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

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**One in three are
'coasting' at work**

**Some HR teams
failing to delete
personal data**

**How to behave
at the office
Christmas party**

**The best Secret
Santa gifts for
your colleagues**

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One in three people in the UK are 'coasting' at work, according to new report

One in three (32%) people in the UK are coasting in their career and the biggest cause appears to be unhappiness in their current workplace, according to a report entitled Why BWell from Barnett Waddingham. The alarming statistic – which equates to more than ten million of the workforce – comes as the UK battles to solve a productivity crisis which since the financial crisis has seen our output slow more than any other leading western economy.

The Why BWell report, created through interviews with 3,000 UK workers, was undertaken to gain fresh insight into health and wellbeing in the workplace. When respondents were asked how they were coping at work, just over half (55%) were positive about their performance, however a third (32%) admitted to coasting, while 7% said they were struggling.

The most compelling reason why people coast is unhappiness at work, rather than any lack of ambition. There are two types of coasters – those who make the conscious choice to do so and those where it comes down to something not working with the employer or job role. While three in five (62%) coasters were content in their lives generally, only around a third (36%) were happy at work – suggesting that many could be mobilised to becoming better performing workers if employers could figure out how to make them happier at work and more productive.

One key cause of this unhappiness is employees lacking a sense of purpose – less than half (47%)

of those who coast say their job is meaningful to them and that they add value, yet among those excelling in their occupations, nine in ten (89%) feel this way. Meanwhile, only two in five coasters (39%) believe their employer makes best use of their skills, compared to 83% of those excelling.

Another contributing factor is the perceived effort that employers make with employees – coasters are almost three times less likely (33 vs 80%) as those who excel to feel recognised for the contribution they make, while almost a third (29%) say no interest is shown in them as a person, compared to just 3% of those flourishing at work.

The incentive for employers to address this issue is clear – coasters are a far bigger flight risk. Two in five (41%) coasters did not think they would remain in their current job for another 12 months, compared to just one in ten (9%) of those flourishing. According to Oxford Economics, the average cost to replace an employee is around £30,000, so high turnover can have a big financial



impact. Happiness may also directly influence productivity, with one study finding that happy employees are as much as 20% more productive than unhappy employees.

Laura Matthews, workplace wellbeing consultant at Barnett Waddingham, said:

“Mental health is beginning to get some of the attention it deserves in workplaces and thankfully, more employers are now looking out for the signs of issues such as stress and anxiety. This is great progress, but as part of the same conversation, employers should be thinking more broadly

about employee happiness and the positive impact this can have on all areas of the business, from productivity and innovation to profitability and corporate reputation.

“A third of our workforce is coasting at the moment, applying just enough effort to get by and go home at the end of the day. Our research shows that these are not lazy or unambitious people, but often those lacking purpose or confidence in their ability to add value. Mobilising this group to start excelling at work is worth a huge amount to UK companies.”

Disability inclusion in the workplace

Over 50% of UK employees surveyed feel disability inclusion is most important in the workplace, Wildgoose survey finds.



Disability in the workplace is a hot topic in the media today, with broadcasters such as BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky, along with government ministers, committed to doubling the number of disabled people involved in television by 2020 to make the industry more inclusive. However,

it is not just the broadcasters who need to implement a culture of change.

With 70% of discriminatory queries at The Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) regarding disability, it is clear that employers are not doing enough to be inclusive to those with

The Office for National Statistics found people with disabilities have unemployment rate of 8.7% (the unemployment rate for people without disabilities is 3.4%)

a disability. In addition, millennials are known to want to work for companies who are shown to be inclusive and have a diverse workforce as they understand the benefits.

According to the Office for National Statistics, the employment rate for those with disabilities was 50.7% from April – June 2018 (81.1% for people without disabilities) so if workplaces make changes so that they are more inclusive, the whole economy would benefit.

In addition, research by the Independent Living Strategy Group has recently found that charging for social care or effectively a 'disability tax' has increased substantially over the last two years – sometimes by half. With workplaces not catering for staff with disabilities, there are fewer jobs available for the disabled, resulting in financial hardship. The Office for National Statistics found people with disabilities have unemployment rate of 8.7% (the unemployment rate for people without disabilities is 3.4%)

The Wildgoose survey also found that 'age' was the second biggest area of concern regarding inclusion in the workplace at 46% – potentially leading to dual discrimination for the older generation of disabled people.

