

PA ENTERPRISE

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

December 2017



Are many of us lacking in good manners?

How to manage a demanding boss

Christmas party do's and don'ts

Master your time with proven tips

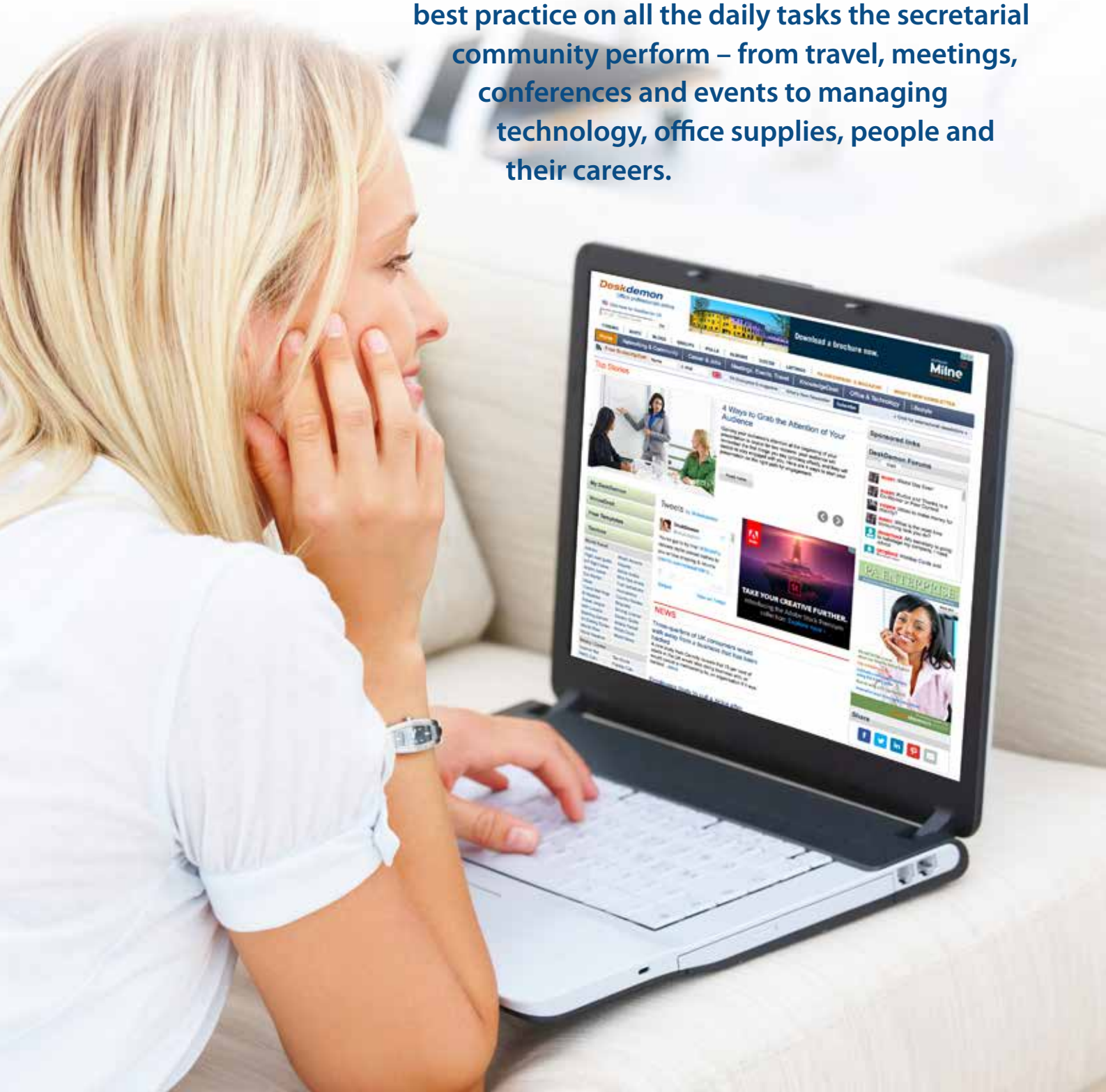
How to change your career at 40

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We've lost that trusting feeling – say a third of UK employees

Nearly one in three UK employees have no confidence in the leadership of their company to create and run a modern digital infrastructure, according to the Advanced Trends Report 2017. The new findings will come as a blow to many CEOs as the UK grapples with a changing business landscape that includes Brexit, increased cyber security threats and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).



