

# PA ENTERPRISE

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

May 2013

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New Forest for  
conference and  
event bookers  
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**How Tempting is Temping?**

**A-Z Pearls of Wisdom: C is for ...Communication**

**Working on the Road: Productivity Tips**

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## All play and no work?...

**53% of British workers spend part of their day playing games on their mobile phone, costing the economy as much as £355 million.**

Respondents to the survey, conducted by mobile casino game FortuneFrenzy.co.uk, admitted spending an average of one hour a week playing games during the work day.

As smart phones continue to play a more integral role in daily lives, 57% of people polled stated that they will habitually check their phones every 10 minutes or less.

In 2005, a YouGov survey identified that 80% of workers considered it unacceptable to send or read an SMS in the workplace, but today's results show that only 9% now avoid any use of their device at work.

As our lives become more and more linked to our mobiles it's perhaps not such a surprise that it is featuring more and more in our day to day activities. Whether it's checking email, updating social media, browsing the web or playing games the mobile has become the go to device for millions of us.



### Key Findings:

- **53% of people admit they spend part of their working day playing games on their mobile phone.**
- **On average, respondents spent one hour playing games during the work day each week.**
- **Only 9% of people avoid any use of their mobile phone at work.**
- **65% admitted to having used their mobile phone while using the toilet.**
- **57% of respondents habitually check their phones every 10 minutes or less.**

## AA ROUTE PLANNER INTRODUCES NEW ONLINE MILEAGE CALCULATOR

### *New online tool for business drivers*

As companies increasingly crack down on expense claims, employees are left with the difficult job of trying to work out accurate business mileage. With fuel prices fluctuating on an almost daily basis, perhaps it is no wonder that one in two drivers admit they think their expense claims are wrong.

The AA's popular route planner has launched a new online tool to overcome this problem. The AA Mileage Calculator helps companies and employees keep within the rules by providing accurate figures for mileage expense claims.




All you have to do is enter the route driven, including the return route if applicable, and the company approved expense per mile, and the AA Route Planner will automatically calculate the overall mileage and claim amount. Multiple routes can be calculated and the list can be printed off to support expense claims.

Drivers can also calculate the fuel cost for their journey by adding the cost per litre and their car's average mpg.

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## Coffee Questionnaire - chance for free samples

To celebrate the launch of the new **Kenco Millicano** catering tin, Kenco Professional are giving away a **FREE** retail pack of **Kenco Millicano** and a **Cadbury Crispello** bar to the first 300 people who provide details of the coffee requirements in their office by completing a quick questionnaire.

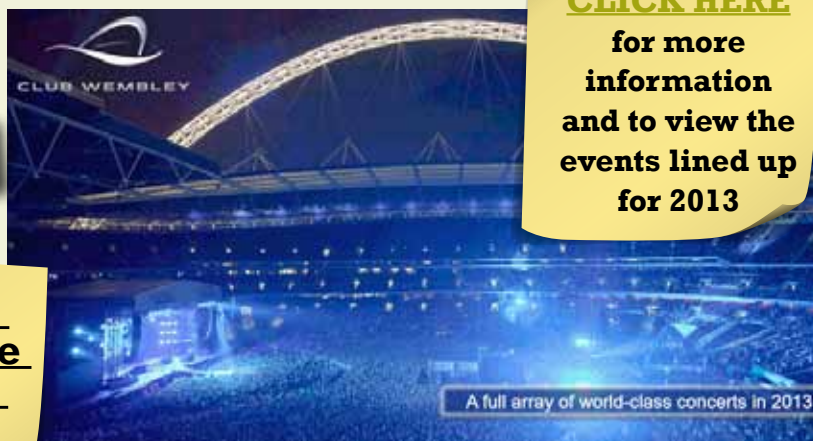
**Click here to complete the online questionnaire and be in with a chance for a free sample**



## BUSINESS. PLEASURE. BOTH.

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for more  
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and to view the  
events lined up  
for 2013

**Have your say...**  
**Complete our Online poll**

**This month's question:**  
**Which type of company best describes the one you currently work for?**

**Submit your vote**  
**CLICK HERE**

## Are you worried about using your mobile abroad? If so, you're in the majority

**New Research conducted by BT has revealed that 93% of us develop 'mobile-phobia' when abroad.**

In light of the research, cheap international calls provider JustCall.co.uk is reaching out to re-assure the UK public that there is no need to be afraid of using their mobile phone when abroad, or when making calls from the UK to those who are travelling around the world.

UK mobile phone owners are significantly less likely to call, text or use mobile data whilst travelling abroad. As soon as we leave the country, our mobile phone habits change: 62% of people go 'cold turkey' and try not to use their mobile phone at all, with as little as 20% choosing to leave their mobile phones at home.

Of those who wish to keep in touch and check in with friends and family member whilst abroad, 62% prefer using email or sending text messages, just 25% prefer to call.

According to a spokesperson from JustCall.co.uk, "The many horror stories of people getting 'bill-shock' on their return home is becoming more and more uncommon. With network providers slowly improving visibility and awareness for consumers."

"We encourage everyone to get to know the costs that are involved when using their mobile phone abroad. It is also important to get to know your phone: understanding how to disable your data when it's not required, and taking advantage of Wi-Fi access can make a huge difference when travelling."



## SMEs neglecting staff development

New research from breatheHR reveals that small to medium sized business owners in the UK are neglecting to provide staff with adequate training and development support, with almost half of those surveyed feeling that their boss doesn't take their personal development seriously, and a quarter admitting to having never discussed training or personal development at all.

