

PA ENTERPRISE

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

April 2014

**Keeping Mind
Clutter in Check:
How to Stay
Focused**

**Tips To Changing
Careers At 50**

Ask the PAnel:
your questions answered by our
team of experts

**Setting Up Your Own
Business in Your 50s May
Keep You Healthy**

PA Enterprise is published by

Deskdemon.com

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



1
POINT
DONATED

=



WIN A LUXURY ECO-HOLIDAY WITH KENCO

You could win a luxury
eco-holiday and bring clean
water to people who need it.

Here's a chance to try something new... checking-in to your own treehouse in the Dordogne, or a charming Spanish yurt, or a romantic Devon houseboat.

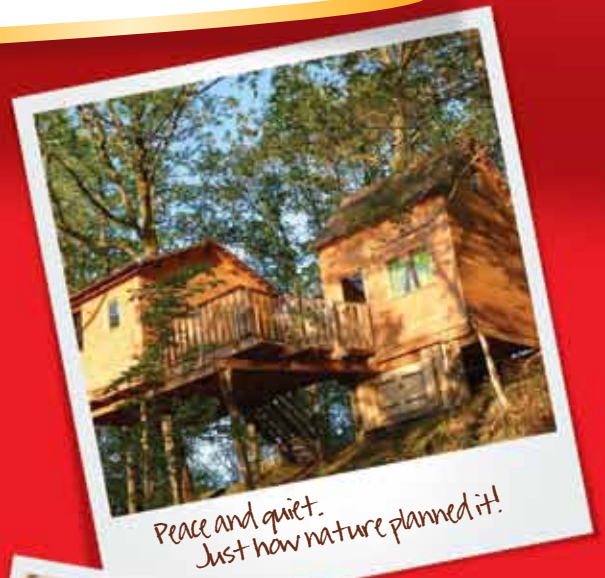
We're giving away a fabulous eco-holiday every month until the end of the year. To enter and for full T&C's, visit kenco.co.uk/cleanwater.

Make every point count

And that's not all. Many South American families have to trek for hours to get clean water. Together let's do something about it.

Help us help them by joining Kenco Rewards Club and donating your points to their cause. With every point you donate ten glasses of clean water will go to them.

Just enter the unique code on your pack at mykenco.com and make your Kenco Rewards Club points count.*



*Peace and quiet.
Just how nature planned it!*



Luxury in the woods



0870 600 6556
www.kenco.co.uk/cleanwater





- 4 • Health and wellbeing 'job share'
• Reset your body

- 5 Infuriated by business speak, tormented by techno babble?

- 6 Personalise your desk space with new dispensers from Post-It

- 7 World's First Pop-up Book For Kindle

- 8 Workingmums.co.uk launches its 2014 Top Employer Awards

- 9 • The Hot Tuna Suitcase Range
• Bringing the outside in at your corporate events

- 10 PA and VA Diary Dates 2014

- 12 Keeping Mind Clutter in Check: How to Stay Focused

- 15 Meetings and Conferences at River Cottage HQ

- 16 Setting Up Your Own Business in Your 50s May Keep You Healthy

- 18 Ask the PAnel:
your work relation issues answers by the experts

- 21 International Women's Day:
survey finds UK is still stuck in gender discrimination dark ages

- 22 Tips To Changing Careers At 50

- 24 A-Z Pearls of Wisdom: L is for... Listening with your whole body



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.

All rights reserved. No part of this Publication (whether in hardcopy or electronic form) may be copied, transmitted, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior written consent of DeskDemon.com. Whilst every care is taken in the compilation and publication of this publication, DeskDemon.com can not be held responsible for any consequences, mistakes or omissions. DeskDemon.com can not accept any responsibility for any inaccuracies or changes, or for consequential loss arising from such changes or inaccuracies, or for any other loss. Inclusion of any advertisements does not imply recommendations or endorsement by DeskDemon.com Copyright 2010 DeskDemon.com



PA ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

www.deskdemon.com

Terminal House, Station Approach,
Shepperton,
Middlesex TW17 8AS

Editorial

PR contact: Paul Ormond
Tel: 0870 410 4030
editoruk@deskdemon.com

Features Editor

Alison Pedrick

Advertising

Paul Ormond
Tel: 0870 410 4038
paul@deskdemon.com

Jane Olsen
0870 410 4036
jane@deskdemon.com

Design & Production

Jane Bigos
Graphic Design
janebigos@deskdemon.com

Kulasekaram Vimalarasa (Raj)
Web Developer
raj@deskdemon.com

Pawel Olszak
Website Designer
pawel@deskdemon.com

Publisher

Paul Ormond
Tel: 08704104038
paul@deskdemon.com

Managing Director

Mek Rahmani
Founder, CEO
mek@deskdemon.com

Health and wellbeing 'job share'

Nearly 80 per cent of workers in the UK believe responsibility for managing staff health and wellbeing should be shared between both employer and employee, according to new research.

The 'Employee View – Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace' survey, conducted by health insurance provider Westfield Health, found the majority (79 per cent) of respondents felt there should be an even balance between them and their employer when it came to taking care of their wellbeing.

Nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) also said knowing their employer cares about their health would make them more likely to be satisfied, loyal and motivated at work.

And almost a third (30 per cent) asked for better communication in the workplace about the types of wellbeing programmes on offer to them.

Commenting on the results of the survey of 1,500 working adults across the country, Westfield Health's Executive Director, Paul Shires, said: "The research we've conducted provides an interesting snapshot of the views, beliefs and hopes of the modern employee when it comes to their health and wellbeing.

"Three quarters of employees recognise unhealthy lifestyles reduce productivity and performance at work. But workers are equally keen to see their employer accept some responsibility in what could be described as a health 'job share'."

One respondent commented: 'I am responsible for my health, but my work environment and welfare on site should be managed effectively by employers.'



Reset your body

Give a quick boost to your digestive system, metabolism and reduce your cravings with the Reset Days Cleanse.

Just in time for spring, why not get in shape, become energised and enjoy a wide range of potential health benefits with Purifyne juices.

Similar to the idea of intermittent fasting, the essence behind Reset Days is very simple: you drink Purifyne's tasty, freshly cold-pressed juices and take natural supplements daily to support your main detoxification organs.

Based on the work of leading scientists from around the world, this is a new alternative to standard dieting. By implementing one or two Reset Days per week into your lifestyle and fitness regime, you can help:

- give your digestive system a rest
- lose weight
- achieve great control over your cravings
- reset and improve your eating habits

Infuriated by business speak, tormented by techno babble?

It seems we are fed up with blue sky thinking, outside the box, and feel that running it up the flagpole will not result in anything cutting edge!

Moving forward, this cutting edge paradigm is unlikely to be actioned or benefit from a roadmap.

In a survey of the most hated business phrases, conducted by blur Group - the company reinventing commerce at blurGroup.com – Brits made their feelings clear: and red-flagged the worst offenders.

The top 10 are:

1. Outside the box
2. Blue sky thinking
3. Run it up the flagpole
4. Brainstorming
5. Level playing field
6. Paradigm
7. Cutting edge
8. Action it
9. Moving forward
10. Roadmap

When it comes to technology phrases, terms such as 'deployment', 'portal' and 'elasticity' are widely understood

– if not liked - but people are still cloudy about cloud computing; 20% of us don't fully understand what it means.

And even under anonymous survey conditions, respondents were so keen to display a working knowledge of tech that many claimed to know about 'zomblogging', a made-up phrase. Asked to provide specifics, 60% of those surveyed admitted they did not know the actual meaning of the word.

Hearteningly, 75% said that they would ask during a conversation if they were unclear on a specific term, 10% said they would smile, nod and look the term up later, and only 7% said they would feel stupid.

"Our latest platform launch, blur 4.0 will be improved through customer feedback, and will continue to evolve as more are invited from the outside world to help us understand their needs better. It's the way that every tech company should be working - to use a little jargon of our own, it 'levels the playing field' for those keen to embrace tech, whatever their company size."



Personalise your desk space with new dispensers from Post-It

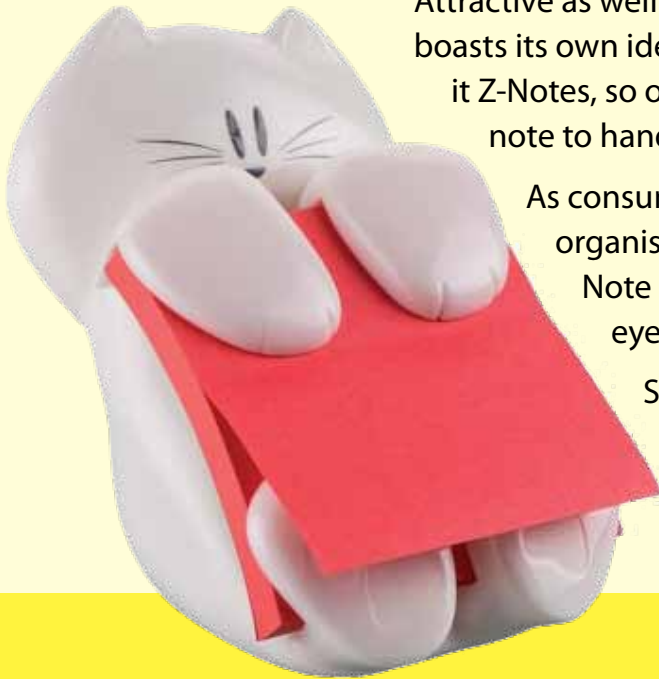
The Post-it Brand from 3M has announced the launch of three new dispensers to capitalise on an ever-growing need for ways to personalise a desk space.



Attractive as well as undeniably useful, each stylised dispenser boasts its own ideal design and includes a colourful pack of Post-it Z-Notes, so office and home users alike will always have a note to hand.

As consumers continue to seek out products to help them organise their busy day-to-day lives, the Post-it Pop-up Note Dispensers Range teams product efficiency with eye-catching design.

Simon Williams, Post-it Brand manager from 3M, says: "As shoppers continue to look for high shelf appeal at a relatively low cost, these new dispensers offer the best of both worlds."



