arrived in Walford and eight year old Tommy Duckworth was snatched in Coronation Street - and rescued by Tyrone!

While all this was happening, DeskDemon was launched - one of the first websites entirely dedicated to PAs, EAs, Office Managers, Virtual Assistants, Secretaries, Admin Assistants - Office Professionals. The Founder and Chairman of DeskDemon had worked at Senior Management level for many years, and when his PA went on

holiday, the temp went sick. How did he cope...? Cue lots of time wasted, frustration, stress and not much getting done, and not knowing how to get things done - the idea of DeskDemon was ignited.

The aim of the website was to provide a platform; a database of useful information, an area to encapsulate everything that an Office Professional (OP) may use in her/his working day. But more than that, he wanted to create a place where OPs can share best practice, tips, advice and just talk about their working day, the Forum was born.

Over time the **Forum** has become one of the most important parts of DeskDemon, it's the heartbeat of the website. Even if people don't want to register to make a comment or start a thread, the



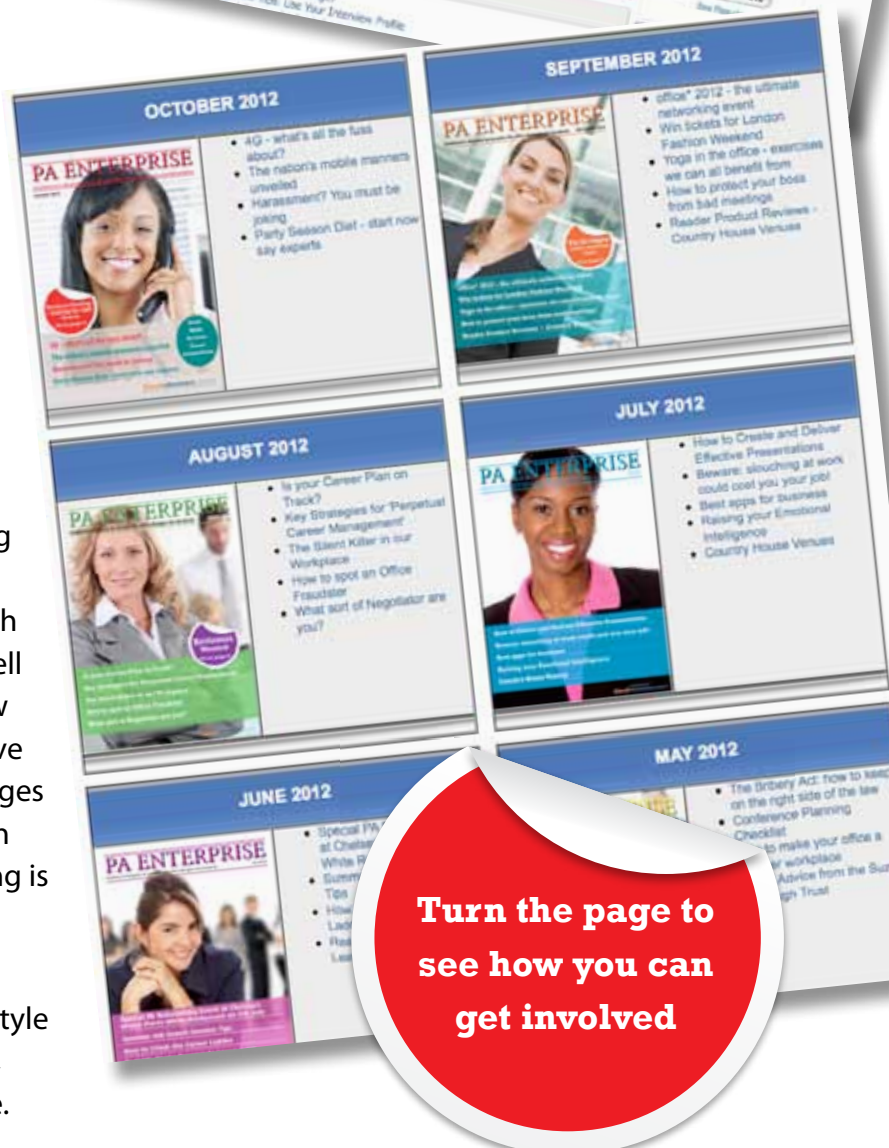
read numbers show for themselves the popularity of this part of our site.

