Top Ten E-mail Scams

Plus

Time Management
Train Tips and Lists
Management Behaviour for Success
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Welcome to PA Enterprise. July is here and a new prime minister is in power. There is even more talk by politicians and in the media about the issue of global warming and the environment. Do events like Live Earth make a difference? Is our government doing enough? Are we doing enough as individuals? This last question is something we can only answer by ourselves, but there are ways to work together to make it easier to go green. That’s why the recent DeskDemon networking event at the Royal Garden Hotel was themed “Practical Tips for Green Office Policies”. Despite the quest for the so-called “paperless office”, many offices have a long way to go in the green stakes.

Our article Train Tips and Lists should spark your desire to leave the airport behind for a more environmentally friendly form of transport, train travel. There’s something liberating about train travel – even if it’s on a business trip. We also have the articles, Time Management: More Than Just a Tidy Desk, Writing Your Own Performance Review and Management Behaviour for Success. Though discussing different aspects of work, these informative pieces are all about taking control of your career, rather than it controlling, and perhaps undermining, you.

In these days of technology, there are also new ways for fraudsters to get to you. Reading Recognise the Top Ten E-mail Scams and Protect Yourself should put an end to all risks of being a victim of e-mail scams. But technology’s not all bad; it can just be bewildering in its variety. Transcription: Get the Right Equipment for Your Needs takes us through all the things to think of when choosing recording devices for transcription.

Wimbledon aside, our summer does seem to be finally arriving with us. Our menu of mouth-watering Ms – Mushrooms, Moussaka and Muffins – should whet your appetite for having a meal outdoors after a hard day at the office.

Our new “Your Voice” section of the website, where you can communicate directly with your peers about the issues affecting you, is going from strength to strength. For the hot topics in the office professional community come here! We hope you enjoy this July issue of PA Enterprise.

Basma Hadid
Publisher
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By knowing your goals and putting systems in place you can take time back.

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Email fraud is increasingly prevalent. With a little knowledge you can protect yourself.

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25 Past Articles on DeskDemon?
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Time management is important because time is the foundation of everything we do (or don’t do). Every time we decide to do something we are also simultaneously deciding to not do everything else in the world?

Another way to think of time is that it’s your life: all you get is time – not enough of it – and you don’t know how much more there is left. Oddly enough, if you did know how much you had left, you’d do a lot more planning and be a lot more assertive, but because none of us knows how long we’ve got we behave as if we’ll live forever, and we squander the days and years. But not any more, because you are about to read this article!

What’s Important to You?

The essence of time management is to work out what’s important, and then spend as much time as you can on the important things. Most of us are quite bad at this. We don’t spend time thinking about what’s really important, such as family, and even when we have vague ideas about it we allow ourselves to be pulled off course by short-termism, crisis management, mistaking “urgent” for “important”, procrastination, laziness and catering for other people’s priorities.

“Importance” is a question of personal choice; it depends on what you value. Maybe football is important to you, or gardening, or music. Nobody else can tell you this. Some useful tests for importance are: Would I miss it? Will it matter in five years’ time? Does it contribute to my goals? Is it what I want to spend my time doing?

The result of importance is not whether you do it or not; after all there are lots of unimportant things that have to be done, like buying food or putting antifreeze in your car that don’t pass any or all of the tests mentioned above. The result of the importance test tells you how long you should spend on it. You should use as much of your time as you can on the things that really matter. The crime is to spend too little time on important things because all your time has been frittered away on unimportant things. And for this crime you pay the price later, and the price is regret.

The Four Types of Task

In order to spend the maximum time on the important things you have to (a) find a method for preventing our natural human tendency to put things off, and (b) reduce the time spent on the other three types of task – the crisis, hassle and “don’t do it” tasks.
Crisis

Crisis is probably not a huge chunk of your day (well I hope not!) and is hard to reduce since you have to deal with crises when they arise, but the key is to spend some time getting to the cause of the crisis and then working to prevent repeats. If you can’t prevent repeats then at least develop systems that allow you to react quickly and easily. The fire brigade try to minimise houses destroyed by fire by both prevention and by perfecting their ability to react.

Hassle

“Hassle” is probably a much larger part of your day, and is the main area to hit. “Don’t do it” is similar to hassle but less urgent. Hassle could include interruptions, badly run meetings, most emails, requests from colleagues, sorting out problems and correcting errors and general “maintenance” tasks and processes. There are five strategies you can use in order to reduce the time spent on all this small stuff. None of them are easy, but if you don’t choose any of them (or some mixture of them all) then you will end up taking the sixth choice: saying Yes and then not doing it. This is a bad option!