The annual Advanced Trends Survey of over 1,000 professionals in UK organisations is the second to be commissioned by British software and services company Advanced. Like the first report, it reveals the state of readiness amongst British businesses in the face of digital disruption and examines the biggest barriers to digital transformation – of which leadership is one.

When asked about the most important attributes for a leader in the digital era, the majority of respondents said leaders should be able to

embrace change (82%), think and react with pace (67%) and be able to make bold decisions (57%). Only 42% felt bosses having a strong digital skill set was important, suggesting employees believe bosses are better off leading the company through change and making high-level decisions that will determine the future success of the company.

“Businesses will not succeed in the digital era without a strong, skilled and admirable leadership team,” says Gordon Wilson, CEO at Advanced. “A lack of confidence will only demotivate employees, thwart productivity and cost businesses money. Ultimately, it will leave leaders trailing behind those that do have the leadership attributes to reimagine their business and embrace the opportunity of the digital era.”

Tom Thackray, CBI Director for Innovation, adds: “We know that businesses’ ability to innovate and embrace the digital era is fundamental to the prosperity of our economy. It is vital that British businesses have confidence in their organisation’s leadership to deliver digital strategies that will support growth and create new business models for the future.”



Gordon concludes: "We are in a tumultuous period of economic uncertainty, and employees will be looking to their leaders for reassurance as Britain leaves the EU. We continue to see mixed feelings from our survey respondents about Brexit – 52% see it as a threat to business survival (compared to 49 % in last year's report) while 48% see it as an opportunity for growth and prosperity (previously 51%). Do leaders have mixed feelings too, or do they actually see Brexit as an opportunity and are not communicating their confidence from the top down?"

Brexit aside, the increased threat of cyber attacks and impending GDPR are enough justification for staff to demand better leadership. Both place new responsibilities upon their leaders to ensure every employee understands how to protect corporate and personal data. The consequences of being breached are serious, and can cost leaders their jobs as seen with TalkTalk and Equifax.

Julian David, techUK's CEO, says: "It's no longer a question of whether or not your company will experience a cyber attack, but rather when it will be attacked. That is why it is so important that cyber security is a top level priority for organisations, from the boardroom down. Organisations that prioritise security can confidently adopt new technologies, from cloud to IoT to AI, which facilitate innovation and help them grow their businesses."

The repercussions of a data breach or loss would be even more damaging if a company failed to safeguard its data under the GDPR. Equifax, for example, could have been fined up to \$124 million if the regulations had already come into effect.

Julian explains: "Too many organisations are unprepared for (or unaware of) the changes that GDPR will bring and the new responsibilities placed on data controllers. Additional guidance is needed from the Information Commissioner's Office, and particularly for SMEs, on how to prepare for GDPR. Similarly, senior leaders must ensure they are doing all they can to manage the changes ahead with the information already available.

"GDPR is less than seven months away and we must avoid a situation where organisations are on the wrong side of the law, and at risk of large fines, without realising it."

But it's not just large organisations facing these risks – all businesses are. Worryingly though, nearly one in five (18%) businesses still remain unprepared for a cyber attack while 25% are either unsure or not confident their organisation is going to be ready for the GDPR.

Gordon adds: "There are pressing issues that businesses should be taking action on today. Leaders urgently need to get a handle on the challenges they can control, such as regulation and security risk, and not get distracted by changes that are out of their hands, like Brexit. The reality is that digital is fast becoming a pre-requisite for businesses to gain a competitive advantage. Creating and running a modern digital infrastructure will help to improve employee productivity and customer service, as well as reinstate confidence and trust in leaders' ability to grow successfully."

Additional findings:

- **Most (88%) believe a connected digital infrastructure is important in being able to service and anticipate their customers' needs.**
- **Only 28% describe their organisation as having a modern digital infrastructure (departments connected through integrated data and statistics to gain insight into operations) – compared to 61% that don't (11% 'don't know').**
- **Given that digital is becoming the norm, only 75% are confident in their company's ability to adapt and embrace change.**
- **Over a third (36%) don't think they have the right tools to do their job effectively in the digital era. Of those that do have the right tools, half are now over 50% more productive as a result.**



Christmas party: do's and don'ts

While Christmas is supposed to be a time of joy and peace to all men, the Christmas party is traditionally seen as quite the opposite.

Cue bad DJ playing a selection of Christmas classics, and awkward conversations with people you don't really know that well at the bar. It always seems like a good idea before the big night, but let's face it, they're usually a little less 'Mistletoe and Wine' and a little more 'Fairytale of New York'.

