Here to Stay?

Marion Coles and Deborah Ackland, senior consultants at Platinum Training, give their thoughts on the future of the secretary.
We make meetings work for you.

Every year thousands of companies trust their meetings to us. Not only because we have more than 2,000 meeting rooms in over 300 hotels across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. But also because we take the time to attend to the little details. Like making sure the layout of the room suits your meeting. Having the right equipment ready and waiting. Serving a delicious lunch just when it’s convenient to break. So let us quote on your brief today and we’ll deliver a meeting that works for you.

To book, call 0845 604 6045
or visit holidayinn.co.uk/meetingsplanning
Here to Stay?
Marion Coles and Deborah Ackland, senior consultants at Platinum Training, give their thoughts on the future of the secretary.

6 Managing by Default
Challenging the default position.

12 Microsoft Office InfoPath 2007: Extending the Possibilities of Forms
Making the collection and manipulation of data easy and efficient.

15 Beating Procrastination
Ways in which to unlearn the problem of procrastination.

20 Discover How to Understand Colour for Dress Designing
How colours shape our experience of the world.

23 Mexican Dream
A scrumptious Mexican meal of corn bread, chicken fajitas and pumpkin pie.

26 Top Interview Tips
Learn how to shine at interview

28 Sudoku
Give your brain a break from work with a sudoku workout.

29 Past Articles on DeskDemon?
Think you might have missed something? Find out what articles we’ve had recently at DeskDemon.
Welcome to PA Enterprise. There has been much talk in the media recently about what the world economy is doing. With the subprime crisis in America and Northern Rock’s nationalisation and the sluggish housing market here, many believe that we’re hitting a rocky economic period. Whilst the jury is still out on whether this is true – with experts currently debating it ad infinitum – it means that there’s no better time than now to think about how you work and what you can do better.

Our cover article Here to Stay? gives us two leading consultants’ insights into the future of the administrative professional. Fortunately, they believe that the role is remains as important, if not more so, than it ever has been. The problem is simply that many organisations just don’t realise how vital PAs are in assuring success and so don’t invest correctly in training and development.

The article Managing by Default has some valuable thoughts on this too – how people and organisations are so often stuck in default mode, which is fine when times are easy and cruising along is enough but a catastrophe when times call for decisive action and innovative thinking – a loud call to action!

Of course, though, it’s nigh on impossible to move out of default if you procrastinate. Beating Procrastination offers some incisive thinking on it and how to shake the habit. It lists the various reasons we procrastinate (which we all do, at some point or another) and gives a number of solutions. There’s something for all of us there! Have a read of Top Interview Tips too. Unless you’re royalty, interviews, along with taxes, are a certainty in life. This article has some points on how to prepare, present yourself and perform in interviews.

We also bring you the worksmart article Microsoft Office InfoPath 2007, which shows how an aware and appropriate use of this forms tool can extend the possibilities of research and communication in your organisation.

Don’t forget to take a look at Discover How to Understand Colour for Dress Designing in which an expert explains how to use colour effectively. And our Mexican themed menu is perfect to invite friends around for. That’s it for this month; we hope you enjoy it!

Susan Silva
Managing Editor
susan@deskdemon.com
Smiles brighten up the day!

Mirth, amusement, pleasure: smiles spread happiness all around. And so DeskDemon would like to catch your smiley face to publish on the site.

Illuminate everyone’s day by sending us a photograph or video of your smile and we’ll choose the ultimate smile: the most contagious, happiest and fun of them all.

Laughter is never far away...especially if your smile wins.

Each month we will be giving away a heavenly spoil-yourself session for you and friend: Yes, your smile could win a relaxing spa day, where you and your friend can relax, enjoy a back, neck and shoulder massage, facial, manicure or pedicure, use of the sauna, steam and pool and lunch too! Ooh what bliss!

So, e-mail us your smile today:
smilesuk@desk demon.com
Last time you bought a computer or a laptop, the chances are it came with a ready-to-use software package. This, I’m sure, was much appreciated because it meant that you didn’t have to load disks, as in the old days. The software allowed you to use the computer immediately. It gave you a good feeling of mastering the equipment. You felt proficient and boasted to your teenage daughter that you knew how to work these machines after all.

What you got that day was your “default system” – up and running, ready to go, not pretending to do anything but the minimum so that you could start right away. The settings, however, can be adjusted, and each application adapted to your special needs. In many cases, the system can be made very sophisticated, because the potential for customisation is enormous. Once customised to your preferences, the new application looks very different from the default. It becomes yours.

But maybe you, like many others, chose not to customise. You did not see anything wrong with the default package. After all, it worked. When upgrades came along, you did not bother to use them. You had neither the time nor the energy to switch over to another more complex version and, besides, who knows how the new one would work? Only later, your company decided to upgrade or change software altogether. Hey, that was a massive disruption, even if the IT folks held your hand. At that time, you had no choice; somebody had chosen for you. So you moved to the next level.

The Default Organisation
This story may seem more or less familiar to laptop and spreadsheet users. However, organisations behave in the same way. There is, for example, the “default organisation”. The one that is just there, perhaps inherited after a merger or acquisition, and of which people do not hesitate to say “it works”, that there is nothing wrong with it. Staff join it day after day at 9am on the dot and stay until 5pm. Although there may be some ups and downs, it is comfortable and contains everything an organisation needs. It has people performing tasks, managers supervising people and bosses managing the supervisors. It is OK, not sexy, but OK. You can’t ask for much more, can you?