The recommendations accepted by the BBC's Executive Board include:

- **Increasing disability in its workforce**
- **Gaining a better understanding of our workforce through asking supplementary questions in the staff census**

- **Including disabled employees in all development and leadership programmes**
- **Ensuring recruitment processes and trainee and apprenticeship schemes provide specific support for disabled applicants**
- **Introducing a centralised 'BBC Passport' to inform managers about the support each person needs**
- **Mandate disability awareness training for all team managers**

All these recommendations could be made at any company – disability needs to be made a top priority.

Upon the publication of the Wildgoose survey results, Michelle Hamilton at MENCAP said:

'As a charity that works with people who have a learning disability, Watford Mencap are familiar with the findings of this survey. The UK is currently enjoying a low unemployment rate, but a disproportionate number of people with disabilities are unsuccessfully seeking work.'

Simple adaptations, robust induction and ongoing access to mentoring and training programmes can provide good pathways for people with disabilities to access the workplace and to become valuable team members.

Businesses must welcome people with disabilities into their workforce to provide a more equal and inclusive employment landscape.'

Almost three quarters of employees are doing a job they don't want to

New research by The Recruit Venture Group has uncovered the truths behind Brits' career aspirations including:

- *70% of employees are doing jobs they don't want to*
- *A third of full-time employees secretly want to start their own business*
- *Business owners are most likely to say they're in their dream job*
- *Almost 1 in 10 don't want to start a company because of uncertainty around Brexit*

The research shows that business owners are six times more likely to be in their dream job than employees (74% saying they're in their dream job vs just 13% of employees). It seems Brits have taken to starting their own company to create their dream job rather than searching for it elsewhere; 39% of side business owners say that their side business is their dream job and 31% of full-time employees want to start their own company rather than staying in employment.

The main reasons for not taking their side business full-time were money, family arrangements and friends at work. These echo the reasons for employees not starting their own business which were:

- **Lack of capital (58%)**
- **Fear of no regular income (43%)**
- **Fear of failure (42%)**

Almost 1 in 10 don't want to start a company because of uncertainty around Brexit.

Despite not being in their dream job, a quarter of employees do want to stay in their current job, with the top reasons for staying being:

- **Money (37%)**
- **Location (27%)**
- **Family Arrangements (21%)**
- **Lack of skills required to obtain the job of their dreams (20%)**
- **Unsure how to achieve the job of their dreams (19%)**

Age seems to have an impact on changing career with over 45s are most likely to fear it's too late to change careers, although surprisingly 10% of 18-24-year olds also fear it's already too late. Almost half of 65+ year old employees aren't in their dream job with 35% thinking it's too much hassle to find another.

71% of employees weren't always sure on what career they wanted but over half (55%) of business owners always knew they wanted to have their own company.

As a third of employees admitted to secretly wanting to start their own company, they were also asked which products or companies they wished they'd invented, with technological advancements being the most popular:

- Internet
- Facebook
- Mobile phone
- Jobs
- Computer
- Apple
- Amazon
- Dyson
- Google
- iPhone

Paul Mizen, Managing Director at Recruit Venture discusses these findings:

“Initially we predicted that more employees would be unhappy in their job over business owners, but we didn't expect it to be that high. It seems that many people could be happier by starting their own company and looking at the statistics we have got back from business owners, employees should think about their options and work out if their dream job is feasible by creating their own business and if so what the next steps towards this goal could be.

There is always another option and a different career path has no age limit, especially when looking at setting up your own company.”



The research also looked at how dream jobs have changed from when Brits were children to now, with the most desired jobs for each being:

	Dream job as a child	Dream job now
1	Education / Teaching	Education / Teaching
2	Nurse	Vet / Animal related
3	Doctor	Business owner / CEO
4	Footballer	Travel / holiday rep
5	Vet / Animal related	Lawyer
6	Pilot	Author
7	Engineer	Doctor
8	Fire fighter	Nurse
9	Police	Acting
10	Astronaut	Photographer

UK Workers most amusing Christmas workplace stories

Does your workplace grind to a halt throughout December? It can certainly be a quieter period for businesses ahead of the New Year, and new data reveals that this can lead to many workers taking a more relaxed, less professional, approach to work.