Although the look of the site has been refreshed approximately every three-four years, the integrity of being the one-stop-shop for OPs has never wavered.

DeskDemon has produced a newsletter for many years with different titles and looks.

PA Enterprise has now been published for almost four years and like DeskDemon, aims to bring you the reader - offers, competitions, information on new products and venues, reviews and we especially proud of attempting to highlight issues that affect many of you during your working lifetime - how to deal with bullying colleagues, stress, redundancy - as well as giving tips for interviews, travel advice, How To's for office survival, how to change and move ahead with your career. Also our Resources pages on DeskDemon are crammed with information on every office topic you may need - if anything is missing, please let us know!

As well as competitions, offers and articles relating to office matters - we also have a Lifestyle section where you will find articles on fashion, cooking, gardening, charity projects and more.





Getting Involved

Make sure you don't miss out on any of the items listed above - all will be on DeskDemon.com, some will feature in PA Enterprise and some in our other monthly e-update **What's New @DeskDemon**. A new feature we are forging ahead with is PA Reviews. You may have seen some of our book, product, hotel and restaurant reviews over the last couple of months - we shall often tweet if we are looking for someone in a particular area - so please make sure you are signed up to **Twitter** to get our latest tweets - @deskdemo.

If you would like your product, venue, restaurant, hotel reviewed - please email review@deskdemo.com - If you would like to review for DeskDemon, please send your details including name, title, address and contact details to review@deskdemo.com - only Office Professionals please.

We also hosted a very successful PA Networking event in the summer where more than 100 PAs met at the Marco Pierre White Restaurant at Chelsea Football Club. We will be hosting more of these types of events - sign up to be the first to know when we announce a new event at network@deskdemo.com

Coming soon is a new feature looking at you - our fantastic readership - Say Hello to a PA...Meet X - if you would like to take part, please email editor@deskdemo.com

Have you also noticed our poll question on the

right hand side of our Home Page? This is your chance to have a say to a relevant questions - let your voice be heard. If you would like to submit a poll question - please email editor@deskdemo.com

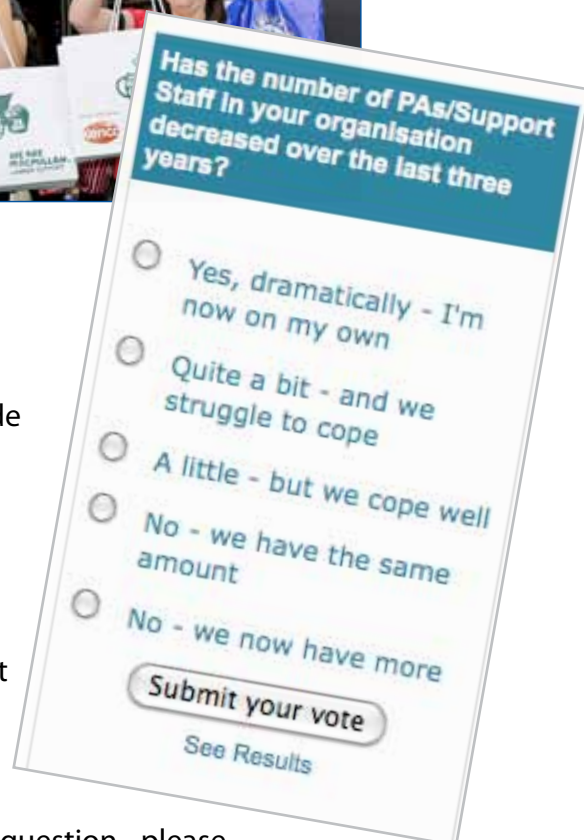
We are always interested in hearing from you - whether you fancy writing a one-off blog - or an on-going blog tracking a certain project, or have a feature idea - we want to give you stories and articles that encourage you and give you a chance to get involved.