Default organisations do not engender much excitement and there is little hope they will generate any business breakthroughs. But it is a good default organisation and you don’t see anything wrong. In bad times, things are different. People become

Difficult Times
Organisations that remain in default mode are unsuited to times where high customisation is needed. They simply can’t cope. As William Shakespeare’s character, Coriolanus, put it, “When the sea was calm, all boats alike show’d mastership in floating”. Mastership in running a floating organisation for calm cays is like driving a car under 40 miles an hour with no one else on the road on a clear day. If this is how you drive every day, you will have some difficulties navigating
the Monte Carlo Grand Prix. Many managers, however, are happy with the default position for both the organisation and themselves. Indeed, default management is widespread. These managers hold an MiF (Master in Floating) qualification. It’s very handy for the good, clear, predictable and uneventful days in business life. It’s a pity such days are disappearing fast.

**Managing the Inevitable**

Default management exhibits two types of behaviour or characteristics. The first could be called “managing the inevitable”, that is, managing what otherwise will happen. Legions of managers spend their time managing plans and events that are going to happen anyway. Meeting after meeting, committee after committee, review after review and tons of slides later something happens and managers are happy to associate that event with the activity of the meetings, the reviews and the presentations.

In a few cases this is true. In most, the causality is no different from that suggesting that since most of the inmates in a prison smoked before they were jailed, smoking causes criminality. Many would laugh at such post-hoc fallacy, yet 90 percent of management is post-hoc fallacy management in a default environment.

In my previous career as a clinical psychiatrist, I had a patient, Carlos, who was a very bright paranoiac. Paranoia is a rare condition, different from its cousin paranoid schizophrenia. Paranoiacs have a single monothematic delusion (false interpretation of a reality) that is impossible to change or modify by rational argument. This strong set of beliefs is the only anomaly. Patients do not hallucinate or have other symptoms, so they may otherwise lead a normal life – as long as the delusion does not interfere with others. For example, a paranoiac may believe he has invented the telegraph and explain this in detail. If the conversation does not come up or he does not try to claim the royalties, his paranoia may never be noticed. My patient Carlos was convinced he had special powers. He used to travel by bus and was certain that he had the power to stop the bus at every red traffic light. Obviously, every time the bus stopped accordingly, this reinforced his belief.

**Carlos Syndrome**

I know many managers who suffer from Carlos Syndrome. They are convinced that what happens in their organisation is the result of their endless meetings and reports, their fiddling with the organisation chart and the taskforces they have set up. In many instances things happen because their CEO had decided a strategy long ago, or simply because there was no other option. However, these managers believe it was a result of their own intervention, and, like Carlos, events reinforce this view. Because organisations don’t take the time to do good post-event analysis, entire generations of default managers are happy to live in their own delusional world, often taking their entire teams with them.

**Admiring the Problem**

The second behaviour that default management induces is what can be called “admiring the problem”. Default managers may be good at ►
and, not surprisingly, the self-fulfilling prophecy of the communication problem becomes reality.

Managers become paralysed by the label: the label becomes the reality. Whatever was happening in truth is irrelevant once people have articulated the label “communication problem”. It is the old nominalistic fallacy: name it (label it) and it exists. In psychiatry, we had lots of these label admirations and nominalistic fallacies. A mother presents with a child who can’t stand still, is constantly restless, cries for no reason, misbehaves, is unpredictable and, quite frankly, unmanageable. The diagnosis: “Madam, your son has emotional instability.” (What else could it be?)

Given a label, the mother exclaims, “Aha! Now I understand!” The label has decreased the anxiety of the uncertainty and as such is therapeutic – for the mother! But the concept refers simply to the same complex reality, now safely controlled with a two-word straight jacket. Default managers admire problems but, even more, they admire their labels. And, God knows, there are plenty around.

The fundamentals of default management – managing the inevitable plus admiring the problems and their labels – have been widely challenged by literature that stresses the chaotic and unpredictable environment. But the problem with all those books on chaos is that they mix eschatological business with no clear ideas of how exactly one has to change.

Challenging the Default Position

John Searle, professor of philosophy at Berkeley, California, defines philosophy as the challenge of the default positions such as “the existence of an external reality, the reality of personal consciousness, and the reasonable fit of language to the perceived world.” If unchallenged, these defaults remain untouched.

I believe that leadership in organisations has to do with challenging the default organisation. This is the company that does things “the way they have always been done” and is organised in “the way everybody is”. The current business environment has no time for defaults yet many organisations are based on them.

No wonder these companies are prone to sinking like the galleons of the Spanish Armada or being frozen to death like the German soldiers on the Russian front during the Second World War. These companies have a common theme: they are caught up in a battle against the wrong enemy.

With the Armada and Stalingrad it was the weather. In business it is easy to blame the competition, market volatility or political uncertainty. Taking a look at your own ships and your own clothing before going into battle would help.

Default management does not invent, default managers do not build and default thinking will not lead to the next level of success for the organisation and for its employees. Like the shareholders, they may still enjoy earnings per share according to expectations. Default organisations, after all, meet stakeholders’ expectations like the bus drivers in Barcelona met Carlos’s every day.

Dr Leandro Herrero practiced as a psychiatrist before taking up senior management positions in several pharmaceutical companies, both in the UK and the US. He is co-founder and CEO of The Chalfont Project Ltd, an international firm of organisational consultants. He works with organisations on structural and behavioural change, leadership and human collaboration. More information on his work can be found at www.meetingminds.com and www.thechalfontproject.com.
The typewriter and phone were the basic tools of the secretary for about 100 years. But since the arrival of computers, the secretary’s role hasn’t stopped changing. Now, the ability to type at 75 words a minute is not enough. Secretaries must create presentations, manage budgets and billing, coordinate marketing and plan conferences. And technological advances like voice recognition software and email have made the original secretarial skills of typing and verbal communication increasingly redundant.

