ACTION CENTRED LEADERSHIP

Plus

How to Give a Presentation or Talk
Ten Top Travel Tips
How Are Your Interpersonal Skills?

A publication of DeskDemon.com
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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 £15,000, 1 x trip for 2 to Dubai RRP £10,000 at least 1 weekend for 2 at an exclusive London boutique hotel RRP £1,884, at least 1 x Gold jewellery RRP £2,000, 1 x Canon digital camera RRP £1,195, 1 x gold mobile phones RRP £1,397 and 1 x bottle of Janson Gold Vintige Champagne RRP £149. 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 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 printer within the promotional period. Your receipt must precede your web entry. There are a minimum of 50 golden tickets to be found. The closing date for receipt of claims and entries is 31.01.08. For full terms and conditions go to www.dymogoldenticket.co.uk/termsofconditions.
Welcome to this first anniversary issue of PA Enterprise. This is the twelfth issue of the magazine and, with rising subscriptions and the issues important to you, it’s going from strength to strength. Our goal has always been to bring you incisive articles that help you shine in your job. Whether lifestyle, career, travel or technology, PA Enterprise offers that little extra.

This month, the issue is very much focused on the self and how you project and present yourself to the world. At whatever level we are in our careers, there are always new skills to learn and better ways to deal with, and relate to, people. In Action Centred Leadership the author offers his insights into effective leadership and how it’s vital that a leader understands the three main needs involved. Then, as the first of a series, we bring you How Are Your Interpersonal Skills?: Part 1, written by the founder of the British Diversity Awards, which goes into some depth about the face we present to the world and what binds the social fabric. To cap off this theme of communication and self-projection, How to Give a Presentation or Talk gives an insider’s guide to the key points involved in making sure you are as relaxed and focused as can be for your big moment. Preparation is the key to confidence here!

As it’s more than simply confidence that makes the world go round, though, Playing QuickTime Movies on PowerPoint for PC gives some technical pointers on getting over the Mac/PC divide and producing high quality presentations using PowerPoint. Then Ten Top Travel Tips shows that preparation here too is definitely the foundation of a successful trip abroad. It’s best not to trust to luck alone!

We also bring you another top menu of three delectable recipes, bizarrely titled Eating Gorgonzola with Caesar in a Forest (you’ll have to take a look to see what mouth-watering recipes are contained within!), plus a sudoku puzzle to test you. That’s it for this anniversary month of PA Enterprise. If there’s anything you’d like to see in the second year of the magazine then please get in touch.

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Maybe you are one of the lucky ones, but making a speech or giving a presentation still gives me the jitters, even though I have done many over the years. My heart will start to thump away like mad and my voice often goes a little shaky when I start out. Nevertheless, like most things in life, this nervousness can be overcome and most of us can put on a decent performance, providing we prepare properly and follow a few basic steps.

For example, I always learn my opening paragraph by heart but still write this out in full. I then start off by reading this from my cards or papers. This allows my voice time to settle down and the familiarity of the words helps to ease my nerves. Once the opening paragraph is out of the way I move on to just using notes for the rest of my talk. By then I’m usually fairly in control. A speech doesn’t sound right if you simply read continuously, word for word, from what you have written down.
I’m probably getting a bit ahead of myself, so I’ll start at the beginning of preparing for a presentation of some kind. Traditionally they are expected to have an introduction, a middle and an ending. This may sound obvious but watch a lot of inexperienced speakers and you will see how they do not always follow this format. Everything can then turn into a jumble, with no real flow or continuity and often you can’t be quite sure when they have actually finished, other than everything goes quiet!

A Beginning, Middle and End

Let’s look at these three parts:

1. Introduction: This is where you tell them what you are going to say.
2. Middle or main body: Now you tell them.
3. Ending or summary: And finally you tell them what you said.

To balance a talk properly, ten percent of your allotted time should be for the introduction, eighty percent for the main body and the final ten percent for your summary. A thirty-minute talk, for example, would have three minutes allocated to both the intro and summary and twenty-four minutes for the main body. It is always preferable to finish a minute or two earlier than to overrun your time.

Many speakers find it difficult to gauge their time. As a rough guide the speed ought not to drop below 120 words or exceed 150 words per minute, other than in exceptional circumstances.

1. Introduction

Firstly, a look at the introduction for the presentation (that is, to tell them what you are going to say). Some suggestions:

I: Start with something which is particularly interesting or unusual, something your audience may not be expecting. Try and think of a way to grab their attention.