With almost one fifth of households owning a cat in the UK, the new Post-it Cat Dispenser (RRP £7.72) offers a captivating design and sturdy base makes it the ideal choice for cat lovers and stationery fans alike.

The new Post-it White with Notes from Electric Glow Collection (RRP £7.89) offers the nostalgic appeal of childhood favourite game Jacks. The fun bubble shape includes a rocking base, appealing to stationery lovers of any age.

Complete with pen holder and weighted for use as a paperweight, the Karate Design (RRP £9.39) is a multi-purpose must-have for karate, sports or movie lovers.

Other favourites in the range include; Black purse (RRP £7.49), Heart Shape (RRP £7.49) and Apple shaped, Red (RRP £8.99).



World's First Pop-up Book For Kindle

Colin The Crab, leading light of Norfolk-based Gone Crabbing, is the unlikely star of a technological first – a pop-up book for Kindle that tells the story of the curious crustacean and his sole mates – Sally the Starfish and Mike the Mussel.



Working with scientists at the University of Norfolk, Gone Crabbing has developed a Kindle book that, when a child turns the page, produces a colourful, 3D image that floats above the surface of the e-reader. Thanks to both tele-immersion technology and holographic projection, the image will hover for 10 seconds before it disappears. As soon as the 'page' is turned, the next image appears. Commenting on her literary leap, Susie Mason said:

"As a child, I always wanted to be able to step into a picture book. A holographic book is the next best thing and we've even incorporated seaside sounds into the story. It brings the British beach to life and helps underline our simple message to children to be environmentally aware when playing in rock pools".

Workingmums.co.uk launches its 2014 Top Employer Awards

Workingmums.co.uk has launched its fifth annual Top Employer Awards which celebrate best practice in smart working and advancing women in the workplace

The Awards, sponsored by McDonald's Restaurants, recognise employers both big and small who have embraced the business benefits of flexible working and have been proactive in seeking to recruit and retain talented staff, particularly working parents who want to combine successful careers with being a parent. They will be announced at a ceremony in Central London in November which includes a networking session, sponsored by Unilever, and an in-depth Q & A session with leading experts in diversity and flexible working, sponsored by BAE Systems.

This year there are seven categories open to employers, one of which is also open to employees. An Overall Top Employer is chosen from the winners of the other categories. The categories include Best for Dads in recognition of the links between women's career progression and greater equality in the home. The issue of how to reach dads and support them in working more flexibly was one of the big debate points at last year's Awards and organisations are increasingly looking at these issues in light of policy changes, such as the introduction of shared



parental leave next year. Other awards include Talent Attraction which aims to share good practice on reaching out to a more diverse workforce, for instance, through advertising flexible roles.

The full line-up of Award categories is:

- **Innovation in Flexible Working Award, sponsored by last year's Overall Top Employer Atkins**
- **Career Progression Award, sponsored by last year's winner the Royal Mail Group**
- **SME Award [split into sections for companies with under 25 and under 250 employees]**
- **Best for Dads Award, sponsored by IG Group**
- **Talent Attraction Award**
- **Family Support Award**
- **Working Mums Champion Award**

Gillian Nissim, Founder of Workingmums.co.uk, says: "Every year we are inspired by the entries which we receive from a wide range of employers, whether small start-ups or large corporates. There is a real momentum building around flexible working with more and more employers recognising the business benefits and an increasing focus on the advantages of a diverse workforce, not just at boardroom level but at every level."

The Hot Tuna Suitcase Range

Born in Australia in 1969, Hot Tuna have always been known as the surfer brand and for their instantly recognisable piranha motif that can be seen splashed across surf boards, shorts and bikinis. Over the years professional surfers such as Robbie Page and Drew Courtney have helped Hot Tuna gain its cult status and be an industry favourite.

Now the brand have taken a step in a different direction and expanded into the realm of luggage, bringing the feel of the waves to dry land. The Hot Tuna line of suitcases and messenger bags, all featuring the signature logo and branding, is now available at MrLuggage.com and is the ideal holiday luggage.

The suitcases also feature a split lid design, so not only is there twice as much space but it also helps to keep clothes, accessories and toiletries organised. There are also zipped compartments to the front for more storage, as well a retractable handle and two wheels to the base making them easy to manoeuvre around the airport.



Bringing the outside in at your corporate events

Easi-event, the corporate events arm of the award-winning easigrass group of companies, has created a new dedicated product for the events industry.

Entitled easi-eat, easigrass provides a high-impact, safe, re-usable and washable presentation base for a multitude of event food and snacks. Easi-eat is fitted onto trays, serving platters or tables as a base for either hot or cold hors d'oeuvres, sushi, snacks, fruit, dips or canapés.

Easi-eat is made from the 'Gold' award-winning easigrass Chelsea range and is made-to-measure for the client. At the recent Louis Lehman event, hosted in the spectacular Café Royal hotel, London, easigrass (in the original green) covered aluminium trays serving a selection of wrapped canapés, dried fruit and nuts for guests to enjoy.

