

Virtual Newsletter

Issue 8

WELCOME to our latest Newsletter—how quickly time seems to have flown since the last one!

We have a lot that's of interest in this issue—particularly the article on "Developing the Secretary of the Future" on page 2, as this is currently such a hot topic. With recruitment and retention of good secretaries so difficult at present, it makes sense to invest in nurturing and developing the ones you've already got!

So sit back and enjoy this issue, and call us if you'd like to find out more or to arrange for us to come and see you.

Des Whitehorn
Training Principal

The Institute of Legal Secretaries



We are pleased to announce that your legal secretaries can take advantage of a reduced fee for membership of The Institute of Legal Secretaries through Zee Associates.

For those wishing to offer their legal secretaries additional business-related education and development opportunities, membership of the Institute is an ideal way to achieve it.

The Institute recognises that secretaries and PAs are depended on by their managers, and so need not only to be reliable, but committed. (We would also say *passionate* about their role!).

There are many benefits of membership, including:

- * Professional status & designatory letters after your name
- * Contact with other Members to share mutual learning and advice
- * Regular magazines featuring useful and interesting articles on law and procedure, as it relates to the role.

Plus all of our courses can count towards their CPD! For more information click on the link to the Institute of Legal Secretaries (on the News & Events Page of our website), or call us to discuss.

New Quick Guides

Some of our readers will be aware of our new series of "How to... Quick Guides". These are being compiled for all of our courses because so many of you have asked for them.

They are a handy and valuable resource which can be used by everyone.

While we have our own schedule for topic publication, please let us know if there is a topic you particularly want to see. And if you want to be added to the list so you receive the rest of the series—or you have a colleague who would like to receive them, email their details to us.

Trends in Training—who's using?

The trend over the last couple of months seems to still lean towards improved communication, but also towards team working, as this snapshot shows:

- Burges Salmon**
- * Assertiveness
 - * The Proactive Secretary
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer**
- * Effective use of Time

- * Proofreading Skills
- Saffery Champness**
- * Professional Report Writing
- Martineau Johnson**
- * A Positive Approach to People
- Wiggin LLP**
- * Proactive Support in the Team

Top Tips for Trainers:

No 5 The series continues this issue with "Handling the Awkward Participants"

This is often one of the biggest fears for new trainers—how to handle the Snipers, Wipers and Hypers.

Snipers: wait for their moment to shoot you down.

Wipers: burst into tears or become emotional.

Hypers: disruptive, often funny, always talking to another participant.

There are many more types, of course! And, too, each trainer has different views on what makes an "awkward" participant. There are the silent ones, the "don't knows", the ones who don't want to be there, and the know it alls or those who have "done it all before".



Thankfully, awkward-to-handle participants are rare. And while each trainer has their own way of dealing with these people, here are some key tips:

- * Prepare well. Find out as much as you can about why

this training is being offered, what has already been said to the participants about the training and what (if any) response or feedback has been received.

* This will help you to set the ground rules at the start of the course, for example, by agreeing confidentiality with them.

* Assure them that your role is to guide and support; not to dictate, enforce, "snoop" or report back on them.

* Don't take their behaviour personally! It's not you they're sore with: often it's with their manager. More usually, it's with themselves.

* Allow peer pressure to help sometimes, by asking questions such as "Do you all feel this way?" or "How does anyone else feel about this?". But be careful not to open a can of worms and have an otherwise constructive session turn into an almighty whinge!

* If you really feel they need more than this and you have to say something, take them to one side at the coffee or lunch break—preferably out of view and earshot of the other participants.

* As part of this conversation you could also tell them you are happy for them to leave if they would prefer. (Nine out of ten will usually stay and participate.)

* Above all, don't single them out or "return the favour", since this will further alienate them, and their colleagues will very likely take sides. Unfortunately not yours!

Brainteaser (6)

Last issue's phobias caused quite a stir, so for you "phobia addicts" here are a few more! Do you know what these phobias are?