The five strategies for reducing time spent on hassle:

1. Say No: This requires assertiveness, but then whose life is it? But is it selfish to say No? Maybe it is, a bit, but then who is going to look after your time and life if you don’t? And maybe the person to whom you are thinking of saying no is also being a bit selfish in putting you under pressure to do something you don’t want to do?
2. Negotiate: A bit more polite than saying No. You can negotiate to do it later, to spend less time on it, to only do part of it, to get help with it or to only do it this one time. If you could gain an hour a week you’d save fifty hours a year – that’s more than a week extra you could have in your life each year!
3. Delegate it: This may not be an option for you, but if you do have people who work for you then this is a big one. Delegate more! People prefer bosses who delegate too much rather than too little. Monitor and support, and the delegated task can’t go wrong. Train and empower, and they might even do it better than you!
4. Do it less well: All you perfectionists out there won’t like this one, but for some tasks you know it makes sense. Don’t let perfectionism bog you down, so you spend all day fiddling with unimportant things and then have no time for the important things. Should you organise your CDs or play with your children? Should you perfect that report or plan next year’s strategy?
5. Have more efficient systems: These may be computerised or they may just be lists on paper, or they may be things like keeping your car keys on a hook, or having two washing baskets (one for whites and one for colours) or making up a pre-packed travel bag. Whatever your repeating tasks are, set up a system to either prevent the problem (e.g. laminated checklist, better information on intranet, clear responsibilities of team) or to make the task quicker (e.g. files organised on computer, automatic excel forms, organised desk).

Systems: More Information

As well as systems for your main time wasters you will need the three essential parts of any organised life:

1. A master list: This should be of everything you have got to do, all written down in one place. It could be on a computer, on paper, in your diary, on the wall, on a whiteboard and so on. It doesn’t matter where, but it should contain all the big things you are going to do, at time unknown. You might have two of these, one for home and one for work.
2. A daily jobs-to-do list: This could be a small bit of paper, or written in your diary, or perhaps using Outlook on your computer. These are the small tasks that you are going to do today. Maximum of 10 items, written as a daily habit either first thing or, better in my opinion, at the end of each day ready for the next one. Then you can
3. A diary: This should be small, always with you and contain home and work information. Again it could be as a palm-type PDA or a paper diary, whatever works for you.

Write everything down in one of these three places. If you promise anything to anyone, write it down on your lists. If anyone promises you anything, find out when they will do it, and write it down in your diary for follow-up.

### The Roots of Time Management

Underlying everything are the two unavoidable qualities or skills: self-discipline and assertiveness. Every problem you have either comes from you (lack of self-discipline) or from other people (lack of assertiveness). Somehow you have to conquer these two, but how?

### The Meaning of Life

Well, it’s my belief that problems with insufficient self-discipline and assertiveness stem from not having clear goals. If you’ve got no objective in mind, why should you bother with being disciplined about your time or being assertive in order to defend it? But if you have a clear objective that you are excited by and determined to achieve then you’ll have the necessary edge required to make it happen. Most people drift through life – no wonder their time management is not great, because why should it be (apart from that vague feeling of guilt)?

Your goals in life need to cover both work and home, and they need to include things you like doing, and things you want to achieve. That is to say, things you want to do more of in the present, and things you need to do in the present in order to achieve your future objectives. Just enjoying yourself without a sense of achievement won’t be enough in the long run, and achievement but at the price of not enjoying yourself is not what life is about either. Enjoy and achieve: the game is to do both!

Many of us are unclear about what we want to achieve in life, and perhaps not even completely clear on what makes us happy. And those who do have a plan usually intend to achieve at work and to enjoy themselves outside of work. But I would suggest that the ultimate plan would be to enjoy both work and your time outside work, and to achieve worthwhile goals both at work and outside work.

### A System for Goals

So how would someone go about doing this? Well, the answer is to write down what you want to achieve at home and at work, and to write down what you enjoy doing at your work and outside your work. Write it down in detail, in any format that works for you. If you have clear goals written down, then you have made the first step towards getting them.

In fact you have made more than the first step by writing them down, because your subconscious will now work on achieving these things, without you even being aware that it is doing so. You will find that things happen as if by chance – but it’s not chance at all. Autopilot has been set…

### In Conclusion

So if you have clear goals you will be much more aware of what’s really important and what isn’t. You will become more self-disciplined and assertive about your time, and your subconscious will make small correct decisions constantly and make you more aware of the information you need in order to get you where you want to go in life. But don’t forget that your systems are needed as well. If you have both goals and an efficient system for managing your day-to-day time then you will see great results. Goals without a system will lead to disappointment. A system without goals is just sad!

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Chris Croft runs training courses for 10–120 people all over the UK. More information can be found at www.chriscrofttraining.co.uk. He also organises Certificate in Management and Diploma in Management programmes, where trainers come to you and teach you for a day a month. More information can be found at: www.croftcentre.co.uk.
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a Canon digital
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Congratulations

