



The magazine for Education PAs & Admins

EDPA

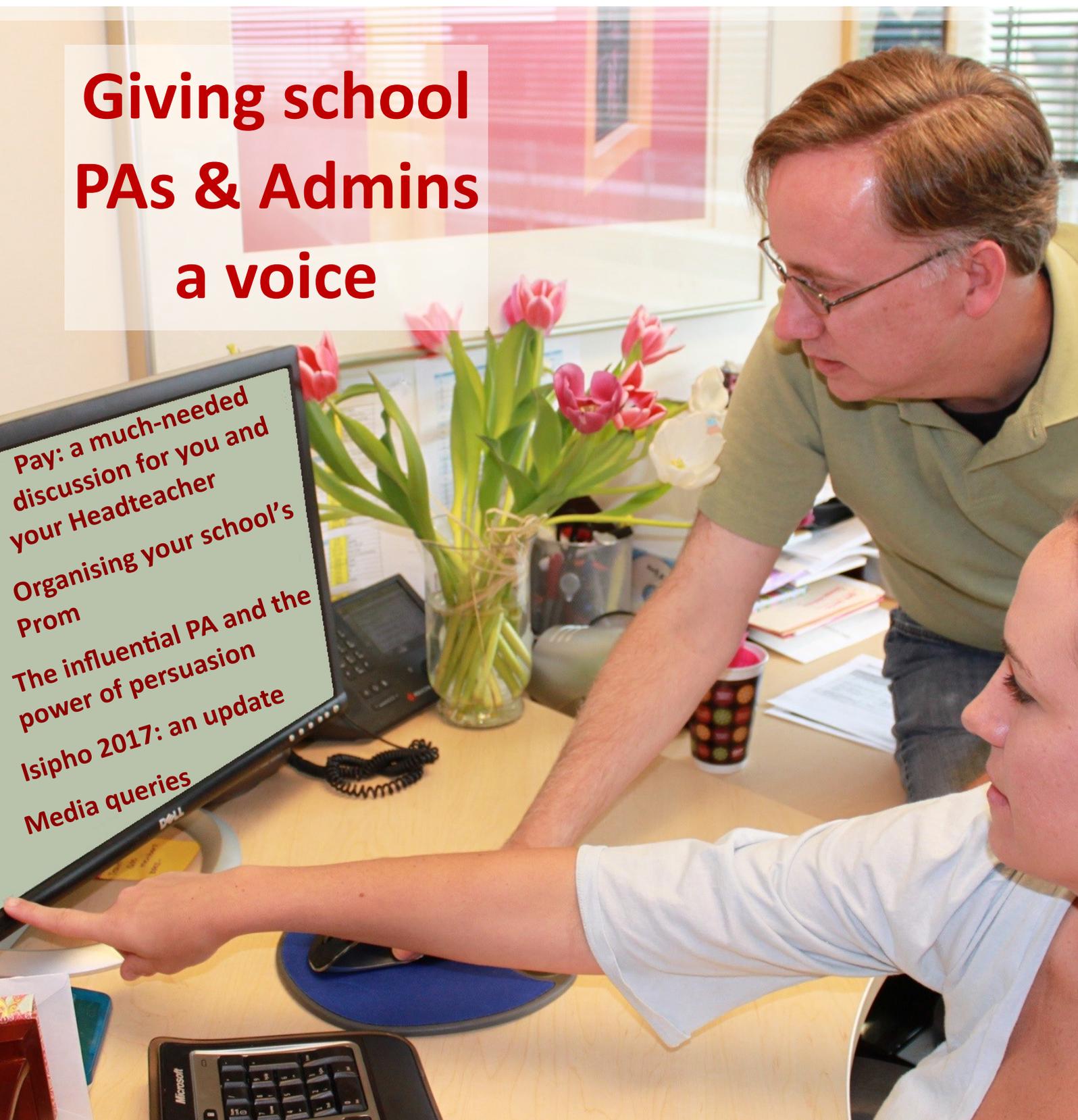
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Giving school PAs & Admins a voice



Pay: a much-needed
discussion for you and
your Headteacher

Organising your school's
Prom

The influential PA and the
power of persuasion

Isipho 2017: an update

Media queries

Welcome to **EDPA**: SPRING 2017



Angela Garry—Editor

Welcome to this term's issue of EDPA! As usual, we have pieces written by and for the school PA, secretarial & admin community—and we've been working with worldwide experts and trainers to bring you articles to motivate, inspire, lead, teach, demonstrate, encourage and support you and your colleagues in your ever-increasingly busy roles in schools.

