

PA ENTERPRISE

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

May 2014

**The Rise of
the Uber-Mum**

**How to Choose
the Perfect
Meeting Venue**

**Top Ten Diet Tips from
Saracens Rugby Players!**

**In Focus: Peachy
Boss and his PA**

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

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New grab and go healthy breakfast

No time for breakfast? Struggling to think of a way to eat a healthy breakfast on the go?

Try Lizi's Granola On The Go - a single serving of delicious granola in a self-contained pouch and spoon pack.

Cleverly, lactose-free milk powder is already added, so just add a few spoonfuls of water to create the perfect tasty and healthy breakfast.

The ultimate in convenient healthy eating, Lizi's On The Go can be slipped into handbags, briefcases or even pockets and means that you can enjoy a satisfying and filling meal wherever you are and at any time of day.

The new range includes the naturally luxurious varieties: Original; Belgian Chocolate; and Treacle and Pecan.



Lizi's Granola On The Go launches at Waitrose on 12 May at £1.29 for a single 47g serving.



Protection from bites

Don't Bite Me Patch has announced that it will make protecting skin from ravenous mosquitoes and other biting insects easier than ever this summer with the launch of the newly formulated Don't Bite

Me Patch. Using a natural blend of Vitamin B1 and Aloe Vera, the clear topical patch is applied to the skin

and actively deters the unwanted attention of those pesky bugs that just won't stop biting. No more chemical sprays or sticky lotions, just a simple, easy and discreet adhesive patch that provides up to 36 hours of guaranteed protection.



Portable speakerphones

Ideal for conference calls on the move

Sennheiser, a leading provider of premium headset and speakerphone solutions, has released its new range of SP 10 and SP 20 portable speakerphones for business professionals and “prosumers” that need flexible conferencing equipment while demanding excellent sound and user-friendly functionality. The Sennheiser Speakerphone Series now enables users to make personal and small group conference calls on PC/softphone in offices and campuses or when travelling, and doubles up as a portable high-fidelity speaker for listening to music on the move, with a dedicated Sennheiser HD optimised sound profile.

The Sennheiser Speakerphone Series delivers Sennheiser’s renowned high definition audio quality in a stylish and eye-catching design. The Speakerphone Series elevates the once anonymous meeting room conference phone to the level of ‘must have’ workplace innovation; it shows Sennheiser’s sound heritage and iconic design at its best while making a clear style statement for any office or desk.

Customise your phone tariff

For anyone who has ever felt locked in by their mobile phone service plan, My Tariff offers a simple and effective solution.

My Tariff is a SIM card-only service that allows for on-going customisation of your mobile SIM tariff to suit your changing needs. In the UK alone, more than £6 billion is wasted every year on overspending on mobile phone contracts. Much of this is due to unclear limits on the amount of call, SMS and data that a particular tariff offers. With My Tariff, consumers and businesses can create a unique tariff on a SIM card that reflects the exact needs of each user.

On the website interface, you can use sliders to set the precise call, data and SMS levels that you want for your SIM card. It takes as little as three minutes to make your mobile potion and order your SIMs, which will be sent out to you the very same day. Once your SIM arrives, you can start using it immediately with your existing phone, provided it is unlocked. There is no need to change your number – you can enter your current number, PAC code, and network. After filling out a short form, you will get approval within minutes and very soon your customised SIM will be on its way to you.

Purchasing Power for SMEs



This month sees the launch of a new company which is set to revolutionise procurement deals for SMEs giving them the same purchasing power as large corporations. The Buying Power offers its members extraordinary value on a wide range of products and services from credible suppliers – including office products, facilities, IT, credit cards, fuel cards, legal and recruitment.

The Buying Power has pre-negotiated deals with its trusted partners generating typical savings of between 20%-70% - dependent on the product or service - making them a clear-cut choice for SMEs looking to save money and be more competitive or for entrepreneurs looking to start their own company.

With The Buying Power's next day delivery on all office products, facilities and IT goods – it means storage space can be kept at a minimum meaning those costs can be put straight back into the business for growth.

David Mitchell, founder and director at The Buying Power comments; "The concept behind The Buying Power came from many years working on procurement deals and recognising that large companies were able to drive better prices for their suppliers giving them better profit margins."