An Invitation to be Sociable

We are also on **Linked In** as DeskDemon Group. please do join us - there are more than 3,500 in our group - come and meet everyone. We are working on updating our **Facebook** page - more details to follow soon. We also regularly tweet about features, competitions and offers - make sure you follow us @deskdemo - to be kept right up to date.

We love hearing from you - so please do keep in touch - and regularly return to www.DeskDemon.com

Alison Pedrick, Editor



Have a Rewarding Christmas with Avery

From trimming the tree to munching mince pies, everyone has their favourite thing about Christmas time, but there's one thing we all love and that's treating ourselves and our loved ones to something special. This year Avery Rewards has the perfect present for everyone inside promotional packs of Avery products. There's no need to write a letter to Santa either, all you need to do is simply purchase Avery products from your stationery supplier in the usual way and look out for your unique code inside the pack.

Once you have your code, simply register online at www.averyrewards.co.uk and you can start spending right away with instantly redeemable vouchers for some of Britain's best love brands. So whether you use your vouchers to reward yourself or spend them on Christmas gifts for friends and family, there's something to keep everyone happy.

Thanks to Avery Rewards you'll even be able to get those hard-to-buy-for friends and family something great too. From the latest film and music releases at HMV, to clothing, jewellery and accessories from New Look or Marks & Spencer, gorgeous gift sets from Boots, right through to some amazing Red Letter Day experiences, Avery Rewards has Christmas all wrapped up!

And, as an added festive bonus, when you register online at www.averyrewards.co.uk Avery will automatically enter you into their exciting quarterly prize draw.



So what are you waiting for?

You'll find Avery Rewards codes in a wide range of Avery products to help you at Christmas from Address Labels and Mini Return Address Labels to Opaque BlockOUT™ Parcel Labels. Plus you can create beautiful bespoke Christmas labels by using the image gallery on Avery's Design & Print Online software. Stock up on your supplies for the year ahead and have a great Christmas with Avery Rewards.

**AVERY®**

e-Recruitment – what is it really all about?

by Alison Pedrick,
Editor

e-recruitment is one of those terms that has slipped almost unnoticed into language and interview processes, but do any of us really understand the impact it has not only on companies who recruit using it, but how it affects job applicants?

I went along to see WCN an e-recruitment specialist company that provides tailor-made software for companies and organisations when implementing e-recruitment to find out about it.



If you have changed or applied for jobs in the last five years or so, there will probably be part of the recruitment process that was by e-recruitment - whether you realised it or not at the time. Sometimes it may have been submitting your CV, application form and covering letter via email - something we are all familiar with, or the full recruitment process - application, tests, interview by telephone, references, contracts - and usually one or two face-to-face interviews and the job offer by telephone. If you were unlucky enough to not get the job, you may have gotten an automated 'Dear Joan' response - it is fairly common practice for an e-recruitment system to automate these now, partly due the huge numbers of people applying for each job, which is understandable, but a real shame.

So, let's look at how e-recruitment is changing the recruitment process.

Where to Find Jobs

BEFORE - local and national newspapers, word and mouth, visiting or calling agencies, writing in or phoning up each company.

NOW - agencies (all jobs now online). Newspapers - both in print, but mainly online. Company websites - career areas (many with advanced search functions) - most large, and indeed some small companies, have jobs online and with a way to apply. Smaller companies still are aware that job hunters will look at its website and often provide an email address to send your CV to or a physical address. Many sites will allow you to register with them and get alerts via email, text or app when a new job that fits your criteria has been added.