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a Peugeot 207cc

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Congratulations

You have WON

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staying at the Fairmont Gold resort

plus £1,000 spending

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Open to UK residents aged 18 and over. No purchase necessary. There are a minimum of 50 prizes available. The prizes available are: 1 x Peugeot 207cc RRP £16,995, 1 x trip for 2 to Dubai RRP £5,695, 1 x weekend for 2 at an exclusive London boutique hotel RRP £1,984, at least 1 x Gold jewellery RRP £2,000, 1 x Canon digital camera RRP £1,795, 1 x gold mobile phones RRP £1,897 and 20 x bottles of Lanson Gold Vintage Chamagne RRP £16.50. The prizes are not transferable and there is no cash alternative. A golden ticket inside your Dymo Label Writer is a winning ticket. Once found go to [www.dymogoldenticket.co.uk](http://www.dymogoldenticket.co.uk) and enter the winning code found on the golden ticket into the website to reveal what prize has been won. Winners will also need to mail in their golden ticket along with their dated receipt showing purchase of Dymo Label Writer within the promotional period. Your receipt must pass our website entry. There are a minimum of 50 golden tickets to be found. The closing date for receipt of claims and entries is 31st January. For full terms and conditions go to [www.dymogoldenticket.co.uk/termsandconditions](http://www.dymogoldenticket.co.uk/termsandconditions).
This is also sometimes known as the “Nigerian Scam” and is a confidence trick in which the target is persuaded to advance relatively small sums of money in the hope of realising a much larger gain. This is most often perpetrated by email and begins when the “investor” is contacted, typically with an offer such as, “A rich person from the needy country needs to discreetly move money abroad; would it be possible to use your account?” and sums in the millions of dollars are named. The investor is promised a large share of this money (generally thirty to forty percent of the total). The proposed deal is often presented as a “harmless” white-collar crime with no risk to the “investor”.

The operation is professionally organised in Nigeria, with offices, working fax numbers, and often contacts at government offices. But the mark is then asked for money to bribe officials and so on. Money is sent and the mark is never contacted again. Just delete any message where you’re offered money out of the blue, especially if the message originates in Nigeria.

The Charity Request/Disaster Relief Scam is becoming far more prevalent these days. Scammers prey on the natural and admirable human desire to aid disaster victims by sending fake emails desiring donations, or they set-up fake charity websites and steal the money donated to the victims of disasters.

Often the approach will come in the form of what looks like a forwarded email. Essentially, if the request for donations came via email then not only is it a scam but there’s a good chance that it’s also a phishing attempt (see below), especially if it directs you to a website. Never respond to these emails. If it’s a legitimate charity then find the phone number of the registered offices and donate over the phone.

In the Employment Scam unscrupulous persons posing as recruiters and/or employers offer attractive employment opportunities that require the job seeker to pay them money in advance, usually under the guise of work visas, travel expenses and out-of-pocket expenses. The scams can also involve lucrative offers of employment in Europe, the Middle East, West Africa or South Africa with money demanded to be paid to an agency or travel agent for visas or travel costs.

This type of scam has become more and more frequent recently and it often targets people submitting their CVs to employment sites and bulletin boards. Often you will be addressed by name in the contact email. If you are contacted by one of these emails and the deal is abroad and seems too good to be true then give it a wide berth.

The Holiday Scam

These started as unsolicited emails announcing that you had won a “Cruise of a Lifetime” or a “Free Holiday to Florida” or the like. These scams are generally more active during the summer months (May to July) as this is when most people take their holidays. Generally you will receive an email either announcing that “you, or someone
“You know” has entered you in a contest and that you have won a free cruise or holiday package. Alternatively you are offered a cheap travel deal – all at a price that’s too good to refuse.

If you do call to take up the deal you will find that there are hidden costs or you have to pay over the odds for the hotel or you will have to sit through a sales pitch when you arrive. As with all similar scams, if you did not enter for something and an email comes out of the blue it’s probably a scam.

**The Lottery Scam**

In this scam you get an email saying that you’ve won the email sweepstakes for a lottery that no one’s ever heard of. Or, you’ve been told that you’ve won the email sweepstakes for a well-known lottery but the contact address is not the contact address of the lottery organisers. This is a very common form of spam email and it’s easy to avoid.

**Overpayment Scam**

Basically, lotteries only serve one of two purposes. They are there to raise money or they are there to provide publicity in order to draw-in customers. If you have not seen an ad campaign for a lottery and you have never entered it then any email you will have been sent is a fraud.

This scam targets people selling high-value items on internet auction sites or on internet-classified sites. Here the scammer finds your ad (usually through online or paper small ads, though this scam is also seen on auction sites such as eBay) and you are sent an email offering to pay much more than your asking price. The excuse given is supposedly related to the various international fees to ship the item overseas. In return you are requested to send the scammer the item and cash for the balance.

This looks legitimate and you agree to the transaction. Your are sent a money order or cashier’s cheque or
banker’s draft which looks genuine and you deposit it. The claimant is at your door so you hand over the balance and the item you were selling. Later, the bank calls you to say that the payment method was forged and you are out of pocket. Once you know about this scam it’s easy to avoid. Never agree to any overpayments and always wait for funds to clear in your bank.

**The Phishing Scam**

Phishing is a term used for the criminal practice of attempting to fraudulently acquire sensitive information, such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication. The majority of phishing methods use some form of technical deception designed to make a link in an email (and the spoofed website it leads to) appear to belong to the spoofed organisation.