While the recession may have forced some SME owners to focus their priorities elsewhere, with the economy slowly improving employers need to place a renewed focus on providing structured personal development to avoid staff losing motivation and becoming unengaged, a scenario which directly impacts productivity, morale and ultimately the success of the business.

The Personal Development in the Workplace study also reveals that the majority of respondents haven't been provided with any kind of personal development plan, so are essentially working day-to-day without any long term focus.



# How to conduct a selection interview

**A first selection interview can provide you with nearly three-quarters of the information you need to employ the right candidate. They say there's only one chance to make a first impression, and the first interview is a crucial opportunity for both applicant and employer to sell themselves in the best possible light.**



## Preparing for a selection interview

Decide who is going to interview the candidates, and at what stage. What will be the involvement of your HR department, future colleagues and managers? How many interview rounds do you plan to have?

- The presence of a perceptive colleague during the interviews may provide you with a valuable second opinion. Some companies insist on the presence of an HR manager at all interviews.
- Ensure you and any other person interviewing candidates have the full, correct details of both your vacancy and the application.
- Anticipate any questions candidates may ask you and make sure you can answer them.
- Schedule time in between interviews to make notes and consider each applicant individually. Interviews require alertness and concentration; take breaks to recharge yourself.
- Choose a quiet location without distractions for your interviews. Provide candidates with clear directions.
- Keep refreshments to a minimum during your interviews. Provide plenty of water, but no biscuits.
- Depending on the purpose of your interview round and the character of the vacancy, you have to choose a suitable style of questioning. Discuss interests or stick to facts, pose technical questions or set tests according to your requirements.

## Conducting a selection interview

- You may like to ask your receptionist beforehand to provide you with feedback on the candidates' impression. We know of companies where the interviewer personally decided to cover the reception in order to observe candidates anonymously as they arrived. Allowing for tension, a candidate's behaviour towards front office staff is often a good indication of their personality.
- Stick to your interview schedule. Don't keep candidates waiting and don't exceed the agreed duration. Most candidates are likely to want to get back to their current employer as soon as possible.
- Give the interviews your full, undivided attention and be sure to avoid interruptions.
- An interview generally includes the following stages:
  - ➊ An introduction followed by a few minutes of small talk, to help the candidate relax
  - ➋ A questions and answers session to fill in any gaps in the candidate's CV
  - ➌ A conversation to discover more about the candidate's character and personal motivation
  - ➍ A discussion of the job specifics and the work environment
  - ➎ An opportunity for the candidate to pose questions about the job, remuneration etc.
- Depending on your requirements and the character of your vacancy, you may request candidates to perform a test. Always inform candidates of your intentions and take any possible tests into account when notifying them of the anticipated duration of the interview.
- Use open questions ('why did you?') if you would like to get more information out of your candidate. Closed questions ('did you...?') are more



suited if you want a brief, simple affirmation or clarification.

- Avoid asking questions that can be open to different interpretations. Clarify your question, if necessary.
- Use a checklist of points you would like to cover in the interview, but remain alert and flexible.
- Go into every interview with an open mind. Allow the candidate time to finish a reply without jumping to conclusions, gently steering them back to the question if necessary. Listen attentively and build on the candidate's answers.
- Summarise the candidate's responses to check that you have understood what is being said. This ensures that you haven't misinterpreted any information.
- Pay attention the body language of the person you are interviewing. Does the candidate seem confident and relaxed or ill motivated and defensive? Be aware of cultural and gender differences which may affect the candidates body language. Is your own body language positive and encouraging?
- Provide candidates with an honest, attractive picture of your organisation. Remember an interview is not a one-way street, but an opportunity for the both of you to exchange information and form an opinion. Have copies of your company brochure and/or annual report ready to give out, for those candidates who hadn't been able to do their homework on your company on beforehand.
- Make notes during the interview to trigger your memory later on, but don't allow the candidate to read them. Never use derogatory, racist, ageist or otherwise offensive terms to remind a candidate by.

- At the end of an interview, check whether there is anything left you would like to ask or clarify, invite questions from the candidate and explain the next step in your selection procedure. Give a timeframe for your decision and stick to it. Check with the candidates what notice period they have in their current employment.

## *After the interview*

- Evaluate each candidate as soon as possible following an interview. Research shows 80 per cent of your memory is lost within 24 hours. Fill in any gaps in your notes when your memory is still fresh.
- Record your first impressions, your gut feeling. Specify what gave you those impressions. Were the candidate's words consistent with the candidate's body language and appearance? What could have caused any discrepancies? What would the candidate be like to work with, outside the selection interview?
- Talk to other people who have interviewed the candidate and compare notes. Are there marked differences? How come?
- Read through all your notes again and update the candidate's matching sheet. How would you rate the candidate overall on a 1-10 scale? Do this for all the interviewed candidates and draw up a shortlist for a second interview round, if applicable.
- Check references, if necessary, but only with the candidates explicit consent. Be highly discreet throughout the entire selection procedure.
- Notify all interviewed candidates as soon as possible of your decision, but not before you have taken a moment to reflect on your decision. Is your decision fair and unbiased? Could any of the rejected interviewees actually turn out to be your dream employee after all?
- Don't simply employ the candidate who came out best compared to the other applicants. If you feel you haven't yet found the right person for the job, don't hesitate to continue your search. Giving one candidate the benefit of the doubt may backfire badly in months and years to come.
- Once you have made your decision, notify the successful candidate immediately - in a discreet manner. Make a verbal offer, specifying the terms and conditions of your offer. Invite questions and give the candidate adequate time to consider your offer. Set a time limit within which the candidate can either accept or reject your offer. Negotiate for as long as you deem reasonable, if required. Confirm your offer in writing.
- Build a database of applicants and update it whenever necessary. Ask suitable candidates who were unsuccessful this time for permission to keep their details on file. Next time you have a vacancy this may save you time and money.