Even with management coming up with ever more ingenious ways to keep things in check (e.g. the old 'party on a weeknight' trick), the combination of a free bar and a shiny dance floor can make the annual office knees-up a potential minefield.

In the highly unlikely event we can offer some advice you'll actually use, here's our list of Christmas party do's and don'ts...

Christmas party: do's:

Pace yourself

If you're a drinker, this is often easier said than done, but you should try and keep it in mind. Let's be honest, the office party usually means you're in it for the long haul. Make sure you eat properly in preparation, even if there's food provided (the buffet won't last long). Finally, make sure you have plenty of water in between drinks to keep hydrated.

Remember: *Try and avoid mixing your drinks. Don't let yourself become another Tequila statistic.*

Buddy up

Chances are, you may find it hard to keep to the first point. If you think this might be the case,

always plan ahead. Find a colleague who you're close with and make a pact. That way, if one of you ends up falling asleep at the bar or crying into your Chardonnay, someone is there to look out for you.

Get involved

It's an unavoidable truth that at least one person or group of people will avoid interaction or enjoyment at all costs – or alternatively, can't keep their thumb off the Facebook check-in button. It's also an unavoidable truth that this doesn't endear them to anyone. There's a time and a place, and the Christmas party's not it.

Remember: *Any embarrassing pictures can wait until the next morning. They also help with the flashbacks...*

Avoid the mistletoe

Some people embrace the Christmas spirit a little too much. And, after a few drinks too many, it may seem like a good idea to express your true feelings to that special person in the office. Mistletoe is not your friend, and should be avoided at all costs.

'All I Want for Christmas is You' also falls into this category. Cornering your crush singing Mariah Carey at the top of your lungs is pretty much bordering on torture.

Book your cab home in advance

Possibly the most important tip of all. Because nobody wants to sleep in the station waiting for the first train home.

Other things to remember: *Thank the host,*



thank your boss, keep your shoes in sight, avoid the photocopier.

Christmas party: don'ts:

Be honest

A wise man once said 'at Christmas, you tell the truth'. However, this should, in no way, apply to your Christmas party. Starting sentences with 'I didn't like you when I first met you', 'wow, you scrub up well' and 'don't say anything, but...' will not form part of an effective career progression plan.

Talk excessively about work

Targets, projections and any other work-based conversations should be provisionally left at the door. You're there to eat, drink and be merry. Work should only be brought up in emergency situations, such as getting caught in a one-on-one situation with the managing director.

The rule here is necessity. A boring conversation is always better than an awkward silence.

Network

See above. If you're looking for a promotion, this probably isn't the best place to do it. By all means branch out and talk to someone new, but don't overdo it. After a few drinks, you might not be making quite the impression you think you are.

Get too serious

As a rule, avoid speaking about religion, politics and money. People can have strong opinions about these things, and they're unlikely to change them during the course of the evening, no matter how charming and persuasive you think you're being.

Cry

If you're an emotional drunk, always take proper precautions. Waterproof mascara is definitely the way forward.

Other things not to do: *Sing, stare, steal, attempt to make a toast, break dance.*

by Michael Cheary www.reed.co.uk



Proven Tips to Master Your Time

"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you are the pilot."

Are you envious of your colleague who constantly accomplishes more than you? Do you wonder how the successful actor, businessmen, lawyers have got to where they are now? No matter how you slice it, everyone has only 24 hours in a day; their success is a result of how they manage their time to achieve more with less effort.

Here are the top 7 tips to master your time and improve your ability to focus:

Structure your day

Make daily and weekly plans with reasonable allocation of time limits for each task and frequent breaks. Making checkbooks against these tasks will help in tracking what has been completed versus what is left. You can also use apps like Time Tune, Todoist to distribute your workload more effectively.

Commit to your plan

Now that you have charted out your plan, it's important to follow it with complete sincerity. Focus on one job at a time. Instead of throwing a towel in the face of a tough situation, get out of your comfort zone and face it. Maintain willingness and a sense of dedication to do whatever it takes to complete the task in hand.

Prioritise

Key to effective time management and handling workplace stress is prioritizing. It is a method for determining the task having principal importance

on your goal lists. Should avoid making the rookie mistake of wasting a lot of time in doing an unimportant trivial task and miss out on the urgent ones.

Get an early start

A job well begun is half done. Procrastination just paves the way for ceasing growth and development. Getting an early start, gives you a clearer picture of your future tasks and also makes the entire ordeal less stressful.