The easiest way to combat phishing attacks is to modify users’ behaviour by education. The truth is that nearly all legitimate email messages from companies to their customers will contain an item of information that is not readily available to phishers. Always check for this information. But if you see this kind of email purporting to be from a bank or other organisation always contact the organisation directly to check if what the email you received says is true.

**The Pyramid Scam**

In this type of scam you will receive an email with a list of people in it. The email will say something like, “you have received an incredible opportunity to make CASH FAST!” To gain anything you have to send $5 to the people on the list and forward the email to six other people. Basically this is just a pyramid scam and it is completely illegal. Do not reply and do not forward it as to do so means that you are participating in a fraud.

**The Reshipping Scam**

The Reshipping Scam is designed to trick individuals or small businesses into shipping goods to countries (generally West African or Asian) with weak legal systems. The goods themselves are most often paid for with stolen or fake credit cards and the reshippers (unbeknownst to them) assume the brunt of the legal risks.

Often the fraudster poses as a representative of a growing company trying to establish a presence in the UK, US or elsewhere. Lucrative offers of employment are made if the victim only accepts parcels and forwards them. Stolen credit cards are used to purchase the goods and they are sent to the address of the victim. Soon after a package delivery company package with pre-printed labels arrives and the next day the delivery company arrives to pick-up the packages. More often than not the cost of the package delivery company will be billed to the victim’s address.

**The Romance Scam**

The romance scam is generally perpetrated on internet chat rooms and most especially on online dating services. Essentially it’s a variant on the Advance Fee Fraud but uses a “money for romance” angle to reel in the victim. The victim is often groomed for many months to make them believe that the person they are communicating with is really in love with them. Eventually, however, demands for money start coming in and because the victim is in love with the person on the other side they pay. Often the victim may give everything they have. This scam is most often perpetrated from West African countries but the scam is also now perpetrated from Russia. This is very insidious as it relies on feelings of love. Anyone can be targeted and niche-dating sites are as likely to be used as mainstream ones.

The above are what are considered to be the “Top Ten” scams. These are not the only ones, but the other scams all tend to be variants of the scams above.

Dyfed Lloyd Evans is a webmaster of the CeltNet Nemeton site and internet publisher. He maintains the CeltNet Information website, which has information on many internet topics including internet scams, marketing and telephony. More information can be found at www.celtnet.org.uk/information.
The Hub

Do you ever have a problem and need answers fast? Do you wish you could get objective advice from a peer? Ask on The Hub!

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Take a minute to visit ‘The Hub’ at DeskDemon

http://www.deskdemon.com/community(forums)/forums.php
There is a bewildering array of recording equipment available to record interviews, focus groups and conferences for later transcription, but this article aims to inform you on the various features available for recorders – what they’re for and how they will, or won’t, be of use to you. Prices range from less than fifty pounds to hundreds of pounds, and this article aims to explain which features cost more and what to look out for.

As any visit to a good website or shop selling these machines will show you, this is not a comprehensive list. Instead, it’s a list of the most important aspects from the point of view of transcription.

The various points to consider are:
- Recording quality
- Frequency response
- Length of recording time
- Computer interface
- File type
- Voice editing, such as rewinding and adding or deleting some words
- Recorder’s power source
- Dimensions
- Microphone jack
- Compatibility with speech recognition software

Recording quality will normally be indicated as SHQ (stereo high quality), HQ (high quality), SP (short play) and LP (long play). SHQ is the best quality but will take up the most memory, so you will be able to record less at this setting. LP is the poorest quality but you can record more time. Mono is probably perfectly adequate for an interview, but if you’re recording a number of different people at a meeting, conference or focus group it might be useful to have stereo recording. To use stereo you will need a stereo microphone or more than one external microphone.

The various recording qualities relate to different frequency responses. The human ear picks up audio in the range of between approximately 20 Hz and 20 kHz. The most used frequencies in speech are between 250 Hz and 5 kHz, with the higher end being a high-pitched woman’s voice and the lower end being a low-pitched man. So it’s around those ranges that you need to be looking. A wide range of frequencies are available in different recording machines but, frankly, most will record a one-on-one or one-to-two interview to acceptable quality at SP, and possibly even at LP.

The amount of recording time will depend on the recording quality you choose, and, again, the range of times is enormous, so you really need to think about what your needs are. You might need a long recording time if you’re going to be researching “in the field” for significant lengths of time, with no access to your PC to download files, or if you are recording a conference, especially if you want to use a high quality recording, which will mean you have less time.

If, however, you are recording notes or dictation, or one-to-one interviews, and can...
regularly download information onto your PC, there is no need to save vast amounts of data onto the machine. It is probably this factor that creates the biggest price differences, so think carefully and don’t buy a machine that gives you hours more than you need.

**Computer Interface**

The computer interface is a really important consideration. If you are planning to send the recordings to a transcriptionist to be transcribed you will need to download them onto your PC first. They can then either be emailed (if small enough – see file type section), transferred by FTP, or, in some cases, sent using a file-sending box on the transcriptionist’s website.