"Small and medium sized companies – and new start-ups – are at the heart and soul of the UK and we at The Buying Power believe they should have the same access to great deals – helping them save money and be more competitive. We do not rely on the number of members to get the best deals – we've already negotiated those!"

Pre-negotiated deals

20-35% off IT hardware and peripherals

20-70% off office supplies

20-35% off facilities supplies

20-25% off printing services

30-50% off recruitment services

30-40% off card payment processing

Fuel cards at 10p off per litre

20-35% off office furniture and interiors

20-45% off business development

20-30% off PR and social media

20-30% off legal services





April - Nov
2014

Small businesses across the UK are being encouraged to grow in 2014 thanks to a new Government-backed business tour.

Get Growing! The Great British Business Roadshow - which is supported by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills - will visit 11 cities across the UK during 2014, providing advice, support and insights about growing a business from some of the countries leading small business support providers.

The tour is being led by pioneering cloud accounting company FreeAgent, who provides the UK's market-leading online accounting system for small businesses and freelancers.

The tour, which was officially launched at Google Campus in London, will visit some of the UK's hottest startup locations throughout 2014, including Cambridge, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Brighton.

Delegates who attend these events will receive a range of useful information designed to help them grow their businesses, as well as attending interactive workshops and networking opportunities with other small businesses from their area. They will also receive exclusive offers on tools and resources that will help them run their businesses more effectively.

Skills and Enterprise Minister Matthew Hancock said: "Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and it is essential they are given the right advice and guidance for them to start-up and scale up."

For more information about the roadshow tour and details about how to sign up for upcoming events
CKICK HERE

The Montar car mount from Winnergear is now available in the UK.

The mount has a simple yet stylish design so it will look good on a dashboard or windscreen and will suit any custom car settings. It can hold all major devices including Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy and most devices from manufacturers such as Blackberry, Tom Tom and Nokia, as well as devices with bulk cases.

The rubber-coated arm that surrounds the phone can be rotated a full 360 degrees, and held in position by an adjustable neck at the base of the mount. While in use, all ports and buttons are still fully accessible, allowing the phone to be charged and earphones to be attached at the same time.





The Rise of the 'Uber-mum'

"Super-mum". The very phrase immediately conjures up exhausting images. Highly over-used and places unnecessary pressure on mothers and their expected roles in society. So what exactly is a 'Super-mum'? SM's are expected to raise perfect, adorable and well-mannered, healthy children, effortlessly juggle the demands of family life, cook like their life depends on it with Paleo/ low-sugar/ fashionable/ exquisite recipes, look devastatingly fabulous at all times and maintain that gorgeous size 8-10 figure.

They must also be witty, charismatic, host umpteen dinner parties with scintillating intellectual conversations about 'trending' hot topics and politics, be a 'socialista', run pristine and whistle clean living quarters – all while still holding down their high flying careers.

We are now witness to this phrase everywhere. You only have to Google the

term and you will see what we are getting at. Exhausting? Absolutely.

THE BIRTH OF THE 'UBER-MUM'!

Just how is it possible to sustain or obtain this godly 'Super-mum' status? Gradually, more and more mothers are waking up to the reality that this existence is simply not possible in the real world.

There is a brand new wave and emergence of women on the block who seem to be a little more discerning about the 'real' parenting and lifestyle deal. The mother who has less of a 'try-hard'/'must-do' attitude and one who is more motivated by a gentler balance in her life which enables her to truly engage with life and enjoy parenthood at the same time. She doesn't conform to any one category or feel pressure to be this or that. Move over 'Super-mum' and all hail the rapid rise of the

'Uber-mum'.

In fact, a recent survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found that SAHM's (stay-at-home-mums) managed almost twice as much time to caring for their children compared to working mums. The results found that they actually devoted 2 hours, and 35 minutes each day devoted to activities such as playing games, meal times and bathing.

WHO EXACTLY IS THE 'UBER-MUM'?

The 'Uber-mum' is the modern 2014, forward-looking mother who has been confident enough to take a little bit of control back for herself. Oh yes. She refuses to spread herself so thinly that she is 'Jack-ess' of all traits and master of none. She doesn't want to dilute the wonderful experience of simply being a 'mother' either. Rather, she wants to maintain a healthy and steady balance in her life, spend quality time with the family at home, whilst earning a few pennies and saving money where she can. Conforming is so over. She is an absolute 'time-hero' and chooses to spend her time boosting her income for the family nest in between those crucial school hours. Sending her beautiful offspring to after-school every day or recruiting a nanny is an extra expense she doesn't need and means less time with her nearest and dearest. She wants to cherish that school pick-up hug for as long as she can. Oh – and she actually manages to find time for herself too....