In addition to the traditional green colour, easi-eat is also available in pink, blue or a bespoke colour-way with a lead-in price of £24.99 per metre square (including UK delivery).

PA and VA

Diary Dates 2014

by Christine Todd, VA and
Owner of 'In the Shed'

If you would like to add event
to this list – please email
editor@deskdemo.com with
the details.

10th April

The Virtual Assistant Coaching & Training Co
Taster Sessions on Thursday 10th April in Euston, London
NW1. These half-day sessions give you a real in-sight
into running your own VA business.
See www.vact.co.uk for details of how to book.

31st May

The Northern VA Collaboration
Event 2014, sponsored by
MinuteDock, is the inaugural

annual one-day conference, held by
Virtual Assistants for Virtual Assistants –
both existing and aspiring on 31st May at
the Stadium of Light in Sunderland. The
speakers, venue and exhibitors have been
carefully selected to ensure that the day is
both relaxing and relevant for attendees, so
whilst this isn't a "jolly" you will have a very
pleasant time!

The event is aimed at current and future
Virtual Assistants to allow an opportunity
to network with other professionals,
discuss important industry topics and share
experiences.

**Why register? Here's what you'll
get when you register for the
conference:**

- Learn how to market your business via video
- Learn how to sell more of your services without actually selling

15–16th May

**The Office Management & PA
Exhibition and Conference** takes place
at London's ExCeL Centre on 15th - 16th
May.

It offers a huge range of office and IT
skills workshops, career progression
workshops and many high-profile
Keynote speakers throughout the two
days. For more information and register
for tickets, see the website at [www.
officemanagementandpa.co.uk](http://www.officemanagementandpa.co.uk)

6th June

The Annual Conference and Award for Executive Secretaries & PAs in Scotland: ACES 2014, takes place at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange on Friday 6th June. A packed day full of keynote presentations and including the announcement of the Scottish PA of the Year Award 2014.

For more information, follow on Twitter @aces_pa or see the website at www.mackayhannah.com/conferences/7th-annual-conference-and-award-for-executive-secretaries-and-pas-in-scotland

- 14 day free trial and 10% discount for MinuteDock
- Membership of The OCCAT Club for 3 months (worth £30)
- "Social Media for Business" ebook
- 1hr FREE Mentoring from The VA Doctor
- Network with like-minded individuals and peers
- Access to products and services for the VA industry
- Lunch & refreshments
- Goody bag with offers and gifts from recommended suppliers

To book a place go to <http://northernvacollaboration.co.uk/register/>

Register through DeskDemon using the link above and receive a 10% discount! - just enter "VAForum" in the 'enter promotional code' link.

Monthly Meet-Ups

For VAs in and around the M25, there is a 'Meet-Up' group for **London-based Virtual Assistants**. The group run a series of monthly meet-ups on the first Tuesday of each month. The venue is The Sun Tavern at 66 Long Acre, London WC2E 9JD – close to Leicester Square tube. These meet-ups are a great opportunity to get together with other VAs in an informal environment to network, share ideas and discuss best practice.

See www.meetup.com/London-based-Virtual-Assistants for more information.

The West-End VA Meet-Up takes place on the first Tuesday of every month. Date: Contact Caroline Deayton for more info – caroline@remotecontroluk.com or www.remotecontroluk.com

Keeping Mind Clutter in Check: HOW TO STAY FOCUSED

By Cathy N Graham



How should you deal with the force of other people's priorities into your life to distract you from your true passion. Someone drops by your office just as you are hitting your stride on a project. Your boss' voluntolds' you for a local board that you really aren't interested in. The school calls because (according to the rules) your daughter's skirt is too short and you need to come to the rescue with a potato sack.

Most HR professionals live in a constant state of interruption. Meetings with Human Resource are rarely scheduled. There is normally a fire smoldering (or raging out of control) before someone decides to drop by or pick up the phone - do you have a minute? It's rarely a minute. It's the nature of the beast.

Someone else's failure to plan, schedule or otherwise handle an issue can easily leak into your life and weigh you down. If you want to stay on track to your best work, you need to work on keeping people from treading on you. Don't be a doormat. Here's how:

No

Set up some boundaries. Let your family, friends, and colleagues know where your limit's are. Business mentor Christine Kane calls this your "Proactive No". I'm not available from 9 until 10:30 AM. I only work with charities that are aligned with my goal of helping disadvantaged children. I'm always home on the Sunday to be with my family. I set my schedule according to my son's wrestling meets. No television or phone calls during dinner. I check email and voice mail on the hour. Draw a line in the sand.

Barriers

Shut your door. Put on some headphones. Turn off your phone. Mark out your space. A colleague of mine used to put police tape across his cubicle when he had an important conference call. In the book "18 Minutes" by Peter Bregman, the author has prescribed work hours in his home office and his children know that they may not interrupt for any reason. If the door is shut - don't interrupt Daddy. Other barriers can be turning off all alerts for phone, email and text. I have a little piece of post it note over the place on my monitor where the little envelope shows up when I have email. Out of sight, out of mind.