Even if you plan to transcribe the files yourself it is a tedious business if you have to do this directly from the “note taker” – which recorders that don’t have a download interface are sometimes called. Ideally, the recorder will link to your PC with a USB interface, usually requiring no extra software or drivers. Alternatively it might link through a port and come with a CD containing the relevant drivers.

The file type is another very important consideration and is perhaps the one that is most often overlooked. Examples include WAV (uncompressed – great quality but enormous), WMA (Windows Media format – compressed but reasonable quality for voice) and DSS (Olympus proprietary transcription file – very compressed but specially designed for voice so good quality).

If you plan to send your files to a transcriptionist for transcription you will ideally want files that are reasonably small and can be emailed, although there are various ways of sending much larger files over the net. WAV files will not only take a long time to send, they will take up a lot of space on your PC and on your recorder. DSS files, for instance, are much more convenient as they are small and compact, can be emailed without being blocked by the server and are delivered quickly.

**Voice Editing**

Editing of recorded voice will probably be more important if you are using the machine to take dictation rather than record an interview. When dictating a letter you may want to go back and delete the last few words and replace them with something else. The recorders at the mid to upper end of the price-range usually have this feature, but if it’s important to you it’s worth checking to make sure, as by no means do they all have it.

How is the recorder powered? Most recorders are battery powered but if you’re going to be using your recorder significantly it’s worth checking that you can use rechargeable batteries, both from an environmental and cost perspective. It’s also a consideration if dimensions are important to you. In particular, the batteries can add considerably to the weight. Most modern recording machines are fairly light and quite discreet though. If weight is a concern, make sure that the weight listed includes the batteries.

Whether or not the recorder has a microphone jack is an important consideration, as is the quality of the microphone it allows you to plug in. Really, for anything but one-person dictation an external microphone is a necessity. Recording an interview with only the machine’s internal microphone is likely to give disappointing results. A poor recording will lead, at worst, to a poor transcription and, at best, to an expensive transcription, as it will take longer to complete! If you are recording a conference you will need more than one mike, or a stereo microphone, as already mentioned.

Some recorders link with speech recognition software. As yet this type of software is really only of use for one-voice recording such as the dictation of notes. Even then you will need to spend some time and energy “training” the software to recognise your voice, and then carefully check the transcript, as it will doubtless be ridden with mistakes, especially on homophones (words that sound the same but are spelt differently). However, if you are going to use one of these packages then a feature that links your recorder directly to it is a useful addition.

This article lists only the most important features for transcription of interviews, dictation, focus groups and conferences. It does not cover the recording of music, which requires a much wider frequency range and a number of other specialist considerations, but I hope that it is helpful for those embarking on research that requires transcription.

Anne Hickley works for Penguin Transcription, part of Penguin Office Services, which offers an affordable transcription service by tailoring each quote to the exact requirements of the client. Their website is www.penguin-transcription.co.uk. If you require a transcription you can receive a quote by going to www.penguin-transcription.co.uk/PTS_enquiry_form.html.
Performance review time: potentially one of the least desired events of the work year. Your experiences could range from receiving seemingly arbitrary comments, vacuous praise and a sense that your manager hates this more than you do, to comments on a job well done and even the occasional useful comment.

Can you make this a better experience for yourself and your manager? Can you prepare? Yes to the latter, you can certainly prepare and even better develop your review throughout the year. The answer to the former is that it cannot hurt to try, even if you have the most difficult manager imaginable.

Learn Everything You Can About the Review Process
What is the corporate policy on reviews? Does your division or organisation implement the policy in a specific way? How do the reviews influence the individual's compensation? Is there an overall summary, for example, a letter or ranking? If there is a summary, is it completely at the discretion of the manager, done by a management team or based on some form of forced ranking? How are the rankings linked to overall corporate, division or group performance?
**CAREER**

**Understand Your Boss’s Objectives and Beliefs**

Is she doing this to check off a box? Does he want to present his employees in the best possible light to others? Is she truly interested in your development? Does he have a hidden agenda? Does she believe that performance reviews are primarily for the benefit of the organisation or for your development? Is there any political benefit to your manager for investing his time in this process? What is the political payoff to your manager for over-evaluating or under-evaluating his team?

**Gather the Relevant Information**

Throughout the year, keep files of accomplishments ranging from completed project plans and letters of acknowledgment to notes from phone calls. Gather your position description, the goal/objective document for the current year, last year’s performance review, mid-year reviews and desired competencies for your job (or the one you aspire to).

**Put Yourself in the Shoes of Management**

What results and contribution was management looking for from you this year? What did you do that contributed to your boss’s reputation? What behaviour was your boss looking for from you (such as cooperation, team leadership, delivery of results, innovation or compliance)? Did you solve or cause any political problems in the organisation?

**Write it Up**

Write it up, that is, from the perspective of the boss – what did you do for him and his organisation this year? For format, think about how your boss likes to receive information—does he want all of the gory details? Is he swayed by evidence? Does she want just the facts? Is he interested in shared credit? Put aside your natural style, and provide a review for your boss based on her style. Focus attention on your contributions and strengths and how they aligned with the organisation’s and your boss’s objectives.

