



# PA ENTERPRISE

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

July 2013

## Building your Portfolio of Evidence

Social media – helping or  
hurting job candidates?

Banish the Clutter!  
Product Reviews – Desk Organisers

How healthy is your  
workspace?

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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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# How would you grade *your* boss?

*Almost a quarter of workers say that their boss regularly asks them to help out with non-work related tasks...*

*What is the strangest thing your boss has asked you to do? Spy on senior management? Work on her daughter's science project? How about loan him money? Nearly three-in-ten workers (28%) reported that their bosses have asked them to perform tasks that are not related to their jobs, according to a new CareerBuilder study.*

### Grading the Boss

Workers are split on whether they like reporting to their current boss. When asked to grade their boss's performance, about half (48%) gave an average or below average rating:

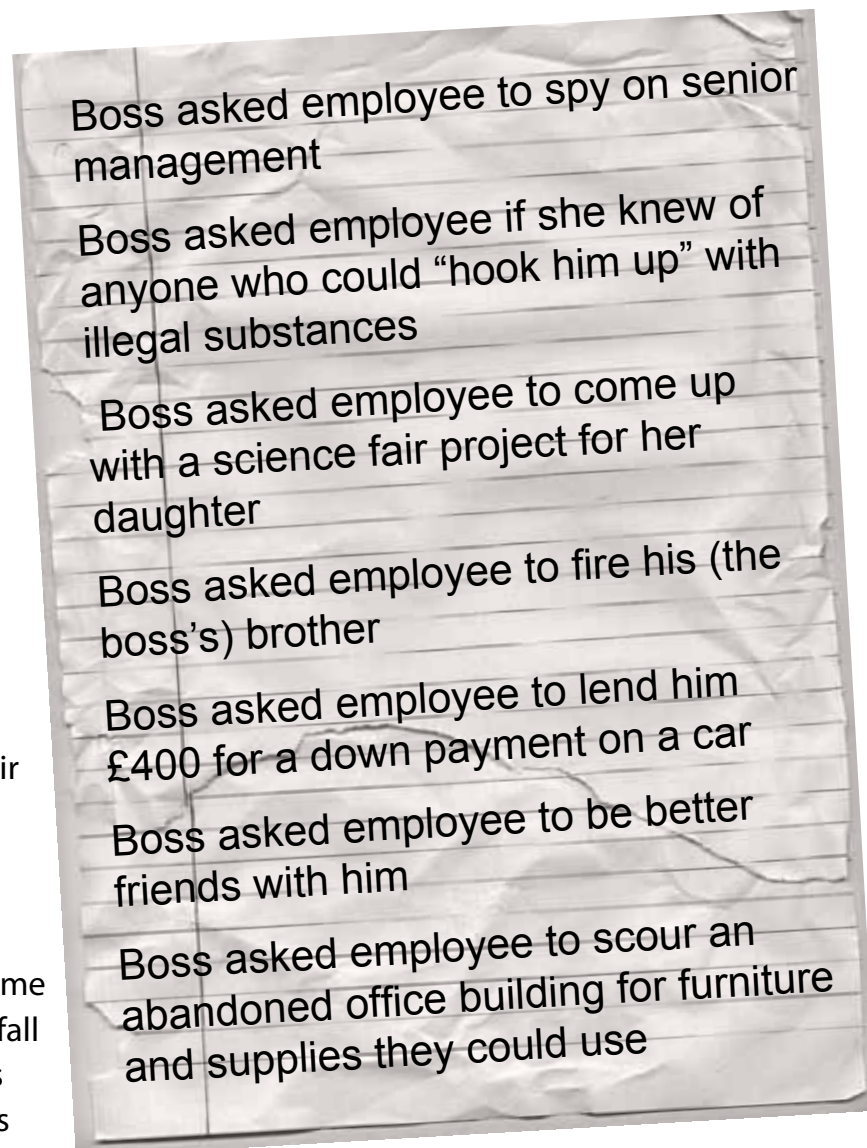
- A – 22%
- B – 30%
- C – 31%
- D – 11%
- E – 6%

While many workers reported they respect their boss (57%), only 25% said that they learn from him/her, and 18% feel they are smarter than their boss.

46% of respondents say they are friends with their boss, however, two in five reported that the boss doesn't know their birthday, the names of their children or what type of foods and music they like.

### Above and Beyond

When it comes to day to day projects, some workers feel assignments from the boss fall outside of their job description. Workers provided the following real-life examples of the most unusual requests they received from their bosses:



# How healthy is your workspace?

*Unhealthy workspaces are costing UK businesses more than £7 billion every year in sick pay, according to a major new survey from the leaders in workspace ergonomics, Fellowes.*



**B**adly set up or poorly equipped workstations result in one in five office workers missing almost three weeks of work a year from health problems such as backache (40%), tense shoulders (37%), eye problems (30%) and even depression (17%).

Creating a comfortable, healthy and productive environment for employees is not a big investment and can positively affect firms' bottom lines although half of office workers report that they've not had workstation risk assessment in the last 12 months despite it being a legal requirement.

In addition to the lack of risk assessments in the workspace, a further 40% of employees do not have access to ergonomic accessories which can help to relieve or avoid poor posture and discomfort.

The research found that almost half of those

questioned said health problems caused in the workplace were having a negative impact on their personal lives too – with 16% saying it damaged relationships and one in five suffering lasting depression as a result.