N: Demonstrate the Need for the audience. Try to make it personal for them all. Convince them that they “need” to give you their attention. Show the importance of the topic for each member of your audience.

T: Give the Title of your presentation.

R: Indicate the Range of your talk. Say what you will be including and what you must leave out. Tell them how long your presentation will last and whether you will be answering any questions.

O: Establish the Objectives for your talk. Explain to the audience what they will know, or will have learnt, by the time you have finished, and how you expect them to react to what you have said.
Use this introduction to set the route you intend to navigate, so they will be aware as to what you are going to tell them.

2. Middle or Main Body

Now we move on to the main body of the talk (that is, the tell them). Here are a few things to consider:

- The stages of the development of your theme should be very clear in your own mind.
- Only make those points that are fundamental to your objectives.
- To help you emphasise your points use 1. examples, 2. analogies and 3. any visual aids or objects that can be shown.
- Be sure that your linking summaries are both accurate and adequate for the purpose.
- Don’t labour any arguments with repetitions. Instead, illustrate and reinforce your points wherever possible (perhaps with 1., 2. or 3. as above)
- Present your arguments so that only the main or important points will be remembered. Your system of priorities is important.

3. Ending or Summary

Finally we have the summary (that is, the tell them what you said). Don’t end suddenly or stop too abruptly. Your finish must be part of the overall plan. The closing sentences of a well-delivered talk will tend to linger in the minds of your listeners. Capitalise on this, and make this to your benefit.

Use your summary to briefly repeat and restate your main points, but try to vary your language. If there are any conclusions to be drawn then draw them. Do not introduce any new material, evidence or arguments in the closing stages. You are simply reiterating what you have already said.

How Do I Say It?

What I have written above are just the bare bones of the subject, hints and tips that may be of help. Let’s, however, presume that you have completed the draft of your presentation. The question then arises of, “How do I say it?”

The most successful method of preparation involves a combination of memory and reading skills. Use your memory, as I said earlier, to learn the opening paragraph. Also learn your final paragraph off by heart (remember this will tend to linger in the minds of your listeners). It therefore makes sense to know exactly what you are going to say to make that final lingering impact.

Your notes are a reading aid and should be constructed as such. Whether you use cards or plain paper plan the layout. Print the words so that they are easily read and use letter sizes that will enable you to see them easily at a distance. Coloured inks and sketches also help.

Regarding your notes: it is a good idea to also have one master sheet setting out the stages of your presentation clearly. This enables you to be aware of the overall plan and sequence of what you saying. If you should then indulge in anything off the cuff or get sidetracked, it will help you to see where you are up to and put you back on course.

Once you have prepared your talk rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Make your friends listen, say it in front of a mirror, perhaps your dog or cat would like to hear, record it on tape and so on. By repeating it over you may well find that you have to amend your notes. Sometimes the written word doesn’t have the same effect when said aloud. It is important to stress that proper preparation will create confidence. It is only a lack of confidence that prevents any of us from becoming effective speakers.

The Delivery of Your Presentation

I’ll finish up with a few points on the delivery of your presentation. Read over your notes, not into them. Never apologise either for yourself or for the subject matter. Speak in your natural accent and don’t project your voice only to the back of the room. Talk to those in the front as well and look at your audience – talk to them and hold their eyes individually. If you are addressing a smallish group you must make eye contact with them all at some time during your presentation. Make it a two-way exchange, even if the words are only coming from you. And try to avoid “umms” and “errrs” and repeating loose phrases such as “you know”, “you see”, “basically”, “personally speaking” and so on.

It’s not too difficult to make a presentation or give a talk if you do your homework first. We can achieve most things in life if we really want to. It’s simply a matter of effort and preparation mixed with a desire to succeed. Good luck!

Mike Perri is a former business opportunity magazine publisher. He retired early and, for fun, is now trying to see if it’s possible to earn money with free blogs and without using any capital. His blog can be found at http://mikesmoneymakingmission.blogspot.com and is regularly updated with what he is doing to try and make money.
From Dave’s Desk

Occasionally office managers and executive administrators in small to medium sized companies are asked to put their “two cents” in the decision making mix on promotional advertising images, content or concepts. Periodically Big Charlie or Big Charlene puts you as trusted colleague on the spot and you find yourself being a “tie breaker” for that upcoming promotional campaign particularly in the case when your company’s marketing, advertising and creative is outsourced to a consultant or agency.