**Meet with Your Manager**

Ideally, your manager will use your performance review to acknowledge your contributions and strengths. She will give you a few helpful suggestions for the next year and then move on to how to build success. Unfortunately, performance reviews are rarely ideal. If you have done your homework, you should be able to anticipate the mood of the meeting. Check your emotions at the door and listen carefully.

In the best possible world, performance reviews provide you an opportunity to review your contribution, calibrate your understanding of expectations, receive affirmation of your strengths and learn about how to contribute even more in the next year. More likely, you need to be doing your best to influence opinion throughout the year. Remember, the more you can see the world through the eyes of your boss the more likely you are to be able to meet her expectations.

Sherry L. Read runs Read Solutions Group, which provides coaching to successful professionals. Whether you face challenges with your boss, deciding on your next career move, deciphering feedback, developing leadership skills or deciding what your goals really are, they can help you make the changes you seek in your life.

Some systems allow, or even encourage, responding to written performance reviews. If you believe your performance review is unfair, carefully evaluate whether the issue is a matter of degree, whether there is some basis for the comment, whether there are any political motivations and whether you have clear evidence supporting your position. If you believe, after careful consideration, that you have a case, meet with your reviewer and present any counter-evidence you have not previously provided. If the review stands (remembering that the boss usually wins), consider whether it is you are in the right job.
A menu of mouth-watering ‘M’s.

Mushrooms, Moussaka and Muffins...
If you could only eat things beginning with an “M” you couldn’t do much better than this menu. Garlic mushrooms are one of the chief delights in life, but when followed with mouth-watering moussaka and capped with fresh homemade muffins you have truly reached culinary heaven.

**Garlic Mushrooms on Toast**

**SERVES 4**

**Ingredients:**
- 4 large slices of bread
- 75g/6 tbsp butter
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 500g chestnut mushrooms, thickly sliced
- 3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- salt and ground black pepper

1. Toast the bread on both sides under a hot grill. Brush the toasted bread with 1 tbsp of melted butter and keep warm.

2. Melt the remaining butter in a frying pan, add the garlic and onion, and cook for 5 minutes until golden. Add in the mushrooms, parsley and seasoning and toss well. Fry over a high heat for 3 minutes. Pile the mushrooms on the toast and serve immediately.

**Moussaka**

**SERVES 6**

**Ingredients:**
- 30ml/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 500g lean minced beef
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh oregano
- ⅛ tsp allspice
- 1 large aubergine, sliced
- 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
- 45ml/3 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 stock cube
- 2 medium potatoes
- 125g/1 cup Cheddar cheese, grated
- 150ml/2/3 cup single cream
- salt and ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas 4. Heat the olive oil in a large deep frying pan. Fry the onion over a low heat, stirring frequently, for about 7 minutes until the onions have softened.

2. Stir in the meat, oregano and allspice and cook for 15 minutes until browned. Meanwhile, grill the aubergine slices for 5 minutes until browned.

3. Stir the tomatoes and purée into the mince mixture. Dissolve the stock cube with boiling water and add in stirring well, season with salt and pepper and simmer uncovered for another 15 minutes.

4. Cook the potatoes in salted boiling water for 10-15 minutes until tender. Drain well and cut into thin slices after cooling down. Layer the aubergines, mince and potatoes in a 1.75 litre ovenproof dish, finishing with a layer of potatoes.

5. Mix the cheese and cream together in a bowl and pour on top of the ingredients in the dish. Cook for just under an hour until bubbling and golden on the top. Serve straight from the dish whilst hot.
BLUEBERRY & CHERRY MUFFINS

Serves 12

Ingredients:

- 180g/generous 1½ cups plain (all-purpose) flour
- 60g/¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 50g/4 tbsp butter, melted
- 175ml/¾ cup milk
- 5ml/1 tsp vanilla essence
- 75g/¾ cup fresh blueberries
- 75g/¾ cup fresh cherries, pitted

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas 6. Grease a 12 cup muffin pan or alternatively place 12 paper muffin cases on a baking tray.

Sift the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt into a large mixing bowl. Whisk the eggs in a separate bowl until blended. Add the melted butter, milk and vanilla to the eggs, and stir thoroughly to combine. Pour the egg mixture into the dry ingredients. Stir with a metal spoon until the flour is moistened, but not smooth.

Add the blueberries and cherries to the muffin mixture and gently fold in, being careful not to crush the fruit. Spoon the batter into the muffin tin or paper cases, leaving room for the muffins to rise.

Bake for 25-30 minutes. Leave the muffins in the muffin pan or on the tray for at least 5 minutes to settle and cool down before turning out onto a wire rack.
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My greatest journey was from Birmingham in England to Los Angeles in California without going anywhere near an airport. For twenty years I didn’t make a single journey by plane. I have travelled all over Europe by train with total freedom. Train travel gives you the ability to do exactly what you want and stop anywhere you take a fancy to. You can throw the plan out of the window. You’re going from Paris to Milan? Go via Venice. Shall I go north, east, west or south? Feel like seeing Barcelona? Fancy popping down to the Algarve in Portugal? Yes, I’ll have a week here… You get the idea.