Employees' well-being is compromised further with a quarter of people have seen their personal interests and activities suffer with 14% having taken time off sporting activities, 11% giving up the sport altogether and another 11% giving up interests and hobbies such as gardening.

General practitioner and health broadcaster, Dr Sarah Jarvis, comments: "The impact of the working environment on office workers' health is all too often overlooked by businesses.

"What is very clear from the research is that



the way you work and the equipment you use has a major impact, not just on your workplace health, but on your wider health too.

“On a daily basis I see many patients suffering particularly from back pain, and I ask routinely about workplace set-up because I know the consequences of poor posture and spending long periods sitting in the wrong position.”

Louise Shipley, from Fellowes, comments:  
“Most of us spend a great deal of time

at our desks so we need to think harder about the conditions we’re working in – and invest in protecting our health and ultimately, our quality of life.

“Employers have a responsibility to their employees and that includes making sure they can work safely and productively.

“Investing in the right kind of supportive, ergonomic accessories and workspace assessments should be a part of that process to ensure they have a more engaged and healthy workforce.”



To find out if your potential risk areas at your workstation, take the simple Fellowes workstation risk assessment at [www.ergo.fellowes.com/en-gb/workingwellassessment](http://www.ergo.fellowes.com/en-gb/workingwellassessment)

# Office workers eat the same thing for lunch every day

*A study into the eating habits of the country's workers found one in eight tucks into an identical meal every lunch time.*



In fact, 70% of these unadventurous lunch eaters have been eating the same thing for as long as they can remember.

The most popular reoccurring lunch proved to be the humble ham sandwich followed by the equally uninspiring cheese sandwich, according to the research by Wonderful Pistachios.

Of the 2000 workers polled, 71% said that they have a packed lunch every day, one fifth have something shop bought and one in ten eat in the staff canteen.

Seven in ten people said they eat the same thing day after day mainly because 'it's easy', while cheapness and simply following the routine were also big factors.

A disillusioned 50% of those polled said that their lunches were dull yet one in six never eat anything different or new while clocking time up in the office.

One quarter even admitted to having a weekly food routine, where a particular day of the week means a certain type of lunch.

And one in four admits to being completely stuck in a rut with their diet.

A spokesman for Wonderful Pistachios said: "We're often creatures of habit and it's understandable that so many of us stick to what we know.

"But with nearly half of the study finding their lunches boring or many stuck in a rut with their diet, it seems there's less of a focus on lunch and more towards snacking throughout the day.

"As working hours become increasingly longer and busier, we have even more reason to make sure the food we're eating each day is nutritional as well as something

to look forward to."

The results also revealed four in ten people think the traditional lunch break is a thing of the past with heavy workloads and time constraints meaning the average worker has to 'squeeze in' the time to eat for a third of their breaks.

43% of people say their lunch 'hours' have got noticeably shorter overall than when they first started working.

In fact, the average person feels they take 20 minutes less of a lunch break now than when they first started out in the working world.

With the traditional lunch hour fading from Britain's offices, a new 'snacking schedule' is taking over as the time to eat - 40% of workers say the afternoon snack is a staple part of their diet.

One in five people cited 11am as the time that they are most likely to turn to food to help them through the day, with 3pm being the next most popular slot.

The spokesman added:

"Wonderful Pistachios are perfect for busy workers looking for a tasty snack. A 30g serving contains 160 calories and provides a variety of different vitamins and minerals."



# Win Your Ultimate Coffee Morning Hamper

*For the fourth year running, Kenco has teamed up with Macmillan to support the World's Biggest Coffee Morning.*

*The event takes place on 27th September and register to be with a chance to win a gorgeous hamper which includes an Eco kettle, a coffee mug set, a cupcake maker, Kenco Coffee and lots of Macmillan goodies to make your coffee morning bigger and better than ever!*

**A**t Kenco we believe in making a difference. That's why for the fourth year running, we are proud to support Macmillan Cancer Support as a long-term partner of their annual flagship fundraising event, World's Biggest Coffee Morning.

Operators can help make a difference and get involved by visiting [www.kencoprofessional.co.uk](http://www.kencoprofessional.co.uk) and registering to hold a coffee morning of their own. Registering also gives you a chance to win an 'Ultimate Coffee Morning hamper', bursting with everything you could need to raise even more money for Macmillan, including an Eco kettle, a coffee mug set, a cupcake maker, Kenco Coffee and lots of Macmillan goodies to make your coffee morning bigger and better than ever!

Zoe Williams, Marketing Manager for Kenco Professional, said: "At Kenco, we are passionate about making a difference. Why? Because more than half of us will get cancer, and if there's even a small difference we can make, we'll do all we can to help."

Last year, over 118,000 people registered to host a coffee morning, raising a record breaking £15 million pounds for Macmillan. This year we want to make it even bigger!

Now more than ever, Macmillan needs people like you to get involved and take part in World's Biggest Coffee Morning. All the money you raise helps Macmillan ensure that no one faces cancer alone.

No one should face cancer alone and with your support no one will. To find out more about Kenco's partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, visit [www.kencoprofessional.co.uk](http://www.kencoprofessional.co.uk).



# National Personal Safety Day 2013

**N**ational Personal Safety Day, which falls on Monday 14 October in 2013, is organised by the personal safety charity, Suzy Lamplugh Trust. It's an annual event aimed at highlighting some of the simple, practical solutions that everyone can use to help avoid violence and aggression in today's society. It's about helping people live safer, more confident lives.