Selection Process

BEFORE - a real live person sifting through and reading each CV, speculative letter and taking each job-seeking call.

NOW - computer software will rapidly scan your CV to see if you match key words as specified by the job recruiter. However, if the job requires someone with a certain type of experience, specialised skills,

etc. - the HR recruiter will more than likely look at CVs - so the right candidate should still get noticed.

Tests

BEFORE - usually a letter or phone call asking you to attend the company to take certain tests at their offices. Often only one date and time was available and was during office hours - meaning the candidate would need to take half a day (or more depending on the location) and find their way to the hiring company. Possibly a confirmation letter also sent out.

NOW - an email, text or app request may be sent out informing the applicant that they have been selected to move onto the next stage - online tests. Some systems allow you to go online at any time and start the tests - allowing you to do this at the best possible time for you.

Telephone Interview

BEFORE - not carried out on a regular basis - maybe for the odd person who lived quite far away - and more of a general chat, than a structured interview process.

NOW - this is a big part of the recruitment process. This means the HR recruitment department can be based anywhere, even from home, meaning costs for employers reduce dramatically. As the potential new employee, this may mean learning new skills, setting time aside to treat this as you would a real face to face interview and getting across your skills and personality can be seen as both an advantage and disadvantage. You can schedule the call, usually time and date confirmed by app, text or email, at a time to suit not only the employer/recruiter - but also yourself.

Interviews (1st and 2nd Stage)

BEFORE - again usually a letter or phone call arranging both first and second interviews.

NOW - you may receive email, text or app message offering a time and date - you may also receive a call, as sometimes at this part of the process, the hiring company want to get to know you a bit more

(especially if there wasn't a telephone interview). You confirm by app, text or email at a time to suit not only the employer/recruiter - but also yourself. Interviews though, will be done face to face.

References

BEFORE - a form sent by the HR department through the post with SAEs and the response was met with varying degrees of success - sometimes taking weeks or months to get an answer back, and sometimes no response at all.

NOW - the e-recruitment system allows the job applicant to input your reference contacts and the system will contact them via email. The referee will respond via the system, keeping all the data in one place and secure. If your referee doesn't respond, the system will contact you and ask you to chase your referee. This is a great way for HR departments who are recruiting for jobs that require a high level of security clearance and have to meet government standards regarding references before they can offer a job.

Contracts

BEFORE - after many changes by several different departments, paper copies are sent out via the post - asking the new employee to sign all copies, keep one and return the others. Even enclosing an SAE means time is lost and this is not particularly a professional way of doing business.

NOW - the e-recruitment system will send the contract - as seen and signed off electronically by all necessary parties.

Moving With the Times

Although some of this may seem a little impersonal, with technology moving at such a pace, it seems only natural that recruitment is becoming part of the technological way we live our lives.

For the company or agency recruiting - not only can it save time and money, it allows for instant tracking of one or many live jobs, allowing them

to run completely up to date data to see where any job is in the recruitment process. It provides a secure system that they can alter to tailor-make each job specification, can update job details quickly and efficiently when recruiting for similar positions, gives them instant access to an up-to-date Talent Bank for those who didn't get that particular position they applied for - and which they can re-look at should a similar job need filling - saving time and money.

For the job applicant, the best way to give yourself a chance is to embrace these changes, make them work for you:

- Online systems allow you to apply for jobs instantly and at any time of the day.
- Agency systems allow you to have an account, where you can store your CV and covering letter, let you track job applications, store favourites and more. If you are applying for more than one job at a time, it is easier to keep up to date with where you are with each job - it is so easy to get confused especially when applying for many similar type jobs.
- Ensure your CV and covering letter pick up key words that have been used in the job advert.
- If you are asked to do online tests, make sure you read all the help and guidance pages that should be online to help you - especially for tests. Usually there is a telephone helpline you can call should you get stuck.
- If you haven't had a telephone interview - why not practice with a friend? Work out how you can make yourself stand out from other applicants.
- If you are unsuccessful in your job application, ask if you are in the Talent Bank.
- Keep the recruiter's email and details, and drop them an email in a few months asking if there are any suitable vacancies.



