

Virtual Newsletter

Issue 4

WELCOME to the latest edition of the Zee Associates newsletter where we keep you abreast of the latest trends in the training and development industry.

Much has taken place since our last newsletter: in particular the re-launch of our website. We have had many favourable comments and feedback about the site so if you haven't yet seen it, take a look at www.zee-associates.co.uk

We have also recently redeveloped many of our courses, to take account of the rapid changes in working practices. Full course details are available on the website.

Because we know that many firms are working within training budget constraints we have launched two exciting new schemes which offer immediate discounts on courses. Details can be found on the News and Events page on our website.

If you would like to discuss your firm's training and development needs please call us for a free consultation.

Des Whitehorn
Training Principal

NEWS

Some of you will already be aware that we have linked up with Central Law Training (CLT) to provide several personal development courses for paralegal and support staff. If you have a need for some of our courses but not enough numbers to make it worthwhile, then consider sending your staff to the CLT versions.

Contact us for more details of the courses being provided.

Thank You ...

to everyone who visited us on our stand at the 2nd LETG Training Fair at Central Hall, Westminster on a gloriously sunny 13th May. It was a real pleasure to meet so many of you!

Introducing Judith Di-Castri

Judith is a Consultant Trainer with Zee Associates. She specialises in Business Writing, and has developed the Proofreading courses for secretaries and trainees and has also developed the note-taking courses for graduates and newly qualifieds.

Her Words of Wisdom "Small

changes make a big difference" are particularly relevant to these topics.

See Judith's article on "Proofreading" on page 2.

Trends in training

We have noticed recently that many firms are using more e-learning.

There are many providers with "e-learning on a CD", using the blanket training approach. This is appropriate and effective for tasks and skills where there are only right or wrong answers (such as using software, or following set procedures in-house).

There is also a move toward intranet based skills development, so that your staff learn on-line through your intranet.

For example, a series of scenarios which may be designed to test or improve ethical or moral judgments, or interpersonal skills.

Each scenario gives, perhaps, three choices. Get it wrong and the package tells you why (given the corporate philosophy and culture) and asks you to make another choice.

Get it right, you are rewarded (the package links directly to your personnel file), have your learning reinforced, and can move on to the next (learning point) scenario. One to watch!

New Series!

Starting this issue, a new series of top tips for trainers. No 1: Effective Interaction

Effective interaction is often what makes a course successful. We've all experienced speakers who do just

that: speak. There is nothing worse than having to sit through a half or — heaven forbid — a whole day of training with someone whose sole aim is to get information across. The one-way communicator.



And what about those who never offer the simple courtesy of a handshake on arrival? Putting them at their ease right from the start is a great way to break the ice and get them on your side.

Someone once said that if you can get them laughing by the first break, you've won.

Introducing humour into your initial welcome session is also an investment since the return is a participant who feels relaxed and comfortable in the environment you have created.

Continue the humour through "Crazy" group work: whatever the topic you want them to consider and discuss, add an element of humour by naming the groups, or by adding a level of competition between each group. They will rise to each challenge you set them!

But whatever techniques and style you use to build rapport with your participants it will always be the days when they feel comfortable with their trainers and where they have had the most fun, that they will learn the most.



If you would like to request course literature, discuss any of our services or request an invitation to an event please contact us:

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PROOFREADING

By Judith Di-Castri

Spotted anything so far? Perhaps the title? See what else you can find in this paragraph. Proofreading is a key part of a secretary or writer's job. Its no good thinking an planning about how to answer a difficult letter or how to write an impressive report, if once it's written you don't spend time checking it through, The finished document that goes to the client is what will persuade the, so not only must the content be excellent it must also be presented error free.

How many errors did you find? There are seven – including the title. I hope this has helped you realise how much you need to concentrate when proofreading. Proofreading is not a quick two-minute glance to check spelling mistakes. And don't rely on the computer to pick up all spelling errors, like the head of a school who didn't realise the report on public examinations was headed as "pubic examinations". I wonder what the parents thought of that!

Proofreading is about checking spellings, but it is also

about editing the document. Editing includes checking grammar, punctuation, sentence length, the sense of the document, the tone and how it will come across to the reader, the style of the writing and whether it conforms to the company's house style.

Also, have you considered that at one time a document would have been seen by the author and the secretary who typed it? Consequently, two pairs of eyes and two brains were checking it. However, as many people are now responsible for their own typing, a document is only ever seen by one person – who very often doesn't have secretarial skills or the keen eye of a secretary to spot mistakes.

On our courses we look at how to proofread and identify the "hot spots": where errors are most missed when proofreading. However, we also look at marking up documents correctly and neatly so that it saves time, confusion and hassle for all concerned.

Another area we look at is how to reduce sentence length to meet the Plain English Campaign's standard of having an average sentence length of 15 – 20 words.

One of the ways of doing this is to use a single word instead of a phrase. For example, instead of "I would be grateful ..." you could use "Please"!

So if you feel that any of your employees, whether secretaries and support staff, trainees or fee earners, need the skills to proofread, or edit, or mark up documents then please contact us to find out how we can tailor a course for your specific needs.

Oh Dear ...

Last issue we mentioned that a secretary used to be a monarch's 'Keeper of Secrets' and had to walk behind the monarch and keep notes.

We have since also discovered that if the monarch died, the secretary was usually beheaded because (s)he knew too much.

Bearing that in mind:

Growing signs that companies are starting to hire has meant that employers are bracing themselves for something new: turnover.

Job hopping is expected to surge as recruitment picks up. To prepare, employers are strengthening legal contracts designed to protect trade secrets and adding incentives to retain valued workers.

About half of companies make employees sign non-disclosure agreements that bar them from disclosing trade secrets, according to a March poll by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

And more than a third are reminding employees who leave about the need to keep trade secrets private...

USA TODAY, May 17, 2004

Brainteaser (2)

How did you get on with the brainteaser last issue? Have a go at these commonly confused words—do you know the difference?

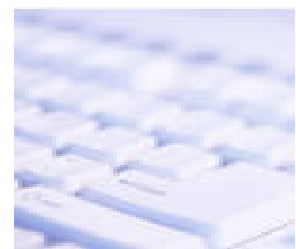
Among and Between
Affect and Effect
Farther and Further
Practical and Practicable
Biannual and Biennial
Disinterested and
Uninterested

Look Out For...

The Times Crème Executive Secretary and PA event which will be at the G-MEX Centre in Manchester on 1 and 2 December 2004.

Next issue — We introduce **Mary Overton**, a Consultant Trainer with Zee Associates, whom many of you will already know from her work on Supervisory Management. Mary's leading article will be on **"Moving into First Line Management"**. If you can't wait until then please call us.

No 2 in our series of top tips for trainers. Next issue: Flip-chart or slides?



Don't Forget...

If you missed the last issue of our newsletter, it can be viewed on our new website at www.zee-associates.co.uk

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