This year's awareness campaign, StreetsAhead, is about safety on the streets. The aim of the campaign is to get people thinking about the precautions they might want to take when on the streets - such as, staying alert to your surroundings or walking against the flow of the traffic to avoid kerb crawlers.

Suzy Lamplugh provides the campaign messages and the resources and encourages local partners – including Neighbourhood Watch teams, police teams, local councils, schools/colleges and workplaces to disseminate those resources throughout their local communities. Current partner organisations have held a whole range of events and activities over the last few years, including putting the leaflets through letter boxes; handing them out in shops/ community centres/in town centres; holding 'safety surgeries in stations/ shopping centres; putting on talks



or plays in schools/care homes; clubs for the elderly and so on.

The Trust encourages partners to create events or activities that suit their community and which include information about specific local safety issues wherever possible.


To get more information about how you can get involved in the day and how to order a whole range of free campaign resources, from leaflets and posters to school quizzes and Powerpoint presentations, go to [www.nationalpersonalsafetyday.co.uk](http://www.nationalpersonalsafetyday.co.uk)

*The Trust advise that if you would like copies of the poster or leaflets you should order them as soon as possible as, even though the numbers printed each year increase substantially, the growing popularity of the event means they are always out of stock well before the day.*



# Is social media helping or hurting job candidates?

*While your social media profile can be a great asset in your job search, a new CareerBuilder study shows it can also end up costing you the job. 43% of HR managers who currently research candidates via social media said they have found information that has caused them not to hire a candidate.*



The nationwide survey, which included more than 2,100 HR managers and professionals, found that nearly two in five companies use social networking sites to research job candidates, up from 37% last year.



### Help or hindrance?

Employers who took a candidate out of the running for a job after researching social media sites reported finding a variety of concerning content. Top mentions ranged from evidence of inappropriate behaviour to information that contradicted their listed qualifications:

- Candidate posted provocative/inappropriate photos/info – 50%
- There was info about candidate drinking or using drugs – 48%
- Candidate bad mouthed previous employer – 33%
- Candidate had poor communication skills – 30%
- Candidate made discriminatory comments related to race, gender, religion, etc. – 28%
- Candidate lied about qualifications – 24%

At the same time, some employers also noted that they came across information

on social media sites that made a candidate more attractive or solidified the decision to extend a job offer. One in five HR managers said they found something that has caused them to hire a candidate – top mentions include:


- Candidate conveyed a professional image – 57%
- Got a good feel for candidate's personality – 50%
- Candidate was well-rounded, showed a wide range of interests – 50%
- Candidate's background information supported professional qualifications – 49%
- Candidate was creative – 46%
- Great communication skills – 43%
- Other people posted great references about the candidate – 38%

“Employers are using all the tools available to them to assure they make the correct hiring decision, and the use of social media

continues to grow," says Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. "For job seekers it is essential to be aware of what information they're making available to employers, and to manage their online image. At the same time, hiring managers and human resources departments must carefully consider how to use information obtained from social media and whether it is relevant to a candidate's qualifications."

### What are HR managers looking for on social media?

The research suggests that HR managers are using social media to get a glimpse at the candidate's behaviour and personality outside of the interview, and are most interested in professional presentation and how the candidate would fit with the company culture.



To make sure your social media profile sends the right message, Haefner suggests:

#### Search Yourself

The easiest way for employers to research your online personality is a simple search on Google and other sites. Try it out for yourself so you know exactly what they'll see and remove any digital dirt you wouldn't want a potential boss to encounter. Some browsers may save information about you, so search from a public computer to be sure you're getting the right results.

#### Read Your Privacy Settings

Social media sites change their privacy settings often, and occasionally this leads to a change in your personal settings. It's good practice to check in on the privacy settings for all of your accounts regularly.

#### Showcase Your Talent

This is your opportunity to provide evidence that you are as exceptional as your CV says by posting awards and accolades you've received, volunteer activities, accomplishments you're excited about, etc. Employers often search social media to learn more about your qualifications or to see that you are well-rounded, so be sure to put that information front and centre.

#### Keep Tabs

Just because you're being careful with what you put online doesn't mean your friends are necessarily so cautious. Pay attention to what others are posting on your profile and what you're tagged in to protect your online image.



# Top Techy Tips

## from Paul Pennant

Today's PA ([www.todaysPA.co.uk](http://www.todaysPA.co.uk)) is the biggest news in Personal Assistant, Executive Assistant and Office Professional training, thanks to the inspirational vision and leadership of the company's founder, Paul Pennant, himself one of those rarities - even today: a male former executive PA. Paul's wide communications experience really helps his students engage in what he teaches whether it be assertiveness, time management, presentation or IT skills.

Here Paul shares with us some of his favourite IT tips. Watch out for more coming next month!

### Outlook

Assign a task using Tasks:

1. Type in task and click on Assign Tasks from ribbon
2. Type in email address or use address book
3. Send



### Word

Type --- and press return to underline your page

### PowerPoint

Type B in PowerPoint to make screen black (in slideshow view)

### Windows 7

Shake a window to simplify screen (other windows will disappear). Shake again to get other windows to reappear.