Of course, not all companies are using a full e-recruitment system yet and it is usually the larger sized companies who are using it, but as time and technology moves on, small and medium sized companies will almost certainly move in that direction as well, even if they don't use it themselves, they will use an agency that does tailor-made recruitment exactly how the company wants it.

Before I close, just a quick word about apps and iPhones/iPads/Notebook, etc. More e-recruiters are using apps to contact applicants. These are especially good when confirming details for tests, telephone interviews and interview dates - as you can just hit the confirm button or choose a new date.

However, just be aware, that if you are applying for a PA role, you already know that attention to detail is key - and should you need to reply in any detail, that spelling errors (especially hard to avoid with small phone keypads), could mean you not getting through to the next stage. Also your PC and home phone are probably more secure than your mobile - so just be aware should you be discussing and typing in salary and personal details.

WCN provides software directly to employers for candidates to search and apply directly for jobs via an online portal accessed from the employers' website. WCN has worked with Marks & Spencer, Civil Service, RNIB and many more reputable companies. Contact them via sales@wcn.co.uk or <http://www.wcn.co.uk/>

The Top 10 Most Awful Corporate Gifts

By Karisa M Cloutier

We've all heard the expression, "It's the thought that counts".

But, it's not completely the case. The reality is that if you want to make a long lasting impression on your valued clients or perhaps employees, you may want to give it a little forethought. To the receiver, gifts convey a good deal about the gift giver. Really think about it, when you have been given a present that you really felt was truly appalling, exactly how did you view the individual once they gave you the awful present? Did the thought "What were you thinking" pop into your head?

Here are a few suggestions to avoid in the gift giving arena. Make an attempt to steer clear from some of these examples, and it really should keep you off the "Bad Gift Giver" list this year!

(In decreasing order, one being the most awful)

10. Inadequately Funded Gift Cards or Certificates

Certainly one of the most negative encounters I've had, was getting a £20 gift card to an expensive

shop, merely to realize that I couldn't purchase one item in the shop with that amount of money. Almost everything in the shop was a lot more than £20. As I searched around for a little something I could toss some extra money in for, I said to myself "Didn't someone in management really know what kind of shop this was?" It just simply didn't make the management seem like the brightest of individuals. If perhaps your financial budget is strapped, try to find a few other innovative ways to gift this season. The £10 gift card probably will not produce the big impression you're looking for.

9. The Branded Polo Shirt

I have to acknowledge that this isn't the most awful gift to give someone. Nevertheless, gifting any kind of apparel is always a gift risk. The typical "small" may totally swallow a very small woman, whilst the largest sized extra large may become a midriff to a big fella. And if it's the completely wrong colour, forget about it. That polo will likely be thrown in the Salvation Army bin and then forgotten easily!



8. Business Mugs

I can't think of exactly why this isn't a very good present besides the reality that my cupboard is over-flowing with logo'd mugs. I always have clean mugs sitting within my cupboard regardless of how much coffee or tea I consume. They are constantly sitting there taking up space or room. In fact, if I get one more logo'd mug I may just lose it entirely. Enough said.

7. "Scaling Down" your gifts

Everyone knows that financial budgets are tight nowadays, but don't make it totally obvious in your gift giving. Whenever a corporation starts out giving away wonderful gifts, and then scales all the way down to grandma's knitted booty's, it results in a bitter taste in the mouths of the recipients. Allow me to give you a good example:

2008 - MP3 players for everybody!
Whoo-hoo!

2009- 20 Supermarket Gift Card

2010 - A company Logo'd Pen and Pad set

See what I am talking about? Sort of deflating right? Work with your financial budget, thoroughly crunch the figures and then get imaginative with your gift giving. Don't leave your recipients eager for more.



