

## Virtual Newsletter

### Issue 15

**WELCOME** to the first virtual newsletter of 2007—and a belated Happy New Year to you all. (Doesn't the festive season seem such a long time ago, now? And how quickly January seems to have passed already!)

We are exceptionally busy this year, delivering modular programmes for secretarial and support staff, with each module building on the learning of the previous module.

Additionally many firms are designing rolling training programmes, with the responsibility for booking and attending sessions resting firmly with their secretarial and support staff.

If you would like to discuss your firm's training and development needs please call us to set up a meeting: we'd be delighted to come and talk to you.

In the meantime I hope you find this issue interesting and enjoyable.

**Des Whitehorn**  
Training Principal

### Quick Guide Successes

To date we have published 28 of these handy little resources, which are emailed out once a fortnight.

They are always well received and the feedback we receive is particularly positive.

Some firms have asked for direct links to our website so that their staff can access the Quick Guides, our Newsletters and other resources from their intranet link.

And our circulation list is growing as more and more ask for

the mailings to be sent direct to their inbox.

If you have a special request for a Quick Guide topic, just let us know.



### Trends in Training—Who's using us

The trend over the last couple of months is a very definite swing towards developing the skills, proactivity and future role of the secretary, as this snapshot shows:

- Dickinson Dees**
- Service Excellence!
  - Senior Secretary Development

- Freeth Cartwright**
- Checking it for Sense

- Geldards LLP**
- Positive Image

- Howes Percival**
- The Successful Secretary
  - Meeting Client Expectations

- Mills & Reeve**
- Making the most of appraisal

- Wragge & Co**
- Secretarial Masterclass

### Did you know?

We use action cards at the end of all of our programmes. These are similar to postcards on which participants write the three most important actions

they want to achieve as a result of attending the course. We collect in the cards and post them back to participants about six weeks after the course.

Either this reminds them to get going on achieving their goals, or it congratulates participants on having achieved them. Either way the feedback we get from participants is that they are a pleasant surprise as they have usually forgotten about having filled in the card.

It's also a great way to reinforce some of the learning.

### Top Tips for Trainers: No 12

The series continues this issue with "Ways to open a session".

Most trainers use a variety of icebreakers on their courses, including the simple "introduce yourself" round robin, perhaps with pre-written points on a flipchart.

Variations on this include paired introductions (where they find out about and then introduce the other person); or mixed name tags (they are given a name tag and have to find the owner plus two interesting facts about them, then introduce this other person).

On an interpersonal skills programme you might consider getting people to introduce the person on their right purely by guesswork! (This won't work if they all know each other exceptionally well!)

There is also the "puzzle" at the start of the programme so that early arrivals have something to work on before the course starts. So long as it is fun, this often generates informal introductions and creates a positive atmosphere. It has the

added benefit that latecomers get the message that you intend to stick to time!

A variation of this which is useful for team building sessions might be to have two children's puzzles (large pieces!) and hand out two or three pieces to each arrival with the task of finding the owners of the other parts of the jigsaw and fit them together. If you have two or more jigsaws you could have two or more teams, and this will help them to mix and begin to bond with each other.

Whatever icebreaker or scene setting activity you choose, make sure it is fun; is relevant to the topic of the session; and that everyone can participate at the same level. Then the ice will well and truly have been broken helping to ensure a more positive outlook for the programme.

### Some Statistics



A recent trawl of the The Lawyer Magazine's top 100 Law Firms 2006 reveals that Zee Associates has worked with 42 of the current top 100 since we started in 1995.

Of course, many of the firms we have worked with over the years are no longer: some have merged, demerged or simply do not exist any more. So the true figure is probably more than 42. We think that's a pretty good track record!

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

Iron Castle, Royal Oak Lane, High Hurstwood, East Sussex TN22 4AN  
Tel: 0845 009 0077 - info@zee-associates.co.uk - www.zee-associates.co.uk

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### A rose by any other name

By Des Whitehorn

And what a rose your co-ordinators, administrators, group managers, support leaders, team secretaries or team seniors are.