# Stress and the modern PA



By Anel Martin

There are literally mountains of information available on stress and how to manage it effectively. Yet as a society and as a profession we are still suffering from acute, chronic and prolonged stress. In fact the effects of excess negative stress are so severe, and are affecting so many people, that is now being widely referred to as the 'Black Death of the 21st Century'

The word stress is derived from the Latin word 'stringere' which literally means "to draw tight"; this is a wonderfully descriptive root word, which aptly captures how stress feels in the human body. Many of us can relate personally to this feeling of being pulled like an elastic band, fully extended and about to break.

## *Good stress v bad stress*

Stress is normal and as we all know, it comes in the good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress) categories. Good stress prevents boredom and enhances motivation. Many of us are at our most productive and creative when there is a looming deadline. Good stress enhances focus and concentration and gets us moving. Bad stress is different! It's the feeling or perception that you do not have the resources to complete or achieve the task at hand. It creates imbalances in your life on all levels and can be crippling.

As administrative assistants we are exposed to physical and emotional stress daily due to the nature of our profession. We are expected to get things right and be organised all the time and our margin for error is very small indeed. As the right hand person to a high powered executive you are also exposed to their stress, a recent study by the University of Hawaii has found that stress is as contagious as the common cold. We therefore not only contend with our own stress (be it work or personal) but we are also exposed to our boss' stress due to

Anel currently works in the office of Managing Executive for HR Business Partners (WS&N) at Telkom and she is the PA of the Year 2011/12 and was a finalist in the National Office Professional of the 2009/10.

Anel has achieved the CAP-OM certification and a Business Management Diploma. She was the Head of the Academy of Excellence Committee of PAFSA (2011/12) and a member of OPSA and the IAAP Johannesburg Chapter at Large.

She is a Task Team member of the International Year of the Secretary and Administrative Professionals taking place in 2014. She is also in charge of social media communications and the IAAP Johannesburg Chapter at Large website.

Anel has been the Webmistress and content owner of the Telkom Secretaries Toolbox for the last 5 years and is also a Telkom Brand Champion.

Anel has recently started to write for Desk Demon in the UK and has written regularly for Career Success, A-Z and Executive Secretary Magazine (UK) in the past. She has also started her first book!



*Stress contributes to and aggravates diseases like diabetes, heart disease and hyper tension. It creates blood clots, disrupts the immune system and is responsible for as many as 30% of infertility cases.*

*Research in the US has also found that one third of stress related illnesses are as a direct result of bullying in the workplace.*

the close working relationship that is unique to this role.

Another cause of distress is hyper-connectivity and poor life balance being created by technology and working for companies that have offices in different time zones. We are currently living in a society that never shuts down and we are being engulfed by waves of information that hit us on a daily basis in the form of never ending emails, reports and statistics. Smartphones have created a new working culture of checking mail and responding after hours and on weekends. Being constantly available and switched on. This is particularly hazardous to the type A, perfectionistic, people-pleasing personal assistant, who feels the pressure to respond in real time to anything that happens in the mailbox and feels guilty when their phone is switched off.

## *Techno stress*

A study at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden on "techno stress" has found that heavy computer and cell use adversely affects stress levels and general mental health. The light from your computer screen disrupts your melatonin production which disturbs your circadian cycles and damages your sleep patterns.

Another significant factor is the worldwide recession which is placing strain on companies who need to either downscale or retrench. As a result, administrative professionals may suddenly be working for more than one boss or be in a position where they are working as a team secretaries, having to juggle tasks, manage priorities and

maintain a professional standard of work while looking after the needs of multiple stakeholders. Our salary increases are getting smaller every year (if you get an increase at all) and our expenses are rising exponentially. All this creates stress which can feel overwhelming and debilitating.

There are many other causes of stress which we will explore in more detail in this series, but what we all need to understand is that it is not necessarily the stressor but our reaction to it which creates the stress. It is in the gap between the stimulus and the response in which our power lies to overcome stress.

## *Fatigue*

Another critical factor is fatigue. Stress is created by adrenaline and other stress hormones like cortisol being released, this makes us alert which in turn makes it hard to sleep. Not being able to sleep creates fatigue which makes you less and less resilient and more prone to stress and so the vicious cycle continues. One of the most critical factors to manage when you are experiencing bad stress is your sleeping pattern. This can be done by reducing your caffeine intake, exercising more and managing your diet.

Another critical point to note is that chronic ongoing stress is much worse for you than once off acute stress. It is the ongoing long term exposure to stress hormones which damages neural pathways, your internal organs and causes diseased fat.

Research in the US has also found that one third of stress related illnesses are as a direct result





of bullying in the workplace. They also found that one-fourth of all the prescriptions filled are for tranquilizers, antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications. Stress and depression related expenses worldwide go into the billions of p. These are terrible statistics!

It has long been known that stress contributes to, and aggravates diseases like diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. It creates blood clots, disrupts the immune system (reducing the body's healing ability by as much as 25%) and is responsible for as many as 30% of infertility cases.