Business owners and service providers need to make sure they achieve the company’s objectives and make an honest dollar, pound, yen or euro while maintaining the satisfaction and return of your customer, patient or client which is often easier said than done when designing a successful campaign on a small budget.

Therefore, sooner or later your valuable input is called upon because of your loyalty and trustworthiness as it often is with many other matters beyond your “pay grade”.

Here’s the guideline (to use only if you’ve been on the job more than 90 days!) for the spot-on ad. It elicits a direct emotional response through the successful linkage of design and language that “speaks to the individual rather than screaming at the crowd”.

An ad must bring your company’s unique qualities, product or service virtues immediately to the viewer’s gut. Often the most powerful image may bypass language altogether.

So trust the direct impact at your gut level. If it’s there, say so. If not, send it back.

Dave West
Associate Publisher
DeskDemon.com

What is...

What is Ergonomics?

Ergonomics is a scientific discipline which is derived from the Greek word ergos (work) and nomos (natural law). It literally means the science of work and is concerned with removing barriers to quality, productivity and safe human performance by fitting products tasks and environments to people.

This means that when designing a piece of equipment, an ergonomist aims to optimise human well-being and overall system performance by taking into account human anatomy and physiology rather than basing the design on aesthetics or storage capabilities. In other words, the aim is to ensure that a human can work efficiently and without discomfort in a certain setting.

Quote of the month

I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter.

Walt Disney (1901 - 1966)

Idioms

Wooden Spoon

The Wooden Spoon is generally awarded to the person who comes last in a contest. The custom started at Cambridge University in 1811. Each year there were three classes of honours degrees awarded. The first class winners were called Wranglers and were said to have been born with a golden spoon in their mouth. Then came the Senior Optimes (silver spoons) and the finally the Junior Optimes (lead spoons). The graduate who came last in the Junior Optimes was called the “wooden spoon” and the University adopted the ritual of presenting a wooden spoon to this graduate.

Get Shirty

If you Get Shirty you become aggressive and look for an argument or a fight. The phrase directly links to the 1700s when it was customary for a gentleman to remove his shirt before engaging in a fight, to ensure that it remained clean, tear-free and could be worn again afterwards.
Leadership is centred in the actions that a person takes. Any leader must retain respect of the group that they lead and they will be judged by the actions they take in dealing with their workmates. From this thought has come the idea of “Action Centred Leadership”.

Basically, if one person is to run a group of others, then the size of the group should be determined by the task requirements of the job. This is the first area a leader must look at – the task needs. They have also to try to use the expertise and talents of their subordinates and, more than this, co-ordinate each person so that an effective team is constructed.

Another example could be the captain of a football team who has not only to use the skills of their individuals, but also to blend them as a team to score goals. If the match is won, individuals feel satisfied singly, but there is an “esprit de corps” in the team.

Some of the world’s greatest leaders had and have the natural ability to read a situation and to deal with task, group and individual needs as they appear. There are various practical actions the manager can take as a leader to bring out the best in her/his individuals, the group as a whole and the situation at hand.

**Task Needs**

For a task to be carried out effectively, various systems and methods must be set up. Examples of different systems include “critical path analysis”, “budgetary control” and “management by objectives”.

Every leader should know their work objectives and constraints. To meet these objectives, they will have to structure their team to suit. The exact structure will depend on the technology and style of management in use. The number of people under the control of a leader can vary enormously. In a large team there is often a feeling that individuals don’t really know what they are supposed to be doing and how they fit in.

The leader needs to set up methods to ensure that their team members know what their objectives are, they have facilities to do the job and that they are informed on progress that is being made. One system that is used...
is a briefing group system where the leader of the team briefs her/his own group. This system starts at board level and works down to supervisory level; that is, if points come from a board meeting that can help others do their own jobs that much more efficiently then they are briefed to the head of department level. The head of departments briefs their managers and the managers their supervisors. This system ensures a quick transfer of information through all levels with a minimum amount of time used.

**Group Team Needs**

When a group forms, whether a social or work one, the purpose of the group will be some common activity. An all-important factor is that communication is open and forthright so that a mutual trust develops. This, in turn, will lead to high morale within the group. On the other hand, if communication is false or devious, distrust will develop which will cause splintering and polarisation in the group.

If something goes wrong, arguments will ensue, leading to the apportioning of blame to others and the taking of sides, both inside and outside the group.