### Internet Explorer

Type deskdemon into your browser + ctrl + enter to enter [www.deskdemon.com](http://www.deskdemon.com)

### Excel

To move through worksheets press ctrl + page up/page down

### Fun One - Google

Type google guitar and click I'm feeling lucky

More coming soon – if you have any tips you can give us which we can share with your peers, please send them through to [editor@deskdemon.com](mailto:editor@deskdemon.com) – and you might find your tips in print and on DeskDemon!

# Banish the Clutter!



## Product Reviews – Desk Organisers

There have been several surveys recently about cluttered desks and in research from University of Groningen, Germany, we learnt that instead of clean desks promoting clear thinking, for many it's the opposite; a messy and chaotic desk can actually lead people to think decisively. A messy desk is fine for some, but for others an untidy desk increases stress at work, leads to low energy, anxiety and bad mood, experts have warned. Seeing messy desks, simply drives others mad. Indeed, according to research carried out by Staples, it appears that a quarter of Britons have received complaints from colleagues about their untidy desks; and one in 10 has actually been formally cautioned over it!

For whatever type you are, DeskDemon took a look at some of the latest desk organisers – and found practical items don't have to look boring.

If you would like DeskDemon to review any of your office products, please email [editor@deskdemon.com](mailto:editor@deskdemon.com)

# Martha Stewart Home Office Range



The first thing you notice about this range from Martha Stewart, is the colour – and the elegant style. We received a selection of items from the extensive full range (130 items!) to test out.

Starting with the letter trays, there was no assembly necessary, I just placed one of letter trays on top of the A4 size horizontal drawer – but you don't have to stack it up, you can spread it over your desk, or build it up (see pic) and mix and match to get it exactly right for you. I really like the drawer, so handy if you need something confidential close to hand, but away from prying eyes. The labels are not only of great quality and charming but really useful, I especially like the chalk, dry erase and removable ones – really clever and saves

money too by being reusable – you can write on them or put them in the printer too. The ones I used were in complementary colours, as were the sticky Note Tabs and ultrahold sticky notes.

The A5 shagreen-style notebook - or journal as our American friends would say - is both beautiful and handy. It includes important dates calendar for 2012-2014, entertaining tips from the editors of Martha Stewart Living and I particularly like the expandable inside pocket at the back, great for keeping receipts, tickets, business cards, etc.

This is a really pretty range of office products, and it's refreshing to see something which isn't black, navy blue or grey just because it's meant to be used in an office. Every time I look at it, it cheers me up.

Prices start from £2 going up to £15 and are only available from Staples.



## DeskDemon Verdict:

A charmingly beautiful somewhat feminine range. Well-made and well-priced too. Can brighten up the dingiest office.



## Leitz Complete Multicharger for Mobile Device

Now, I would have to take my shoes off to count the amount of phone chargers that have been borrowed and never returned during my time as a PA. How my heart used to sink when a visiting VIP would promise to return the charger, often both VIP and charger never to be seen again.

Now this new device can solve all that for you and rid you of trailing wires over your desk. The Leitz Complete simultaneously charges smartphones, iPods and tablet PCs - anything that can be charged via USB. Another benefit, is that you can even continue to work on your device during charging. In fact it can charge one tablet sized device and three smartphones at the same time or four smartphones! Given how quickly phone batteries last these days, this product certainly has a place in the market.

The charger comes in black or white with green stripes to stop the phones slipping and letting air circulate. Its sleek design is big enough to do what it needs to do, without being cumbersome. The phone cables lay tidily behind the main panel which you flip to connect – keeping every neat and tidy – I hate messy wires everywhere. I was impressed to find the mains charger lead is very long making it easy to place upon a filing cabinet or desk, normally these are so short you end up putting the item on the floor.

It's a handy size and weight so it's ideal for taking along to long meetings or off-site conferences where you are providing office services to the attendees. However, your colleague would have to leave the phone with you – rather than you lending them the charger!

Prices start at £54.99 and is available at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and [www.viking-direct.co.uk](http://www.viking-direct.co.uk)



### DeskDemon Verdict:

**A really valuable effective tool that would get a lot of use – just don't lend it to anyone!**

## Osco Clear Acrylic Desk Top Products

In contrast to the colour of the Martha Stewart range, the Osco products are made from clear, strong, acrylic - which looks very chic.

At DeskDemon we tested eight items from the extensive range: Pen Pot, Double Letter Tray, Magazine Rack, Organiser, Five Tube Pen Pot, Letter Organiser, Business Card Hard and Smart Phone Holder.

The range is flexible and functional and my two favourites were the Smart Phone Holder and Business Card Holder. The former is a nifty little item, sits neatly on your desk and will hold a smart phone of any size – no more scrabbling around when the phone rings or you want to make a call, it's right there, in its new place completely visible. The Business Card Holder is also really handy to either keep your own cards, your boss's, or cards you or your boss have been handed.

The letter rack is also a winner – with the dividers in increasing height, we found we put envelopes, labels and CDs/DVDs near the front, with A4 paperwork at the back. The double letter tray comes supplied with six risers, plus two spares so that when you buy another double letter tray you can build a stack of four.

This range also looks stylish and funky, and because it is see-through, everything is easy to find. Another plus is that it fits in with any colour scheme your office may have, and because of the great quality of the items they can actually look like they are made of glass.

You can buy from Office Depot, John Lewis, Ryman, W H Smith, Homebase and others.

Retail prices range from the very reasonable £3.99 for the smartphone and business card holders to £15 for the desk organiser.