And as always, we welcome your involvement in the magazine. If you would like to suggest a topic for future coverage, or you have a query about an aspect of your job, or you have acquired a skill or some knowledge in your role which you think would be of benefit to others, please don't keep it to yourself, but share the wealth with your fellow readers!

All contributors will receive two printed copies of the issue in which they are featured, plus a pdf version which you can attach to job applications or performance reviews.

Please email editor@picaaurum.com with any further suggestions for EDPA.

Onwards and upwards!

Best wishes to all,
Angela Garry



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- **Sue France** is an international, motivational speaker and certified coach, based in the UK. A former winner of the Times PA of the Year, she is the author of two books for PAs / EAs.
- **Anel Martin** is an award-winning former PA, now full time trainer and coach who is passionate about assistants and the valuable work that they do.
- **Don Miguel Ruiz** is a Mexican author, a shamanic teacher, and was listed as one of the Watkins 100 Most Spiritually Influential Living People in 2014.
- **Lindsay Taylor** is Director of Your Excellency, spent 10 years working as a PA / EA in UK / US and is an international PA trainer.
- **Michelle Thwaits** is a Certified Facilitator, Trainer, Professional Speaker, Coach, Mentor working with audiences through training and speaking engagements worldwide.
- **Teri Wells** has 30 years experience in the PA profession and is an international speaker, trainer, facilitator and mentor "with a passion for giving back to the profession that I love".

Regulars:

- **Andy Case** is a cartoonist, illustrator and music mogul by night, and talented teacher by day. He is the author and illustrator of several books for small children, and is working on more.
- **Tandy Hanff** is our resident in-house IT guru and self-confessed geek, with 20 years' self-taught computing experience.
- **Angela Garry** is EDPA's editor, author of "Brave PAs" and "The PA & EA Circus", and a global PA Trainer, with 24 years' experience in admin & PA roles. Also author of several children's books, published via Pica Books www.picabooks.co.uk





The magazine for Education PAs & Admins

EDPA

Networking / LinkedIn / Website

Networking with fellow school PAs and Admins

Have you created or joined a network yet? If not, why not?

"I'm too busy" - Clear your diary for a 10 minute session once per week. During that time, send a couple of emails to other PAs and Admins in schools near you—or use the EDPA group on LinkedIn to contact other subscribers of the magazine.

"I don't need a network" - sorry to tell you, but you're wrong. This is not the age of "find everything out for yourself" but the era of "work with others, share the expertise". A network of your peers in other schools will be invaluable to you, no matter how long you have been in your job or how amazing you believe you are at your work.

"I don't know what I could contribute to a network" - ask others what they need help with. There are bound to be a large number of things that you could assist with, sharing your knowledge and experience, or even just a common sharing of "you're not the only one struggling". PAs, EAs, Secretaries and Admins in schools worldwide are all struggling with too much work, too many deadlines, too many pressures—help yourself and others by sharing the fight!

"I'm leaving my job soon so I don't need a network" - Wrong! You have a WEALTH of experience —get out there and share it with others!

THE EDPA discussion group on LinkedIn

We encourage you to join the exclusive EDPA LinkedIn group. It's a private discussion space, made available for EDPA readers to communicate. With just three issues per year, this magazine can't give you full access to your peers worldwide—it's down to you to get in touch with them, so please do get onto the LinkedIn website, join the group and start making use of the discussion group space which is there specifically for you.

To clarify, "exclusive" means that only subscribers to EDPA can be members of the discussion group, and "Private" means that whatever is discussed in the group's pages cannot be viewed by other users of LinkedIn, nor by Google, and so confidentiality rests within the group's members.

This means that you have a confidential, secure space within which to discuss issues of concern or interest in your roles, without being overlooked by others outside of our community. Please do use the space—post a message to introduce yourself, add a comment about your favourite CPD resource, mention something that you've learned in the last few weeks in your role which might help someone else in their role. In effect, post whatever you like, which you feel is of relevance to the EDPA readership. It's a networking space, so get out there and network!