These are a few of the job titles of this supervisory level for secretarial teams. Whatever their title, the role is a valuable one, and one which is constantly changing to accommodate the needs of business.



So at one end of the scale the "rose buds" perform a dual role: secretarial support and supervisory management, to include for example holidays and sickness, cover and workflow. With the now common use of digital dictation this is a restrictive use of someone who probably has much more to offer and who may want more responsibility and the opportunity to develop.

At the other end of the scale are the glorious scented roses in full bloom: the ones who manage the managers, credit control, billing, WIP, appraisals, training, budgets, best use of technology and departmental marketing. Often they have an administrator of their own (sometimes shared) to support them.

Many secretaries complain there is nowhere to go in the secretarial role and see "working for a senior partner" as the top of their ladder. So perhaps by tapping into their need and releasing fee earning time on "non-technical" tasks, a whole new range of job roles or grades can be

created.

The problem will most likely be in getting the fee earners and partners to release their prized secretaries. However if you grow and nurture lots of roses to take their place (we won't

talk about heaping manure on your roses at this point), then you will also grow multi-skilled, adaptable, secretaries.

Here are some of the benefits of developing willing secretaries into the supervisory role :

- \* It provides a visible career path for those who say there is nowhere to go and nothing to aim for
- \* They can do more cost effectively tasks currently being done by expensive fee earners and managers
- \* They know how your teams and the firm work, requiring little induction and have a less steep learning curve
- \* They are trusted by secretaries and fee earners alike so are more likely to smooth-run the department
- \* The firm is seen as providing a broader career path for non-lawyers
- \* It challenges senior or experienced secretaries to develop beyond existing comfort zones
- \* It will help to retain staff instead of them seeking opportunities elsewhere
- \* This in turn saves the cost of

recruiting and training replacements

And so to the manure. All the best roses are well fed. Your co-ordinators will thrive and bloom having been fed a diet rich in training, support, development opportunities and feedback.

There is no limit to their versatility, ability and capacity to manage. They simply need the opportunity to demonstrate all this.

If you are considering creating the role or augmenting an existing one and want some ideas or help, then contact us. We'll help you design, plant and nurture your garden of administrators, team secretaries, support leaders...

### The Cannibals

A big corporation hired several cannibals. "You are all part of our team now," said the HR manager during the welcome briefing. "You get all the usual benefits and you can go to the cafeteria for something to eat, but please don't eat any of the other employees." The cannibals promised they would not.

A few weeks later the cannibals' boss remarked, "You're all working very hard, and I'm very pleased with you. However, one of our secretaries has disappeared. Do any of you know what happened to her?" The cannibals all shook their heads, "No," they said.

After the boss left, the leader of the cannibals said to the others angrily, "Right, which one of you idiots ate the secretary?"

A hand rose hesitantly in admission. "You fool!" said the leader, "For weeks we've been eating managers and no one

noticed anything, but noooooo, you had to go and eat someone important!..."

### Look Out For...

Next issue The leading article is by **Val Tyler** on "Using a Skills Deployment Inventory (SDI)". If you can't wait until then please call us.

**No 13 in our series** of top tips for trainers. Next issue: "Ways to close a session".

Also in the next issue, more brainteasers, 'Did You Know's and 'Commonly Confused Words' to keep you on your toes!

### Don't Forget...

• If you have a colleague who would like to **receive our newsletters** or Quick Guides, send their email address to us at [info@zee-associates.co.uk](mailto:info@zee-associates.co.uk)

• **Are you missing something?** If you have missed previous issues of our newsletter, or want to download any of our previously published "Quick Guides" you can access them on the News and Events pages at [www.zee-associates.co.uk](http://www.zee-associates.co.uk)



• We need to update our rating regularly on the Kent Training Provider Register, and you can **help by adding feedback** direct to the register. To leave your feedback and comments, click on the Training Feedback tab at [www.kenttraining.org.uk](http://www.kenttraining.org.uk) (Your personal details will not be published.)

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