With the nation gearing up for Christmas, CV-Library, the UK's leading independent job board conducted research amongst 1,100 of the country's workers to expose the top ten funniest festive frolics that happened in their workplace:

We can all get a bit clumsy in the workplace, but one worker who was carrying a large plate of homemade mince pies (while dressed as Santa!) tripped coming through the door and dropped the pies all over the floor...what a waste.

Jane, a retail assistant from Stirling

We all worry about wardrobe faux-pas in the office, but one worker who was wearing a cheap elf costume caught some of the material on a chair, causing a rip in the private area. Luckily his stripy tights saved the day, and his modesty!

Mark, a sales manager from Manchester

No-one wants to be made fun of, but it was too hard to resist for one worker, who said an apprentice walked into a chair during his rendition of the Christmas song 'Walking in the air', causing everyone to start singing 'We're walking into chairs'.

Barbara, a retail banking assistant from London

It can be hard to know who everyone is at work, but one worker got a colleagues' gender completely wrong, mistaking their secret Santa for a lady, when it was meant for a man...whoops!

Sam, an admin worker from Leeds

It's always good to treat clients at Christmas time, but at one company, the important clients that came into the office for a meeting ended up with the Christmas tree falling on top of them – thank goodness they found it funny.

Laura, a PR account manager from Guildford

It's nice to be able to have a laugh with your boss, but one worker said his CEO bought their project manager a 'Project Management for Dummies' book as a secret Santa gift. Unfortunately, she didn't see the funny side, and actually left the room crying.

Gemma, a marketing executive from Liverpool

More and more organisations are embracing 'Christmas Jumper Day', but one employee got the date wrong and turned up wearing his best, most outrageous Christmas jumper (equipped with 3D baubles) ...a day early!

Liam, a warehouse worker from Bristol

Some bosses can be pretty generous during the festive season, but one MD (who was dressed as Santa) was clearly in the Christmas spirit (and also very drunk), giving away £100 to every employee at the office party.

Sue, an IT Manager from Cardiff

Lee Biggins, founder and managing director of CV-Library, comments:

"It's important to have fun at work all year round, but especially at Christmas! Our findings suggest that workplaces become much more relaxed as the year comes to a close and that bosses are, in most cases, more tolerant. This December, I would encourage businesses and workers alike to embrace the festive season and celebrate their hard work over the past year. But remember – it probably won't be all fun and games when you return to work in January!"

The best Secret Santa gifts for your colleagues

Are you taking part in a workplace Secret Santa this year? If you're lucky to have picked out your work bestie from the hat, you're in luck. If not, it can be confusing to know what gifts to give your colleagues – especially when it's all done anonymously!

What should you buy them? How much should you spend? What's appropriate? It can be an etiquette minefield. But don't panic! Much like Rudolph was there for Santa, we're here to help you out this Christmas.

Below we'll discuss what makes the perfect Secret Santa gift for colleagues and give you a few ideas to get you started.

What makes a great Secret Santa gift?

In our latest survey, we asked UK professionals to reveal what they believe makes the best Secret Santa gift.

The outcome? According to 46% of professionals, gifts should be capped at £5 – £10 and they should be either funny or personal for someone you know, or generic if you don't know them that well.

What's more, 98% of professionals agreed that choosing a rude gift is an absolute no-no in the workplace!

Feeling stuck for ideas? That's OK. Workers also revealed what they believe to be good ideas for Secret Santa gifts for colleagues – so why not take some inspiration from the below!

1. Novelty Christmas gifts

The majority of professionals agreed that novelty Christmas gifts were the way to go. So whether you opt for some festive Santa socks, seasonal trivia games or creative baubles, you're bound to find the perfect gift.

And tis the season, right? So it doesn't matter whether you know your recipient well or if you've only briefly spoken at last year's Christmas party, you're guaranteed to find a gift that will leave them smiling and feeling the festive cheer!