HOW 'UBER-MUM' SAVES MONEY..

Yes. The 'Uber-mum' is not someone who wants to spend long hours on a stressful career to raise those all important family

funds. She uses a clever and tactical mix of earning a few pennies and saving money where she can to keep finances in check enabling her to spend more cherished time with the family, at home.

Here are some tips on how to save and make extra money...

- ▶ **eBay** – sell unwanted goods and old clothes you no longer need. This online auction site usually pays the best compared to all the others. Check out www.ebay.co.uk for more info
- ▶ **Sell off old baby goods**, there are numerous dedicated sites such as www.nappyvalley.co.uk and www.swapbabygoods.com that specialise in mothers and parents who are looking for a bargain. The key is to be targeted in your selling for the best selling success and profit margin
- ▶ **Register to take part in paid-for market research** or check out some of the online survey sites offering to pay you for your feedback. Get heard and paid for voicing your opinion on exciting brands and products during face-to-face focus groups or taking part in online surveys etc. Check out www.thisisangelfish.co.uk for more info on signing
- ▶ **How about making a profit from taking photos?** Budding photographers can upload their digital photos to photo bank websites such as www.istockphoto.com and earn royalties for each one sold. You might have a whole host of photos that are just waiting to be unleashed so most of the work is already done!



- ▶ **If you're running a small business from home, then why not apply to see if you're eligible for a government grant?** Do your research on the Internet via search engines where you can find out exactly what money you could be entitled to. You could potentially bag a grant in excess of £1000 or more. Check out <https://www.gov.uk/business-finance-support-finder> for more info
- ▶ **Organise a car boot sale** to sell off all your unwanted items. While you're busy selling why not factor in some time to also buy some goods on site at rock bottom prices, and then up-sell them to eBay, making a nifty profit from the comfort of home? Don't forget to take a car boot partner with you on the day so they can cover your stall whilst you browse for items
- ▶ **Babysit!** You already have a wealth of parenting knowledge – so why not use it? Start up with friends and family to build up your reputation first. You could offer to have the children to your home to make it even easier. Once you have a proven track record you could command up to £8 per hour!
- ▶ **Re-organise your banking and maximise the interest your savings are making you.** So many people are losing out on great rates because they just haven't bothered to check out the latest high street bank account deals. 5 minutes work can save you ££££'s over the year, If you've got savings ensure they are working well for you. Check out www.compareandsave.com to compare rates and the latest offers

HOW 'UBER-MUMS' SAVE TIME...

Time is money as the old saying goes. Jules Dean, co-owner of The Baby Journey www.thebabyjourney.co.uk and Practising Staff Midwife for Gloucestershire commented on the issue of time and parenting:

"Just accepting that you can't do everything at once is really important. Remembering that your children will only be little once and that you should do as much as you can to enjoy that time while it lasts. Prioritising time spent together over Hoovering, family days out over Facebook and cuddles in bed over supermarket trips. The 'Uber-mum' realises that life is all about balance."

Check out her top tips on how 'Uber-mums' actually save time...

- ▶ **Getting a cleaner.** Budgeting in other areas of your disposable income is really worthwhile. It frees up time for playing with the kids and allows more minutes for helping with school homework, reading books or playing games, rather than throwing the Hoover round, ironing or being a slave to the dishwasher
- ▶ **Get organised by using a weekday/end planner** so that you can plan ahead for quality time together as a family with weekend trips or activities. It also allows you to plan your daily tasks for the week ahead as efficiently as possible. Once these activities are in the diary this time is set!
- ▶ **Cut down on unnecessary online activities** such as using social media sites or working on the laptop after a certain time each day. This includes console gaming for the kids! This allows more time for the tasks you really should

be prioritising on or more quality time together, instead of wasting it

- ▶ **Online food shopping is great time saver.** You can do the weekly shop in minutes after the children have gone to sleep, instead of allocating at least a few hours to driving to, browsing for food in the aisles and then driving back again from the supermarket

Angela Barnes, Publishing Editor of Ask Baby & Junior Cotswold www.askbabycotswold.co.uk commented on this major shift of lifestyle for mothers:

"Many mums who would like to return to work are still finding that the rising cost of childcare means that it is just not possible. So many are finding clever ways to earn an income from home where they can work in the evenings, at weekends or during school hours if their child is at school. This also means they can spend more time with their children, can still do the school runs and they don't have to worry if their child is off sick from school.