Don't have unrealistic goals

Don't overwhelm yourself with impractical expectations. Concentrate on the present task and be well aware of your strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, don't be too disheartened if you are unable to reach your target. Continue trying with the same conviction. Take periodic buffer time to mediate or take a walk to divert and refresh your mind.

Learn to say no

We can structure our focus better if we are successfully in realizing what's significant and what deserves our time. To do this when you are unable to cope with the engagements you already have, avoid taking on more commitments. Remember constantly staying busy doesn't mean that you are being successful or productive. The quality of the work also matters.



Defeat distractions

it can be difficult to concentrate on the task in front of you, especially when it's something you don't want to do. Unfortunately not keeping a tab on activities like watching TV, browsing on your phone, playing video games can detail your productivity. It is vital to be conscientious of the time you waste.

Go on! Become the master of your time. The most successful people started with small steps to manage their time and developed their own style of getting more done. Always remember, everyone has the same 24 hours in a day and what you do in those 24 hours are critical to long term success.



This Christmas, most of us will lie and say we love a present we actually hate

A recent survey by Gift Wink has unveiled our gifting habits, showing that 70% of us have 're-gifted' a present we didn't want, rather than admit we didn't like it, and almost 80% of us are willing to say we love a present we actually dislike.

Gift Wink, a company that aims to take the hard part out of buying presents for loved ones, conducted a survey of almost 500 respondents from across the UK. It found that 84% of us have received a gift we didn't like, but only 9% could admit it.

The survey also found that we're more likely to buy the wrong present for someone between the age of 35 and 44 and that we waste a huge amount of time on gifting! 40% of us spend more than two days a year or 'way too much time' when weighing up all our hours spent buying, wrapping, sending, thinking and discussing.

Gift Wink wants to change the gifting experience by providing users with a simple, time-saving

platform to find a present you know your loved one will love. Bad gifts will no longer sit in cupboards and drawers, go unused or be re-gifted, and Gift Wink's digital matchmaking technology will suggest curated and unique gifts to find the perfect match. The more users engage with the platform, the better the system becomes at suggesting the best present matches.

Other survey findings include:

Almost one in five of us have knowingly bought the wrong present for someone.

Half of us have forgotten a present for a loved one - 28% have forgotten a friend and almost one in 10 admitted they forgot their partner!

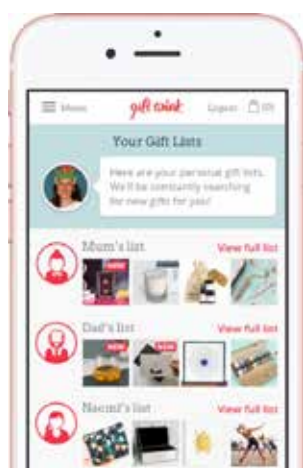
Men are most likely to forget their Mum!

Less than 1% of us have a present drawer.

14% admit to easily spending over £1,000 on presents across the year, but the majority (22.5%) will spend between £400 and £600.

Almost 40% believe they easily add £10-20 to their purchase when they panic buy.

Gift Wink was co-founded by Alex Farrell and Rebecca McAra, two women who believe that the time is ripe to start a gifting revolution. Their



gift wink



mission is to make life easier.

The founders created Gift Wink to solve a problem they experienced first hand. The frustrations of remembering birthdays, battling chaotic schedules, and an ever increasing number of Christmas and party presents to buy. They wanted to find a way to make the whole process of buying someone a present simple, enjoyable and fast.

Alex Farrell, CEO and Co-Founder, commented: "Gifting is an enormous industry that is ripe for an overhaul. With so much of our lives lived online these days, there is no excuse for getting a gift wrong or forgetting a birthday - and the results of this survey show just how bad we are at getting it right!"

"Gift Wink want to use technology to match gift

buyers with the perfect gift and remind them to buy it in plenty of time. No more hours spent trawling the internet for present inspiration - our gift matching system will source the perfect one every time."

Farrell continued: "There's no better time to use it than Christmas when the amount of time spent on gifting can get out of hand. Gift Wink does the work, and you take the credit!"

Gift Wink saves key dates and intelligence about the person you are buying for, so you will be notified weeks in advance with a unique selection. Within a few clicks you can sort a present and have it delivered without having to leave the Gift Wink website.

For more information go to: giftwink.com



Sedentary Brits walk fewer than 1,000 steps a day - a TENTH of the recommended number

A nation-wide study of Brits has revealed the true extent to which our lifestyles have become sedentary, with almost 1,000 emerging as the average steps taken per person in the UK, despite advice from doctors and health experts to take at least 10,000 steps daily.