Not to mention these novelty gifts will be everywhere and reasonably priced! So you can make sure you don't go over budget (Christmas can be an expensive time after all).

2. Sweets and chocolates

You'd be hard pressed to find someone who doesn't love a tasty treat, especially over the Christmas period. So, chocolates and/or sweets came next on the list, with 40% of you lot saying that they're a great gift idea.

If you've got lucky and you know the person well, treat them to a box of their favourite chocolates. If not, that's OK too. There'll be plenty of seasonal treats to choose from (never

underestimate the joy of receiving a chocolate Santa!).

Plus if you're feeling unsure, choosing chocolate or sweets will always be a safe bet. Or ask someone they're close to for inspiration.

3. Vouchers

Often vouchers get a bad rap as they're deemed as lazy or impersonal, yet over a third (39%) of professionals deem these to be a good Secret Santa present for colleagues.

When you're really stuck for ideas (especially if you're not very close to your chosen colleague), simply letting them choose their own gift is a great option. At least that way you know they're going to get something they'll love.

And with so many vouchers available, you could even be creative with it. Get them a voucher to put towards a meal or day out. It doesn't just have to be for one particular shop.

4. Personalised mugs

In many offices, it's a custom to bring in your own mug for the work kitchen. So why not consider mixing up the tea round and getting your colleague a new and personalised mug.

This gift is probably a better option if you know your colleague well. Perhaps select a favourite quote, a picture of them (or the two of you) or a funny joke/image that you know they love.

If you did want to get a personalised mug for someone you don't know so well, you can always keep it simple and have their name printed on the side. You just need to select a great design!

There's plenty of companies out there that offer these services for a reasonable price. Moonpig for example offers a range of personalised gifts. You might even find another idea that you like!

5. Alcohol

Finally, one in four (24%) Brits suggested that alcohol makes a good Christmas present (providing your colleague is over 18 of course!).

Most people enjoy a tipples over the Christmas period, so what better way to kick-start the festivities than with a bottle of bubbly – as long as they don't open it at work that is!

Of course, there are a whole range of drinks you could choose from, just don't go over the top or you could find yourself breaking the budget.

Feeling inspired yet?

These are just a few festive ideas to help you on your way to choosing the perfect Secret Santa gift. But whether you opt for novelty gifts, chocolates, vouchers or something entirely different, remember, you need to make sure you always keep it work-appropriate.



Third of HR teams fail to delete personal data after retention periods expire

Six months on from the GDPR, new study highlights discrepancies between data protection policies and practices among UK HR teams – despite 87% saying they are confident their processes are ‘fully compliant’ with the regulations.

A third of HR teams admit to being in breach of the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by failing to delete personal data about employees, leavers and candidates after data-retention periods expire, according to a new survey by HR solutions provider CIPHR.

Although four-fifths (83%) of the 137 UK HR professionals surveyed said they have set retention periods for employee, leaver and candidate data, just 69% said they'd put these policies into practice and actually deleted data where retention periods have expired.

The apparent mismatch between the high proportion of HR teams who had updated policies (93%), introduced employee training (86%) or defined data retention periods (83%) and the relatively low proportion that are actively deleting expired data was a cause for concern, said CIPHR's head of people and data protection officer Claire Williams.

“We're entering a period now where HR professionals need to focus on enforcing the policies they've put in place. While the majority of organisations have done the necessary work to write policies, create new procedures and train staff, there remains a question over whether data-protection principles have actually been built into the design of the organisation, to

ensure they are being adhered to consistently. It is proof of an intrinsic culture of data protection that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) would be looking for during an inspection.”

The study also found that HR professionals are widely ignoring one of the ICO's key recommendations for GDPR compliance: that of enabling self-service access to data. Only a third (31%) of respondents said they had enabled self-service access to personal data for employees in response to the GDPR, with that proportion falling dramatically for job applicants (7%) and former staff (4%).