Barnes continued: "They can still have that 'duvet day' with their children and any work can be caught up the next day. This is the reason the website www.askbabycotswold.co.uk was set up by myself as I was looking for a way to earn a few pennies from home but still wanted to be able attend school plays and be around in the holidays."

The rise of the 'Uber-mum' is spreading fast and the era of the 'Super-mum' is simply fading away. We say thank goodness for that.

By Angelfish Consumer Market
Research Agency



Tips for Choosing the Perfect Meeting Venue

Have you ever considered how the venue you select for your business meeting will affect its success? Choosing the perfect venue to conduct your business can have a great positive impact on your guests, whether your own staff or important guests. Jackie Dockreay of Exclusive Use gives some top tips for choosing the perfect venue for your next corporate event.

Choose an appropriate venue

Do you need a single room or a whole site? If you are looking for privacy and security, you may wish to book the whole venue, as opposed to a single meeting room. This way you can be assured of privacy and security, and can tailor the whole venue to your needs. Booking a complete site can also offer a feeling of exclusivity, perfect for events including corporate days out, incentive days, or for impressing your most valued clients. First impressions count and your chosen location will say a lot about you.

Consider the location carefully

Ensuring that your venue is centrally located for your attendees and easy to find is crucial. This will ensure that your guests arrive calm, stress free and with a positive attitude. Look out for suitable road / rail / air links. Ask about parking facilities – is this provided on site and does it cost?

Turn the page for more tips



Book well ahead!

Planning your meeting well in advance will ensure that you have more choice and are more likely to find the perfect venue. Once you have confirmed dates, check whether they are flexible enough to be changed if necessary, and whether this will incur any penalties.

Investigate all the costs

Once you have decided on the type of venue you would like to book, compare prices. Check out what is included in the price and whether there are any extras. Ask what deposit is required to secure your booking and when it is payable. Importantly, ask about the venue's cancellation policy – if you need to alter or cancel your booking, it is useful to know what you will be asked to pay and what flexibility they can offer.

Visit the venue in advance

If you are hosting a really special event, or are not familiar with your chosen venue, it would be advisable to visit in advance. This will provide first hand experience and allow you to 'get a feel' for things. Are the staff friendly and helpful? Is the layout right for you?

Ensure your meeting venue caters for your guests' need

Is there disabled access for wheelchairs users? Do you require overnight accommodation or recreational facilities such as a gym or swimming pool? If you are arranging refreshments, don't forget to ask about any special dietary requirements that need to be considered. These usually need to be arranged well in advance.

Choose a venue appropriate to the number of attendees

This is really important for the success of your meeting. A room that is too large could lead to difficulties for speakers and those attending may feel lost in the room. Too small and guests will become hot and agitated. It is important that your chosen location is comfortable to get the best from your meeting.

Save yourself from taking unnecessary equipment

Most venues nowadays will provide internet wifi facilities, but if you require additional equipment such as projectors or whiteboards, or have other specialist requests, don't forget to ask. Many venues will be able to cater for such requirements and it may save you bringing your own! Remember to check whether there is an additional charge for this service.

Staying Safe in the Workplace

by Jordan Peck

Health and safety in the workplace is a crucial element to ensuring the well-being of an office's employees – but it has become something of a running joke. This can cause us to feel like legitimate issues are just going to get laughed off - which is not ideal when you're suffering with back pain, or stressed with no help or solution to hand.

The fact is, your employer has a responsibility to ensure that you are as healthy as you can be in your workplace – and this doesn't just apply to those working in workshop or garage type environments. This applies to those working at a desk, too – and you might find yourself surprised at the dangers that can face you. These common office injuries may be significant, yes, but they're also not impossible to rectify with a bit of careful consideration.

BACK PAIN

Back pain is one of the most common complaints among office workers. The combination of long hours and stationary sitting can make for an uncomfortable few weeks - but there are a few ways that you can prevent back pain in the first place.