The leader of a work group or team often inherits a group of individuals. They then have the job of welding them into a team and of maintaining team spirit.

Obviously, one of the first things she needs to do is to acquaint the members with the common task. At the same time she has to encourage openness and awareness in the team, helping them to achieve a high standard of performance.

To help morale, as well as production, the standards in the team need to be high. The team can then take pride in its performance. Teams need recognition of good work and results. In fact, there are usually some successful points that can be brought up even if the task was not altogether successful.

A team working well and succeeding in its task will affect individual members. Each individual will have a commitment and responsibility to the team as well as feeling pleased due to his or her own achievements. A team usually has its own personality, consisting of an amalgam of the members’ personalities. Part of the leader’s job is to try to fit the best people into this team, not only from a point of view of expertise, but also for the compatibility of its members.

The team will develop its own standards and discipline with help from the leader, but if these are not consistent, it will cause bickering and petty arguments. For example, team morale is highest when a football team has had a hard game and has won. If the team has an easy game but lost, the apportioning of blame and low morale are usually seen as symptoms of splintering within the team.

**Individual Needs**

Individuals are motivated by a variety of factors. They vary from basic needs and security, to the need for power, the need to belong to a particular group and the need for self-fulfilment and achievement. Maslow, McGregor, McClelland, Herzberg and others have classified these needs in different forms. The leader’s job in this third area is to help fulfil the needs of different individuals whilst
doing their day-to-day work. They also have to fit square pegs into square holes and develop their subordinates to take further responsibility.

The sensitive leader has also to remember the dignity of the individual and to encourage and inspire that individual by the actions they take. Individual needs also overlap with group needs. For example, most individuals need assurance from others of their own worth, whether the boss or colleagues.

The leader has to take action in these three areas of need: task needs, team needs and individual needs. Occasionally they will be working in only one area, but not often in all three. The leader needs to consider these areas when carrying out the managerial functions of setting targets, planning, communicating, controlling and evaluating what they are doing.

An example of where the leader might deal in only one area could be where they allow a person time off to go to the hospital to her husband. An example of where the leader is working in all three is where a job description and accountability chart is used. They show the individuals in the team what their jobs are and how they fit into the team.

Here are some practical actions that reflect all three areas of need:

• Set high but achievable targets with the team
• Maintain constant discipline in the team
• Encourage an atmosphere of approval and open and straightforward communication
• Encourage participation
• Ensure individuals know to whom they are accountable

and what they are accountable for
• Examine the physical working conditions, team structure and span of control to see they are compatible with the job in hand
• Regularly appraise team members against targets set
• Regularly brief the team, as a team, to ensure knowledge of changes and progress
• Ensure that there is a delegation of authority as well as work
• Recognise effort by the team and the individuals
• Encourage the latent talent and creativity in the team
• Ensure that a person is made accountable for the team if the leader is missing

One of the most important aspects of leadership is for the leader to treat their subordinates as a resource and not as an extension of themselves. The question that many leaders should ask themselves is, “Do I use the latent skills and talents of the members of my team?” If the answer is “Yes” then the leader is probably working in all three areas of need.

Jonathan Farrington is the managing partner of The jfa Group. To find out more about the author, read his latest articles or subscribe to his newsletter for dedicated sales professionals visit www.jonathanfarrington.com or www.thejfblogit.co.uk.
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or visit holidayinn.co.uk/meetingsplanning
This is not as easy as it sounds, and to be honest, not having QuickTime readily available on the PC side is very frustrating. Since there is no support for QuickTime in the PC version of Microsoft PowerPoint, you are seriously limited in the role and use of content available to the general user. Limited, that is, in the narrow sense if you’re bringing content over from the Mac and also in the wider sense, if you have a slide show to present numerous times want variable performance.

What do I mean by “variable performance”? Well, imagine that you’ve got a series of nice high quality slides and you want a rolling slideshow with specific timings and you also want to play it along to some music. Then imagine that you want the slides to start for a specific duration and then change the duration to match the music right on the beat. You want your slide changes to be accurate and what’s more, you want the show to run accurately every time.

Now suppose you have a Celeron running XP and Office 2003, do you get it to run accurately every time? Not if you do something differently in your workflow over a couple of sessions such as, for example, run a few programs and documents before your presentation. Now your RAM may be used up – if you have a Celeron, it is a good chance you may have less than a Gig of RAM and you have to think about what you do.