The role of the secretary is changing fast. But who is giving any thought to the people who fill the role?

Legal Firms and the Secretary
Senior consultants Marion Coles and Deborah Ackland run Platinum Training Solutions, a consultancy that has worked with many of the top London law firms over the past 14 years. Law firms have seen some of the biggest changes to the role of the secretary – they’ve embraced laptops and digital dictation while reducing the ratio of secretaries to fee earners.

However, too many firms have ignored the training needs of their administrative staff. Marion Coles thinks this is short sighted. “Put simply, if you don’t invest in your people as well as your systems, you might as well not bother investing at all.”

Win-Win
She has, however, worked with several progressive law firms that have focused on both people and systems. They’ve reaped the rewards. When admin staff take on more responsibility and work faster, lawyers can spend more time earning fees, and the secretaries themselves feel more empowered and happier in their role.

It is important for organisations to focus on four main areas for their administrative staff:

- IT skills
- Management
- Business skills
- Personal development

IT skills
The biggest driver for change over the past decade has been the alarming speed of technological improvement. Organisations in all sectors have spent vast sums on hardware and software and the staff training to use it. But has there been a return on the investment?

Marion Coles thinks not. “We’re all creatures of habit,” she says, “and prone to repeating behaviour long after its purpose remains relevant. Multiply this many times over in a corporate culture and it’s easy for businesses get stuck in a rut. That’s why you find people applying their old skill sets to new ways of working – and why many of the benefits claimed for an investment in new technology aren’t sustained.”

The culprit – but also the solution – is training. “All too often training is delivered for training’s sake,” warns Marion. “People return to their desks unconfident, and go back to the old familiar ways of doing things.”

The way forward, she thinks, is to formalise the approach: “We believe that offering a qualification encourages learning while building confidence.”
It gives a sense of achievement to those who gain certification – although it’s important to measure competency against nationally recognised standards.

“At PTS we use the internationally recognised Microsoft Office Specialist programme to train users to understand and make use of the functions within the application, rather than just having a repertoire of a few buttons. That way they know how to use the software even when faced with the unexpected.”

**Management**

“Support-staff management is also a wobbly area,” says Marion. “There is a classic model of a team of department secretaries with one lead secretary.” But in some law firms Marion’s worked with, the lead secretary was promoted just because she or he worked for a senior partner within the business unit. They had generally not been given any management training. They also had no real power and were not necessarily appreciated as being valuable team leaders (hence the lack of investment in their training).

The dangers of this approach are obvious, according to Marion, who remembers with horror one lead secretary who told her: “I am just one of the girls, so it’s no problem to manage them.”

“Lead secretaries are vital,” says Marion. “And this is where our Institute of Learning and Management programme comes in – a series of management modules specially tailored to these leaders. At the end of the course they are asked to write a report on an improvement they have introduced within their department using what they have learnt from the programme. From this and a series of questions/reviews we can see that they have applied the learning in the workplace.”

**Business skills**

Is there any other skill set that needs looking at? “Absolutely,” says Marion.

“Secretaries starting out today have greater expectations. But what holds them back often is a lack of both creative thinking on behalf of their managers and formal secretarial training.” This means they are often light on business skills such as communication, planning and prioritising work, and answering the telephone – another area that it is important for training programmes to focus on.

“Secretaries – the Future”

Marion’s colleague Deborah Ackland believes that claims about the death of the secretary are nonsense. “The computerisation of the office environment and the widespread use of IT by professional staff have raised questions about the future of the secretarial role. But our experience has shown that the secretary is alive and well – if changing!”

“As organisations become more complex, the demands upon secretarial and administration staff increase. They are encouraged to undertake a wider range of roles, given increasing responsibility and autonomy, and expected to have higher-level skills. Rather than disappearing, this seems likely to become an occupation with stricter entry requirements in the future.”

Marion agrees: “In many cases the secretaries we meet have not gained any form of qualification for many years. If organisations have not yet woken up to the fact that their secretaries have an important, ever-growing role to play, and there is a need to invest more money in basic skills and continuing professional development, then it is the duty of HR and training professionals to flag this up.”

Deborah says, “It’s so hard for anyone within an organisation, though, to take a step back and dispassionately judge what needs to change. That’s why it’s useful for an outside consultancy to come in and help.”

“It’s an important first step to recognise the need for change,” says Marion, “As the saying goes, ‘The future depends on what you do in the present.’”

Marion Coles and Deborah Ackland are highly respected training consultants and performance coaches who run Platinum Training Solutions. Platinum Training Solutions provides consulting services and training programmes across a range of sectors. For further information visit www.platinum-ts.co.uk.
Like most people, you probably fill out business forms, such as expense reports, time cards, surveys and insurance forms, on a regular basis. You may even be responsible for designing, distributing and maintaining these forms in your organisation. If so, you can use Microsoft Office InfoPath 2007, which is part of the 2007 Microsoft Office system, to both design and fill out electronic forms.

With InfoPath, you can do the following.

**Design Form Templates**

You can design and publish interactive, user-friendly form templates in design mode (the InfoPath design environment). In addition to inserting standard form controls, such as text boxes or list boxes, on a form template, you can insert controls that offer users the flexibility to add, remove, replace or hide sections of a form. The form templates that you design can range from simple ones for collecting data from your immediate team to complex ones that are part of a much larger business process.