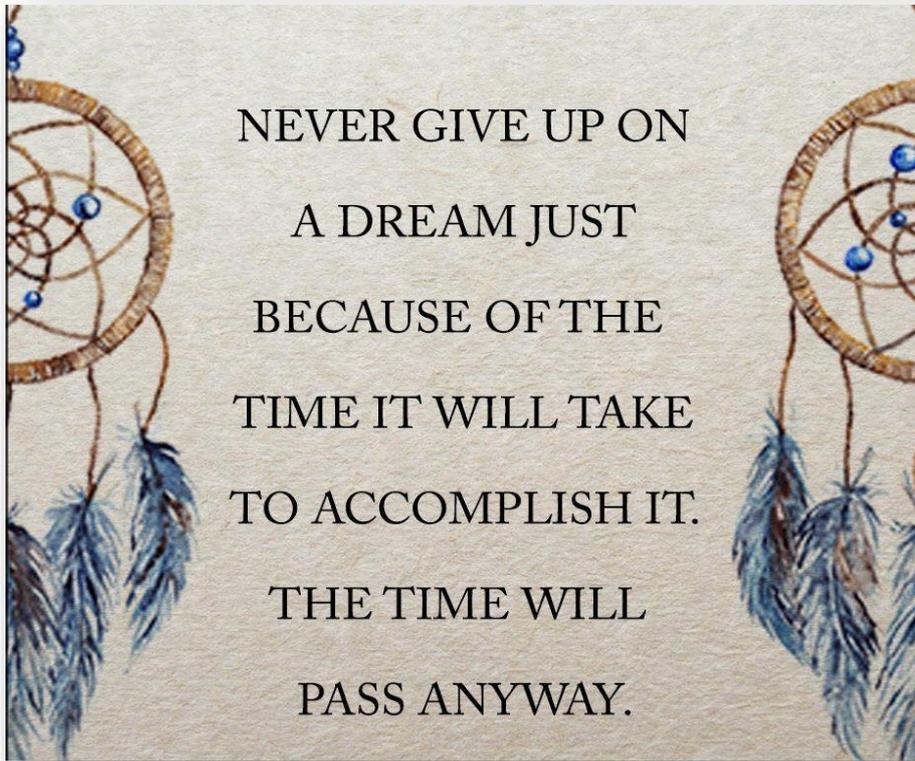
Obviously, we appreciate that all of our readers are busy people. We don't expect you to be spending hours on LinkedIn each week—but we do recommend that you set aside a minimum of 15 minutes or so per week on your professional development—and LinkedIn is a great space to do this. Whether you post a message requesting assistance with a task, or read and respond to the other messages in the group's discussion pages, we're sure that you'll soon find how useful the network can be.

New subscribers are sent details on joining by email—contact us if you need them again.

The EDPA Website

The website is going to be undergoing a revamp in the coming months. We will retain the Subscribers Only section of the site, which offers you a wide range of downloadable resources—sample chapters, articles, whole books, links to training videos and webinars, details of trainers, and books to buy—and we always welcome your suggestions for items to include.

Have you read a good book recently which you would like to recommend to your fellow subscribers? Would you like to submit a brief review of it? Or perhaps point your colleagues in the direction of a news article which caught your eye? Let us know, and we'll add them into the resources section.



Six minutes to success

Six short tasks to chart your daily route towards success.

No matter where you are in life at this moment, there is at least one thing that we have in common: We want to improve our lives and ourselves. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with us, but as human beings we're born with a desire to continuously grow and improve. I believe it's within all of us. Yet most people wake up each day and life pretty much stays the same.

If success and fulfilment were measured on a scale of 1 to 10, it's safe to say that everyone would want to live their lives at a high level, probably an 8, 9 or 10. But to create the level of life that you ultimately want, you must first dedicate time each day to becoming a person who is capable of creating and sustaining that level of success.

But who has time for that, right? Luckily, there is a method to do it in as little as six minutes a day.

Enter the life **SAVERS**, a sequence that combines the six most effective

personal development practices known to man. While someone could invest hours on these practices, it only takes one minute for each -- or six minutes total -- to see extraordinary results.

Just imagine if the first six minutes of every morning began like this:

Minute 1: S is for silence.

Instead of hitting the snooze button, and then rushing through your day feeling stressed and overwhelmed, invest your first minute in sitting in purposeful silence. Sit quietly, calm and peaceful and breathe deeply. Maybe you meditate. Center yourself and create an optimum state of mind that will lead you effectively through the rest of your day.