Also, if you want to get the images and the slides to match your timing exactly, and do so repeatedly, you are relying on PowerPoint’s tracking and the PC’s ability to deliver the tracking and one or both of these could be subject to conditions and circumstances.

What’s a good way round this? Put your slideshow and music in a pre-fixed arrangement that is already tagged and held in check one track to another – like a video format that has a soundtrack and a video track. If you can play the movie, you get the full experience every time.

The Demands of Video

Video is a very demanding proposition even for the best computers today, whether they be Mac or PC; video, that is, when you are creating or editing or capturing or applying special effects.

Video, when you are just playing back, doesn’t demand too much though, particularly if you are reading from the hard disc and not from a CD.

So you could really do with movie formats in PowerPoint – it has to be mentioned here that you can use other formats like Windows Media and AVI but – and this is arguable – they’re not so good as QuickTime and also.
if you have the full range of content creation tools that are available to generate QuickTime movies such as Final Cut Pro, Motion and After Effects, you want to take advantage of what they have to offer.

At this point a “PC-only” user will object that Windows Media is just as good as QuickTime and say something like, “Why don’t you get ‘Flip for Mac’ which plugs into FCP and allows you to generate Windows Media directly from the Export dialogue?”

The answer to that is, “Yes you can do that, but you’d have to pay for and download ‘Flip for Mac’ and there’s a free way to use QuickTime which is still, in my opinion, more flexible.”

QuickTime Pro

What you need to do on either platform is open up QuickTime Pro. Pro is the unlocked version of the standard QuickTime player and you can buy a key to unlock it from Apple for around £20 or so! You can get “Pro” for both Mac and PC.

Now, open your movie in QuickTime Pro and go File>Save As and save a reference version of your movie. A reference version is a “not self contained” version and is just a header or pointer for the main version. Ideally these will be in the same folder and should stay together in there. When you, or someone else, click on the reference version, QuickTime is directed to look for the movie resource in the main movie. If those resources (i.e. the main movie) are present, the whole thing plays through. If, however, someone has moved the main movie, you will get an error message in the way that a referenced picture in a webpage will produce a missing file warning on screen if it is moved from its expected location.

A reference movie will be many times smaller that the original movie so there is no real worries about disc space.

PowerPoint: Playing QuickTime

You can take advantage of the same trick to get PowerPoint to play QuickTime. You will need QuickTime installed on your PC – not the Pro version, just the freebie that comes with iTunes and is available from the Apple website.

Make a folder with your main movie it, and then go File>Save As, as above, to make a referenced version. If your first movie is “01.mov” call the reference one “01a.mov”. You should do this or something similar as a common rule so that, when in PowerPoint, you immediately know which one to import into your presentation. Now open the dreaded MS PowerPoint and create a new blank slide.
The first thing to do is to go to View>Tool bars>Control toolbox and then click on the little hammer icon in the bottom right of the palette.

Clicking the hammer button produces a second dialogue box; all you want with this one is the “Custom” settings button, which is defined by three dots (…)

This button shows a drop down menu with a number of different objects that you can insert into the presentation: from this list select the “Apple 2.0 controller”.

Once you do this, your cursor changes to cross hairs and you can draw a box – which will be invisible apart, from white circular handles. Now right click on this and choose “Properties” from the pop up menu.

Now you are faced with a new dialogue box in which you can actually pick the specific QuickTime file you want to insert – I never said it would be short and snappy.

Choose the reference file and click OK.

Leave the controller setting and you will return to your presentation. The only things to bear in mind from here are that every time you open up this presentation, it will probably warn you about running an Active X plug-in – just click OK; its not going to kill you after all. Also, you will find that the first time performance is sluggish when you open the presentation; give it a second and then it will run fine for this session.

Don’t forget that, as ever, the movie is hard-coded to the presentation; that is to say, it has an absolute path rather than a relative one. What this means is that it will read the path for including the movie from the root: “C:\Documents and Settings\Username\Desktop\Foldername\Moviename.mov” or “Macintosh HD: Users: Username: Desktop: Foldername: Moviename. mov” rather than “/foldername/moviename.mov”, for example.

If you plan to use your presentation on another computer, make sure you re-insert the movie as above, or place the presentation in exactly the same position relative to the system so that PowerPoint can pick it up from that location.

Finally, when you play the movie in the presentation, you have to click on it once on screen to focus on it; then you can use the spacebar to play and pause. But if you then want to go on to the next slide, you will have to double click the surrounding background space of the presentation.

Enjoy!