6. The USB drive

For me personally, I adore getting USB drives! That's due to the fact I'm a want to be IT nerd. Nevertheless, I realise that everybody else is not! Many people who get USB drives don't actually make use of them. They wind up jammed in the back of the desk someplace gathering dirt and dust. And individuals that DO use them, devote the majority of the time formatting them to get the company advertisements eradicated to make more space! Truthfully, unless you are employed in the IT industry, USB drives don't make the best of gifts.

5. The Calendar

Most likely, most people in the corporate and business world are already making use of a completely functional calendar. They most likely aren't looking for yet another one with your company logo on it. Calendars are okay as an additional "throw in gift" from time to time, but as a Christmas gift, it leaves a lot to be desired.

4. The Mousepad

The average person is not really looking for a mousepad. And with laptop sales increasing, they won't need one in the foreseeable future either. Somebody got creative once and provided me a notepad/mousepad combination one year. I seriously can't tell you exactly where that thing is right now.

3. The Paperweight

Now, maybe I am just way too young to know (I very seriously doubt it), but when were paper weights ever actually needed? A large amount of corporate execs work inside, and so I can't really see the need for a paper weight inside a business office. My only memory of paperweights is messing around with them on my father's desk when I was growing up. Apart from that, I genuinely can't think of a practical use for one. A doorstop perhaps?

2. The Logo'd Pen

Ah yes, the notorious logo'd pen. It usually seems like a good idea to the OWNER of the company that

the pen is on, however for the receiver here are the standard numerous uses:

- *The pen which is usually left on the counter to take messages*
- *The pen which is left in the car, just in case*
- *The pen which is not remembered after it is received, and left on the desk of the individual who gave them the pen.*

1. Stress Ball

Last but not least, the most awful gift to give is a logo'd stress ball. Now I am certain that you don't want your brand/logo connected with stress. As a matter of fact, it's sort of ironic to many employees when they receive stress balls from their employers. It may be interpreted as a means of reducing existing employer imposed pressure, or maybe a whole lot worse, giving a stress ball as a gift says: "Hey, take this stress ball, you'll need it for what's coming!" - Not a very good message to send your employees!

Of course, this entire list is my slanted viewpoint on exactly what bad corporate gifts are, however I'm open to suggestions. What are your views? Better still, what is actually the positively most awful corporate gift you've ever received? Leave your feedback on the DeskDemon forums.



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Worked up? Top tips for winding down

Finding rest and respite from the pressures of work can be difficult. Even taking leave can be insufficient to unwind fully and regain drained energy. For Stress Awareness Day (7 November 2012), a psychotherapist offers advice on planning a Christmas break that sets 2013 off to a good start. Whether it is just a few days off work or a couple of weeks away, these are some well-researched hints on getting the most relaxation benefits from time out of the office.

Sherylin Thompson, integrative psychotherapist, says: "The good news is that research shows that it is not just the length of the break that matters but what you do during it. So you need not shell out for an extended exotic holiday to reap the rewards of having a Christmas break. A few days off could do." Sherylin sets out her CALMS model to equip you with inner strength and resilience to kick-start the New Year.



It draws on a number of psychological theories with a winning formula to help you feel replenished, revitalised and refreshed even over the busy festive season.

Choice & Autonomy

This is about how much you personally feel you have freedom and choice. Even if you have lots of Christmas tasks on your plate, you are more likely to feel that you would choose to do the tasks if you believe you and your loved ones benefit. If what you do has personal meaning, you are less likely to see them as a chore, even if the tasks prevent you from putting your feet up. Look through your Christmas task list and decide which have the most meaning and match your own personal values. Start with these and decide whether you can delegate or hire in help for the others. Finding freedom in the to-do-list will bring a sense of autonomy, a core psychological need. On the flip side, research shows that both men and women experiencing low autonomy and control at home have higher levels of depression and in addition, men experience more anxiety. So find something that you choose to do in and amongst your responsibilities. It is important to focus on your needs too.