Maybe you say a prayer of gratitude and appreciate the moment. As you sit in silence, you quiet your mind, relax your body and allow your stress to melt away. You develop a deeper sense of clarity, purpose, and direction.

Minute 2: A is for Affirmations.

Pull out and read your page of

affirmations -- written statements that remind you of your unlimited potential, your most important goals and the actions you must take today to achieve them. Reading over reminders of how capable you really are motivates you. Looking over which actions you must take, re-energises you to focus on doing what's necessary today to take your life to the next level.

Minute 3. V is for visualisation.

Close your eyes and visualise what it will look like and feel like when you reach your goals. Seeing your ideal vision increases your belief that it's possible and your desire to make it a reality.

Minute 4. E is for exercise.

Stand up and move your body for 60 seconds, long enough to increase the flow of blood and oxygen to your brain. You could easily do a minute of jumping jacks, push-ups, or sit-ups. The point is that you raise your heart rate, generate energy and increase your ability to be alert and focused.

Minute 5. R is for reading.

Grab the self-help book you're currently reading and read one page, maybe two. Learn a new idea, something you can incorporate into your day, which will improve your results at work or in your relationships. Discover something new that you can use to think better, feel better and live better.

Minute 6. S is for scribing.

Pull out your journal and take one minute to write down something you're grateful for, something you're proud of and the top one to three results that you're committed to creating that day. In doing so, you create the clarity and motivation that you need to take action.

Start today.

How would you feel if this is how you used the first six minutes of each day? How would the quality of your day -- and your life -- improve? Investing six minutes daily into becoming the person that we need to be to create the lives we truly want is not only reasonable. **It's an absolute must.**



The Influential PA and the power of persuasion

Lindsay Taylor encourages you to consider your administrative role as a very privileged position. You are privy to lots of information and have contact with fellow staff members, teachers, parents, pupils, external customers and visitors alike. This puts you in the perfect position to persuade and influence to great effect!

If you take a minute to think about all the people you have come into contact with just today (whether face-to-face, written, via Skype, telephone or email), that's a pretty impressive list I'm sure. Consider that list over the course of a week - a month - a year - and you'll realise what a vast "reach" you have to influence and persuade.

In this article I will share with you the

benefits to being able to persuade and introduce you to a model you can use to structure your persuasive communication.

Firstly, let's be clear about the definitions of "influence" and "persuading" so we have absolute clarity on what we are talking about.

According to Merriam-Webster "influence" is

- "the power to change or affect someone or something : the power to cause changes without directly forcing them to happen"

Influence does not use direct force and one word I personally twin with "influence" is "integrity".

This is not "manipulation" which in contrast is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as

- "controlling someone or something to your own advantage, often unfairly or dishonestly".

Rather like a "back-to-school" English lesson then, the verb (or "doing-word") "persuade" is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as

- "to make someone do or believe something by giving them a good reason to do it or by talking to that person and making them believe it"

Using these definitions then, when considering yourself as an "influential admin professional" with the power to persuade, remember you are, first and foremost professional, discrete, confidential and integrity-driven.

Now let's consider the benefits of being able to persuade. A fun "back-to-school" activity is considering the benefits in an A-Z format. Here is my input, in no way an exhaustive list as I'm sure you can think of some more benefits to add:

- Avoids conflict
- Achievement
- Authority
- Better working relationships
- Collaborate with others
- Comfortable
- Career advancement
- Development
- Delegation
- Engages fellow staff members,

teachers, parents, pupils, external customers and visitors

- Friendship
- Further your career advancement
- Get things done with efficiency and effectiveness
- Growth in your role
- Harmonious working conditions and environment
- Happiness
- Influence with integrity
- "I am capable...." self-perpetuating attitude
- Job satisfaction
- Join together as a team
- Keep to timescales and deadlines more easily
- Listened to (due to credibility)
- Liked
- Management of tasks
- Management of self
- Management of others
- Monetary gain (career advancement)
- Motivation (for you and others)
- New ideas generation
- Organised
- Opportunities
- Objectives
- Progress ideas
- Personal effectiveness
- Pride in self
- Quality communication
- Questioning skills are heightened
- Reach agreements more easily
- Realise own potential
- Respect from team members
- Reduces stress
- Sway opinions
- Sympathetic
- Take control of your role (and career)
- Time management effectiveness
- Unity in the team
- Understanding
- Valued
- Viewpoints
- Work more effectively and efficiently
- Excel in whatever you do
- Get "yes" answers when you most need them
- "You can do it" attitude is promoted

So, what structure can we apply to our persuasive communication? Let me introduce you to a model used by training company Watson Martin Partnership who I support as an Associate Trainer. The model is a simple-to-follow format and can be applied to pull together the words you want to use.