InfoPath form templates can be used on their own, or you can design them to work with existing databases or web services. Form templates can be published to and accessed from a common location on a company network, such as a shared folder, a web server or a library located on a Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services site. In addition, if you have access to a server running InfoPath Forms Services, you can design a single form template that can be filled out either in InfoPath, in a web browser or on a mobile device.

**Fill Out Forms**

Users can fill out forms that are based on the form templates created in design mode. When filling out a form in InfoPath, users can use familiar, document-like features. For example, they can check spelling in their form or insert formatted text and graphics into certain fields. Depending on the design of the form template, users may also be able to merge the data from multiple forms into a single form or export the data to other programs. If a form template is browser-enabled (a form template that has been published to a server running InfoPath Forms Services and has been browser-enabled so users can both display and fill out the form in a web browser), users who don’t have InfoPath installed on their computer can fill out the form in a web browser or mobile device instead.

**Why Use InfoPath?**

You can use InfoPath to collect business data from your colleagues, partners, suppliers and customers. For example, you can use InfoPath to create a form template for expense reports for the people in your organisation.

---

**Expense Report**

**Report Date:** 05/17/2006  
**Expense Code:** 392879  
**Start Date:** 02/06/2006  
**End Date:** 02/07/2006

**Employee Information**

**Name:** Michael Devee  
**Title:** Associate University Recruiter  
**Department:** Recruiting  
**ID Number:** EB-345

**Reimbursed Expenses**

**Date**  |  **Description**  |  **Category**  |  **Cost**
---  |  ---  |  ---  |  ---
02/04/2006  |  Round-trip flight  |  Transportation  |  321.00
02/06/2006  |  Hotel  |  Lodging  |  175.00
02/06/2006  |  Dinner  |  Meals  |  22.00
02/07/2006  |  Breakfast  |  Meals  |  5.50

**Total Expenses:** 540.40
InfoPath form templates can be straightforward and simple, perfect for use by several people in a small workgroup. For example, a ten-person sales team can use an InfoPath form to informally collect and share information about sales calls. The data in those forms can be merged into a single summary report that is sent to management each month.

Alternatively, organisations can design highly sophisticated form templates that are connected to existing corporate databases or integrated into existing business systems. For example, the developers in your information technology department can design an InfoPath form template to manage the expense reporting process for your organisation. The form template can include views (a form-specific display setting that can be saved with a form template and applied to form data when the form is being filled out; users can switch between views to choose the amount of data shown in the form) and business logic features that enable different categories of users to submit the expense report, review it, approve it and reimburse the submitter.

The following list outlines some of the benefits of using InfoPath.

**Wider Access to Forms**

If you use InfoPath and a server running InfoPath Forms Services, you can design browser-compatible form templates in InfoPath and enable them for use on internal and external websites. This lets you share business forms with a variety of users, such as employees, customers, suppliers and partners. Users aren’t required to have InfoPath installed on their computers to fill out a form, nor are they required to download anything extra from the web. All users need is access to a browser, such as Internet Explorer, Safari or Mozilla Firefox. If users do have InfoPath installed on their computers, they can display and fill out the form in InfoPath instead. You can even design your form template so that users can open it and fill it out on a mobile device.

**Office System Integration**

InfoPath works with a number of other programs and servers in the Microsoft Office system, including Outlook, Excel and Access. For example, you can design and fill out InfoPath forms in email messages, export form data to worksheets, submit form data to a database or query data from a SharePoint list. In addition, developers can embed InfoPath forms – without menus, toolbars or other aspects of the user interface – into custom applications.

**Reusable Data**

The data that users enter in an InfoPath form doesn’t have to remain locked inside that form forever; it can be reformatted or reused in a variety of ways. This flexibility enables the developers in your organisation to integrate the form data into existing business processes. For example, the data collected in sales reports forms can be used to update your company’s enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. This allows people throughout the company to access the data when and where they need it, so that they can make better-informed decisions. With more timely updates on sales numbers, it is easier for other groups, such as operations and finance, to make accurate forecasts of production and costs.

**Consistent, Accurate Data**

InfoPath includes a number of features that help users avoid data-entry errors and fill out forms more quickly. For example, you can use formulas to automatically calculate mathematical values for users, use conditional formatting (the process of changing the appearance of a control, including its visibility and read-write state, based on values entered into the form) to draw the user’s attention to data, or enable the spelling checker so that users can check for spelling errors before submitting their forms.

In addition, when users fill out a form the data that they enter can be checked for data validation (a set of rules you can apply to a control to specify the type and range of data that users can enter) errors. If your form template is connected to a database or web service, users won’t be able to submit data until they correct these errors. This helps you ensure that the data that you collect is accurate and error-free, and that it conforms to whatever standards you specify. The following illustration shows how a data validation error appears to the person who is filling out the form.
Low Overhead

Unlike paper forms, which have to be reprinted when a change occurs, InfoPath form templates can easily be modified and republished. In addition, InfoPath automatically detects when a form template has been updated so that users always have the latest version.

Offline Support

InfoPath forms don’t have to be filled out while a user is connected to a network. Users can save forms to their computer, work on them offline, and then submit them to the corporate network when they are reconnected. This is especially useful for people who have intermittent or limited access to network resources, such as employees who travel frequently.