Chronic and prolonged stress and the resulting hormones released by the body, has also been proven to kill brain cells, increasing the ability of harmful chemicals and viruses to pass the blood-brain barrier.

Yes, stress is scary, but it is also a reality of the modern world that we live in. We need to be aware of its negative impact and start to manage and mitigate its harmful effects on our bodies and minds. We need to arm ourselves with the theory but also implement some practical plans to reduce our own stress.

In this five part series on stress we will be looking in detail at the following from an administrative professional's perspective:

**Part 2 – The difference between good stress and bad - how to mitigate and harness your stress**

**Part 3 – What causes stress for PAs?**

**Part 4 – Toxic work environments**

**Part 5 – Creating your own stress management strategy**

Stress management is a bit like dieting, sometimes you will backslide but the most essential thing is that you try and maintain perspective and not give up on having a more balanced and stress free life.

*I hope that you will enjoy this journey with me!*

# Working on the Road: Productivity Tips for the Business Traveller

By Lynette Holroyd

**Does your job involve a lot of business travel, such as attending conferences, trade shows and meetings in other cities? Business travel can be a great opportunity to network with new people, make important professional connections and get inspired by new ideas. However, frequent travel can really put a damper on your productivity. It is hard enough to stay on top of things when you are in one place, so when you are always staying in hotels and are travelling on trains and planes you might find it extra difficult to keep up with your work.**

**What can a road warrior and frequent traveller do to keep productive even when on a business trip? Here are some tips for staying focused while you are on the road:**

## Establish Productivity Routines

The hardest part of getting work done while you are on a business trip is how displaced you will feel. If you are used to working in your office at work or your desk at home, being in an unfamiliar hotel or serviced apartment can really throw you off.

In order to get your brain into 'work -mode', you can form a ritual that means it is time to get down to business. Set up the desk at your accommodation in the same way that your desk is set up at home or at the office. It can really help to stay in serviced apartments rather than a small hotel room, because you will be more likely to have a large and practical desk that is conducive to productivity. It's hard to do your best work when you are curled up on the hotel bed.

Wake up at a specific time, drink your morning coffee, put on your favourite working music and get down to work. Plan around your conference or meetings and schedule in hours of work time where you make the decision to focus and get specific tasks completed.

## Get Enough Sleep

Even though you are disturbed from your usual routines at home, it is still very important to get enough sleep so that you can maximise your productivity. It can be hard to get enough sleep during a business trip because there is so much going on. It might be tempting to have a few more drinks with colleagues in the evening, but this can really ruin your plans to get up early and do a couple of hours of work before the conference starts.

Burning the candle at both ends can work only for a couple of days until you start feeling terrible and your exhaustion really compromises your productivity. Keep yourself sharp and alert by getting the sleep you need.

## Take Advantage of Time in Transit

Make sure your laptop is fully charged and make the most of any time that you spend waiting for a plane or sitting on a train. These are prime work hours because you are stuck in your seat anyway and can't be distracted by anything else. The more work you get done on the flight or the train journey, the less you will have to do when you get there.

These are just a few tips that will help any business traveller stay productive and get things done while on the road.

If you are a business traveller you may prefer to stay in a serviced apartment, these facilities of which offer more privacy, flexibility, comfort and more practical working space to maximise productivity.



# Focus on The New Forest



## New Forest Conference Showcase 17-18 May 2013

**The first New Forest Conference Showcase is an exciting new event where 20 superb venues will open their doors to conference and event booking agents for an action-packed weekend on 17-18 May 2013.**

**Click here to register your interest in attending the Showcase**

**On the weekend of May 17th-18th the finest hotels will open their doors to show what they can provide and how to take the stress out of booking conferences and meetings. Booking agents are being invited to stay in the best hotels, enjoy locally sourced gourmet dining and be chauffeured around the New Forest. They will also enjoy some special activities, such as duck herding, combat games and a RIB ride on the Solent!**

## Your action-packed weekend

### Friday:

Arrive with a guest at your New Forest hotel. Enjoy a complimentary dinner and overnight stay in a beautiful room. Tour your venue's facilities with the manager and meet their team.

### Saturday:

After breakfast, you will be driven through the idyllic New Forest National Park where ponies, cattle and deer roam over wild woods and heathland as they have for centuries. Your tour will take you to visit three conference venues.

Enjoy lunch at Rhinefield House Hotel, a four red star venue in the heart of the New Forest and get the chance to meet the teams from all 20 showcase venues.

In the afternoon watch or even take part in a little duck herding and other team-building events. Then it's off to the coast for an adrenaline-fuelled rib ride from Lymington to Beaulieu.

Round off the day with an indulgent afternoon

tea at the world-famous National Motor Museum Beaulieu, where you can visit the Bond in Motion exhibition, and see many other historic and iconic vehicles.

### Sunday (Optional):

All hotels are offering a special Saturday night rate if you choose to stay a second night and spend a lazy day in the Forest, enjoy a complimentary lunch and view more venue facilities.

## What makes the New Forest a great Conference and Event Venue

The New Forest is only 90 minutes from London Waterloo and yet, in terms of pure escapism, a million miles away from day-to-day life.

All 20 showcase venues work together and alongside all event and activity suppliers making conference organisation easy.

The New Forest is an iconic and high-quality destination – an ideal place to reflect your client's brand.