Remember that when communicating we also need to consider the tone and body language of our delivery. Harvard Professor Mehrabian advises us that when engaged in face-to-face communication and sharing our feelings and thoughts we communicate in words (7%), tone (38%) and body language (55%). The percentages relate to the importance of communication. The most impactful communication aligns all three elements to deliver a congruent message.

This is an interesting concept to consider given our reliance on written communication and email in particular. With written communication it's easy to set the wrong tone – our message may be received and read with a different tone of voice than we intended. And, of course, we can't see what body language is being displayed by the originator of written communication either.

Ensure your written messages are not ambiguous and can only be received in the way you want them to be received. Add contextual/background information. You could also italicise the words you want to be stressed so the reader uses inflection in their tone of voice to add (the correct!) meaning – this is dependent on your agreed office practices of course.

The Model

Based on the acronym 'PROEP':

P = Proposal

Put forward your proposal in simple terms:

eg: "I propose the school continues to subscribe to EDPA magazine"

R = Reasons

Put forward your reasons (use "the power of 3" here with another "up your sleeve")

Firstly, you'll be able to read education specific articles that will provide you with new skills and ways of thinking

Secondly, you will be demonstrating your commitment to the education admin profession by keeping up to date with best practice in other schools

Thirdly, you can put your new skills into practice to ensure you are the most effective and efficient

O = Objection

Be ready to respond to any objections or barriers that could potentially be identified by the person you are persuading:
Objection 1: *The school doesn't have any money? EDPA costs less than £1 per week throughout the academic year (in the UK) and slightly more elsewhere in the world. If your school cannot afford this tiny amount, can you instead, as in investment into furthering your own career?*

Objection 2: *You don't have time to read the magazine? Do you know those who are most personally effective "make time" for their own professional development? So, setting aside time to read the magazine can be hugely beneficial to you.*

E = Evidence

This could be in the form of stats/figures or feedback/testimonials – for example

"The Editor of EDPA has some testimonials and feedback from subscribers who praise the magazine for its relevance to the education administrators and Headteacher's PA roles...."

P = Proposal

Summarise your proposal

"So, in summary, I propose that the school continues to subscribe to EDPA magazine to help towards my development"

There we have it – an easy-to-follow format for pulling together your persuasive words. Give it a go!

Do you want to earn a formal PA qualification?

Your Excellency's portfolio of learning and development offerings include one and two day workshops.

They offer the following qualifications:

- The IQ/IAM **Level 3 Award in Professional PA & Administration Skills** and
- The IQ/IAM **Level 4 Certificate in Office & Administration Management**

These courses will add 12 one day and 4 two day courses to the organisation's learning and development offerings.

"We are delighted to support the PA profession with recognised qualifications that will help raise the profile of this challenging yet rewarding role" says Director Lindsay Taylor, a former PA herself.

"We are excited to have Associate Trainers on board with specialist knowledge in their subject areas who share our passion for fun and memorable learning".

The qualifications are scheduled to run in London from January 2017 and include training on project management, HR, finance and marketing.

There is a useful Youtube information



video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLrZdl8FUV4 for you to find out more.

Lindsay Taylor is a Director of Your Excellency Limited, a provider of leading edge personal and organisational development coaching and training based in the UK. All our development training is tailored to your needs and delivered in a fun and experiential way. We believe the best way to learn is to do it! Our workshops support Continuing Professional Development and we are proud to be members of The Association for Coaching. Lindsay Taylor specialises in delivering training and coaching to PAs, EAs, Secretaries and

Administrative Professionals across the world.

Lindsay is a former PA and has first-hand experience of the diversity of the profession and the challenges faced. Lindsay is the proud author of "A-Z Pearls of Wisdom for Executive PAs" which is receiving high acclaim from the business and PA community.



You can contact Lindsay via:

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Web: www.yourexcellency.co.uk

The EDPA cartoon

Our series on the life and times of a school PA, by talented teacher and illustrator Andy Case.