Fewer Forms

Instead of distributing and maintaining multiple paper forms for the same business process, you can create a single form template in InfoPath that includes multiple views. For example, in a form template for expense reports, you can create one view for employees who enter expenses, a second view for managers who approve expenses and a third view for employees who process reimbursements. By default, users can switch views by clicking commands on the View menu. You can also create rules that automatically switch views when users open the form, submit the form or click a button on the form.

Flexible Controls

In addition to standard controls, such as text boxes and list boxes, InfoPath includes a number of controls such as repeating tables, choice groups and optional sections. A repeating table is a control on a form that contains other controls in a table format and that repeats as needed. Users can insert multiple rows when filling out the form. A choice group is a control that is used to present a set of mutually exclusive choices. By default, a choice group contains two choice sections, one of which appears to the user as the default choice in the form. An optional section is a control on a form that contains other controls and that usually does not appear by default. Users can insert and remove optional sections when filling out the form.

These types of controls let you design a flexible form template that accommodates your users. For example, in a form template for expense reports, you can use a repeating table to allow users to enter only as many expense items as they need.

You can also create template parts, which are portions of a form template that can be saved and reused in multiple form templates. A typical template part consists of controls and a data source (which is the collection of fields and groups that define and store the data for an InfoPath form; controls in the form are bound to the fields and groups in the data source) and may also include features such as data connections (the connection between an InfoPath form and an external data source, such as a database, web service, SharePoint library, or XML file), data validation, and rules (a condition or action, or a set of conditions or actions, that automatically performs tasks based on events and values in the form). Using template parts can save you time and help ensure that the form templates in your organisation are consistent in tone, structure, and behaviour.

Tablet PC Support

If users have a tablet PC, they can use a tablet pen to write directly in fields on a form. InfoPath then converts that ink into text. You can also provide tablet PC users with a dedicated field on the form where they can write or draw. This can be useful when you want users to be able to sketch something that is fairly complicated or technical, such as a mathematical formula or a diagram of a particular business process. In this case, InfoPath saves the ink along with the form rather than converting it to text.

This is just one of many new features that 2007 Microsoft Office system can offer you. To find more about how it can help streamline the way you and your colleagues do business visit: www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/microsoft/demos
Beating Procrastination

By Andrew Rondeau

Ways in which to unlearn the problem of procrastination
We all suffer from procrastination at some time in our life. Some of the problems and solutions are detailed below.

**Problem: Fear**
People procrastinate because they are paralysed with fear of failure, loss, pain or, in some cases, success! What we fear becomes our reality.

**Solution**
1. Fear is “false evidence appearing real”.
2. Ninety percent of what we fear never becomes reality.
3. The best way to overcome fear is to do what we fear.
4. It helps if you visualise the worst-case scenario and accept it as a possibility and realise it will probably never come to pass.
5. Our imaginations exaggerate fears completely out of all proportion and in most cases they never occur!

**Problem: No Strategy**
Few people have a strategy to use to accomplish their goals.

**Solution**
1. Make a contract with yourself.
2. Identify specific rewards for positive action.
3. Establish certain penalties for procrastination.
4. Break your goals down into small steps.
5. Schedule a time segment for each activity.
6. Give yourself rewards for correct action and penalties when you do not follow through.

**Problem: A Lack of Discipline**
Many people have a lack of discipline. Apparently, it takes thirty days to break old habits and establish new ones.

**Solution**
1. Create a successful-habits-reminder card to record your daily activities.
2. Tape it to your bathroom mirror.
3. Stick it on your desk to keep track of your actions.

**Problem: No Prioritising**
Most people do not assign priorities or have a plan.

**Solution**
1. Create a “To do” List.
2. Determine immediate, intermediate and long-range goals.
3. Plan the goals that are in immediate reach of your abilities and assign priorities: “Important and urgent”, “Important but not urgent” and “Not urgent or important”.
4. Do the “Important and urgent” tasks first.
5. Eighty percent of your activities are not important to your goals.
6. Only twenty percent are important and urgent.
7. Learn to eliminate the eighty percent of activities that do not help you attain your goals.

**Problem: Leaving Important Tasks to the Last Minute**
Many try to complete the most urgent and important activities at the last moment.

**Solution**
Every day schedule a block of prime time to work on an important activity due in the future. Soon you will find the time to analyse and polish your projects a long time before they become due.

**Problem: No Time to Think**
There never seems to be enough time to contemplate your decisions.

**Solution**
Schedule quiet time to make important decisions. Listen to relaxing music that balances both brain hemispheres. If you do not schedule time for exercise, rest and entertainment, you will spin out of control.

**Problem: It’s All Too Much**
You are overwhelmed.

**Solution**
Learn to say, “No!” to activities and individuals that do not contribute to the attainment of your goals. Often, people take advantage of your
kindness and generosity without ever realising you have better things to do with your time.

**Problem: No Big Plan**
Most people do not have a master plan.

**Solution**
1. Create a master list of all personal, spiritual, physical, emotional and financial goals for one year.
2. Assign priorities for each.
3. Predict a date for completion.
4. Write everything in pencil so you can change it.

**Problem: No Organisation**
Few people use an organiser or daytime planner to coordinate their activities.

**Solution**
1. Transfer the things on your master list to the correct dates in your organiser.
2. Check off each item as it is completed.
3. At the end of each day, reschedule the things that were not completed.
4. If an item is rescheduled twice, you are procrastinating.
5. Ask yourself, “What if I never do this?”
6. If the answer is, “No big deal!” then delete it.