If possible, plan your train journey before you start, or at least plan the beginning of it and then do the rest on the train itself. Take a small notebook and pen and get all the details written down, including a few phrases such as “Hello”, “Thank you”, “How much?”, “Where is…?” in the language of the country you are visiting. It really helps – the inhabitants love it and will help you because you have made the effort.

On long distance routes, travel overnight by train. It’s usually cheaper than a hotel room and you don’t waste any time. Get to your destination the next morning. As an example, in the past I have left Paris in the evening, had a meal on the train, gone to bed and then the next morning, voila, arrived in Nice in the South of France or Madrid in Spain. You can often get a breakfast on the train and then you get off, ready to go and refreshed for the day.

In Europe, couchettes (where the seat goes back for sleeping) are the cheapest method of night travel on a train. Private sleepers are available but cost a fair bit more. If using any sleeping facilities overnight, and in some cases just travelling by night, you must make reservations. High speed trains – the TGV or THALYS in France, TAV in Italy, AVE and TALGO 200 for Spain and Portugal – need to be booked in advance for both day and night travel.

Don’t take a suitcase. Whatever age, a largish backpack is great. Inside that, keep a smaller easily carry-able day pack because you can leave most of your main luggage at left luggage facilities at most railway stations. And don’t forget to get some...
wheels for the large pack – it makes it even easier.

Put all your documents together before you leave – passport, any visas needed, driving licence, credit cards and so on. Take a photocopy of all of them. Get some passport type photos at your local shop – they’re very handy if you need to get a visa somewhere. Put the main documents in a very safe place on your person – perhaps in one of those body wallets – and store the photocopies elsewhere. Also, split monies into various pockets.

Wear comfortable loose clothes. Take a travel pillow, maybe even eyeshades. During the journey, kick off shoes and relax. For when you’re off the train, a multi-pocketed sleeveless jacket is ideal for storing monies and documents.

Get a pass for all the train travel in the countries you intend to visit. Do all this before you leave. Some passes cover border cities not even on the pass. You are then totally flexible. You can buy an InterRail Pass for a month if you wish, which covers eight zones and twenty-nine countries in Europe and North Africa.

InterRail tickets come in three types:
· A one-zone pass, valid for 16 days, costing under-26s £145, over 26s £215 and under-12s £108.
· A two-zone pass, valid for 22 days, costing under-26s £205, over 26s £295, and under-12s £148.
· An all-zone (“global”) pass, valid for one month, costing under-26s £285, over 26s £405 and under-12s £203.

For more information, visit www.interrailnet.com.

Here are some things you may consider taking with you:
· Tissues or toilet roll
· Wipes to refresh and clean yourself
· Combined corkscrew and tin opener
· A good reading book
· Bottled water
· A pack of cards and a travel board-game set.
· Pen and paper
· Mini maglite
· Sunglasses and sun lotion
· CD player, MP3 player (and music) or radio
· Mobile phone with charger and adapter
· Food, such as sandwiches and fruit
· Some sachets of tea, sugar and milk

Take it all I say. Why not? There are no luggage restrictions here. You could even take a bike with panniers.

Travel in Europe and beyond is well within reach without setting foot in any airport. I’ve travelled all over the globe by train. You can’t beat it.

Barry Sheppard is an established author and filmmaker and has written over 140 articles on train travel. His website is www.traintraveller.com, where details of rail journeys all over the world can be found.
To have a successful career in any company you must know how to build relationships. And the most important relationship is between the manager and their direct staff. The strength of this relationship can have a very real result on the success of a team. Yes, the relationship between the manager and their staff must be open and trustworthy – that’s a given – but, as a manager, how else can you build good relationships?

During my management career I’ve observed that certain behaviours on the part of both the staff and the manager are more conducive to productive and rewarding relationships than others.

Here are my thoughts for management success, in the hope that I can help other managers, leaders, staff and teams improve their relationships and, as a consequence, their performance.

**Get Involved**

Successful managers know how to delegate. But, even more importantly, they know when a situation calls for their immediate involvement, whether it’s in redirecting resources to a major crisis or visiting their staff at a remote site. If you see a problem rising, there is no excuse for not taking responsibility. I expect my managers to take the blame for things that go wrong and give credit to their employees for positive developments. That is part of being a manager: to take the blame but praise the staff/team when things work out well.

It is the manager’s judgment call to know when your involvement is necessary and will have the biggest impact on the business. I have found that effective managers generally get involved when one of these three types of circumstances arise: when somebody is falling behind in their commitments, when important personnel matters arise and in a crisis.

**Generate Ideas**

An innovative and creative person is rare. I actually encourage individuals to come up with ideas. I listen to what they suggest and say. Together we decide which ideas are taken forward and implemented.

**Be Willing to Collaborate and Share**

The number of people I come across who resist collaboration or sharing credit amazes me. Individuals think that by keeping “things to themselves” they will...
become infallible or irreplaceable. The team, department, company can achieve improved results if individuals share their good ideas, practice and ways of working.

