

## Virtual Newsletter

### Issue 17

**WELCOME** to the latest edition of our virtual newsletter. All the usual features and regulars are here for your delight!

But first, I was delighted and excited to learn that I have been nominated for the Legal Education and Training Group's Trainer of the Year Award 2007. I'm looking forward to the LETG Annual Dinner on 28 June when the votes will have been counted and the awards will be made. Wish me luck!

And what have we been doing recently that may have prompted this nomination? Excellent feedback from our participants is a large part of this. In addition, we have a greater involvement in office and team away-days.

Another is helping set up secretarial forums and workshops which involve secretaries in the process of taking responsibility for identifying and implementing their own training and development programmes.

Sometimes creativity is required (see Bill Carpenter's article on the next page for ideas on how creativity training can help!) to get them to see beyond the "never done that before" or the "they'll never let us do that" mindset!

But it's rewarding to work with them and to see them buy into the responsibility for their own development and future career. And of course to see the difference it can make to their motivation and smile factor!

Training up your co-ordinators and administrators to become involved in and to deliver secretarial training and development sessions is also an area we are involved in.

Our experience and specialist knowledge of support staff

and their needs makes us the first choice for many firms. 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 pretty mixed bag, but there is a consistent need for grammar, at all levels!

#### Ashurst

- Managing Multiple Fee Earners

#### BDO Stoy Hayward

- Taking Minutes

#### Buckles

- Grammar Gremlins Destroyed

#### Cripps Harries Hall

- Handling Difficult Callers

#### Freeth Cartwright

- Business Writing & Grammar for Lawyers

- Managing Your Manager

#### Mills & Reeve

- Effective Use of Time

### Training for initiative

We are sometimes asked if we can train for initiative. The dictionary says this is "the ability or attitude required to begin something". So yes, we can train in knowledge, skills and confidence to begin something. However, unless it is supported back on the job, the ability to "use their initiative" is quickly lost.

Effective performance management, good motivators and clear communication are key—all of which we can train

in. Call us to help you balance the skills your firm needs to "train for initiative".

### Website facelift

Our website is currently being given an overhaul and there will be a whole new approach to the site with, for example, a searchable archive of our newsletters and Quick Guides. We will keep you posted and let you know its unveiling!

### Top Tips for Trainers:

**No 13** The series continues this issue with "Training Preparation": points to consider before delivery of training.



Many trainers say that the delivery of training is the easy bit; that the preparation and lead-in are the hard bits.

So, key to getting it right is knowing where you are going with it. Make sure you ask the right questions of your client so that you can align any solutions with their objectives and the trainees' needs. And don't be afraid to probe for detail if it is all a little unclear. Sometimes clients don't actually know what they want!

Build in and use their language in your notes and programme design so that the end product is relevant and understood. And language is important, too, in considering how best to get the learning across: should you tell them, or design a game, or have a guest speaker slot to introduce a, perhaps controversial, discussion point?

Consider Kolb's learning cycle

and choose a range of delivery styles to accommodate the different learning needs of your participants.

Think up a new icebreaker for all the different sessions you deliver—if people attend more than one of your sessions they may be bored with the same one and less excited about what is to come.

Remember the Six Ps: Proper Preparation Prevents Pretty Poor Performance!

### Oh Dear...Bag-teria

A study on workplace germs undertaken by Dr Charles Gerba, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona, has found that women's desks are seven times dirtier than those of their male colleagues! This is apparently due (amongst other things) to putting handbags and make-up bags on loo floors and then transferring those germs to hands, desks and clothes.

Even worse, the research team found that men's wallets were the single most bacteria-laden item in any office, and were on average four times as dirty as a woman's handbag. (We won't ask "how come?")!

### Thank you ...

to all our loyal followers!

80% of our work (new and repeat) is as a result of referrals and recommendations.

Many of you change roles (some of you even take each other's roles!), or climb to giddy heights in the world of training, development and Human Resources and remember us when we can help you meet your training and development needs. Thank you!



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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## Creativity? No problem!

By Bill Carpenter

"THEY don't want us to be creative, THEY just want us to work". "We're not allowed to do things differently". "My kind of work doesn't require creativity". Just a few of the comments people have made when discussing the role of creativity in their organisations at the beginning of courses I've run.

As with most training, alongside the skills, tools and knowledge, comes what we used to call a change of attitude – we now call it competency. If one thing is going to make a real difference to organisations, it's the people in them starting to behave differently.

Creativity is the art of breaking through patterns, habits and certainties. We can all stimulate our creative skills, if only we are aware of our own obstructions and impediments (and those of the organisation) to arrive at creative solutions.

It's important to recognise that creativity isn't just for solving problems - it equally applies when something good could be improved. It's also important to realise that it's cultural. Warren Bennis, in his book *Organizing Genius*, bemoans the organisation whose people say "We do manage to be creative round here, despite the system".

Creativity needs training, practice, support and reward if it is to be used to the benefit of the organisation. What counts

as benefit depends on why you're there – to make a profit, to meet clients' needs, to make a difference to employ-



ees, to add value to the local, national or global community, to be good stewards of world resources, to support a particular charitable aim, or more likely a combination of the above.

How does creativity add value to these things? Well, if you don't have a clear goal or plan for a particular activity, or the plan isn't working – or if you have a goal or a plan but want to find a better one, creativity can help in a number of ways. It can help to:

- find solutions when you can't think of one
- find better (more beneficial) solutions when you already have one
- involve people and gain their commitment
- avoid unhelpful or potentially disastrous action
- make your people feel more valued

In principle, it's about allowing divergent thinking. Some people call it "outside the box" thinking, but I prefer to think of it as forgetting that there is a box. There are, of course, many techniques to help with this. Many of them seek to get people to use their brains in a

more joined up way, particularly to use the parts of the brain that deal with abstract concepts like pictures and music, rather than rely solely on the parts that deal with words and logic.

For some, this is quite a natural thing. For others, it takes more practice and, for them, it often helps if they know that a later part of the overall creative process involves convergent thinking which reduces the options down to, finally, the best one for the circumstances. It's this part of the process that the more naturally creative people sometimes struggle with. That's one of the reasons why creativity works well with teams, who can bring a variety of strengths to the game. Ultimately, it's important to recognise that the purpose of creativity (at least in organisational life, but arguably always), is to end up with something which adds value (even if that's only the opinion of the person who created it, sometimes!!).

Here are a few of those 'parting shots' at the end of courses: "I need to tell them what creativity can do for us". "I can pinpoint areas where doing things differently will be really valuable". "I can see areas of my work where creative thinking will really help". "I've realised I do have problems, but I've now got some tools to solve them".

If you feel your firm could do with some creativity, then contact us for more information—and we promise to be creative with some of our solutions!

## Did you know?

Before the year 1000, the word "she" did not exist in the English language. The singular female reference was the word "heo", which also was the plural of all genders. The word "she" ap-

peared only in the 12th century, about 400 years after English began to take form and is probably derived from the old English feminine "seo".

## Look Out For...

Next issue The leading article is by **Judith Di-Castri** on some of the many ways to present a positive image in the workplace. If you can't wait until then please call us.

**No 14 in our series** of top tips for trainers. The next issue is slightly different with the Top 10 questions trainers are asked at a training event.

## 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](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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