

## Virtual Newsletter

### Issue 6

**WELCOME** and Happy New Year to you all!

This issue's leading article looks at what might drive us to stress, and how to cope under pressure. Without a release valve, pressure builds up and can get us all down – especially if we've made new year resolutions and are trying to stick to them! (See our article about kicking bad work habits. )

I hope you find this issue thought provoking and useful. And if you would like to discuss your firm's training and development needs please call us for a free consultation.

We wish you a very happy and successful 2005.

**Des Whitehorn**  
Training Principal

### New Year's Resolutions - kicking those habits!

How many new resolutions have you made this year? Most people resolve to do many things in their new year's resolutions, and while most succeed, many others don't!

Here is a list of the Top Ten bad work habits<sup>1</sup> that workers are hoping to kick:

- \* Missing deadlines (87%)
- \* Never returning people's phone calls (82%)
- \* Going to work with a hangover (78%)
- \* Gossiping about other colleagues (70%)
- \* Never making the tea, or lying about whose turn it is (67%)
- \* Flirting with colleagues in and out of the office (54%)
- \* Making too many personal phone calls (48%)
- \* Blaming colleagues for your mistakes (45%)
- \* Stealing stationery from colleagues' desks (22%)
- \* Calling in sick because of a rough night out (15%)

<sup>1</sup>Source: Office Angels

Is your resolution in this list? If you're having trouble sticking to it, consider our Effective Use of Time course (course outline available to view on the website) — and learn the Three Golden Rules to work by.



But don't be too hard on yourself (see our article on Stress - P2); unless you have the will-power of a saint there is going to be the odd time you revert to the comfortable old ways. Just don't make a habit of it!

### Trends in Training-who's using us?

The trend over the last couple of months seems to lean towards written communication, as this snapshot shows:

#### Baker Tilly

- \* Interpersonal Skills
- \* Report Writing

#### Burges Salmon

- \* Business Writing
- \* Effective Use of Time
- \* Taking & Writing Minutes

#### Dickinson Dees

- \* Senior Secretary Development

#### Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

- \* Proofreading
- \* Effective Use of Time

#### Shearman & Sterling

- \* Rapid & Effective Reading

#### Tarlo Lyons

- \* Business Writing
- \* Supervising the Team

### Oh Dear ...

According to a survey commissioned by Video Arts, 1 in 4 employees plan to leave their

jobs in January and that by far the most restless age group is the 18-24 year old employee, with over a third (34%) planning to change their job in the New Year.

There are many different reasons why employees might want to leave their jobs and, contrary to popular belief, money isn't usually top of the list. In fact, stress, feeling undervalued and boredom feature most highly.

Consider this approach :

- \* Spot the warning signs and don't ignore them.
- \* Ask questions to get to the bottom of someone's problems, and then listen to what they have to say.
- \* Look for and agree solutions. This will stop the problem escalating and ultimately stop someone from leaving.

Our supervisory, leadership, interviewing and interpersonal skills programmes all address these core areas. Look up the course outlines on our website and contact us for more information on how we can tailor these programmes to help you.

### Brainteaser (4)

Test yourself with this legal quiz:

1. What is the smallest quantity of draught beer than can be legally sold in Britain?
2. Musky Muskrat was the sidekick of which cartoon lawyer?
3. By what name was the Scottish outlaw Robert McGregor better known?
4. In which year did the Pound note cease to be legal tender?
5. In 1998 who did Bill Clinton agree to pay \$850,000 to drop her sexual harassment lawsuit?
6. Under Islamic law, how many wives is a man allowed to have at any one time?

Answers on page 2.

### Top Tips for Trainers:

**No 3** The series continues this issue with a tongue in cheek look at "Trainer Speak": what we say, and what we sometimes might mean!

Even trainers are human: there are bound to be times when we get frustrated with how things are going, or with the people on our courses. But we would never dream of being truthful about the situation so instead we scout around for a useful phrase or diversion!

For example, how many times have you used or heard a trainer say "That's a good idea, what does anyone else think?" While this can be extremely useful in getting people talking, sometimes what we really mean is "Oh pooey, how do I answer that?"

Some others we've come across:

Any other views? (*Shut up and let's get on.*)

What would you do differently next time? (*Start again: that was krud!*)

Let's take a coffee break. (*I've had enough!*)

I think you've got a point there! (*What on earth are you drivelling on about?*)

Thanks for that interesting point! (*You boring dipstick.*)

Anyone else come across that problem? (*I hope so because I'm completely lost.*)

I can hear myself saying some of these on occasion! Send me your own favourites—we'll print them next time!