Williams commented: “I'm really surprised that employers aren't actively using self-service – which is such a common, widely used tool – to assist them in adhering to the GDPR principles, especially in relation to ensuring individuals' rights, such as the right to access and the right to rectification. The GDPR sets out very clear rights for individuals in relation to how they access, rectify and erase data, and enabling self-service is an easy way to comply with those requirements. Not to mention all the other benefits associated with self-service HR for staff – such as improved data accuracy, absence management, better communication and, ultimately, higher employee engagement.”



The findings are at odds with HR professionals' confidence in their compliance with the GDPR's requirements. Six months on from the 25 May 2018 deadline, 87% of respondents said they were 'very' or 'somewhat' confident that their HR processes were now fully compliant with the regulations. Their confidence fell to 79% when asked about their wider organisation's compliance with the GDPR.

"Although these are promising results in some regards, it's vital that organisations don't become complacent about GDPR compliance," said Williams. "They need to make sure that policies and procedures are built into the fabric of the organisation, are consistently implemented, and are regularly reviewed and audited."

Lucy Gordon, senior solicitor at ESP Law Ltd, also warned organisations not to become complacent. "Much of the detail of how compliance will work in practice is yet to be confirmed," she said. "I would encourage businesses to update and modify their processes as time goes on in line with the current guidance. It's also prudent to keep training employees about their obligations so that bad habits don't develop and to audit processes regularly to ensure that they remain compliant."

CIPHR's survey also found that two-thirds

(65%) of HR teams had requested consent from employees, leavers and applicants to hold their personal data. This high proportion could signal a misunderstanding of the GDPR's eight lawful bases for data processing – only one of which is consent – said Williams. "The majority of data that organisations hold about their employees is usually driven by contracts or legitimate interests, so I'm surprised that such a high proportion of respondents are actively seeking consent to hold data.

"HR teams – and organisations more widely – must be actively considering the lawful bases for the ongoing processing of data, and take appropriate action if that purpose is no longer relevant," added Williams. "More than half (51%) of HR professionals told us that they are relying on alerts outside their HR and recruitment systems – such as calendar reminders or paper notes – to remind them to manually delete records when their retention periods expire.

"Implementing HR and recruitment systems that have sophisticated data-retention dashboards – such as those in CIPHR's software – will alleviate the burden of manual HR administration because they automatically identify and flag when records need to be deleted or anonymised, or if consent to process data needs to be extended."

How to Behave at the Office Christmas Party

Making a fool of yourself at the office Christmas party is something to be avoided at all costs. After all, you'll be obliged to front up to those very same co-workers the following week and if they have a remarkably lowered opinion of you since the party, it'll feel more than awkward...

While the Christmas party can create worries for both employer and employee, it is an event where you can still behave professionally and have fun, and provides a great opportunity to socialize with co-workers and bosses within your company whom you normally don't have a chance to mingle with. It all comes down to the simple mantra "behave right and you'll have a great night". And here are some straightforward suggestions to keep this part of your work's social event calendar all sorted.

1. Prepare yourself mentally and show up.

Rather than dreading the occasion, the right mindset can provide much-needed balance. Regardless of how you feel about the party or the office, office parties are a crucial part of the office dynamic. Think of it like a Sunday afternoon visit to Grandma – even if you don't feel like it, you know that you probably should go.

- Accept that this is part of what is expected and expect to be able to talk to the people you do get along with, at the very least. It's a good opportunity to meet your superiors in a casual environment and a chance for networking with new people. Both are great things for career escalation. It's also a good opportunity to get the wallflower into a good conversation. You might be surprised and find a terrific person there.

- If work is paying, here's a chance to enjoy food and alcohol at work expense!
- Consider leaving early in advance. When you're deciding whether or not to agree to going to the party, it can help to reassure yourself that you can come up with a valid early exit strategy, such as having to attend a kid's Christmas concert, or your spouse's business Christmas party, etc. At least this way, you can save face by turning up for part of the event but leaving before things become awkward or strange.

2. Arrange for a friend to call you at a set time.

Go out of earshot to take the call, then return and say you must leave on an urgent matter. Some good excuses are your friend's car broke down on the highway or your roommate is locked out of the apartment.