### DeskDemon Verdict:

**A chic, stylish, funky range with lots of choice. Expensive looking, great quality at reasonable prices and would fit in with any style of office.**

## Stress and the modern PA – part 3

# I am a PA and I have stress!



By Anel Martin

I spent a number of weeks thinking about and preparing for this article and I came to a few interesting conclusions which I want to share.

Firstly PAs are the frontline in the organisation (*sure this is not new news!*), but if you really think about it, we are surrounded by customers. Our customers are our bosses, teams, internal/external stakeholders and clients. A few lucky PAs get to work in admin teams but the rest of us are a bit like reporters who are embedded with the army during war time (*a feeling that is best understood by administrative professionals who work with engineers, architects, accountants and sales teams.*) If you are lucky, you get to know them and grow close to them but your job is unique and they don't always understand what you do, how long things take and how difficult and thankless this job can be at times.

Secondly, we function as shock absorbers for our bosses, teams and sometimes even with external clients. *Now what do I mean by that?* Well, as office professionals we often take the blows meant for other people, we apologise for things that are not our fault, fix things we did not break and listen to and diffuse conflict situations not of our making.

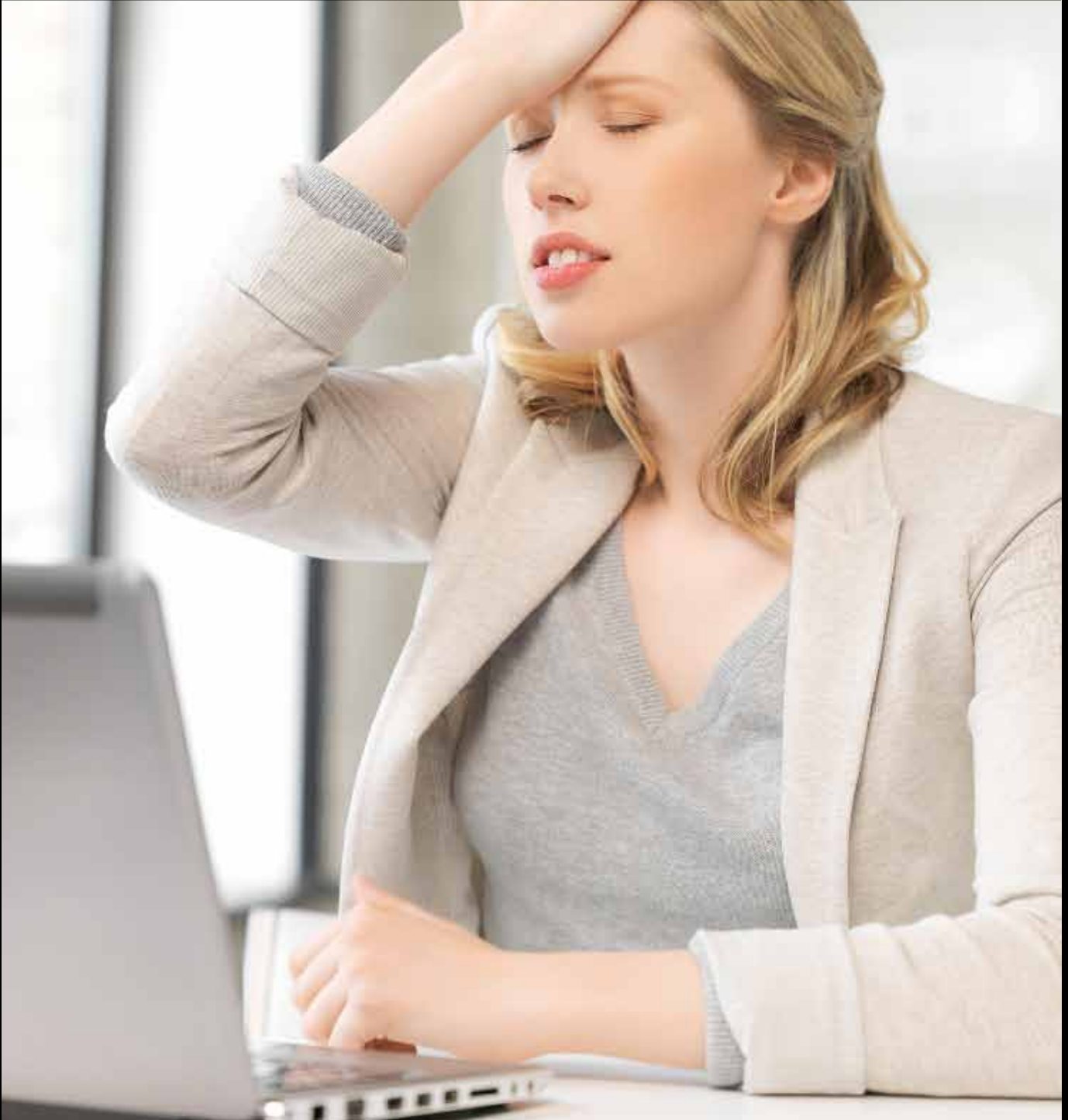
Thirdly, we are ultimately responsible for the quality of work that reaches the boss' desk and managing timelines of submissions. We are the final check point and we are often the one who needs to manage poor performance from direct reports (*that most often out rank us*).

Lastly we are expected to be on top of **everything, all the time, no exceptions!** The fact that we have two eyes, two ears, one brain and the same 24 hours that everyone else has is beside the point!

Feeling stressed yet?



We are expected to be on top  
of everything, all the time,  
no exceptions!