The set-up of your office chair is really important: you shouldn't be able to touch the back of your knees to the seat, your feet should rest on the floor and your thighs parallel. This should help minimise any discomfort in the muscles and joints, along with the possible pinching of any nerves, as in this position your spine is no longer forced unnaturally into a curve (which can also place extra strain on muscles in the back).

BACTERIA

If you knew the amount of bacteria and germs that reside on your every-day equipment like your keyboard and mouse, you'd likely never use them again! Unlike the floor and desk surface, the majority of office keyboards and phones aren't cleaned on a daily basis, and this can lead to a build-up of bacteria and the spreading of illnesses like colds – and we all know how quickly these can spread around the office.

Somewhat obviously, the way to prevent a build-up of bacteria is to take matters into your own hands and ensure that your keyboard, phone and mouse are cleaned often with equipment-safe antibacterial wipes – and you could always keenly use hand sanitiser too.

EYESTRAIN

Another bane in the life of the desk-worker is eyestrain. Often, we suffer with irritable, red, itchy eyes that can often transcend into a full-blown headache if we're not careful – and it's all because we have to focus at a screen for at least eight hours a day, often reading small lettering with badly-set contrast levels.

Along with taking regular breaks away from the screen, play around with the brightness settings to see if altering that helps. Adjusting the light around you can help keep eyestrain at bay too, but looking up, away from the screen from time to time can help you too!

In Focus

If you and your boss would like to take part in an article like this, please contact editor@deskdemo.com

Peachy Boss and his PA



Kristjan Novitski, Founder and MD of Peachy.co.uk and his PA, Heike Paberits

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT IS YOUR STARTUP ALL ABOUT?

Kristjan Novitski, founder of short term loan company, Peachy.co.uk. We are a direct lender best described by the following three words – fast, easy and secure!

We currently offer short term loans from £50 to £500 with multiple repayment options that give our customers a choice to choose when and how they wish to pay.

The majority of our customers are based in London, Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham and Liverpool and 60% are men, 40% women.

We pride ourselves on being a responsible lender that abides by the rules given by the OFT (Office of Fair Trading, the CFA (Consumer Financial Association) and now the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) who have just taken over regulation of the industry. We make sure that we only lend to people who can afford to borrow, only approving 7% of the loans applications we receive and those who apply must have a monthly income of over £600.

WHAT ARE THE CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES OF YOUR COMPANY?

Our core beliefs are based upon the three 'Es' – Expectations Exceeding Experience. We want all of our customers' expectations to be exceeded. We also want to provide a trustworthy and reliable service, creating long-term relationships with clients who know we are there when they need us – and who we can rely on to pay us back. Of the 12,600 average weekly claims we accept, just 7% are

approved highlighting the strict checks we have in place, ensuring that we're providing a service to people who really need us, rather than something that can be exploited by people who will simply drive further and further into debt.

WHERE DID YOU GET THE NAME FROM?

I came up with the name 'Peachy' because of its positive connotations – "life is peachy!" I wanted "to create a feeling" and with a name like Peachy it opened up the potential for diversification under this dynamic brand, to match the dynamic world we live in.

WHO ARE YOUR BIGGEST COMPETITORS?

Wonga and QuickQuid.

ONE THING EVERY ENTREPRENEUR MUST KNOW?

That running a business is one of the hardest things you are ever going to do – and if you want to succeed, you must never give up. If you had said to me in 2008 how hard this was going to be I wouldn't have taken the challenge back then. But it has been worth it; you just need to remember that life is going to hit you but it doesn't matter how hard you get hit, it only matters how fast you get back up again.

WHAT'S THE NEXT STEPS FOR PEACHY?

Over the next six months my energy is focused around our authorisation with the

FCA - who are taking over regulation of the short term loan industry this month. We want to make sure that we are fully compliant with any new rules they bring in and find out if there's anywhere we can improve so that we become one of the top companies in the consumer credit market.

Our main focus is ensuring Peachy is giving the best service we can and that we're doing the right thing by the FCA and our customers.

WHAT WOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A PA/SECRETARY?

Most of all I think that a PA or Secretary has to be a fast learner. He or she has to have very good communication skills because sometimes that person has to be my "voice" among the staff or in correspondence with my partners. Accuracy and attention to detail is also very important.

WHAT MADE YOUR CURRENT PA/SECRETARY STAND OUT IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS?

