

Virtual Newsletter

Issue 16

WELCOME to this Spring edition of our virtual newsletter. And "virtual" is a hot buzz word these days—see the news in the next column.

Secretarial Development is high on the agenda for many firms these days. Everything from taking minutes to sessions on where the role will be in five or ten years' time.

And of course there are tools we can use to help you—see Val Tyler's article on Page 2 about using a Strength Deployment Inventory.

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

Trends in Training—Who's using us

The trend over the last couple of months is a very definite swing towards the communication skills, both written and verbal:

Ashurst

- Checking it for Sense
- BDO Stoy Hayward**
- Communicating for Impact
- Influencing Skills

Fladgate Fielder

- Effective Inductions
- Herbert Smith**
- Proofreading & Grammar
- Mills & Reeve**

- Managing Multiple Fee Earners

Wiggin LLP

- Write it Right!

The Future is Virtual

What, you might ask, is a Virtual Assistant? No, not a robot to pander to your every whim, nor cyberspace technology, but a highly proficient, professional PA who is accessible virtually rather than personally.



VAs have been around for a long while, however the role is now gathering momentum as experienced PAs seek more flexibility, freedom and control over their careers.

And there is now a vast support network for VAs: The Institute of VAs, learning forums, national conferences, "how to become a VA" handbooks, VA networking events and groups, VA agencies and more. A quick search on Google will return literally millions of results.

The majority of secretaries we see on our development programmes always prick up their ears at the possibility of being a VA. With the portability of, and developments in technology, and given that businesses are moving towards more flexible working arrangements, we will see a rise in the number of VAs over the coming years.

There are even virtual law firms these days. One law firm in Manchester has no fixed

abode—instead each partner, assistant and member of support is virtual.

So if, as we suspect, this trend continues to grow, ought we not to be planning this into our recruitment and training plans? If you'd like us to come and talk to you more about this, please get in touch.

Five go Masterclassing

One of the biggest rewards of being a trainer working with secretaries and PAs is seeing the changes that they make as a result of the training.

At the end of an especially positive day in February, one group of PAs composed a poem during our "Crazy" session (Top Tips No 7, Issue 11) to reinforce learning.

It is reproduced here with the permission of its authors: *Claire Du Plessis, Gill Pritchard, Sue Sutton, Traci Verhulst and Carol West.*

"There were five PAs from Wragge & Co
Who didn't really know in which direction to go

So to make themselves more upper class
They went along to the Secretarial Masterclass.

And this is what they learnt:
Forget Omega 3s and probiotics
In with proactive discussions—no longer neurotic.

Out with the old, in with the new,
Hard backed notebooks is what we shall use.

Image overhauls were to be had
Now that we are all HIP*, GOYA* and glad.

Appraisal time is near...
But that's okay cos Des has been here.

Off to appraisals we shall go
Armed with our notebooks and a confident glow."

(* Acronyms used throughout the training day: contact us or book yourself a training day to find out what they mean!)

Oh Dear ...

Six months. Apparently that's all it takes to turn an enthusiastic new starter into another "making-a-living" clone in the office.

After six months there is the emergence of the reality gap—the difference between the promise of a job and its reality.

More than ever before, employees have great expectations from a new job and employer: everything from promotion, social events and international travel to training and mentoring.

Perhaps the three- or six-month probation period review is more important than we realise in providing your staff with the answer to "Should I stay, or should I go?"

A date for your diary



The next Times Crème Exhibition for Secretaries, PAs and Administrative Assistants is on at London's Olympia from 15-17 May 2007. See you there!

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

Using a Strength Deployment Inventory

By Val Tyler

Understanding ourselves is one of the first steps to understanding others. It is also a vital tool in managing relationships at work.

Relationships can be confusing, people can be difficult to understand. We could be compared to tin cans without labels. What is on the inside? How do we know without a label? It could be a can of soup that you heat for four minutes, or a can of fruit cocktail that is served cold. How do you deal with people without knowing what motivates them? How do you find the instructions that treat you in the way you would wish to be treated?

Strength Deployment Inventory or SDI is a technique for finding out what motivates us, first of all, then what drives our colleagues and bosses. We should not assume that we would all like to be treated in the same way. You have a unique view on the world, because it is your world!

Devised by Elias H Porter, Ph.D (1914 – 1987) in the mid 1930's it explains what makes us tick. Called Relationship Awareness Theory it is based on the theory that our behaviour traits are consistent with what brings us everyday rewards. We are programmed with these beliefs at an early age. It is an altruistic concept, grounded in a

belief that understanding will lead to better relationships. It is based on three basic motivations: want to be of genuine help to others; want to be the leader of others; and wanting to be self-dependent.

After completing a comprehensive questionnaire, SDI maps out your world and how you see it. There are four major areas; blue, red, green and central hub. Blue is altruistic-nurturing. Reds are Assertive-directing. Greens are Analytic-autonomising. Hubs are Flexible-cohering. The questionnaire also gives a reading of how we behave when things are not going well for us. Very often we revert instinctively to our early learned behaviours.

We can assume that most of our behaviours are normal. We might congratulate ourselves on being TRUSTING – but others may see us as gullible. When does SELF CONFIDENCE become arrogance? And you may pride yourself on being LOYAL – when others may see you as having a slavish attitude. To be ambitious is a good thing, but how far down the line does it become ruthless? We do not always see ourselves as others see us. And even if we do, we justify our behaviour with all sorts of reasons.

I list below some of the overdone strengths revealed when carrying out a training session in interpersonal skills linked to a psychometric test. See if you

can spot some of your strengths which may be overdone from the following list.

- Trusting
- Self confident
- Optimistic
- Economical
- Organiser
- Experimenter
- Helpful
- Persuasive
- Adaptable
- Quick to act
- Caring
- Imaginative
- Orderly
- Analytic
- Fair
- Accepting
- Polite
- Conserving
- Team player
- Mediator
- Gullible
- Arrogant
- Impractical
- Stingy
- Controller
- Aimless
- Self-denying
- Pressuring
- Spineless
- Rash
- Smothering
- Dreamer
- Compulsive
- Nit picking
- Unfeeling
- Passive
- Deferential
- Possessive
- Groupie
- No convictions

Could you find some of your (or your colleagues') behaviours in the list? If you would like to know more about using the SDI in training or assessment sessions, please contact us—we'd be happy to help.

Top Tips for Trainers

There is no room this issue for our regular top tips for trainers feature. But we'll be back in the next newsletter!

Look Out For...

Next issue The leading article is by **Bill Carpenter** on some of the creative ways to solve problems, and the many benefits creativity in the workplace can bring. If you can't wait until then please call us.

No 13 in our series of top tips for trainers. Next issue: "Training Preparation" - some of the points to consider before delivery of training.

Don't Forget...

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



- 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 (Your personal details will not be published.)

And finally ...



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