Let go

This is about making a conscious choice to detach from work and relax. Detach from work by deciding what you can leave in the office. This could be your mobile, e-mails as well as responsibilities by seeing if a colleague can pick up on essential work so that you do not need to. You can also detach from work by not using the same skills on your break as you use in your job. Over-using job skills could result in burn-out even if they are not in the context of work. If you work in IT, time away from technology would be more beneficial. If you work in a building trade, try to avoid the temptation to turn your work skills to your own home.

Relaxation is not about doing as little as possible. The essential ingredient is that the activity brings positive emotions. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions says that developing your ability to enjoy a good mood will broaden your mind and build your inner strength. Negative moods from work can narrow your thinking. In contrast, allowing yourself to feel good will give you a wider perspective and relief from the difficulty. Think



about what activities bring you natural enjoyment – nature, socialising, crafts, sport – and allow yourself to appreciate them as much as possible.

Mastery

This is how competent, effective and capable you feel in your leisure time. Find opportunity to develop a special hobby you seldom have opportunity to. Feeling that you can competently master a developing interest can help you feel a sense of choice and autonomy and bring positive emotions essential for relaxation. Mastery therefore links to the former elements of the CALMS model. It also leads to the final one, social activity, in that you could feel masterful in sharing your interest with others. See if you can put a natural personal ability you have to enhance others' Christmas experience. For example, offer your quality to be kind and generous, support a local choir with your voice, use your creative flair on the decorations, challenge a friend to a game of squash.

Social activity

This is being able to reconnect with friends and family. It is not always easy for families to get along at Christmas, so focus on the people who support you the most. Accept offers for help and take that as a sign of someone caring for you. It is also not worth prioritizing the to-do list if it means having a fall-out with a loved one. Prioritise the people, let go of the list. If you are more introverted, Christmas parties could feel like a strain. Manage your time by limiting those which you will attend and make an excuse to leave early. It is fine to save your energy for your nearest and dearest and for the social events that enhance your mood rather than drain you.

While Christmas time is a notorious time for seasonal stress, it is also traditionally a time for peace and goodwill. Following these simple CALMS tips will help bring you the most wellbeing even with minimal leave at a stressful time of the year.



Sherylin Thompson is a registered integrative psychotherapist in private practice offering sessions in person and by Skype and can be contacted at www.skype-therapy.co.uk and followed on Twitter at @sherylin.

What Causes Your Stress?

By Paul Pennant
Managing Director www.todayspa.co.uk

As a busy PA or Executive Assistant, you may accept stress as an everyday part of your life. Some level of stress is normal, and is actually proven to be important in motivation and success. However, statistics show that levels of stress within the workplace are on the rise.

National Stress Awareness Day was on 7 November 2012. Its main focus this year highlighted levels of stress at work. So, what stresses you? Many PAs today report to more than one boss; diary management and keeping track can be quite a challenge, and may be a key factor in heightened stress levels for many. Research has also shown that working in a loud office environment can add to your stress levels, and there are even psychosomatic conditions related to stress such as neck and shoulder pain.

Advances in modern technology may be another stress factor in the life the PA or Executive Assistant; are you up to date with latest software versions, and ways of working? Furthermore, do you find that technology has caused an increase in your working hours? Many PAs and Executive Assistants find themselves using laptops, tablets and personal mobile phones when away from the office. The result can be that the temptation to log in and reply to emails is just too much, and this eats in to personal and family time, thus heightening stress levels even further.

As part of National Stress Awareness Day, we are conducting our own survey investigating what is causing the elevated stress levels of PAs and Executive Assistants – please click to register your views by going to www.deskdemon.com

**What causes you stress at work?
Click to register your views**