She was punctual, never late to our meetings and also, never too early. She had a strong hand shake and you could feel that positive self-confidence in her.

And, of course good communication skills, correct language usage and an openness to learn new things.

Krisjtan's PA is Heike Paberits. She says:

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

In Peachy there is always something interesting and new happening, and that's what I like most about my job. It's amazing to see a small start-up becoming more and more significant. Almost every day I learn something new, whether it's about communication between people or about the business itself.

IF THERE IS ONE, WHAT DOES A 'TYPICAL' DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

My typical day starts with reading through the correspondence, then I attend all the necessary meetings, write down the minutes and share it between concerned people. I am also responsible for a small part of human resources - handling the vacations, keeping in mind our colleagues' birthdays and organising team events etc.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS YOU USE AT WORK?

Every task I do requires different skills, but the most important ones that I need to use every day are communication, organising and planning skills but being able to multi-task also comes in handy!

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BE A PA/ SECRETARY?

I was just finishing my degree in Human Resources and this opportunity came up, I took it right away! It was the perfect challenge. I've always been organised and I love to plan ahead so this job seemed fitting. I play an important role for Kristjan as I schedule his upcoming meetings and represent the clients.

For more information about Peachy visit www.peachy.co.uk.

Turn the page
for this month's
question

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@deskdemo.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@deskdemo.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.

Ask the PAnel

Question:

I am looking into working from home doing typing, proofreading etc and do not know where to start. I have tried Googling the subject but there is so much out there I do not know where to start. Would you have any information for me on this subject? .

Answers:

Alison Boler



It is worth spending some time researching any local agencies near you that would offer jobs working from home. The best route however is to set yourself up as a

Virtual Assistant (VA). This has become an increasingly popular way for PAs/Secs to run their own businesses and/or work from home. Many VAs are on LinkedIn/Twitter if you want to connect with them for any further advice.

This website **www.virtualassistants.co.uk** is a good resource to give you some tips about becoming a VA and working from home, you can also upload your CV so that employers can find you.

Paul Pennant



Yes, there is so much information around you can end up feeling completely overwhelmed by it all. You need to start at the beginning, with the basics of working from home/being self-

employed. The type of work you decide to do at home - whether proofreading or transcription or a mixture of both - will follow on from that point (being dependent on time commitments, training needed, etc). As a starting point, and to help clarify your thinking, I would suggest contacting:

www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline

Business Support Helpline

0845 600 9006

Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm

I am confident they will be able to assist you.

Ask the PAnel

Lindsay Taylor



Hi Debra and congratulations on your decision to work from home! As you've identified, there is a wealth of information out there just by "Googling" and I agree, it can be a little daunting to know where to start.

As a first point of call, I would suggest getting advice from industry experts (such as the UK Association of VAs - www.ukava.co.uk - who have some valuable information on their website). I would also suggest getting first hand advice from those who are currently working as VAs and can "tell it like it is".

LinkedIn have various VA groups where you could post a discussion requesting advice and assistance. UK based Virtual Assistants and The Admin Doctor (Virtual Assistants Forum) are examples of LinkedIn groups.

Finally, I thought you'd like the following quote from Management guru Peter Drucker to ponder on:

"whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision".

Congratulations on your decision and here's to a very successful business for you!

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.

Ann Errington



From your question I am assuming you are looking at becoming a VA (Virtual Assistant). The way to begin would be to try and find out whether there are any other VA's in your area and make contact with

some of them to see if they can offer you any advice. You could also have a look at the following web sites where you may find lots of information:

www.vanetworking.com

www.linkedin.com/in/debbymarcy

www.societyofvirtualassistants.co.uk

Work out what you are good at and what you like doing and make this your specialism. Get good quality business cards produced and if possible create a web site. You will need to think about the equipment you will need eg good quality printer, good storage facilities (either paper based or electronic based), good communications equipment etc etc.

Find out whether there are any VA Networks near where you live or work and connect with them. Once you've started chatting to people you will get known. Remember people will not usually recommend someone they've never met! You could email target companies directly. If your email is friendly and explains why they might need you, people would be happy to keep and pass on your details. You could also place adverts in the local shops or newspapers.