# Focus on The New Forest



The New Forest offers the very best of England – with 300 square miles of idyllic woods and open moorland, charming towns and villages and 43 miles of wonderful coastline. Activities range from romantic walks to full-on family fun with high quality accommodation to match – from back-to-nature campsites to world-class hotels. There is so much to choose from . . . so why go anywhere else?

Idyllic glades of ancient woodland where ponies, cattle and deer roam over wild heathland is the quintessentially English image evoked by the New Forest. The National Park is only 90 minutes from London Waterloo and yet a million miles away from day-to-day life in terms of pure escapism for a short break or family holiday.

The natural seasons are key times to plan a visit – from crisp, clear winter walks with leaves crunching underfoot on the forest floor to the first wash of colour with spring bluebells bursting through to the dappled sunlight of lazy summer days. Every season has its own special treasures to explore and

different ways in which to enjoy them.

The New Forest is a walker's paradise, mile upon mile of car-free woodland paths criss-cross the National Park through spectacular scenery and riverside rambles that get you close to nature. See the only working tide mill left in Britain or for the more adventurous, **New Forest Activities** have a range of water sports on the Beaulieu River. **Progressive Resources** can arrange open sea adventures from RIB fun to sailing trips on skippered luxury yachts. **Go Ape's** extreme high-wire forest fun is not easily forgotten, while more leisurely sport is provided by an enviable selection of golf courses for beginners through to the more experienced.

Whether the aim of your trip is relaxation or discovery, everything is on your doorstep. The natural beauty of 18th Century riverside ship-building village of **Buckler's Hard** is a step back in time to a slower lifestyle. While other postcard-perfect towns and villages nestled in the heart of





the New Forest are ripe for discovery, with lots of home-grown arts and crafts and a friendly tea room round every corner.

**Beaulieu** is famous for its National Motor Museum, which features more than 250 vehicles from every era, or for motorcycles Sammy Miller is a specialist.

**Paultons Park** has become a family favourite for its many rides and activities as well as the newly launched attraction Peppa Pig World. At **Longdown Activity Farm** there is the chance to get up close to a multitude of different animals, while Amews Falconry lets you hold and fly some of Britain's most beautiful birds of prey.

For the more relaxed attractions you can simply soak up the natural wonder of the world-famous **Rothschild Collection** and its year-round riot of colour at Exbury Gardens, explore the tranquillity of **Furzey Gardens** or wander around the Elizabethan splendour of **Breamore House and Countryside Museum**.

Another unique appeal of the New Forest is that within a short drive from its woodland heart you can be on the coast enjoying seaside fish & chips and crabbing with bacon bits at Lymington or relaxing on The Marine's stunning Art Deco roof terrace with a 360 degree view of the Solent Coast at Milford on Sea.

The **New Forest Marque** is a quality stamp representing some of the best local produce the

region has to offer. The **New Forest Breakfast** for instance, is not to be missed – made up of at least three New Forest Marque products, which are often free range and organic. To get a true taste of the area, visit a vineyard, cider maker's or **Ringwood Brewery**, or simply explore the diverse range of real ale pubs, bistros, restaurants and serious fine dining in hotels. **New Forest Food Trails** can be followed on foot, by bike or on horseback whilst touring through spectacular scenery and seasons with local treats to sustain you at every turn.

A great starting point for any visit is the **New Forest Centre** at Lyndhurst where you can find everything you need to know. During the summer you can also jump on an open-top bus and let the New Forest Tour guide you around coast and forest scenery from the highest vantage point.

Choosing an accommodation base for a visit is equally diverse. From natural woodland camping, log cabins, friendly B&Bs and characterful cottages to some of the most luxurious hotels and spas in the country, every style is catered for.

For Visitor Information and accommodation visit [www.thenewforest.co.uk](http://www.thenewforest.co.uk)

# How Tempting is Temping?



Dena Stephens is a senior PA with 15 years of experience working in London, the Isle of Man and the south of England. In her spare time she is a freelance writer, music band PR and blogger. We are delighted that Dena will be contributing articles for PA Enterprise and DeskDemon. If you would like to write for DeskDemon, please contact us at **editor@deskdemo.com** - and if you have any topic you would like us to explore on your behalf, we'd love to hear from you.

Not for the first time in my career I find myself temping. It's probably fair to say that during my administrative and PA career I've spent about 50% of my time temping or on fixed term contracts, so I'm a bit of a seasoned veteran when it comes to such things.