3. Decide what to wear.

Find out what everyone else is wearing before the party and match the tone with your outfit:

- If it's casual dress and you turn up smart, that will immediately put you on the back foot and make the rest of the evening very uncomfortable. It also opens you up as an easy target for derision. The same applies the other way round.



- If you are a woman, find a compromise between 'I'm attractive and sexy' and 'Take me seriously, I'm a professional'. Revealing clothing, while fun, is not appropriate around your superiors. Think beyond the event to the image you'd like your co-workers to retain of you in months to come!
- If everyone is heading straight to the party from work, you don't have to worry as there won't be time to change, so clearly work clothes are the go.

4. Arrive on time.

This is an office party, not a discotheque. So turning up 'fashionably late' is not an option and could have you missing out on all the fun. Arriving on time gives you the opportunity to say hello to everyone, and still get out early without seeming rude.

5. Mingle.

Be sure to acknowledge all your co-workers, and especially your superiors and their associates as

this will put you in good stead; the Christmas party is an excellent opportunity to cement relationships and to get known in a good way. Talk to your co-workers and bosses about work issues in a positive and complimentary light, focusing on achievements for the year and fun things you remember. And don't be frightened to talk to your co-workers and management about things outside of work such as the cinema, football, hobbies, family, or dogs. And practice listening; this is as important as the small talk.

- Even if there's someone you really don't like, like Steve from accounting, it's best to have a quick chat with them, and remember to use that winning smile.
- While the occasion may feel really informal, take care to still defer to superiors; this isn't the time to be speaking your mind informally to management (unless doing so is the norm in your workplace).

Continued ►

6. Drink responsibly.

Don't forget where you are – technically, still at work because you're with the work crowd, so treat the party as an extension to your work day. Keep in mind that everything observed has the potential to be turned into a judgment on your professionalism and work suitability. If there is one thing that can besmirch a reputation, it's getting out of control on the liquor at the work Christmas party. No matter how much management has insisted that everyone let down their hair, just don't. Wait until after the party if getting blind drunk is your plan; grab the few trusted co-workers and head off somewhere else.

At the party:

- Eat first before drinking. Drinking on an empty stomach is asking for trouble. Space all drinks with water and more food, and lots of conversation.
- Join in the drinking so you don't look like a stiff, but judge the tone carefully. If it's a kicking party led from the top, and you're having a good time, you can let your hair down a little more than usual but do be aware of your limits and keep in mind that someone is always watching with an eye to judge in the workplace context.
- Under no circumstances allow yourself to get hammered. The more drinks you have, the more likely you are to do something that you'll regret.
- Avoid using alcohol as the excuse to let out a year's worth of pent-up resentment and frustration about your boss, co-workers, or the workplace in general. Telling them what you really think of them will be remembered forever more as the truth from your perspective, and this can only harm your future prospects in the company.

7. Be tactful and careful about declaring your undying romantic intentions.

It's that time of year. If you're having an office blowout and Jeanna from HR is there, you may be tempted to make your move. This can go either way. Remember, you will have to see this person at work on Monday. Think: Do I really fancy them? Do they like me? How much have I had to drink? Will I regret this in the morning? This is called a reality check. If you fail the reality check, under no circumstances should you make your move. If however, you have strong feelings for that person, this may be the opportunity you've been waiting for.

- Be discreet. Your co-workers will gossip as soon as they see anything happen.
- On the other hand, you may find yourself being hit on – even by your boss. If this is not to your liking, be tactful. You don't want to damage relationships with your co-workers or boss, so let them down gently.
- Don't lead anyone on because you're drunk and you feel like it. This will only create problems on Monday, especially if they like you more than you like them.
- Bear in mind the potential for claims of sexual harassment. Do not touch people in ways that can be misinterpreted, or say things that are considered demeaning or sexually provocative. Use your common sense.

8. Help others.

If you see a co-worker overdoing the drinking or making a move when they are clearly not fully mentally cognizant, step in and bail them out. Explain to them what they are doing and how it appears to other people. If this doesn't sink in, discreetly ring a cab and take them home. This is one time where your own executive decision-making can save their reputation. You can always return to the party after if liked, but don't bring up what you've just done, as it's a helping act to fix things quietly and with grace.