Cue

When someone comes in asking if you have a minute - give them a cue. Mark out a time limit. I've got fifteen minutes. I have a conference call at 2. I'm in the middle of a project but I can give you ten minutes. Give them the parameters before they get started. This will help them hit the highlights before heading down a long meandering tale of whoa. If you find out this is bigger than you thought it would be, you might need



to stop and quickly reschedule impending appointments. Being up front will help soften transition back to your own priorities.

Delegate

Can someone else do this? Don't be the hero. You do not need to be responsible for everything that comes across your desk or desk top. I know. It so much easier to just take care of it yourself. Especially if you are impatient like me. You've been doing that report for the last 3 years and it only takes you 30 minutes to complete. Training someone else will take at least an hour and they will probably make mistakes the first few times around. Ugh. Invest the time and, in the long run, it will pay off in additional hours to spend on what brings you joy in your life.

Gossip

Hanging out at the water cooler isn't the greatest use of your precious time. Discussing the latest episode of "Modern Family" or who got kicked off of "Top Chef" is usually a procrastination technique. Gossiping about Suzy's new haircut or Joe's constant lateness can damage your relationships in the long run. Gee, if Cathy will talk about Joe that way... what is she saying about me behind my back. More mind clutter. Your prefrontal cortex doesn't need to be fed that stuff. Keep the stage clean.

Select

Being more selective about who you hang out with can improve your use of time. Hanging out with Debbie Downer or Negative Nancy can suck the time and energy out of you. Being around optimistic folks helps you stay away from your lizard brain and fueling the flame of fear. Surround yourself with some carefully selected Pollyanna's and let them lift you up to your best. This is advice that I have given my daughter frequently. When she complains about a "friend" being consistently critical of her actions or associations, I ask - why are you hanging out with this person? What value are they bringing?

Frequently it's best to back away and seek out those who will help you stay clutter free.

More About Cathy Graham

Cathy Graham is an Executive Coach who uses a Brain-Based approach to help leaders free thoughts, create new mental connections and bring about new, more effective neuro pathways. If you would like to read more blogs about how to jump start your career, check out Cathy's blog at cathygrahamcoaching.wordpress.com.

Meetings and Conferences at River Cottage HQ

Breakfast meeting 8am – Midday £40.00

River Cottage bacon rolls, homemade cakes & unlimited organic refreshments.

Day time meeting 9am – 5.00pm £50.00

Unlimited organic refreshments served with homemade biscuits and cakes during breaks, lunch platters of home cured organic meats, local cheeses, homemade breads and salads.

Private Lunch Meeting £54.00 / Private Dinner Meeting £79.00

A delicious menu prepared by your personal River Cottage chef using the best seasonal ingredients. 3 course lunch or a 4 course dinner with a glass of bubbly, canapés, petit-fours & coffee.

If you're struggling to find a suitable conference or meeting space in the South West, then look no further than River Cottage HQ.



For more details visit
[www.rivercottage.net/
hq/events/corporate-
days/meetings/](http://www.rivercottage.net/hq/events/corporate-days/meetings/)

Smaller groups might prefer the 17th century farmhouse where you can relax in front of the fire or wander the walled vegetable garden and feel truly inspired. In the kitchen next door (where the TV series is filmed) your own chef will be on hand to answer any culinary questions whilst preparing delicious platters for lunch, or a seasonal tasting menu for your party to enjoy.

Larger groups are invited to hold their event in the recently renovated threshing barn. The team of chefs, including many well-known names, such as Gill Meller, John Wright and Steven Lamb, are always on hand to inspire any food lover to learn new skills, try new recipes and find out more about sustainable, seasonal produce.

Setting Up Your Own Business in Your 50s May Keep You Healthy

by Dr Lynda Shaw

Your fifties is the ideal time to set up your own business and it may help to keep you healthy at a time when the UK still faces rife ageism in the workplace.

The UK is seeing a wave of new businesses set up by those over 50, who have faced the difficulties of finding a new job due to redundancy. According to research from over-50 business starter support charity The Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise (PRIME) out of the 11 million people between 50 and 64, around 3.2 million (33%) are economically inactive with many facing the added pressures of paying the mortgage, saving for retirement and looking after families, which could include children still living at home, elderly parents, or even both.

On the flip side nearly half the self-employed population is over 50, and one in six new businesses started in the UK are set up by post-half-centurions. Furthermore businesses started by people over 50 have a 70% chance of surviving their first five years - compared

with only a 28% for those younger than them.

Changing jobs in our 50s is the ideal time because we naturally reinvent ourselves as we mature. We are in our prime to try something different, perhaps a job we always wanted to do. We have life experience, strong relationships, and the children have grown up, so it is often the perfect time to reinvest in ourselves. We are also more capable and knowledgeable than ever, and can contribute enormously to the economy, community and society as a whole, in something that we might be more passionate about than the job we may have been doing previously. More than ever, many of us are now living to 100 years so why should we be settling for the mundane or stopping work at the half way point?

This is backed up by the fact that many of us are planning to work into our seventies both because we enjoy working and because we are living longer and need to fund our extra years. Research shows that as we get older we spend more time talking to people. This means that we are more likely to build relationships that are mutually beneficial in both our private lives and business, resulting in more sales and growth.