This term's edition is based on the Headteacher who said to Andy "My PA is the clumsiest person I know".

Andy Case
 Studios

andycasestudios@gmail.com

God's Right Hand by Andy Case





Let's get 'People Smart'

How you can gain the skills and the insights to create productive working relationships? Michele Thwait reports.

Who irritates you? People who take ages to get to the point? People who sulk? People who seem aloof and unresponsive? People who keep interrupting? People who move too slow? People who are always rushing?

I am sure you can say yes to one or most of the above, and have been frustrated to no end on numerous occasions.

Have you ever heard of the golden rule "Do unto others as you would have done unto you"? I am sure you have. So let us change it a little to be "Do unto others as they would have done unto them". Makes you think, doesn't it? We are always focussing on what we want and how we want people to understand us, but we have never thought to do it the other way around. Putting others first instead of ourselves. That changes everything in the way we communicate and interpret others. Don't you agree?

All people really want is to be treated honestly, fairly and with respect. To

have their human dignity esteemed. How many times have you said to yourself or someone you knew that respect needs to be earned. If you can pay respect to someone first, you have earned theirs immediately.

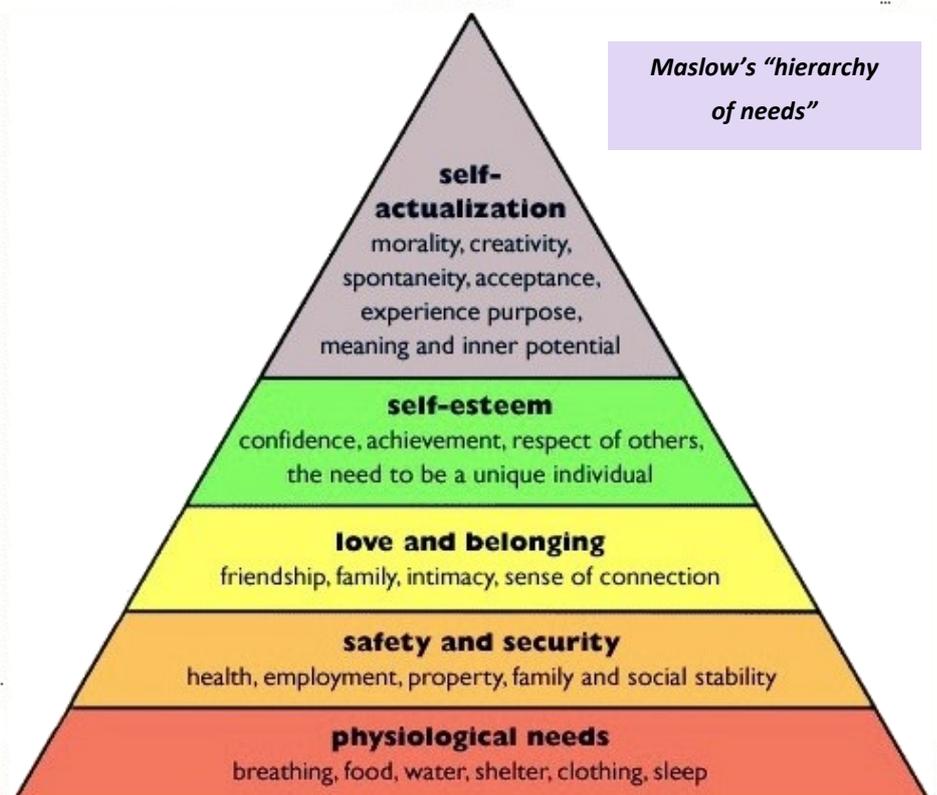
So who are you? What makes you

tick? Well, your beliefs, your experience, your upbringing, your genetics and your environment all play a role in who you are. Where you are, is who you are. So who are we to prejudge others, unless we want it done in return? And being on the receiving end of someone judging you or making assumptions, does not make us happy. So why do we do it?

Our brain has three parts which control the way we think and how we go about doing it. The three parts are Cognitive, Affective and Conative. Big words, I know, but let me explain:

- **Cognitive** – this is the process where your brain acquires knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and your senses. (knowledge, experience, skills).
- **Affective** – this is the emotional response to the environment. Your preferences, desires, attitudes.
- **Conative** – this is a combination of the thinking and feeling – leading to drive and action. Innate strengths and talents (drive, necessity, instinct, talents).