Andrew Williamson is a website manager and a lecturer in multimedia in the south of England. Andrew has a fine art background and is interested in all areas of multimedia work. His blog can be found at http://brown-sauce.blogspot.com.
Eating Gorgonzola with Caesar in a Forest

Try this lip-smacking menu of delicious recipes for Caesar salad followed by tagliatelle with Gorgonzola sauce and shrimp and rounded off with lemon cheesecake with forest fruits.

Caesar Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients:
- 1 large cos lettuce
- 4 thick slices of white bread without crusts
- 45ml/3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, one crushed and one chopped
- 1 egg
- 30ml/2 tbsp lemon juice
- 120ml/½ cup olive oil
- 5 tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 220°C/Gas 7. Separate, rinse and dry the lettuce leaves. Tear the outer leaves roughly and chop up. Arrange the lettuce in a large salad bowl.

Dice the bread and mix with the olive oil and crushed garlic in a separate bowl until the bread is soggy and has absorbed the olive oil. Lay the bread pieces on a baking sheet and put in the oven for approximately 8 minutes until golden. Leave to cool down.

Break the egg into the bowl of a food processor and add in the chopped garlic and lemon juice. While the food processor motor is running, pour in the olive oil in a thin stream until the dressing has the consistency of single cream. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Pour the dressing over the salad leaves and toss well, add the garlic croutons and Parmesan cheese.
Tagliatelle with Gorgonzola Sauce and Shrimp

Serves 4

Ingredients:
- 50g/4 tbsp butter
- 450g/4 cups medium cooked prawns
- 225g Gorgonzola cheese
- 150ml/½ cup double cream
- 1 tsp cornflour
- 30ml/2 tsp dry sherry
- 1 tbsp fresh sage, chopped
- 450g tagliatelle
- Salt and ground black pepper

1. Melt 1 tbsp of the butter in a frying pan, stir in the prawns and cook for 1-2 minutes on a moderate heat.

2. Melt the remainder of the butter (leaving a bit aside for tossing the pasta) in a large saucepan (it needs to be thick based to prevent the cheese from burning). Stir in two thirds of the Gorgonzola cheese and stir over a low heat for 2-3 minutes until the cheese is melted.

3. Add the cream, cornflour and sherry whisking well. Stir in the sage and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook whilst whisking all the time until the sauce boils and starts to thicken. Set aside.

4. Boil the pasta in salted water according to the packet instructions. Drain well and toss with the reserved butter to coat evenly. Add in the prawns and stir well.

5. Reheat the sauce gently while whisking continuously. Divide the pasta into 4 serving plates, top with the sauce and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top. Serve while hot.

Lemon Cheesecake with Forest Fruits

Serves 8

Ingredients:
- 50g/¼ cup unsalted butter
- 25g/2 tbsp soft light brown sugar
- 45ml/3 tbsp golden syrup
- 115g/1 cup cornflakes
- 11g sachet powdered gelatine
- 225g/1 cup soft cheese
- 150ml/½ cup single cream
- 150g/½ cup Greek yogurt
- 75g/6 tbsp caster sugar
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 2 eggs, separated
- 225g/2 cups mixed prepared fresh fruits, such as blueberries, raspberries and strawberries

1. Place the butter, brown sugar and syrup in a pan and heat over a low heat, stirring until the mixture has melted and is well blended. Remove from the heat and add in the cornflakes. Press the mixture over the base of a deep 20cm loose-based round cake tin. Chill for an hour.

2. Sprinkle the gelatine over 45ml/3 tbsp water in a bowl and leave to soak for a several minutes. Place the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and stir well until the gelatine has dissolved. Place the cheese, cream, yogurt, caster sugar, lemon juice and egg yolks in a large bowl and beat well until the mixture is smooth and thoroughly mixed.

3. Add the hot gelatine to the cheese and lemon mixture and beat well. Whisk the egg whites until stiff and then fold into the cheese mixture.

4. Pour the cheese mixture over the cornflake base and level the surface evenly. Chill for 6 hours. Carefully remove the cheesecake from the tin and place on a serving plate. Decorate with the mixed fresh fruits and serve.
For the modern traveller, the world is your oyster. Okay, maybe you’re not prioritising a summer visit to currently war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq or Sudan. Likewise, tales of drug-trafficking, kidnapping and armed muggings might put you off a two-week sojourn in Venezuela or Colombia. But perhaps you are considering something a little more off the beaten track than usual – a holiday that will test your nerves a little, or that will embed you in a completely different culture or environment.