Top Ten Diet Tips from Saracens Rugby Players

We all know just how fit and healthy sports men and women are - so why not follow some of their secrets? Saracens Nutritionist George Morgan shares his top ten healthy eating tips

1 PLAN MEALS DON'T SKIP THEM

Missing meals is the first nail in the coffin of a healthy diet; it will lead to you fatiguing between meals and relying on energy dense nutritionally weak snacks to make up the difference.

- ▶ Look at your upcoming week in your diary, focus on days where you may be home late, have the meal prepared in the fridge or freezer on those days
- ▶ Shop according to your plan so the food is in the fridge, know what you're eating when
- ▶ If you struggle to eat in the morning invest in a juicer or smoothie maker don't rely on sugary coffee to fuel you

2 HAVE ACCESS TO SNACKS IN YOUR DAY TO FIGHT OFF HUNGER PANGS

The office is a minefield of temptation and if you have already missed breakfast or gone for a high sugary snack it is hard to resist the



morning biscuits. So bring your own snacks:

- ▶ Handful of a selection of raw nuts (brazil, hazelnuts, walnuts and almonds)
- ▶ Raw seeds (pumpkin, sunflower and flax) sprinkled on low fat Greek yoghurt and mixed berries
- ▶ Piece of fruit

3 REMAIN WELL HYDRATED

Dehydration can lead to moodiness, lack of motivation and mental fatigue. Many people mistake dehydration for hunger pangs and actually take on extra calories instead of a



To download your free copy of The Ultimate Office Fitness Guide, which includes diet tips and menu plan suggestions, visit www.spi.sanlam.co.uk/saracens



thirst quenching drink of water

- ▶ Aim to drink 2-3 litres of water throughout the day, have a bottle on your desk
- ▶ Remember to factor in tea and coffee into your liquid intake

4 PORTION YOUR MEALS AROUND YOUR ACTIVITY LEVELS

Over serving or mistiming intakes are a sure fire way to put on weight. Eating the right nutrient intake at the wrong time can also lead to poor weight management

- ▶ Balance all meals
- ▶ 1 serving of a protein (meats, chicken, fish, tofu soya),
- ▶ Large serving of fresh vegetables

- ▶ Fist size serving of carbohydrate (pasta, rice, couscous, breads)

Try to keep energy dense carbohydrates such as pasta, rice, breads, potatoes and sugars to earlier in the day (breakfast and lunch) and control the portion size more to ½ a fist in the evening meal.



5 INCLUDE A WIDE VARIETY OF COLOURS ON YOUR PLATE

As well as upping the amount of fresh vegetables on each plate and reducing the energy dense carbohydrates ensure they come from a variety of sources.

If you look down at your plate and see various colours such as:

- greens (spinach, cabbage, broccoli, green beans)
- purples (beetroot, red cabbage)
- oranges (sweet potato, carrots, butternut squash)

You can be confident you are meeting all your nutrient requirements.



6 BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH TO WORK

Not only will this save you money it will cut calories and extra saturated fat from your diet.

- ▶ Make extra portions of last night's dinner put them into air tight containers and reheat at work
- ▶ Homemade sandwiches can have a great protein content and reduce the amount of high fat/ sugar sauces. They're also a cheap and nutritious alternative to saturated fat, sugar and salt laden supermarket meal deal

7 INCLUDE 2 PORTIONS PER WEEK OF OILY FISH IN YOUR DIET

Oily fish such as salmon, tuna and mackerel are rich in Omega 3 fatty acid which is one of the essential fatty acids we need to add



to our diets as we cannot make them ourselves

- ▶ Grilled salmon is perfect to be bought in as a pre prepped lunch, rich in muscle building protein and health promoting omega 3 fatty acid

8 EAT A DIET LOW IN SUGAR, SATURATED AND TRANS FATS

- ▶ Sugar is energy dense and if not burnt off by the day's activities can be stored as fat
- ▶ Tran fats found in poor quality processed food should be avoided

9. DON'T DRINK YOU CALORIES

- ▶ Alcohol is energy dense and nutrient poor (what you take in you get little benefit from)
- ▶ Drinking in excess can lead to poor metabolism and increase in poor food choices
- ▶ Minimise drinking sugary sports drink unless exercising for more than 1 hour, you just don't need them

10 MINIMISE PROCESSED FOODS

- ▶ Eat food in as close to its natural state as possible (minimal processing)
- ▶ As a simple guide, unless it's homemade, it should have less than four ingredients