And when it comes to going to the gym or working out – Brits have all the excuses, with being unable to find our earphones, being too unfit to work-out and something good on the telly among the most common excuses Brits give for not wanting to go to the gym, according to a new study.

Worryingly, of those polled, nearly two thirds (65 percent) said they take their health for granted and need to look after their body a bit more, while 19 percent said they always get their partner and colleagues to fetch things for them.

Similarly, the research showed the average Brit is sedentary for up to six and a half hours a day, with one in five describing themselves as 'very lazy'.

10% of Brits think there is little point in doing exercise of any sort because Christmas is around the corner and nearly one in twenty won't go and work-out if it's happy hour in their local pub.

The study was commissioned to help raise funds to find a much-needed cure for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy - a muscle wasting disease that effects 1 in 3500 Brits – with most boys only living until their mid-twenties.

Alex Smith, the founder of Harrison's Fund, whose son was diagnosed with the disease in 2011 said: "We can all relate

to that feeling of not wanting to drag ourselves to the gym – especially on these cold nights. But people suffering with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy simply don't have that option. Muscle degeneration is an inevitability and something we are raising awareness and funds to try to cure.

"What we're saying with this campaign is simply, don't take your muscles for granted. If you're going to skip the gym this week, then why not get a better excuse. As is clear from these statistics, we can all struggle to get motivated – so why not make a good excuse this week and help turn a little bit of laziness into hope for someone else."

Three in ten said they will use any old excuse for



getting out of exercise with a popular excuse being that their phone is flat so they won't have any music to listen to.

But a confident one in twenty reckon they look great anyway so they don't need to bother with the gym and many said they don't want to get too buff.

Not surprisingly then, the average Brit gets of a gym session at least four times in a typical month.

Three in ten of the 1,500 adults polled said they have not got much use out of their gym gear and sports equipment – with the average adult confessing to wasting £176 on unused gym memberships and high-end workout gear.

According to the study, one in five claim they “always” take the lift rather than the stairs, while a quarter of Brits will always park as close to the shops as they can in a bid to reduce the distance they need to walk.

While the majority drive to work, more than one in ten (11 percent) said they would rather miss their bus or train than pick up speed and run to catch it.

To get a good excuse to skip the gym today and help Harrison's Fund fund a cure for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy visit www.gymexcuses.com

TOP EXCUSES TO GET OUT OF EXERCISING

1. Too tired
2. Too cold to venture outside
3. I'm so unfit, I won't be able to do anything
4. I've got the start of a cold, so I don't want to make it worse
5. It's winter so no one sees my body anyway
6. My favourite TV show is on
7. Christmas is around the corner so there's little point
8. I'm too hungry
9. I want to be thinner before I go to the gym
10. There is no point because I've stuffed my face today
11. My gym buddy can't make it, so I won't go alone
12. I look great anyway, so I don't need to go
13. I need to help the kids with their homework
14. Gym gear is in the wash
15. The dog can't stay home alone
16. Need to be rested for a big night out
17. I ran for the bus today so that's my exercise for the day
18. It's happy hour in the pub
19. Gym gear is too tight
20. My friends are in worse shape than me so that's ok
21. I can't find my earphones
22. My phone is out of charge, so I have no music
23. I don't want to get too ripped



Citizens Advice warns about subscription contracts

Many consumers still struggle to get out of unwanted subscriptions such as gym memberships and online streaming services, according to Citizens Advice.

Many consumers are facing huge difficulties trying to cancel unwanted subscriptions such as gym memberships and streaming services, with some companies initially refusing cancellation requests, according to a new Citizens Advice report.

Analysis of almost 600 problems reported to the service found that in just three months consumers paid an average of £160 on unwanted services.

Sometimes, consumers misunderstood terms and conditions, while some companies made cancellation difficult.

The head of the consumer group, Gillian Guy, said firms must "act responsibly".

"Subscriptions are very easy to sign up to but can be difficult for consumers to get out of. We know people are wasting time and energy trying to cancel subscriptions while paying out of pocket," she said.

Companies refused cancellations by asking for more notice - stretching to six months in some cases - or told people they needed to cancel through a specific route, such as phone or email.

CA said one person who contacted the service said they tried to cancel a subscription after they were made redundant, and were asked for proof

from their employer - including a P45.

Most payments are thought to be through a Continuous Payment Authority, where companies can change the date or amount of a payment without giving advance notice.