Many a modern traveller now explores further afield than ever before, with Australasia, South America, Asia and Africa proving very popular for those with an adventurous spirit (who don’t mind long plane journeys). But for any such trips, there are dangers that you may want to research before you leave.

Visit Australia and you’ll probably be bombarded by people listing its dangerous creatures – box jellyfish, crocodiles, redback spiders, taipan snakes, sharks and so on – together with a litany of tales surrounding those backpackers who never came back... But go to “safe as houses, no dangerous animals/plants here” New Zealand and you may not realise that its capital city, Wellington, sits on a major earthquake fault line well overdue a “big one”!

Mad dogs and English Men

Indeed, in a Norwich Union survey of last year, several places were highlighted as potential danger areas, including Thailand, Mexico and South Africa, where illness, accidents and crime are common. Again, not terribly surprising perhaps, but did you know that travellers to Mexico made the most number of claims to the insurance company for overexposure to the sun? Probably not.

The findings also mentioned the Caribbean as the worst area for travellers to suffer insect bites and stings, and even Spain and the Canaries hit the list, for possible robberies and pick pocketing.

Even if you deal with all the insects, robbers, earthquakes, illnesses, hungry sharks and venomous snakes, you may still get in your car and crash. In fact, the most likely way for holidaymakers to meet misfortune is on the road, with 15 million people a year injured worldwide in traffic-related accidents. Remember that terrifying taxi journey on the way to your hotel last year? Yes, most of us can recall at least one terrifying car journey in our search for that holiday magic.

Ten Travelling Tips, however adventurous you are

Don’t worry, this article is here to help address all your holiday concerns (both those you knew about as well as the ones I’ve just got you worried about). With these travel tips, you can be sure you’re making the right preparations for a safe and happy trip, no matter how adventurous you are feeling:

1. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office website is a great source of information on safe and dangerous destinations, as well as general travel advice. Well worth a look if you’re planning to backpack round the world.

2. Do not forget or skimp on your travel insurance. Get travel insurance and check that the cover is appropriate.
for your destination and planned activities abroad. Also ensure it covers any health issues you might have. According to recent research, fifteen percent of British people risk going abroad without any kind of travel insurance. Considering an air ambulance from the east coast of the US might set you back £30,000, it really is a risk you don’t want to take.

3. If you are planning to hire a car or you are taking your car with you, check you are covered for accidents and/or breakdowns. Don’t assume your UK car insurance will cover you for driving overseas – it might not protect you for anything more than road traffic accidents.

4. Check what vaccinations you need at least six weeks before you go and consider whether you need to take extra health precautions. Ensure you have sufficient medical insurance cover for your chosen destination, especially if you have any pre-existing health conditions.

5. You will probably be leaving your home empty while you are away – ensure you have got/renewed your home insurance in the event of anything happening while you holiday. Also consider asking a neighbour to pop in/water the plants every now and again to ensure your house looks occupied.

6. Get a good guidebook and get to know your destination. Find out about local laws and customs.

7. Make sure you take all documentation with you, including your passport, necessary visas and insurance documents. Make copies and store separately just in case you lose anything.

8. Check your bankcards. Do you know how much you will be charged for using your cards abroad? It might also be worth telling your bank or credit card provider about your trip. With fraud on the rise, some card providers/banks will stop your card if they see unusual/unexpected spending. A phone call will remedy this situation but it’s just another holiday “downer” you can avoid.

9. Take enough money for your trip and some back-up funds, for example, travellers’ cheques, sterling or US dollars.

10. And if you’re going for a long trip of several months or more, just don’t forget your responsibilities at home, including your mortgage. Budget carefully and ensure you can cover all your payments both at home and abroad. Once you have done all of this, all you need do is pack your bags and go. It might be a scary world out there, but with a bit of forethought, there’s a whole lot of opportunity for adventure too. Have fun!

Caroline Poynton is a financial journalist and writes for www.beatthatQuote.com on loans, travel insurance and personal finance topics.
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A relative once confided rather gloomily that he had been to a party that hadn’t been very enjoyable because hardly anyone spoke to him. Lacking the necessary interpersonal skills, he clammed up like a frightened crab, hugged one section of the room and hoped someone else would make the first move. No one did and he was the loser. Others, being frightened of initiating contact themselves, of course, ignored him. Interpersonal skills are essential ingredients of good communication and social finesse, but they do not come naturally. They are strongly related to the way we were brought up (whether we were expected to be seen and not heard), our inner feelings about ourselves, our level of confidence and degree of interest in others. When such skills are missing in the home, social setting or office it can lead to loneliness, frustration, non-cooperation and substandard service. Routine skills are required on three levels: personal, social and occupational. To have them well developed means you can communicate verbally, physically and in writing with far more confidence and assurance.