**Disclaimer:** We apologise to any of our delegates reading this column, but please don't write us off if we use these phrases in the future: we probably really do mean them!

### STRESSY NEW YEAR?

By Des Whitehorn

In a dark underpass, a shadowy figure appears, blocking your exit. Could it be a mugger? Automatically your body switches to 'red alert': you feel fear, your senses sharpen. Hormones flood into your blood, causing you to breathe more deeply and making your heart rate soar.

Your body is in tune with the particular threat you sense: instinct is priming you for survival. This is a classic stress response.

Unfortunately some people's stress response gets completely out of tune. It is as if they develop a "hair trigger". They become ready to 'fight or flight' in traffic jams; when they hear a baby crying; when the morning post is five minutes late; when you have yet another deadline that you know you just can't meet, but equally don't feel you can renegotiate; or even when someone in the office is whistling a cheery tune!

And there are two kinds of triggers: outer events and inner impulses. The baby crying, for example, is an outer event. The tight deadline, however, is a combination of an outer event (new deadline imposed on you) and an inner impulse, for example "I must please people" or "I must hurry up" or even "I must be perfect".

To cope with pressure and avoid stress, it is important to recognise what's driving us, and where our tolerance levels lie. Also, that pressure affects us all differently: just because no-one else seems affected, doesn't mean it's just us!

Conversely, being bored or unchallenged is stressful: we all need a buzz from our jobs, on occasion!

But what turns this (often very necessary) pressure into stress and health-damaging illness? Often, it's that we don't listen to and act on, or sometimes even choose to ignore, the early warning signals of pressure overload, such as headaches, or irritability, or an inability to think straight.



Each of the inner impulses mentioned earlier can drive us to unacceptable pressure levels - and it's usually self-imposed.

If you think you (or members of your team) are suffering under pressure, DON'T PANIC! Medical problems are not inevitable and there are many techniques you can use to get your stress responses back in tune.

But if the only tool you currently have is a hammer, you will tend to see everything as a nail (Maslow). Our courses provide other, more practical, tools for coping under pressure, enabling participants to leave feeling enlightened and better able to deal appropriately with the pressures in their lives. The ones they feel they can change, that is. And of the others? Well, they learn to recognise the ones which are beyond their control, and how to let go.

#### Stress Reduction Kit



Under the Management and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 an organisation with five or more employees has a legal duty to conduct regular risk assessments of workplace hazards including stress.

So don't bury your head in the sand and hope it will all go away: the results could be disastrous for your individuals, your teams and your business.

We can point you in the right direction for conducting risk assessments and stress audits. We can also do the training to minimise or prevent the risks.

However, while stress policies, guidelines and visible support from others and from the firm are vital, there is little point in introducing stress management training for managers and staff if the partners have little commitment to eliminating excessive pressure.

For more information look up our course outlines and consultancy pages on the website. Or to arrange an informal consultation to see how we can help your firm and staff, please contact us.

### Invest in your bottom line.

Research by the Future Foundation, shows that while three quarters of British bosses say that effective development of employees is vital to the future productivity of their business, just one in three makes it a priority.

Motivation, skills development and structured training courses for employees at every level have consistently been shown to have a real impact on an organisation's bottom line.

And low productivity is just as much a problem for managers as it is for their employees.

But improved productivity is not someone else's problem—it is about managerial commitment and knowing how best to approach it.

Find out what you can do about investing in your staff's development—call or email us for information and help.

### Look Out For...

**Next issue** — If you (or your teams) have too much information to get through then don't miss Judith Di-Castri's leading article about Rapid and Effective Reading.

**No 4 in our series** of top tips for trainers. Next issue: "Designing and Using Games in Training"

### Suggestions please!

Last issue we asked for your thoughts on what you would like us to cover, or research and report on. Surprisingly we haven't had one response! So come on trainers and training managers — the invitation will remain for this issue — let us know what you want to see covered! Email me on [deswhitehorn@zee-associates.co.uk](mailto:deswhitehorn@zee-associates.co.uk) I will publish the most innovative of your requests in the next issue. And, of course, take up the suggestion with the most requests!

### Don't Forget...

If you have a colleague who would like to receive our newsletters, email their details to us at [info@zee-associates.co.uk](mailto:info@zee-associates.co.uk) with the word "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Previous newsletters can be viewed on the News and Events page of our website.

Brainteaser Answers  
1. One third of a pint. 2. Deputy Dawg. 3. Rob Roy. 4. 1983. 5. Paula Jones. 6. Four

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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