Let's face it, what makes our chosen profession so fulfilling and exciting is also what makes it very challenging at times.

Let's unpack some of the Top PA stressors:

### **PAs work with top leadership of companies and have a front row seat to the action**

Working in the shadow of a powerful executive can be thrilling but can also be very scary at times. You have a window into the business that few other staff on your pay grade have. You will know about instability or problems in the company and many other things that the average employee is never aware of (*and doesn't have sleepless nights about*). You will work the same amount of hours as your boss (*in most cases*) and be as connected to your smartphone as they are. PAs who work on a senior level no longer have "working hours" they are expected to be available 24/7.

### **PAs have access to sensitive information and people try to access it**

You have access to your boss' mail and other sources of confidential information; people know this and will at times try to exploit their relationship with you to get access to that information. It is your job to guard any information which is deemed sensitive and you may find yourself in difficult or even abusive situations if are not willing to spill the beans.

### **PAs are expected to gate-keep and protect their bosses**

We have all experienced this scenario: Your boss runs into a colleague between meetings and says "*sure come and see me*" then gets back to the office and says that if that

colleague calls or asks for a meeting you are not to schedule under any circumstances. This can be extremely stressful, you need to be professional, not damage your boss' brand but you also need to keep that individual at bay by running interference.

### **PAs are on the front line of technological and other changes in their offices**

PAs by virtue of their jobs need to adopt and become proficient with new office technology very quickly. PAs often need to provide over-the-shoulder training to other team members on new software, or set up the boss' new smartphone. Technology has changed the role of the PA over the last few decades and in my opinion will continue to do so. Change at this rate can be extremely intimidating especially if you are not technical or resistant to change.

### **PAs need to manage the demands of the office vs those of their homes and children**

Our roles are service driven and our world has become so hyper-connected we find ourselves working around the clock. Unlike the executives we support we often don't have same assistance (driver/chauffeur, graduate/intern, cleaner, gardener, housekeeper, nanny, etc.,) or wives at home that can look after things, we need to do that too! So what happens, we work a full day in the office and then get home and do the night shift. Work life balance and quality time with our families become neglected. Creating feelings of guilt and eroding relationships

### PA's need to put a smile on their face (even when they are having a bad day)

PA's do not have the luxury of expressing the emotions that they feel or simply closing their office door. You may be experiencing problems or heartache in your personal life but when you are in the office you need to smile, make people feel welcome and see to the needs of others. This can be incredibly draining. Representing the company's brand, and indeed your boss's brand, can sometimes weigh heavy - from answering the phone consistently with a 'can-do attitude' in your voice, or engaging with visiting customers or board members when your boss is running late, when you know you've got a thousand and one tasks to do when you get back to the office and it's already 6.45pm.

### The PA Personality

One of the most stressful things for PA's is often their own personalities. Most successful PA's I know are type A, perfectionists. They are driven by excellence and always strive to produce consistently superb work. This is a wonderful way to do your job (*but at what cost to your personal wellbeing?*)

Another common problem for PA's is not being able to say "NO". This places immense demands on their time and capacity to produce good work.

So why have we outlined these seven stressors above? To depress you? To stress you? No, rather the opposite! It is to show you that you are normal! Administrative assistants don't like others to know that they are experiencing stress or have difficulty coping. That is why I chose the title **"I am a PA and I have stress!"** What I want you to take away from this article is that you are not

alone and many other PA's are going through this too! It is not a sign of weakness on your part but rather a natural reaction to the pressures that this job puts on you.

We cannot live in perpetual stress so we need to manage it and get a healthy perspective on our roles and our lives. Develop better boundaries and improve our work life balance. Be a bit more selfish and take some time out when needed to avoid burnout.

The good news is that we as office professionals are uniquely skilled to cope. We are born problem solvers and project managers. We are hugely adaptable, disciplined, resilient and capable employees. We have good relationships, which means that we can reach out and get support from others (*if we ask!*).

In the next part of our series we will be exploring toxic working environments and how to cope if you can't escape!



Anel Martin is the South African PA of the Year 2011/12 and was a finalist in the National Office Professional of the 2009/10. She has CAP-OM and a Business Management Diploma.

Anel was the Head of the Academy of Excellence

Committee of PAFSA and a task team member of the International Year of the Secretary 2014 planning committee.

A member of OPSA and was part of their peer review panel during the selection of the National Office Professional of the Year competition 2012/13.

Anel is also an active member of the IAAP and is responsible for the Johannesburg Chapter at Large's social media platforms and website.

She has presented nationally and internationally and writes regularly for publications in South Africa and in the UK.





# E is for Empathy

By Lindsay Taylor



*Empathy (according to [www.diffen.com](http://www.diffen.com) ) is “ the ability to mutually experience the thoughts, emotions, and direct experience of others”*

*A useful thing to be able to do I’m sure you’d agree, particularly in your position as an Admin Professional working with lots of different characters.*

*So what is the benefit of being empathetic and how can we best empathise with our managers and teams?*

## What is the benefit of being empathetic?

By empathising with someone you are taking the time and effort to try to understand things from their point of view. You are working with the fact that most of us like to be (and indeed want to be) valued and respected in the workplace. We want people to take the time to understand things from our point of view. By empathising with someone you are gaining more of an awareness of a situation – and that can open up choice, opportunities and flexibility around your own behaviours.