**Problem: Impossible Perfection**
Some people suffer from perfection paralysis.

**Solution**
1. Make the decision that you are not perfect and never will be.
2. Everything you do will be imperfect in some way.
3. Realise that if it is worth doing, it’s worth doing wrong until you get it right.
4. Stop judging yourself according to your accomplishments.
5. Learn to trust yourself by developing intuition and following your hunches. You will find your first premonition is usually the correct one.
6. Discover just how right you are by making predictions and observing how a high percentage of them are correct. (Predict the line at the supermarket or bank that will move the fastest, for example, and take action accordingly.)
7. Make some decisions in twenty seconds or less.
8. Make your decisions the correct ones by believing in your choices and acting with confidence.

In difficult situations, flip a coin, choose heads or tails and then observe how you feel about the outcome of the toss. Your response to the coin toss will help you make the right decision. Procrastination has to be learnt; we are not born with the trait. This means that if you suffer from procrastination then you can unlearn it. Use these tips to learn positive new habits.

Andrew Rondeau is the author of the top selling management e-books Accelerate Your Management Effectiveness, How to Get a Standing Ovation Every Time You Publicly Present and Learn the Secrets.
At Holiday Inn, we love meetings... and conferences, and workshops, and team building, and training, and client receptions, and corporate parties, the list goes on! In fact at Holiday Inn we love any type of meeting or event you can think of...

We know that when you are looking for a suitable venue for your meetings and events, it’s not just the venue that is important. You need to be able to trust the venue representatives to provide a good service from start to finish. Our regular clients use Holiday Inn time and time again, one of the reasons being our personalised service.

Reliable, attentive service
From the moment you make contact with our Holiday Inn team, you’ll be assigned a dedicated Holiday Inn Meetings Host whose job it is to take care of all aspects of your booking... giving you one point of contact throughout the event process. Your dedicated Holiday Inn Meetings Host will:

- Run through the objectives for your event and suggest ways of achieving your goals
- Ask you about room layouts, equipment needs and all the basics, so they can start creating the ideal event for you
- Give you menu suggestions, or help you with a personalised menu
- Give you a confirmation of your booking within 24 hours, so you’re assured that your booking has been reserved
- Inform you of the facilities in the hotel and things to do in the local area if your guests are staying overnight
- Offer you a free four-page customised website to promote your event to all attendees, including booking accommodation

What’s in it for you?
You may not be attending the event, but you can relax knowing that your Holiday Inn Meetings Host will be your eyes and ears, making sure guests are happy, the event is flowing to time and that any ad hoc requests are actioned immediately, leaving you to concentrate on other pressing matters in the office. If there are any last minute changes, you don’t have to worry about this either; we can change items even a couple of days prior to the event, so giving you peace of mind that the event will run smoothly, and to your specified budget.

Don’t take our word for it - this is what our clients have said about Holiday Inn...
NB: Client names have been removed for confidentiality reasons

‘Thanks so much for Friday’s event - it went really well - even better than I had hoped. Your staff were very friendly and professional and I’m so grateful.’ - Holiday Inn London-Sutton

“Everything was fantastic, will not go anywhere else but your fine establishment. All the staff were great as always. Please know that you are doing a great job.” - Holiday Inn London-Heathrow

“Thank you so much for a super and generous stay at the Holiday Inn. Our experience was excellent; the team in all areas were smart, happy and efficient. Food was delicious and we were impressed with the bedroom and facilities - a gem!! We will be delighted to place more business into your hotel.” - Holiday Inn Maidenhead/Windsor M4, Jct 8/9

‘A BIG thank you…to you Agnes and the Holiday Inn for helping us to arrange our very successful AGM. The Orchard room was ideal and the food was wonderful.’ - Holiday Inn London-Sutton

To request a free copy of the EMEA Meeting Planner today, please visit www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/venues/holidayinn/planner

Find out more about Holiday Inn meetings today!
Meetings that matter... what matters to you, matters to Holiday Inn
Do you know a PA, Secretary or Administrator who has what it takes to win DeskDemon’s Management Support Fellowship Award 2007?

If you have a peer you think does an outstanding job or you are proud of YOUR accomplishments, submit a nomination to the Management Support Fellowship Award.

Grand Prize winner will receive £10,000!
Their nominator receives £2,500!
Monthly winners receive £250!
Their nominator receives £100!

You can submit a nomination at:
Or by e-mail to editoruk@deskdemo.com

Please include:
- Your name
- Your E-mail
- Your telephone number
- Nominee’s Name
- Nominee’s E-mail
- Nominee’s Phone
- A short paragraph on the accomplishments and why the nominee should be chosen

http://www.deskdemo.com/pages/uk/awards2007/index

E-Mail: fellowship@deskdemo.com
Tel: 0870 410 4030
Discover How to Understand Colour for Dress Designing

By Kathy Amarati

How colours shape our experience of the world

Today, most colours are produced chemically from numerous organic and inorganic substances, giving a tremendous variety of brilliant hues – a great many of which it wasn’t possible to create in the past.

The Meaning of Colours
Throughout the ages colour has had many meanings, some based on superstitions and many on the actual physical reactions of the individual through association. For example:

Red: fire – heat
Blue: sky – water – cool
Green: grass – nature – peace
Yellow: sun – gaiety
Purple: shadow – mystery

Warm colours: red, red-orange, red-purple, yellow-orange, yellow and yellow-green are stimulating, exciting and seem to come forward towards us. When these colours are used in full intensity in large areas they seem to make the mass appear larger.

Cold colours: blue-violet, blue, blue-green and certain shades of green and purple. These colours are more restful than exciting; used in large areas without any accents of warmer colours they can be too restful and even give a feeling of futility or rejection. Cool colours appear to recede and give a minimising effect to the mass. In general, receding silent colours are inconspicuous – for example, low value shades of secondary and tertiary hues. The more intense the hue, the louder or more overpowering it becomes.