Today, the average person changes jobs ten to fifteen times during his or her career, but this often slows down towards the second half of our working lives because we don't want to rock the boat and find ourselves unemployed. For workers over 50 years old who need or want to think about other ways to finance themselves and generate social and personal fulfilment, self-employment provides a viable solution.

The fact is that at 50 something you have accrued a wealth of knowledge and business and social experience over a long working period. Setting up a successful company when over 50 instils self-worth and value, financial independence, the chance to use all the skills built up over a lifetime of working, flexibility and the opportunity for a new challenge. We know that either losing a job, or early retirement, can cause possible anxiety, isolation, poverty and a sedentary lifestyle. If you have set up your own business and your work is fulfilling and you are feeling sharp because you are passionate about it, then you are more likely to stay mentally fit and healthy. Changing jobs in our 50s keeps us fresh and we are more likely to choose something we really want to do rather than something we just settle for.

Personal referrals and networking continues to be the best way to get new business, but half centuries do need to be up to date in their knowledge of social media and the world of IT to stay ahead. There is still the issue of redundancy of older workers with only a small percentage of organisations realising and addressing the problems of this talent loss. Is it any wonder that the 50's plus are leaving their companies in droves and setting up their own businesses before they are pushed?



Ask the PAnel

Back by popular demand! Many of you have asked for our 'Agony' section to be brought back, so here it is. This time we have a panel of experts to help you with any work related questions, queries or problems you may have.



Paul Pennant is Managing Director and lead trainer for Today's PA



Alison Boler has been the Executive Assistant to three Heads of Legal & Business Affairs at ITV since 2007



Lindsay Taylor is the Director of Your Excellency Limited, an executive training and coaching organisation in the UK.



Ann Errington Ann has been a secretary at BAe Systems at Warton in Lancashire for the last 25 years and has worked in many different departments within the company.

Some of you are already familiar with Paul Pennant, our original Agony Uncle and we are also delighted to welcome on board PA Trainer Lindsay Taylor, who is currently wowing us all with her great A-Z Pearls of Wisdom series and also Alison Boler, an award winning legal Personal Assistant whose passions include writing, championing PAs (and you know how much we love to do that at DeskDemon) - and each month we will have a guest boss panel member. If your boss would like to take part - please email editor@deskdemon.com

So, everyone, what's niggling you? What keeps you awake at night? Don't sit and fret in isolation - the team is here to help. Please send your questions to us by emailing askthepanel@deskdemon.com and we shall pose them to our panel. If you prefer to remain anonymous, just let us know and we will omit your details.

Question:

I am unsure what is the best thing to do. I work for two different bosses and one of them keeps making personal comments about my weight. It is generally when no-one else is around, but, there can be people present when he makes sly digs.

Answers:

Alison Boler



No one has the right to make any comments or sly digs about your weight or physical appearance in the workplace. If you actually told him that you found

his comments inappropriate and upsetting, he should be embarrassed into stopping it. If you don't want to say it face-to-face then you can write an email to him, just say that you would prefer it if he didn't make personal comments about your weight. Be careful to just keep your tone pleasant but confident; don't be heavy handed or threaten him with disciplinary action. There is the further option to inform HR or his manager, but I imagine they would expect you to have first mentioned the issue to your boss, before escalating it.

Paul Pennant



I am sorry to hear about the bullying you are suffering. I have been a victim and can empathise with you. You should be judged solely on your work and your ability to do your job. Nothing else.

Your organisation may have a formal policy for dealing with bullying and harassment. However, it is always better to resolve the issues informally at first, if this is possible.

You need to start taking action straight away. I have a few suggestions:

- Visit www.acas.org.uk (08457 47 47 47) for advice and information. They have an excellent brochure you can download.
- Keep a detailed diary of each incident, together with any written evidence (emails or notes, etc)
- Let your boss know you are uncomfortable. Write a memo/email to them if that is easier.
- Talk to a senior colleague or someone in Human Resources.
- Speak to your union rep if you have one available.

Ask the PAnel

Lindsay Taylor



This is workplace bullying. It needs to be sorted out now - informally at first and then you may need to formally make a complaint to your HR Department following your organisation's grievance procedure.

Keep a diary and record of the incidents (dates, times, who else was around, exactly what was said - keep it factual) - this is known as a contemporaneous record. It can be used if you decide to take action at a later stage.

Speak calmly to the boss making these "sly digs" and personal comments. If this situation continues then you can make a formal complaint per your organisation's grievance procedure.

Below is a proven model to use when responding to conflict and situations such as this - the AIDA model uses precision language to ensure your message "lands" in the correct way - your response may go something like this . . .

Action: When you make comments about my weight - either when it is the two of us or when other people are around

Impact: I feel (say how you are feeling). I am here in a professional capacity and I feel your comments are unprofessional

Desired Outcome: I would appreciate it if you would stop making any personal comments about my weight

Agreement: what do you think? Okay?