Frequently, consumers said they felt it was unclear they were being signed up to a recurring payment or that the contract may continue on an auto renewal basis.

Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, businesses can't enforce terms on consumers that are unfair.

CA's report marks the start of National Consumer Week

CA's need-to-know tips about subscriptions:

- Always check cancellation rights
- Be aware that there is a cooling off period, usually 14 days
- Follow the cancellation policy, or you could be liable for missed payments
- Challenge unfair terms & conditions with the firm or its trade body
- If this fails, go to Trading Standards and/or Citizens Advice

Consumer Minister Margot James said the UK's consumer protection regime was one of the



strongest in the world, but there was always more to do.

She said: "With 40 million people in the UK now subscribing to at least one product or service, this campaign from Citizens Advice will help ensure consumers can shop with confidence and know what their rights are should things go wrong."

Leon Livermore, chief executive of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute said consumers should remember that if an offer "sounds too good to be true, it generally is".

He added: "We're also eagerly awaiting the government's upcoming green paper that sets out their vision for consumer protection in a post-Brexit landscape.

"We will continue to work actively with our partners... to build a safer future for UK consumers."

What are my rights if I want to cancel a subscription?

You can cancel direct debits and standing orders whenever you like, but if you do end up cancelling, make sure you follow the firm's cancellation policy, to avoid being charged for any missed payments.

You can challenge any terms and conditions you believe to be unfair with the firm or its trade body, or failing that go to Trading Standards or Citizens Advice.

If you've only just signed up to a subscription, thanks to the Consumer Contracts Regulations 2013, in most cases you have a cooling-off period during which you can cancel penalty-free if you change your mind.

For magazine subscriptions you have 14 calendar days from the day of your first delivery. When buying digital services, you have 14 days from the day after the order is made.



Modern day Brits are lacking in good manners

Modern day Brits are lacking in good manners, new research has revealed. It seems our busy day-to-day lives leave little time for courtesy, with 60% of Brits admitting they frequently forget to greet someone with a hello.

A further three in ten admit they rarely say thank you when they should, while 24% never say please.

Even the term 'goodbye' seems a difficult one for people to master, with one in five saying they often finish a phone call without any pleasantries.

Three in ten Brits admitted they wished they had better manners, and 85% of Brits admit they felt hurt and disrespected by frequent failures of courtesy.

A spokesperson for Mentos, who commissioned the research in line with the launch of the new Mentos 'Say Hello' mint and fruit rolls, said: "When we're busy, or engrossed in our phones, we can often let our good manners slip – but we should all make the effort to be polite and say hello. Mentos gives you the opportunity to say more than just hello, simply by offering one."

With 19% of the nation forgetting to thank strangers for holding a door open, seven in ten will respond with a sarcastic "You're welcome" for this lack of gratitude.

Despite being a nation of bad-mannered Brits, we still receive a number passing pleasantries from others.

Supermarket cashiers greet Brits with the most

"hellos", followed by coffee shop staff and receptionists.

We may not always be the ones to initiate the hello, but 69% say they will respond to polite small talk.

And people typically exchange 59 good-natured remarks every day, including ten pleases, 11 thank yous and ten hellos.

Signs of good manners include listening well, offering guests a first choice and elbows off the table.

Over half the nation agree good manners include offering a tea round when making one for yourself and not reaching over others at the dinner table.

Seven in ten agree people are less polite now than they were ten years ago with six in ten admitting they struggle to initiate a conversation or say "hello".

More than half put this down to being shy and 22% blame others for coming across as "rude".

And sometimes all it takes is a simple "hello", with 22% of Brits saying they have made a good friend from speaking to someone in a queue or coffee shop.



Just over one in ten are seeking advice on ways to speak to and meet new people.

Where over half will ask family and friends for advice and just over one third will join clubs or hobbies. And 11% will use apps and websites that connect people in search of new friendships.

Top 20 signs of good manners

1. Opening doors for people
2. Listening well
3. Showing patience
4. Always saying hello
5. Giving up your seat on public transport for someone more needy
6. Not interrupting someone who is talking
7. Always saying goodbye
8. Covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze
9. Knocking before entering
10. Helping someone with their luggage
11. Chewing with your mouth closed
12. Thanking someone for their hospitality
13. Putting your phone away in company
14. Saying 'excuse me' to get someone's attention
15. Offering someone a drink when they arrive to visit you
16. Saying 'pardon' when you don't hear someone properly
17. Saying goodbye before hanging up the phone
18. Asking permission
19. Offering to make others a cup of tea when you're making yourself one
20. Helping a parent with a pushchair up and down stairs



How to change your career at 40

You're 40 (or 40-something), and you want to make a career change, but it feels risky because you've got a lot to lose, and exciting because you've got a lot to gain. So, how do you change career at 40? And more importantly, how do you do it with less fear and more excitement? Here's how.