By empathising with someone and respecting and valuing them – they, in turn will respect and value you. And that sets a pretty solid foundation for a great working relationship, I'm sure you'd agree.

## How can we best empathise with our managers and teams?

When empathising face to face with our managers and teams, use the research of Harvard Professor Albert Mehrabian. As a reminder from the article A is for Assertiveness "communication can be broken down into three areas – 1) the words that we speak 2) the tone that we use and 3) the body language that we use". To empathise with someone match their words, tone and body language – by taking on the physiology of someone else you will more easily be able to identify with what they are experiencing.

Think about what you already know about the person you want to

empathise with. What's important to them? See, hear and feel the world from their perspective.

Put the person you are empathising with at the forefront of the conversation. Be precise in the language that you use.

Say things like:

*"I appreciate your point of view and....."*

*"I can see/hear where you're coming from and....."*

*"I get your perspective and....."*

*"It's obvious to me that you're really passionate/upset/frustrated/excited (delete/change as appropriate!) with this....."*

*"I understand how you are feeling...."*

Sound back and repeat particular words or phrases that they have used. A person's vocabulary, the terms and words they use are "precious" to them – they mean something to them (which could be different to your own interpretation).

Keep gentle eye contact. Let the person finish saying what they want to say. Regular nods of your head will indicate you are listening and value what they are sharing with you.

And then, ask that one Great Question – "what do you need from me?".

"What is an Executive PA?" and "What skills and attributes are needed to be an effective and efficient Executive PA?". These two questions are posed at many of Lindsay Taylor's workshops and training courses, along with an A-Z structure to help organise thinking.

Lindsay is a former PA and now Director of Executive Coaching & Training organisation Your Excellency Ltd. Over the years Lindsay has collated a wealth of input from admin professionals worldwide. The resulting "A-Z" list that Lindsay now holds forms the basis for our new ongoing article - A-Z Pearls of Wisdom.





# Building your Portfolio of Evidence

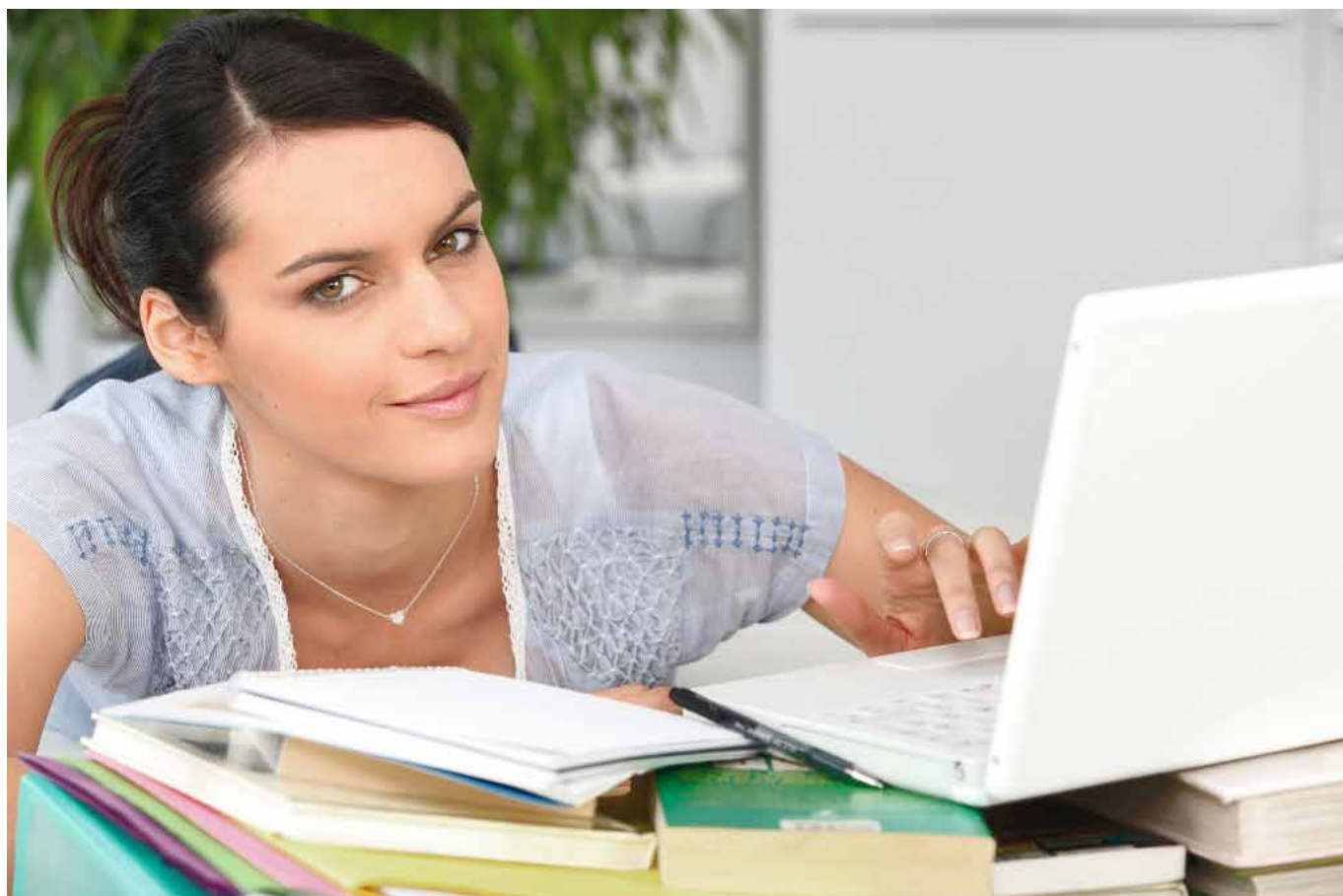
By Cathy Harris

**J**ust as an artist or a model requires a portfolio of their works, so too should office professionals – demonstrating not only their skills abilities, but also their contributions and work ethic within their profession.