Ann Errington



This behaviour from a manager (or any individual) is completely unacceptable. Have you tried speaking with the person who is making these comments? If you have spoken to the

individual and there is no change you could go to Personnel or another senior manager and advise them of the problem. Start to keep a log of each occurrence too. Another option would be to investigate whether your company has a grievance process? If it does, go through the formal process and raise this issue as a grievance. This action may sound very harsh when the individual may think they are only having a joke, however this is serious and must be stopped.



So, everyone, what's niggling you? What keeps you awake at night? Don't sit and fret in isolation – our panel of experts to help you with any work related questions, queries or problems you may have.

CLICK HERE to send us your question.

International Women's Day: survey finds UK is still stuck in gender discrimination dark ages

Despite this year's International Women's Day theme being one of inspiring change, a poll conducted by serviced office provider Business Environment has revealed that for women in the UK, gender discrimination is still as prevalent as it was 20 years ago.

In a poll of 1,500 office workers, over a quarter of females surveyed (27.4%) claimed to have experienced some form of gender discrimination in the workplace.

Worryingly, the majority of incidents reported centred around women's families, suggesting not all women can have it all.

Of those surveyed, a quarter (25.67%) of females felt that having children had held them back in their career, and one in five (18.6%) felt they had missed out on a promotion as a direct result of taking maternity leave.

David Saul, co-founder and managing director at Business Environment said: "This year's International Women's Day theme is 'Inspiring Change' and quite clearly, for some female employees in the UK, change cannot come soon enough. I am saddened that despite huge progress made in the last decades, such a high proportion of women in the workplace still find they come up against the same old problems, especially in relation to family life and maternity leave"

The survey also found that the problem extends far beyond the realms of women feeling they are being discriminated against, with respondents openly admitting to harbouring discriminatory views when making hiring decisions.

More than a quarter of those surveyed (27.47%) admitted that they would be reluctant to hire a woman of childbearing age and 26 per cent claimed they would have reservations about hiring a female if they already had children.

David Saul added: "What these results show is that employers are still discriminating against women who choose to have children as well as work. It's great that women no longer feel they have to pursue the career of housewife if they don't want to, but if this level of discrimination towards working women continues, we could see females reverting back to the ways of pre-suffragette Britain, which would be a huge backwards step for gender equality."

International Women's Day occurs globally every year on the 8th of March and celebrates the social, political and economic achievements of females, whilst also focussing the world's attention on those areas that require further action in order to improve the lives of females today.

Tips To Changing Careers At 50

by Dr Lynda Shaw

Don't allow age to be a barrier

Focus on the fact that you are an experienced individual with a good track record of success. You are probably bursting with valuable knowledge for the organisation!

What are your transferable skills and strengths?

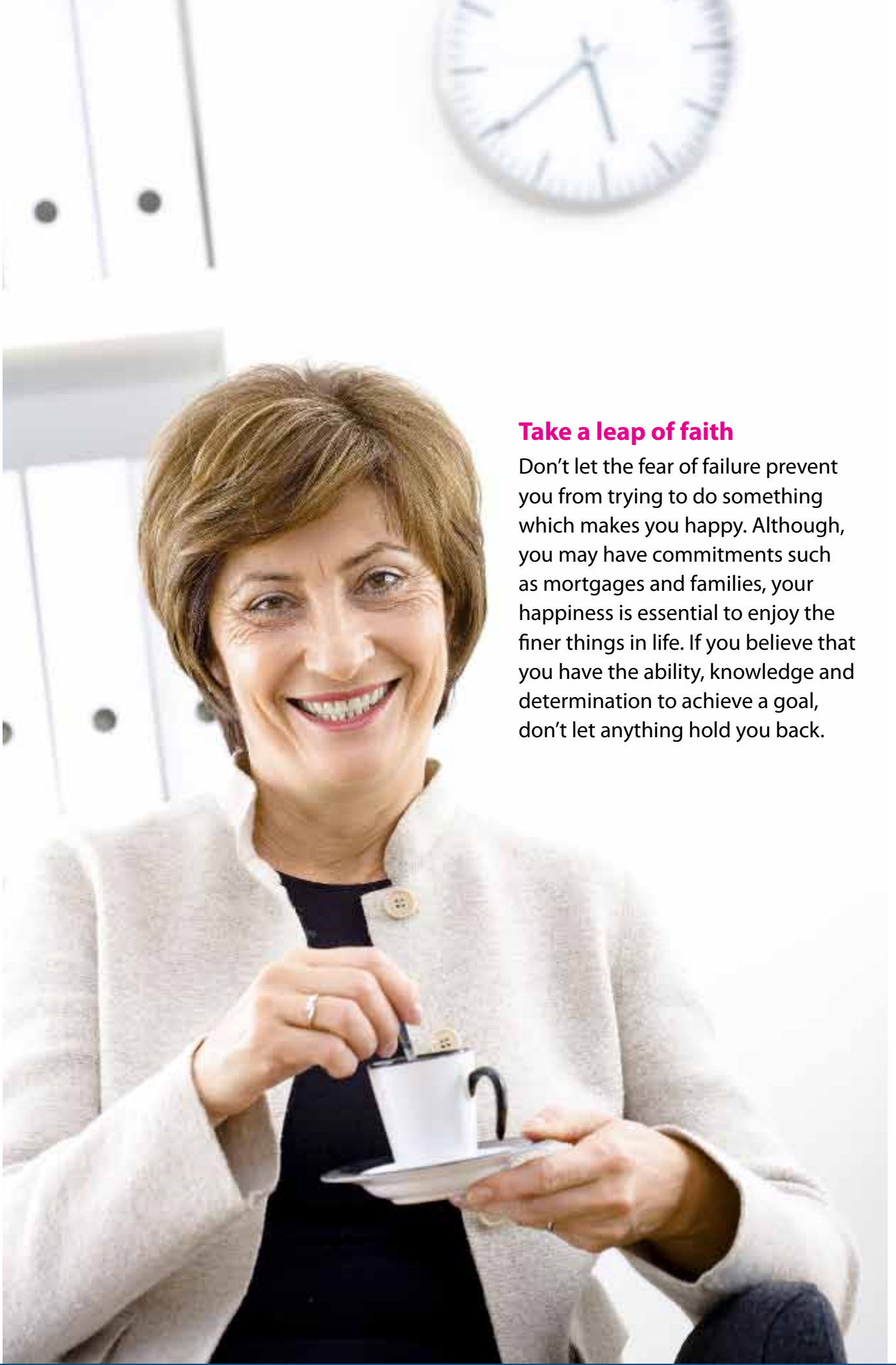
If you've been in the same industry for a long time, it can be easy to believe you only know how to do one type of job. Sit down, and scrutinize what you actually do day to day, then analyse which you use every day. This will help you realise how transferable your skillset is, which will make you more confident when deciding on a new career.