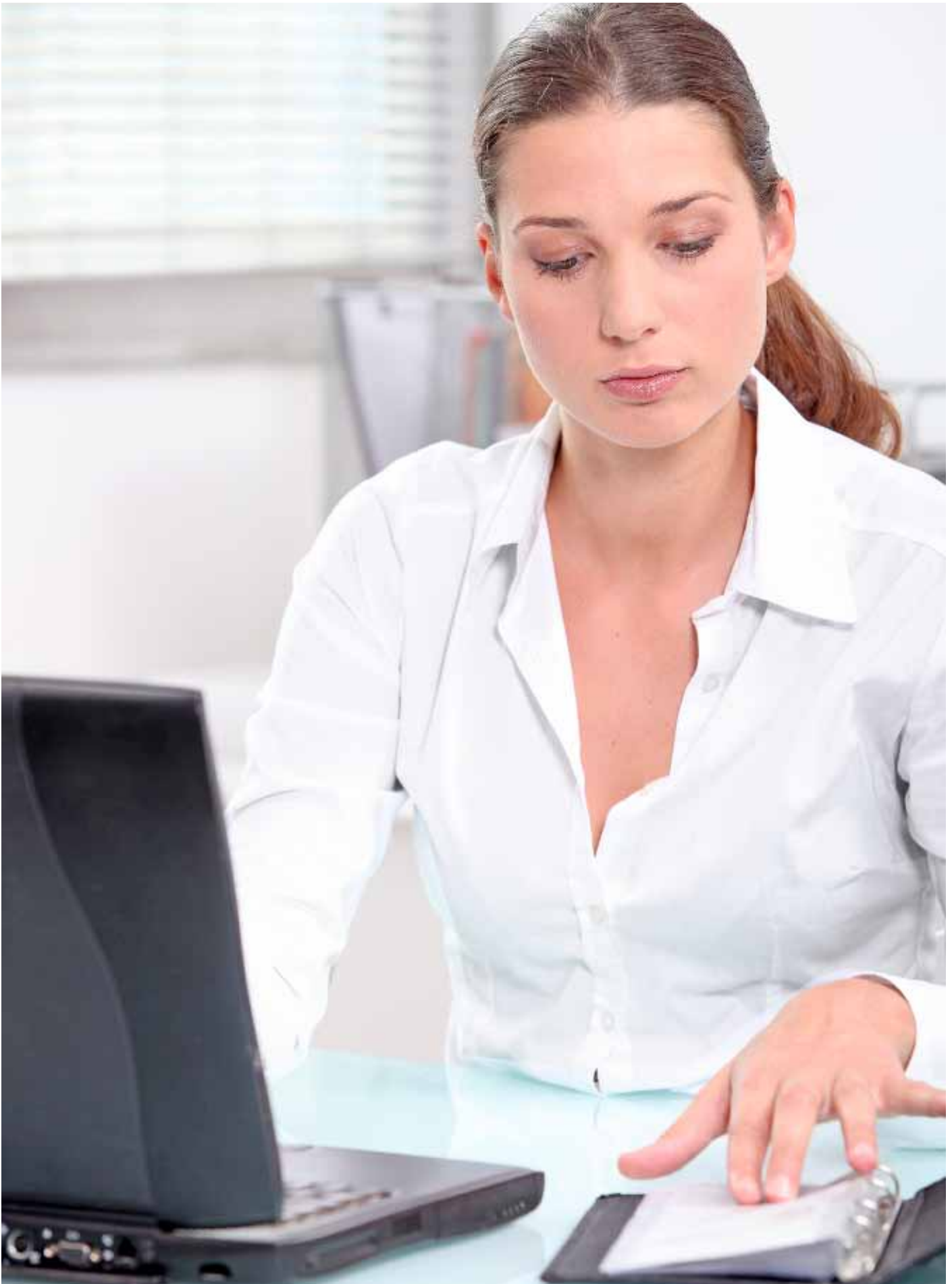
It could be considered a risky move to temp in the current job market; jobs are fairly scarce and completion is fierce. Employers currently have their pick of candidates and job security has rarely been on such shaky ground. But what happens if you find yourself in the position where you have no choice but to temp, or just feel like a career change without the commitment of something permanent? What are ups and downs of temping?

## Transferable skills

As administrative professionals, we're a pretty lucky bunch in that we have transferrable skills. What we do in, say, an IT company can easily be put to good use in a media company. Our job itself doesn't change that much; it's only the external factors that do.

The first hurdle is the employment agency. If you're savvy enough, you'll have already networked with a few local agencies and built a good rapport with them – immensely handy if you find yourself in the position of needing them. I remember an appointment with one particular agency taking well over two hours, mainly due to the fact that they'd forgotten I was coming. I'd driven my mum along with the intention of her having an hour or so looking round the shops whilst I registered. Almost three hours and many impatient texts from her later I eventually emerged into the daylight, blinking like a newborn. The upshot of that appointment was a massive car park charge and not hearing a whisper from them again. On the flip side, the agency I'm currently dealing with are fabulous. Go figure!

Then there's the first day at work; a new office, new desk, new boss and new people to deal with. The majority of places are fairly good.







You'll generally get assigned to someone on the admin side of things who'll show you the ropes and the important things like where the toilets and coffee making facilities are. Provided you're friendly, professional and approachable (and let's face it – of course we are!) then the majority of people will at least talk to you in passing. There are, of course, always exceptions. I've been very lucky with my current role; in an office of about 60 people everybody is absolutely lovely and I was overwhelmed with the sheer friendliness of the place on my first day. It's in complete contrast to other roles I've had where I've been completely ignored or – and this is a classic – told that the company "don't like temps" (I lasted a day there).

It can be a strange experience on your first day because in essence you're starting a new job. You're the "newbie" and you have to deal with everything

that comes with that; the not knowing whether to dial "9" for an outside line, not knowing anyone's name, whether there's a code for the photocopier, or even where the photocopier is – all stuff that those people in permanent jobs take for granted. The workload you encounter can be anything from drowning in a sea of paperwork to twiddling your thumbs, not quite sure who to ask for more work. As time goes on, though, you get used to the way the place works and you eventually get to know your colleagues, and when the contract ends, you're either bidding tearful goodbyes to some wonderful colleagues or you're sprinting out of the door on the dot of 5 with a relieved grin on your face.

## *No security*

Temping can be good, bad or downright ugly. There is no security; you could potentially be called by the agency and told to not bother returning the next day. Conversely, you may be asked to commit to a certain timescale. This can be great, as it's guaranteed money for a while, but the risk is that you lose out on a great job offer that comes along at the "wrong" time. Money is generally poorer for temp work than for permanent work and rather than receiving a set monthly salary you're paid by the hour and get paid weekly. You have to build up a "holiday pot" to get paid for days off – and that includes all public holidays.