1. Atelophobia
2. Philematophobia
3. Pteronophobia
4. latophobia
5. Coulrophobia
6. Scorodophobia

Answers at the end of page 2

Developing the Secretary of the Future

By Des Whitehorn

Attracting the best secretaries for your firm is one thing. Being able to nurture and develop their motivation and contribution—and then hang on to them—is for some the biggest headache of all.

If we look back over the last 25 or 30 years the role of a secretary has changed beyond recognition. And it's not just the technology—although this is probably the biggest reason for the change. It's also the change towards wanting a secretary to "do more" without a specific business case for knowing why. And, too, this is fraught with obstacles because many firms seem to change working practices without breaking the previous habits and culture throughout the firm.

So do you actually know where you want your secretaries to be doing, and why, in, say, five years? And how will you know when you've achieved it?

That has to be the starting point. What is the business trying to achieve? Is it a change in culture, with a more motivated workforce? Maybe it's about having the most cost effective person doing a task or multi-skilling your teams.

We have helped some firms to now work like project teams—where "secretaries" are included in every aspect of the 'project': i.e. the client's needs. But only by multi-skilling and changing the standards

and behaviours of their people are they able to do this.

But do you even know the whole range of tasks and responsibilities undertaken by your secretaries—right now?



In simple terms, work out why you want change; what you want them to be doing; who can or can't do it (training needs analysis); train, develop & nurture them to get there.

We can help you with all of this, as well as motivating the achievers to take on "extra curricular" responsibilities, for example using them as mentors, role models and developers of others. But above all, recognition for their achievements is paramount.

And this isn't necessarily about more salary or a fancy job title. It's about that oh-so-important thank you, and praise (preferably public!) for what they have done or achieved.

People might forget what you say to them. But they will never forget how they felt as a result.

Training will make them ruthlessly efficient, but praise will

sow the seeds of passion and integrity for the job that will inspire loyalty.

So, developing the secretary of the future, therefore, is about change. And with everyone buying into those changes—partners, HR, professional staff as well as support staff. Expecting secretaries to develop into "super secretaries" without role models or a supportive culture is simply doomed to fail.

And this brings us full circle since doing all this means your reputation as an employer will grow: your people are your best (and worst!) advert. And so they will come to you first.

If you are considering the future of your secretaries, PAs and administrators and would like to discuss how we can help you develop your secretaries and support staff, please call us.

"Sorry I'm late!"

A survey by Office Angels reveals some of the creative reasons people give for turning up late for work. Here are the top five least believed reasons:

1. My flatmate locked me in the house.
2. I dropped a jar of honey and it smashed all over the floor—it took ages to clean up.
3. The bus ran out of petrol.
4. I set my alarm clock for 7pm instead of 7am.
5. My dog ran off in the park this morning when on his walk.

Oh Dear ...

How are your secretaries, PAs and administrative staff to keep up to date with the ever changing influences on their role? And therefore bring added value to what they do?

The Times Crème Exhibition was on, last week—a specialist forum for secretaries, PAs and

administrators, where they can network, attend short skills seminars, try out new products and technology, test their skills, and keep up to date with developments in their role.

But when the show is mentioned to the very many secretaries and PAs whom we train, few are even aware of it.

We suggest they go next time!

Next issue

The leading article is "Effective Use of Time" - how to use what time you have available so that your to do list gets done, and your reputation improves!

No 6 in our series of top tips for trainers. Next issue: "Group Dynamics".

A date for your diary

The next Times Crème Exhibition will be held at the G-Mex Centre in Manchester between 30 November and 1 December 2005.

Did You Know...?

Most of our new work is through client referrals. So please remember us to your colleagues in other firms when you get together to "Talk Shop".

Don't Forget...

If you have a colleague or associate who would like to receive our newsletters, email their details to us at info@zee-associates.co.uk with "Newsletter Please!" in the subject line.

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

- Answers to BrainTeaser**
1. Imperfection
 2. Kissing
 3. Ticking with feathers
 4. Blushing
 5. Clowns
 6. Garlic