Consider Self-Employment

Maybe the reason you're dissatisfied with work is due to your frustration in answering to someone else. Becoming self-employed isn't easy and requires a lot of work, however if you're motivated enough and are equipped to do so, starting your own business could bring ultimate job satisfaction and flexibility.

Don't let a rejection put you off

It's very rare for someone to get the first job they go for, you need time to perfect your interview skills and build your confidence (especially if it's been a while since you last applied for work). If you get a 'no' don't let it diminish your confidence, try and get some feedback, or do a self-evaluation to try and find things to improve on. You can learn from every experience you undertake.



Take a leap of faith

Don't let the fear of failure prevent you from trying to do something which makes you happy. Although, you may have commitments such as mortgages and families, your happiness is essential to enjoy the finer things in life. If you believe that you have the ability, knowledge and determination to achieve a goal, don't let anything hold you back.



A-Z Pearls of Wisdom

by Lindsay Taylor

L is for... Listening with your whole body

Listening is the key to creating and maintaining rapport and the great working relationship that we all want with our manager and team. Listening is a skill and for many of us, it is a skill we can improve on.

About the Author:

Lindsay Taylor grew up in Hong Kong and has worked as an Executive Assistant in both the UK and the US. She now runs Your Excellency Limited, delivering training and coaching to administrative professionals around the world. Lindsay is renowned for developing and delivering the workshop "Be a PA with PA – Perfect Awareness", an inspirational day of learning for PAs serious about creating and maintaining a professional identity and working with effectiveness and efficiency. Lindsay is a member of the Association for Coaching and supports continuing professional development.

The crème de la crème of listening involves listening with your whole body and then mirroring or matching the person we are listening to in order to create and maintain rapport, based on the popular saying that "people like people who are like themselves".

Once we have great rapport with someone we are then more easily able to influence or persuade them – with integrity of course – so that we can achieve our goals and outcomes. The "integrity" element here is of utmost importance when influencing – we need to ensure the person we are influencing is being taken to a good place as well as ourselves in achieving our goals and outcomes.

Let's use Mehrabian's research introduced in A-Z Pearl of Wisdom "A is for Assertiveness" as a basis for putting this "whole body listening" into practice.



“Based on the research of Harvard Professor Albert Mehrabian, 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. The words that we speak account for 7% importance in getting our message across, the tone for 38% and the body language for 55%”

Listen with your ears to the Words

We all have a preference for phrases, terminology and favourite sayings. Our own personal interpretation of vocabulary may be very different to someone else's.

Notice what specific words and phrases the person you are listening to has used. Pick out particular phrases and words to repeat back when talking to them. Based on the popular saying “people like people who are like themselves”, by using the same “language” and words as the person you are listening to this demonstrates your respect for what they are saying. You are keeping the conversation

“clean” by using their language without “dirtying” the conversation with your own preferences. This accounts for a lot in creating and maintaining great rapport.

Listen with your ears to the Tone

Listen to how someone is using their voice. What tone of voice are they using? What emphasis are they placing on words with the intonation of their voice? How fast or slow are they speaking? What volume are they using? What does this tell you?

Listen with your eyes to the Body Language

Based on Mehrabian's research we know that 55% of communication comes down to body language – so how we deliver our message. As a listener then we can assess a lot from noticing what is happening in a person's body language including their physiology (facial expressions), gestures, movement. What can you see happening? We can listen with our eyes and use this information to be curious about what is going on for that person.