However, there is no denying that not only does temping provide an essential service (either holiday/sick cover, or to fulfil an ever-increasing "try before you buy" employer trend), but it is also an incredibly useful platform for us as administrative professionals. Learning curves are steep, but the rewards are great. We get an exclusive view as to how different companies work and meet all sorts of interesting people. As temps, potential employers know that we're resilient, flexible, adaptable and not afraid of change. Most importantly, though, our experiences as temps not only hone our skills, but also increase our confidence in ourselves and our capabilities.



## New Park Inn by Radisson property opens in Glasgow

**The Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has opened the stylish Park Inn by Radisson Glasgow City Centre.**

Located in the historic grade 2 listed Pearl Assurance building on the corner of West George Street and Renfield Street, the contemporary new Park Inn by Radisson Glasgow City Centre boasts a strong design element with features including a convenient self-check-in area, restaurant, bar, meeting rooms, on-site gym and an internet kiosk.

For meetings, conferences and special events, the Park Inn by Radisson Glasgow City Centre has meeting space which is both versatile and functional. The hotel has two meeting rooms catering for up to 30 delegates together with a private breakout area, perfect for serving coffees and lunches between meetings.

The fully equipped internet kiosk ensures business travellers can stay abreast of latest developments and keep in touch with the office.

## Hotel News

### Only 6 London hotels awarded new 5-star rating by Forbes

Only six London hotels have been awarded with a coveted five-star rating from Forbes Travel Guide. These are: 45 Park Lane; Claridge's; The Dorchester; The Lanesborough London; Four Seasons Hotel at Park Lane and The Savoy. Plus two London hotel spas have been awarded a five-star rating: The Spa at Four Seasons and The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, London.

This means a number of London's luxury hotels are notable by their failure to gain a five-star rating.

## New iPhone/iPad app from Premier Inn

Premier Inn has relaunched its award-winning app for iPhone and its first application for iPad. Responsible for over 100,000 room bookings in 2012 alone, the app has been downloaded over 2,000,000 times since its launch in January 2011 and has become one of the hotel brand's most important channels.

Featuring an intuitive navigation that anticipates the needs of customers, the app provides a seamless booking flow, with Trip Advisor ratings, the ability to add extras such as breakfast, and an opportunity to easily book repeat stays. The application makes it easy for guests to manage their bookings on the move and offers personalisation through 'My Premier Inn'.





Grab a Coffee (or a Chai/tea...or a Coke/soft drink...or (depending on the time and day of the week of course!) a Chardonnay/wine - while you read this month's article.

There are so many great skills and attributes required of you as an Executive PA that begin with the letter "C". But for me, there is One that steals the limelight, One that comes out on top as the foundation and pinnacle skill of being a successful Executive PA - and that skill is Communication.

# C is for...Communication!







As an Executive PA you need to communicate with internal and external customers. Very quickly you need to get on someone else's wavelength in order to communicate effectively with them and create good rapport. You need to think about the best way to communicate in any given situation (face to face, email, text message, telephone call...) then think about the language you will use to communicate. People use terminology, phrases and words that relates to how they process their world and that's what I want to introduce in this month's article...

We are all complex beings - with neurological pathways buzzing with activity, skilfully multi-tasking with organisational expertise and company knowledge at our fingertips... we are seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting our way to PA excellence and success! But did you know that, whilst we access all five senses to "make sense" of our worlds, in fact most of us have a dominant or primary sense that we use over the others? That dominant sense can mean we favour certain words, phrases and vocabulary and being able to identify your own and others dominant sense can be a

useful thing to do to ensure you communicate as effectively as possible.

### VAKs amazing - seeing, hearing and feeling your way to successful communication

Take a few minutes to think back to the last meeting you were involved in and re-live the most memorable bits - collect the memories in your mind.

Then, think about how you remembered: Did you create a visual picture of the events? Was it a "snapshot", a still image? Was it a "mini movie"? Was it in colour?

Or did you notice the sounds within the experience - people's voices, music or the natural sounds of the surroundings?

Or maybe the memory was about feelings inside - happiness (the meeting went really well!) or tension (the Sales Director and Managing Director could not agree on anything!).

Whichever one of these ways of reconstructing

your memory was the first and/or most recognisable indicates your likely dominant sense - or your lead Representational System. Quite simply, it is how you create a "representation" or "represent" your world - either in:

Pictures (the Visuals - or The V)  
 Sounds (the Auditory - or The A)  
 or Feelings (the Kineasthetics - or The K).

This is our VAK System - one that you as a PA can tap into to communicate really effectively with the people you work with.

An indicator of your Representation or VAK System is the language that you use - particular words and phrases that we call "Predicates".

### The V

If you have a predominantly Visual Representational System then you're likely to use words and phrases like

"I see what you mean"

"I get the picture"

"Things are looking great"

"We need to focus on this aspect"

and, because you can see in your "mind's eye" what you're talking about you're likely to use your arms and body to draw out in front of you the very thing you're describing! You will notice how things look around you - their shape, form and colour - the aesthetics.

### The A

If you have a predominantly Auditory Representational System then you're likely to talk in predicates that are sound or music related

"We discussed the situation"

"I'd like to listen to your ideas"

"I do like the sound of that".  
 You might be great at tuning into new ideas.