By Sarah Berry

The dilemma of change

Most of us choose the wrong career when we first start out in the world of work.

In fact, 80% of us get it wrong, and while changing career in our 30s used to be the norm, it's now the 40s when many of us decide it's time to do something different.

But change is scary. We worry that we'll fail or be worse off than if we did nothing, but is this a reason to stay put?

Certainly not.

Even though change is a challenge and you may resist at first, sticking with what you've got isn't an option. You'll just end up stagnating and feeling fed up with everything. Yuk!

What can make a career change harder is that not everyone around you may think it's a good idea. Your other half doesn't like the idea; your mates think you're daft and your bank balance keeps asking you whether you can afford to take a hit on your salary.

So far, so difficult.

But if you change your mindset, you'll find changing your career far easier than you ever thought possible.



Why do you want to change?

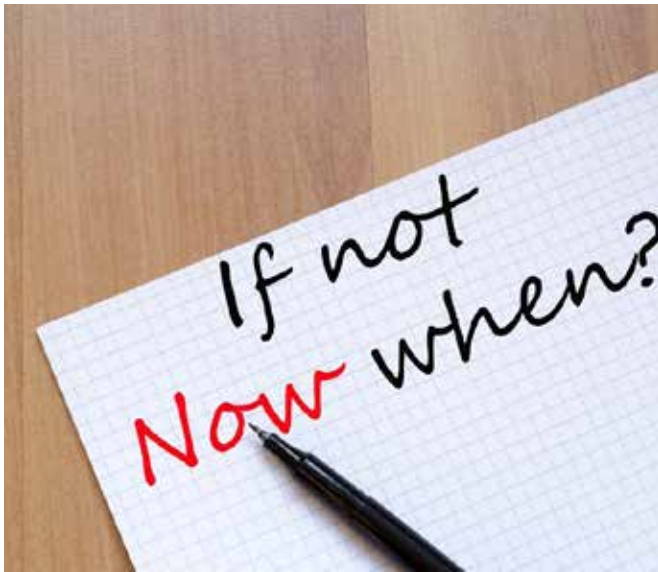
But first of all, it's worth doing a bit of digging to find out why you want to change your career in the first place.

Perhaps there are practical reasons for a career change, like wanting to move out of the city or work closer to home? Maybe you just don't want to be stuck in an office all day or want to use other skills?

Or, perhaps you just don't enjoy your job anymore. In which case, you need to ask yourself some questions.

What isn't working for me in my current career?

Is it the work itself or the culture of the industry I'm in?



Is there something else I'd rather be doing with my time?

Once you've worked out what you want, you can start to figure out whether you're ready for a change.

Are you ready for a change?

But how do you know you're ready for a change of career and not just having a 'difficult period' at work?

Here are some vital signs that you might be ready for a career change:

1. Work is a drag

You have to drag yourself out of bed every morning because your work bores you silly and you can't face another day that feels like a month. You're not using your best skills, either, and there's no sign of change or promotion where you are.

The problem is that it isn't just work that's become a drag, your lack of energy and enthusiasm has spilt over into your home and social life, so everything feels like hard work.

2. You just can't be bothered

You've had days when you couldn't get going because everything felt like too much effort. But these days, you can't seem to get interested or excited about anything at work. It looks as if your

enthusiasm for your work merely has evaporated.

What's worse is that continuously wish you were elsewhere – doing something else or just being on holiday. You seem to be taking a lot of sick days, too. You've tried everything to get your mojo back, but it's just not working. You need a change.

3. I want what they've got

The truth is, the grass looks greener on every side, but looking at the side of the fence you're on – it seems like you've got work envy.

Is someone else is doing the job you want to do, and you're jealous? When you think about doing the job that they're doing, do you perk up? This could be a sign that you want to go in the same direction, but it could also be a sign that you want to change careers altogether.

Is it too late to change career?

No, it's never too late to change your career, especially if you're in your 40s. After all, you could be working until you're 70. Can you imagine the pain of staying in a career you no longer enjoy for another 30 years?

Now that is scary – lot scarier than taking on a career change!