Traditionally the colours of spring have been pink and yellow-green; of summer it is yellow, blue and green; of autumn it is orange and brown; and of winter, red and black. ▶
Red: indicates excitement, heat, bravery, and appeals to the most basic instincts.

Blue: indicates distance, calm, truth, sincerity, and appeals to the spiritual or intellectual aspects of our personality.

Green: the colour of nature and indicates coolness, youth and hope of eternal life. In the proper hue, value and intensity this is the most restful colour, without being too depressing.

Yellow and gold: both indicate sunshine, gaiety, honour and loyalty.

Violet: indicates mystery, sorrow, high rank and royalty.

Red-violet: indicates luxury, elegance and sacrifice.

Orange: indicates cheerfulness, strength and endurance.

White: indicates light, innocence, purity, faith, joy and glory.

Black: indicates grief and sorrow.

The Effect of Light
In choosing colours for a costume it is important to know whether the garment will be worn in the daytime or at night, or if it will be worn at both times, because the effect of light on colour has to be kept in mind:

- Daylight: all colours will appear more intense and brilliant. In artificial light the same colours will be subdued. Candlelight will soften colours, incandescent light slightly brightens, and fluorescent will change the apparent hue.
- Amber lighting: will seem to make yellow more intense, green seem tinged with yellow, blue very dull and purple slightly reddish.
- Blue lights: will dull green and yellow, intensify blue, and apparently change red to purple.

- Under a red light: yellow will seem almost red and both green and blue will appear dull, while red will be very intense.
- Under a green light: yellow will seem almost green and all other colours very dull except for the green itself which will be intensified.

Gain a good understanding of colour and your ability to design well will increase.

Kathy Amarati runs www.dressmakingpattern.net, a website offering ideas and expert advice on dress.
Introducing DeskDemon’s new resident Agony ‘Uncle’ - Paul Pennant

“I’d like to offer you a warm welcome to my new Agony Uncle page on DeskDemon. Whatever issues you face daily, it’s almost certain that I or one of the many PAs I train, have come up against them before - and worked out how to handle them successfully. As a former PA myself, I’m also a member of the IQPS, with a post-graduate business qualification, so I can talk the talk and walk the walk - especially as I’m in touch with my feminine side!”

“As managing director of Today’s PA (indiquo.co.uk) and its principal trainer, I meet and train many PAs from all types of business and organisations around the world every month, so I have a wealth of experience and wisdom to share with you. I’m really looking forward to helping you solve the problems that challenge and frustrate you at work.”

“So, don’t suffer in silence, because we’re all in this together, right?

“Go on - use me - I love it!”

http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/agonyuncle
Ingredients:

- Butter or margarine for greasing
- 100g plain flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 100g ground polenta
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 75g cheddar cheese, finely grated
- 2 medium eggs, beaten
- 300ml milk
- 50g butter, melted

1. Grease a large loaf tin and line the base with greaseproof paper, which needs to also be greased.

2. Place the flour, baking powder, polenta and salt into a large mixing bowl, add the cheese and mix well using your fingertips to make sure the cheese is evenly distributed. Make a well in the centre of the flour mixture then pour in the eggs, milk and butter. Stir with a wooden spoon until smooth.

3. Pour the mixture into the loaf tin and bake in a preheated oven 200°C/gas 6, for 40-45 minutes until it rises and becomes golden brown in colour. The loaf should be firm when touched.

4. Leave to cool in the tin for 15 minutes before turning out onto a cooling rack. Cut into thick slices and serve either warm or cold.
CHICKEN FAJITAS WITH TOMATO SALSA

SERVES 4

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 small chicken breasts, cut into pieces
- 15g fajita spice mix
- ½ onion, peeled and sliced thinly
- ¼ small red pepper, de-seeded and sliced thinly
- ¼ small green pepper, de-seeded and sliced thinly
- 4 soft flour tortillas
- 4 tbsp soured cream
- 4 tbsp tomato salsa
- 1 little gem lettuce, washed and finely sliced
- 50g grated cheddar cheese
- 2 tbsp guacamole (optional)

1. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and sauté the chicken stirring occasionally for 4-5 minutes. Add in the fajita spice mix, onion, red and green peppers and cook for a further 5 minutes.

2. Griddle the tortillas, one at a time, for 15-20 seconds on each side until lightly coloured.

3. Divide the chicken into four portions and place in the tortillas. Top each tortilla with soured cream, salsa, lettuce and cheese then roll up and serve immediately with a bowl of guacamole.
PUMPKIN PIE

SERVES 6

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon sunflower oil
- 500g pumpkin, peeled and cubed
- 2 tbsp butter
- 250g shortcrust pastry
- 1 egg white, beaten
- 350ml double cream
- 100g brown sugar
- 50g caster sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ tsp salt
- Pinch of ground cloves
- Whipped cream

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas 6. Brush a baking sheet with the oil. Roast the pumpkin for 30-40 minutes, or until very soft. Place the pumpkin in a sieve and mash, removing as much liquid as possible. Leave in the sieve to drain and cool.

2. Butter a 25cm pie dish. Roll the pastry into a 30cm circle. Pressing it gently into the pie dish, folding the edges under. Brush with the egg white. Bake for 10-15 minutes but be careful not to let it brown. Leave to cool.

