

Virtual Newsletter

Issue 9

WELCOME to this edition of our Newsletter - the last one of 2005!

With Christmas so nearly upon us many of you may be beginning to wind down after the whirlwind of activity in the Autumn.

If as a consequence you have discovered that making effective use of time is something you could do better, take a look at this issue's leading article on page 2 for some guidelines.

And if you'd like to find out more or want new, fresh ideas on implementing a training programme, please call us. We'd be happy to come and see you.

Des Whitehorn
Training Principal

Visit us on Stand 5!

The Third LETG Training Fair will take place on 26th January 2006 at the Mermaid conference Centre, Puddle Dock, London EC4.



This is a valuable opportunity to meet and discuss your training needs, or just to find out

more about how we can work with you. So come and say hello to us on Stand 5!

Trends in Training- who's using us?

The trend over the last few months is a mixed bag of improved communication (both written and spoken) as well as

client care, as this snapshot shows:

- Brabners Chaffe Street**
- * Creating Images with the Voice
- Burges Salmon**
- * Assertiveness
- * Taking & Writing Minutes
- Dickinson Dees**
- * Service Excellence!
- * Telephone Skills & Behaviour
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer**
- * Proofreading Skills
- Saffery Champness**
- * Professional Report Writing
- Shoosmiths**
- * Effective Use of Time
- * Business Writing
- SJBerwin**
- * The Proactive Secretary
- * Creative Problem Solving
- Thomson Snell & Passmore**
- * Staying in Control
- Wiggin LLP**
- * Improving the Working Partnership

Quick Guides

These handy little resources are proving very popular - we have even had requests from clients for intranet links to our website so the resource can be shared with their staff.

There are six so far :

- * Minute Taking
- * Developing the Secretarial Role (one for Managers and one for Secretaries)
- * Participating in Meetings
- * Proofreading
- * Managing Performance
- * Assertiveness

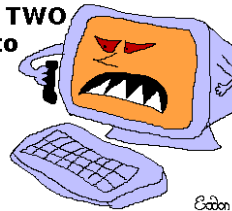
While we have our own schedule for topic publication, please let us know if there is a topic you particularly want to see.

And if you want to be added to the list so you receive the rest of the series direct to your inbox, or you have a colleague who would like to receive them, email their details to us.

Ring Ring!

Trying to communicate with many large organisations can be stressful. Letters "don't arrive" and emails are too often hit and miss so we resort to phoning. Then the nightmare begins.

Select ONE to die a horrible death.
Select TWO to go to Hell...



Since so many of our clients are concerned about the impact of their telephone protocols (or lack of them) we are consequently very busy these days conducting Telephone Response Monitoring exercises.

This is an efficient way to find out how your staff answer the phone, how long they take, how they deal with callers and whether the image presented by your operators and your staff match your client service aims. If you would like more information take a look at our website (consultancy pages) or contact us direct.

Top Tips for Trainers:

No 6 The series continues this issue with "Group Dynamics". This is an oft forgotten part of good training design: who, and how many will be attending? And how do they get on with each other?

Despite large numbers booking on to courses, there are those unavoidable times when only 2 or 3 turn up for the session, and depending on the subject matter, with so few it can make the session a particularly difficult one to run. In

addition, the participants can lose out as there are fewer people to share ideas, plus they may feel inhibited by such a small group.

On the other hand a room full of 30 or 40 people can be equally inhibiting for those who are naturally quiet. And, too, they can get "lost", or perhaps even hide behind the more vocal participants.

Consider too the makeup of the group, for example if there are 2 or 3 in the group with high status this may mean that some will defer to them; some will say what they think is expected of them; and others will simply "clam up" for fear of making a fool of themselves.

To avoid this:

- * Take time with the client to agree the mix of participants so that you can pitch the content at the right level.
- * Consider the benefits of designing into the start of the session a "parked issues" discussion where they compile their own guidelines, as well as topics they wish to park for the day.
- * Always take a supply of energisers you can use to get them working together. A koosh ball or other stress toy is great for throwing at each other, perhaps as they introduce themselves. It will also encourage laughter!
- * Keep a watchful eye on changes in the room and be prepared to change or ditch parts of your training design.
- * Be flexible in running group work: perhaps substituting a group session for plenary work; or use post it notes instead of individual work.