The thing is, once you've recognised you're ready for a change, you need to take affirmative steps to make it happen; otherwise, you'll be in the same place in a year's time – just a bit older.

About Sarah Berry

"Sarah Berry is an internationally recognised Career Consultant and the author of five career titles published by Hodder & Stoughton and Ward Lock, Cassell. She offers her expert career management and social media advice to corporate clients, individuals, leading websites and national magazines and runs Career Consultants & London Outplacement Services."



How to manage a demanding boss

Most of us know what it's like to work for a demanding boss but that doesn't mean you can't change the situation. If your manager repeatedly makes unrealistic requests, here's what you can do.



Demanding or challenging?

Life coach and best-selling author Cheryl Richardson once said, "Your best teacher is the person offering you your greatest challenge." When you are dealing with a manager who you regard as unreasonable, ask yourself what makes them so demanding for you.

'You might think a deadline is too tight or a project is beyond your ability, but your manager might know better,' says career coach Ruth Winden of Careers Enhanced.

'Good bosses challenge you to grow and develop new skills. If you feel stressed by your manager's demands, first ask yourself whether they are being unreasonable – or whether you are feeling anxious and uncomfortable because they are pushing you out of your comfort zone.'

When demands are unreasonable

'A degree of stretch is healthy for your learning and motivation,' agrees David Shindler, career coach and author of Learning To Leap. 'Problems arise when the demands are unreasonable. For example, because you lack the experience, skills or knowledge to complete a task, work overload, competing priorities, lack of resources or information, vague scope and inappropriate timescale.'

So how do you say 'no' without saying 'no'? David has several suggestions.

'Ask your boss for greater direction and support or tap into their experience and wisdom and ask them to coach you. If you have too much on your plate, there are three things you can do:

- 1) **Ask for priorities to be ranked in terms of urgency and importance,**
- 2) **negotiate a different timescale or agree a different result to fit the time and resources**



available,

3) change your methodology, which may include delegating tasks or enlisting the help of other colleagues.'

Decode the reasons why

If your manager is consistently unreasonable, you need to take a direct approach. 'People often feel powerless to change relationships, and either never try or give up too soon,' says Ruth. 'They complain rather than influence the situation. Over time, this can create a toxic work environment.'

Instead of bitching about your boss, try to figure out what's motivating their behaviour. For example, a chat with colleagues may reveal that your manager leans on employees they can trust. While this information won't magically lighten your workload, it may influence how you ask them to change their delegation strategy.

'Many complaints about "difficult managers" come from employees who feel micro-managed. Yes, there are bosses with a strong need for control – but not all managers who micro-manage their staff fall into that category. They will have reasons why they check everything you do. But unless you address the issue head-on, you won't know the reasons or how you can change things,' adds Ruth.

Re-train a micro-manager

If you want things to change, you need to have a conversation with your boss about what's important to you, your capabilities and the level of contribution you want to make.

'Agree on a way forward where you feel more in control. Accept that a micro-managing boss still needs to feel he is in control, at least at the beginning. Together, choose one (small) project where you are in charge,' says Ruth.

'Offer reassurance by agreeing how you will keep him informed of progress. Accept that at the beginning your boss might find it hard to adjust and be tempted to check on you. Make sure you don't let him fall back into his old behaviour and

remind him of your agreement.

'Show how capable you are and run a successful project. Over time your boss will hopefully recognise there is no need to check every move you make. For a busy manager, this should be a relief, not a threat.'

Your work-life balance

There will be times where you need to put in extra hours but it's important to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

'It's fine to work long hours and/or to take work home but this needs to be a temporary solution,' warns Rob Williams, an occupational psychologist and author of *Passing Verbal Reasoning Tests*

'Your manager may demand your immediate attention at work, but that doesn't mean they can expect you to consistently prioritise your working life over your home life.

'Asking to work from home can put some distance between your daily priorities and your boss's whims. Unless your role involves being on call outside work hours, agree that you will switch off devices once you leave the office and won't respond to work emails over the weekend.'

Go to them with solutions

The next time your manager tries to add another piece of work to your growing to-do list, assess your workload before you approach them.

'Making a detailed list of everything you're working on, including who else is involved and the corresponding deadlines, will help you see your workload in its entirety and give you the back-up you need when talking to your boss,' says Rob.

'Make sure you have prepared some alternative solutions. Whether it's extending the deadline on another project, delegating some tasks to colleagues or bringing in extra resources, go to your manager with solutions – rather than just showing them you can't do it.'

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