As a manager, you have to take this very seriously. Several years ago, I was hired to improve the turnaround time of customer orders for a large blue-chip company. Two of my direct reports just did not get on; they didn’t talk to each other; they didn’t turn up to each other’s meetings; they argued in front of customers. All this meant they didn’t and couldn’t work together and because they didn’t work together well, neither did their teams. As a result, service was not improving. The three of us met and I told them that it didn’t matter whether they liked each other or not, but the way they worked together had to change. They left the meeting with the agreement they would overcome their differences. I don’t know if they ever learned to like each other, but they learned to work well together – and more importantly, so did their teams. Our overall performance improved considerably.

Be Willing to Lead Initiatives

I love change and as a manager I am always impressed when someone volunteers to lead new initiatives. It shows courage, confidence and flexibility. New initiatives often mean new skills, new relationships and new environments for the individual who volunteers. Because of the unknown, most individuals won’t put their hand up to volunteer. All I can say is that, for those who do volunteer, their careers will accelerate and their profile will increase tremendously.

Develop Your Staff as You Develop

You need to manage your own development. However, the development of your staff is even more important. Early in my career I worked for a great manager. He told me one day that he was going to do everything he could to help me reach my potential. From that moment on, he was more interested in my development than in his own. He went out of his way to criticise or praise me when I needed it. I’ll never forget him; he played a very meaningful role in my career.

Drive Your Own Development

Keep your own skills up-to-date. Your company may not offer all the development you need. You may have to do your own research. In my career I have read many, many management/leadership/business books (some bad, some good, some excellent). I have also had many mentors.

Ask your boss and peers for feedback. Get yourself a mentor, inside or outside the company. Accept and volunteer for new types of work – learn from the new skills, relationships and environments. Remember, your own development is your responsibility.

A Last Word...

A quarter of all staff members don’t know what their boss expects of them. As a manager, make one hundred percent sure your staff know what you expect of them. It’s easy to do using the points outlined above. You may have some different ones too. It doesn’t matter – just make sure your staff know. If they do, you will see an improvement in your team’s service.

Andrew Rondeau offers management and leadership coaching and mentoring services and is also 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 Of Time Management. You can find out more information at his websites: www.greatmanagement.org, www.andrewrondeau.co.uk, www.acceleratedmanagementsystem.co.uk.
TRY TO FIND 10 DIFFERENCES HIDDEN IN THE PICTURES BELOW

SOLUTION
1. Interviewing the Interviewer: Five Questions to Ask
We all speculate about what we’re going to be asked in interviews, but just as important is interviewing the interviewer. Here are five questions to ask at interview:

http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/career/interviewinginterviewer

2. You’ve Been Passed Over for Promotion, Now What?
You’ve been passed over for the promotion you believe you deserved. This article sets out a plan of action to turn the setback into a net gain, leading to better things in the future.

http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/career/passedoverpromotion

3. Five Tips for Dealing with Criticism or Rejection at Work
We all get negative feedback, rejection or criticism. It’s a part of life. It’s tempting to take it all to heart, to either lose some self-esteem or to lash out. However, there are better ways to deal with criticism.

http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/career/dealingcriticism

4. How to Spot Suspicious Behaviour When Travelling
It is much better to err on the side of caution, especially when travelling. With a little vigilance, you might find it easier to spot the suspicious than the suspicious to spot you.

http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/travel/suspiciousbehaviour
The Management Support Fellowship Award brings together outstanding administrative professionals throughout the UK, giving recognition to the hard work and dedication of PAs and secretaries everywhere. The Award rewards the achievements and accomplishments of exceptional individuals whilst promoting the work of the administrative profession as a whole. Every administrative professional has their golden nuggets of expertise and accomplishments. Each Management Support Fellowship Award nomination will mean that a unique success story is shared with peers, thereby disseminating proven best practices. Achievements, both big and small, are an inspiration to others.

Criteria - An outstanding achievement providing inspiration to others in:
- Communication
- Meeting and Events
- Mentoring
- Office management
- Organisation
- Problem solving
- Project management
- Technology
- Training

Self Nominations
Your success, whether it is a small personal achievement or a corporate wide achievement, has the potential to be an inspiration to others. The Management Support Fellowship Award is based on fellowship, and the sharing of success with your peers. If you have any outstanding achievement in organisation, project management, training and mentoring, office management, communication, meeting planning, technology and software, or problem solving and believe others could benefit from your success, take the time to enter. By sharing your experience, you could win the monthly prize or fabulous Grand Prize of £10,000.

Nominators
If you know an administrative professional who has an outstanding achievement in the areas of organisation, project management, training and mentoring, office management, communication, meeting planning, technology and software, or problem solving you can present the success from a different point of view – whether as someone who has benefited from or seen the benefits of the skills of the administrative professional in question. This is a unique way to say thank you for all that your colleague has done. Your nomination could win you the monthly prize or the Nominator’s Grand Prize of £2,500.

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