### The K

If you have a predominantly Kineasthetic Representational System then you're likely to use language that is feelings, movement or touch related -

"I'm under pressure"

"I like the feeling of that"

"Things are really moving now"

"He's hot on quality control"

You probably have a pretty clear idea of where you experience your feelings too. If you're stressed you may touch your head, if you're hungry you may touch your stomach and for you to really optimise any learning, you probably want to be there, doing it as a first-hand experience.....

So, why is this useful I hear you cry? "Tell me more" say the Auditory readers!

"I get a feeling this is really beneficial stuff - how can I take this great new learning and really get to grips with it in the office to communicate effectively?" ask the Kineasthetic readers.

"So, that's great you've painted a picture of what this VAK thing is all about - can we look at it in relation to the Executive PA role?" you Visual readers request.

### What is the use of my newfound knowledge?

Before I answer your question, let me ask you a couple of questions.

**How often have you met someone for the first time and felt that you got along really well and immediately seemed to be on the "same wavelength"?**

And...

**How often have you met someone for the first time and found it really difficult to keep the conversation going?**

The reason for this could be because you are either talking the same or a different "VAK Language".

If a primarily visual person is using all their visual type predicates, an auditory person is likely to "switch off". However two "visual" people are much more likely to create quicker and deeper rapport and be "comfortable" with each other because they are, in effect, talking the same language.

So, next time you are listening to colleagues or friends in conversation, notice what words

they tend to use and favour. Read through your emails in your inbox and notice any patterns of predicates favoured by those you work with. What Representational System do you think they are?

If you've discovered you are a primarily Visual Representation System and your manager is Auditory - in order to communicate effectively with him/her you can adjust your language and include more auditory predicates.

And that just leaves me to wrap this article up - with a beautiful quote from Nelson Mandela who said "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart".

"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.

"The role of the PA is diverse - it differs from organisation to organisation, from sector to sector, from team to team" says Lindsay "For me, that's what makes the role so exciting. More and more organisations are realising the worth of their admin professionals. Executive PAs are increasingly being accepted as one of the management team - with this status comes the need for specific skills and attributes, specific pearls of wisdom - that will ensure your overall success. With every new client there comes a new input, a new idea, a new perspective - very often backed up with a relevant and interesting story or experience, hence my extensive list! I am delighted to be writing this ongoing article for Desk Demon, picking out the top skills and attributes identified by my clients and sharing some A-Z Pearls of Wisdom".



# The nation's favourite colour

It may spell sadness, leave you feeling cold and forever be associated with Mondays, but a recent survey has revealed that blue is the nation's favourite colour.

The research, commissioned by the Post-it Brand from 3M, found that blue was the nation's favourite colour at 31%. Despite being considered synonymous with sadness (37%) and Mondays (32%) by the respondents, the colour still proved far more popular than second favourite, purple, at 18%.

But even though almost half of those surveyed chose blue or purple as their favourite colour, many do not make their favourite shade visible at home or in the office, with one in ten women claiming they never wear it.

In fact, many people surround themselves with the not so mellow yellow. Hugely associated with happiness, yellow remains one of the most-used colours in the office and at home. The most visible colour in daylight, almost a quarter use it to highlight an urgent task to a colleague while almost a fifth of home-users choose a yellow note when leaving a reminder for their loved one.

Respondents also associated the shade with nice events and activities, with yellow scoring the highest for holidays (43%), family gatherings (16%) and seeing friends (18%).

Colour psychology expert Karen Haller says: "Although blue can be seen as cold and uncaring, like all colours it has many positive connotations too. Blue relates to the mind, intellect and logic, which we associate with trust, integrity and efficiency. It also represents calm, reflection and serenity and it is the intensity of the tone which can affect us differently.

"It's great news that yellow holds such a soft spot in the nation's hearts as well! It is synonymous with sticky notes thanks to the Canary Yellow of Post-it Notes. What is so interesting however is that despite such a vast array of colours available, people don't surround themselves with their favourite, whether at work or home.



# colour revealed!



"Using coloured notes not only helps to personalise your space, it can have such a positive effect on your day too. It's such a simple way to lift your mood if you are otherwise surrounded by muted tones in the office or multiple to do lists at home!"

When quizzed on the reason behind their choices, the majority of women (23%) said their mum had made the greatest impact on their favourite colour, while more than a third of men said their favourite sports team had the most effect. One in ten said their wife or girlfriend had influenced their choice if their favourite shade had changed since childhood, even though 30% of the respondents admitted they had no idea what their partner's favourite colour was!



Karen Haller says: "It's perhaps not surprising that mums have had a great impact on their daughters. We often take advice from others to be better than our own, as opposed to trusting our own instincts. It's ironic that we will take this direction from our mother and in turn do the same with our partner! We all know what colour tones we are drawn to and those we aren't, it's just a matter of trusting our intuition."

"Men will choose their team's colour as it gives them a sense of belonging. As human beings we have an innate need to belong to a tribe. In essence, they are creating an emotional connection through colour."

Emotive colour association also scored highly when it came to describing Britain. Despite the current economic climate and what may sometimes seem like year-round grey skies, 34% said green was the colour they most associated with their fair country.

In fact, the colour grey came third in the results (18%), behind blue at 19%. Red was fourth in line with 17%.

Karen Haller says: "These results are really interesting. Colour symbolism - or colour in culture - will always have a big influence in people's perceptions. Despite increasingly more grey urban environments, work interiors and grey skies, there's still a sense of pride and connection to the green countryside and nature."