If we have participants who can feel comfortable with their colleagues in the training environment they are more likely to enjoy the experience, and to learn from it.

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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Tel: 0845 009 0077 - info@zee-associates.co.uk - www.zee-associates.co.uk

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Page 2

Effective Use of Time

By Des Whitehorn

"You will never find time for anything. If you want time, you must make it."

How many times have you gone home after a long day, flopped on the sofa and thought "What have I actually done today? I know I've been busy, but what have I achieved?"

Making effective use of time isn't about feeling whacked at the end of the day, it's about doing—and doing well—the things that are priority, and which help to drive things forward. So that means allocating the time to do it justice.

Here are a few of the main points to consider:

Get your priorities clear. To be able to prioritise you need to have clear deadlines, but too often we work on assumptions or don't ask because we want to be seen as "capable" and helpful.

And a lack of deadlines means we are often not motivated to achieve; we can't prioritise; and so we can't plan.

Plan daily, weekly and monthly: especially for the regularly occurring tasks, or else risk them being sidelined by "urgent" tasks.

If you have no plan, you will end up trying to do more than one thing at a time—probably the "nice" or "quick" tasks rather than the important ones.

Use a "to-do" list. But make sure it really is a to-do list

based on today's ultimate deadlines. Otherwise you are creating a daily "wish list" which quickly becomes disheartening when you don't achieve what you set out to do.

Learn when and how to say "no".

If we always say "yes" we run the risk of being treated like a doormat, or of rushing the mountain of work we will inevitably have, and producing low quality work. Yes, people will probably like you, but by a voiding causing displeasure in

the first place (by not refusing to take on something) you are more likely to compound the problem at a later date. By struggling on and then not managing to cope, you are likely to cause others to get angry or frustrated with you—so the whole point of caving in to the original request backfires.

On the other hand, saying no and negotiating deadlines—and then achieving them—will mean others will in the future trust and respect your judgment.

Don't mistake activity for achievement Be conscious of time and especially of how long things take to do.

Otherwise you will spend all day rushing around, perhaps just fire-fighting rather than achieving.

Excuses, excuses. We all come up with excuses we call reasons for why we cannot make more effective use of our time. What are yours?

If you or your colleagues are always rushing around, or having to stay late, or frequently take work home with you, consider running our course "Effective Use of Time" at your offices.

Oh Dear ...

Here are some comments from secretaries about their boss's dictation. Is this you?

"His voice is so flat and boring I nearly fall asleep."

"My boss has overdosed on instructions - for example he says 'full stop - new sentence - initial capital'. For goodness' sake, I know that - I'm not thick."

"I never get any punctuation at all and then when I do my best, it's wrong. I'm not a mind-reader."

"I have to keep reminding her about the batteries - last week she sounded like Mickey Mouse."

"He tries to be too clever and dictates very complicated things. I wish he would draw it out on paper and send it with the tape - it would save time for both of us."

"Why must they give their instructions after we have typed the words? I'm sure they think we play the tape through first and then type it."

"It's great when you get a good tape - you can type straight through - it makes you feel good."

Awful Dictators Take Note!

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".

Next issue

The leading article is "Improving the Working Partnership" by Mary Overton. A thought provoking but practical look at how we can work better with our secretaries. And vice versa!

No 7 in our series of top tips for trainers. Next issue: "Designing and Using Happy Sheets: do they really make us smile?"

A date for your diary

Visit us on Stand 5 at the Third LETG Training Fair, on Thursday 26 January 2006.

Don't Forget...

* Your secretarial staff can benefit from a reduced membership of the Institute of Legal Secretaries if you use the link on our website.

* 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.

And finally ...

We wish you all a very



and a happy and healthy New Year in 2006!

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