It can also serve as an additional tool when being considered for promotion, seeking a new job, or even asking for a pay rise.

It should begin with you deciding what your ethos is towards your profession, coupled with evidence which demonstrate this. The concept is not rocket science at all, but does require some strategic and creative thinking from your side.

To get you going on the idea, and hopefully inspired, I have outlined some ethos elements, and provided a summary of the evidence requirements. So here goes!



#### Ethos elements:

- Professionalism
- Communication ability
- Master of time management
- Strategic partnerships
- Resourcefulness
- Champion of change
- Commitment to self development and training
- Lifestyle balance and community activities

#### Professionalism

*Evidence requirements include but are not limited to:*

**Membership with a professional secretarial and administrative association:** this shows your commitment and involvement with your profession.

**Work evidence of articles, presentations, and email communication examples,** such as presentations you may have compiled for a proposal, an article you may have written for a newspaper, in-house magazine or contribution made to a professional body.

**Record of a personal image consultation,** indicating that you are aware of your physical image and the message you portray everyday as illustrated by the way you take care of yourself, and have an appropriate

dress sense for the environment in which you work. It also a great idea to include an updated full body length photographs of you.

**Commendations, nominations and awards** for professional and work ethos conduct.

### Communication Ability

*Evidence that you are competent in:*

**The use of MS office;** this can include a certification of competency in the use of MS Office coupled with examples.

**Business English and writing skills;** certification, courses attended and examples of communications used in the workplace.

**Minute taking and dissemination of information;** you can outline the process you follow and provide templates of your meeting correspondences, which should also include minute and agenda layouts, etc.

**Document management;** a summary of how you manage both eDocuments and hard copy documents and filing. A short summary on why you use the method you do, is also useful.

**Negotiation skills;** provide brief summaries of incidences where you have been required to negotiate. These could include your approach and communication skills to acquire corporate rates for you organisation, requesting a salary increase, diary management and the reshuffling of events to ensure a win-win situation, etc.

### A Master of Time Management

- The completion of a time management training opportunity.
- A short essay or PowerPoint diagram on

how you manage your own personal time.

- Evidence on how you manage your manager's diary and examples of how you manage your manager's time keeping.

### Strategic Partnership

*Evidenced by:*

- An analysis of the strategic contribution you make within the business unit in which you work.
- Your department's strategic goals.
- A description of the strategic contribution you make within your department.
- A list of the seemingly menial tasks you perform to make a difference, and how these small seemingly unimportant tasks impact on your environment if not done.

### Resourcefulness

*Evidenced by:*

- Examples of your financial prudence; budget control, use of company funds etc.
- A list of new ideas you have initiated and implemented within your team / department that has made a significant impact on the effective and efficient running of business.
- Results achieved as a result of implementing your ideas / initiatives.
- Proactive action you have taken, or take to be a strategic partner in your manager's work day.
- Initiatives you have created within your organisation that adds value.



### A Champion of Change

*Evidenced by:*

- A description of how you experience change and have helped others embrace it.
- A short essay on how change has come about in your profession and the challenges you overcame to adapt.

### Commitment to Training and Self Development

*Evidenced by:*

- A two page CV.
- Your personal development plan.
- A record of training courses and qualifications obtained.
- An updated self assessment tool and skills matrix.
- An updated job description for your current role, highlighting new initiatives, responsibilities.
- A list of books read, accompanied by a brief summary of key learning elements gained.
- Your most recent and updated resume and sample cover letter.
- Copies of certificates / diplomas / degrees.

### Lifestyle Balance and Community Activities

Evidence any outside interests you may have as a one pager! Here you can evidence community activities you're involved in, hobbies you enjoy and sports you participate in.

### Branding Your Portfolio of Evidence

Although some people may deny it, looks do count, and a book is judged by its cover. It is important therefore that you choose an A4 binder or good quality PVC file to document your evidence in. Unless you're in the floral profession, stay away from pretty flowers and funky image designed files and binders. Ensure you have a great full length colour photograph of yourself near the front, after your index page, and please make sure you that your photograph displays a professional image of you – so no sunglasses poised in your hair, or beach backgrounds. Keep it slick and professional.

Separate each category by section, and preferably in the order as set out above. Portfolio categories should be neatly indexed and marked, to make it easy to access and view. Stick to one font style. Use colour if you want to, but don't turn your portfolio into a rainbow mezze!

Your portfolio of evidence should be a "living document" updated and added to as you progress through your profession, experiencing new challenges, overcoming obstacles and continuing in your pursuance of excellence!



Cathy Harris is the Professional Assistant to Kenny Rabson, Executive Director Discovery Invest and Head of Product and Development, Discovery Life. Cathy was nominated Office Professionals of South Africa,(OPSA) Secretary of the Year 2006/2007 and has been involved with the Discovery PA FORUM since its inception 12 years ago. She served as Chairperson and is currently Deputy Chairperson.