3. Push the pumpkin through the sieve and mix the pumpkin purée with the remaining ingredients and pour in. Bake in a hot oven on 200°C/gas 6 for approximately an hour. Cover with foil if the edges start to brown. When the filling is a bit wobbly in the middle, remove to a cooling rack. Serve warm topped with whipped cream.
For many of us for many of us, going to a job interview is a bit of an ordeal. It can be a nerve-racking experience. You want the job you are going for and you are under pressure to perform. For the better jobs there will often be first, second and in some cases third interviews.

First interviews will follow a brief telephone interview and is used as part of an employer’s screening process. Essentially they are "getting rid of the bad stuff" and trying to find the good stuff (which is hopefully you). Only 20 percent of candidates get this far.

Second interviews will look further into your technical or specialist skills. They will give the chance for the owner, director or senior partner to rake a look at you. You need to be able to anticipate the questions you’ll be asked, have convincing answers and deliver replies professionally.

What an Employer Wants
An employer will be looking for the following things from you:

- Will this person be able to do the job?
- Will you fit into the team?
- Are you enthusiastic and motivated?
- The ability to do the job is perhaps the most important part. This can come down to the work experience you have. You need to guarantee your success by
- Having extensive knowledge about the organisation you are applying to
- Having tip-top interview skills
- Making sure you fit well into the job
- Selling yourself professionally and enthusiastically.

The interview generally follows a simple structure:

1. A formal start, with an introduction
2. A carefully timed sequence of questions
3. An opportunity for you to ask questions (you must ask some!)

During the formal start, making the right impression is key. You need to have the right appearance and body language. On the morning of the interview, make sure you scrub up well, put on your best business clothes, a light touch of perfume/aftershave, some brightening eye drops and a good smile. Wake up with an air of assertiveness, self-confidence and ready for the challenge ahead. During the interview, don’t mention anything negative about yourself and if your interviewer brings up anything negative, turn it into a positive.

Body language is important. Make sure you sit in an open body position at a slight angle so as not to cause confrontation. Lean forward slightly to show interest, and maintain eye contact and relax! Make sure your handshake is firm but not knuckle breaking.
It’s Question Time!
The most common areas to be questioned upon are:

- About you
- About your academic record
- Your work experience
- Your career objectives, dreams and motives
- Your knowledge of the company you are applying for
- Your personal achievements outside work

To break this down further remember these things:

- When you talk about yourself remember to be positive. Highlight your strengths and remember they will always ask you about negatives. Always turn negatives into positives. For example, you could say you are always too hard on yourself and expect too much from yourself. This is a negative easily turned into a positive.
- When asked about your A-levels or degree you may be asked why you chose certain subjects. Answer clearly and concisely.
- When it comes to work experience, you are going to be asked questions on your main responsibilities, lessons learnt, what you found difficult, how you got on with your boss and so on. Make sure you know why you want the job you are interviewing for, what other jobs you have applied for and where you want to be in five to ten years’ time.
- Important! Your knowledge of the organisation: what do you like about the company? What key issues need addressing? Why will you fit in?
- Make sure you have some personal achievements to hand. Travelling the world, charity work, stand up comedian, sports...

• Is there anything you have heard from me today that worries you that I wouldn’t fit into this job role? (You then tell them why they are wrong!)
• Do you like working here? Why do you like it so much?
• What do you think the strengths of the company are?
• What scope is there for personal growth?
• What kind of people would I be working with if I got the job?

Most importantly, your questions should be showing the interviewer that you are very interested in working at their company. If you act like you are interested and that you have got other job offers and that you are trying to pick the best job for you (rather than them pick you), then you will seem more sought after.

Wrapping it up
Thank the interviewer, say it was nice to meet them and do the obligatory handshake goodbye. Make sure you send them a thank you email the next day reiterating that you enjoyed meeting them and clarifying a couple of your positive points (subtly). Good luck!

Steve Burford writes for www.WealthyStudent.co.uk.
If work feels too much like work then have a go at our office-themed sudoku this month. Sudoku has just one rule – to make sure that each row, column and three-by-three box contains the numbers 1 to 9 just once.
1. Seven Meeting Etiquette Rules Not to Forget
Business meetings are held for a variety of reasons, but they are always about sharing information. Just as in dining, there are certain rules of etiquette that it is important to follow during business meetings. Here are seven key ones to consider.
http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/venues/meetingetiquette

2. Just for the Record - Perfect Minute-Writing
Learn why the minute taker is up there with the chairperson as the most important person in a meeting. This article by top trainer Paul Pennant explains key areas to consider - including preparation and research - if you want to become a great minute taker.
http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/training/perfectminutewriting

3. How to Answer the “Why were you fired?” Question
“Why were you fired?” is about the most difficult question you could ever be asked in an interview. Being honest and open with your interviewer will show you as a mature and responsible person.
http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/career/whyfired

4. Cleaning Your Computer Desktop
Is your computer slow to boot up? Does it take forever for the desktop to load? Fortunately, simply by putting everything on your desktop in a folder, or several folders, you can remove that confusing clutter and speed up your PC.
http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/worksmart/cleaning-desktop
Do you ever have a problem and wish you could get objective advice from your peers?

Ask on The Hub

Join in on topics from your peers around the world. DeskDemon’s The Hub is a forum for networking with your peers. Share your thoughts, experiences, and advice worldwide.

Post a question or a thought or join in to comment or help others.

The Hub has a section for everyone. Sound Off, Admins4Admins, Cafe Admin, Topical Climates, and The Humor Zone

Take a minute to visit The Hub at DeskDemon:
http://www.deskdemo.com/community/forums