For example, merely knowing how to use a phone is an indispensable personal skill. Often people dial a number without any idea of what they are going to say or how they should address the person at the other end. Instead, they become the victim of nervousness, mumbling incoherently and at length while they waste needless time in their search for information and their desire to be understood. On the other hand, some receptionists may rudely or impatiently respond to callers in a manner that suggests they were surprised that anyone should ring their number and disturb their peace!

Good interpersonal skills assume even more importance on a social level. They are the invisible glue binding relationships together. Without those skills, we would cause much pain and anguish for our friends and associates, plus unhappiness for ourselves. Advanced skills reveal themselves through a readiness to share ideas and resources, give credit where it is due, offer constructive criticism, enquire into a person’s health or circumstance and even simply being the first one to say hello.

Shy people find it difficult to do most of these things because their own level of self-appreciation is often so low they cannot project a favourable image of themselves or take any genuine interest in others. The focus is always on themselves as they seek approval without really having the courage to get what they want. Being preoccupied with how they will be treated or what strangers are going to think.
to think, shy people come to dread every interaction.

But if we find it uncomfortable to talk, meet people on their level or make constructive contributions, we are missing out on much of what helps us to hone those skills. Inevitably, they remain underused, underdeveloped and immature. My relative was afraid of talking to others first and, being equally self-conscious, they were afraid of taking the plunge too. Result: unnecessary tension, needless fear and missed opportunities.

Beyond Office Politics

The third level of interpersonal skills is connected with our jobs. It is at work where they are in greatest demand, especially when a good deal of office politics arises from petty jealousy, lack of confidence and poor social skills. Like the personnel director of a large company whose secretary was the third one in a year and she was already half way through the door because of his boorishness. Being very good at his job (well, as far as it didn't relate to his staff), he probably believed his position made him indispensable and excused him from the “trivia” of treating staff properly. However, his inept behaviour was a sure sign of weak interpersonal skills, common to those who neglect or derogate their staff. They are often “too busy” to communicate, yet readily show up to pronounce verdict the minute things go wrong.

Negative Interactions

At the negative end of the social skills continuum are people who constantly find fault first, no matter how good something is; who are often aggressive; who enjoy bullying others and even like to use violence to disguise their lack of confidence and low self-esteem.

Chronically lacking in interpersonal skills, they use alternative methods of social interaction to push their way through the world. In this forceful manner, they use their physical size, intellect, narrow perspectives or controlling manner to impose their viewpoint on others and belittle their honest efforts. This might compensate for their own inadequacies but it keeps their interpersonal skills at a primitive level. There is not much room to manoeuvre if one is always right!

People who are regularly abusive and aggressive, who are constantly on guard and suspicious of others and who deliberately display an air of Ramboesque bravado, have built barriers around themselves to prevent their vulnerability being exposed – one crying out to be wanted and appreciated. They may have been hurt in the past or they have had little personal recognition so they go on the defensive, seeing slights and insults even where none is intended.

Often they find it difficult to reason orally because their verbal skills are limited and their actions dictated by habit rather than logic or context. For them, being aggressive make them think they are “tough” when really they are hiding their acute fear and lack of esteem. However, the only guaranteed result is that such actions reduce their positive interactions even more, thereby diminishing their status as well as the regard and respect of others.

It is not difficult to appreciate that speaking clearly and concisely, making people feel welcome, being able to join in a discussion, appreciate a colleague openly or rationally argue a point of view are all useful personal skills which enhance our competence and general appeal.

Elaine Sihera is an expert author, public speaker, media contributor and columnist. The first Black graduate of the Open University and a post-graduate of Cambridge University, Elaine is a confidence guru and consultant. As well as being a prolific author she is the founder of the British Diversity Awards and the Windrush Men and Women of the Year Achievement Awards. Her website is www.elainesibera.co.uk.
To do sudoku, you don’t need to use any skills of calculation or arithmetic. What it does require is logic: in a nine-by-nine square game each row and column must contain all the digits one to nine, as must each three-by-three block drawn within it too. It’s simple, isn’t it?
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