So to know this should make you think and respond to situations in a

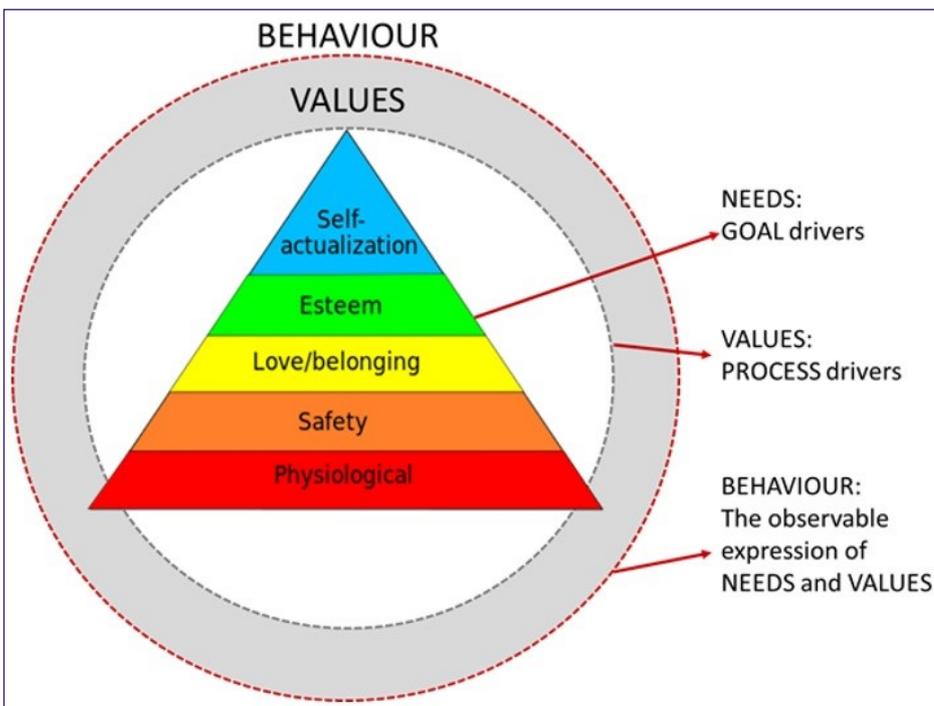


different light. No prejudging of people before you have met them or even heard what they have to say.

Remember, your personality is NOT YOUR character. It is purely how you express your needs in any given environment. It is only one dimension of human behaviour – yet so powerful as we all have the same needs. To get ahead, we need to get along!

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see page left) focuses on our needs – not our condition or our behaviour. Take a look at it and use it as a tool for yourself.

Your values determine the choices you make. How you react to people and the decisions you make – take a look at the image below:



The value of understanding people is so important because that is not happening in most cases. We hear what we want to hear but don't actually listen.

People who understand that they don't understand each other, understand each other so much better than those who don't even understand that they don't understand each other.

Our personal style is the observable pattern of behaviours that defines many of our expectations and how we want to be treated.

A lot of research has gone into style over the centuries and throughout history, four dominant patterns were always identified.

We refer to them as **DOMINANCE, INFLUENCING, STEADINESS** and **COMPLIANCE**.

In talking about these styles we will talk of them as a High D (I, S or C) – this means that the person generally has a high energy flowing into that particular pattern.

Use the information of the styles explained for self-understanding and to adjust your own behaviour to the needs of others, especially those who report to you.

This knowledge is not intended as a tool to judge or to manipulate.

A person with a D style:

- is motivated by winning, competition and success.
- prioritizes accepting challenge, taking action and achieving immediate results.
- is described as direct, demanding, forceful, strong willed, driven, and determined, fast-paced, and self-confident.
- may be limited by lack of concern for others, impatience and open skepticism.
- may fear being seen as vulnerable or being taken advantage of.
- values competency, action, concrete results, personal freedom, challenges.

When communicating with the D style individuals, give them the bottom line, be brief, focus your discussion narrowly, avoid making generalizations, refrain from repeating yourself, and focus on solutions rather than problems.

People with the i style place an emphasis on shaping the environment by influencing or persuading others.

A person with an i style:

- may be limited by being impulsive and disorganized and having lack of follow-through
- is described as convincing, magnetic, enthusiastic, warm, trusting and optimistic
- prioritizes taking action, collaboration, and expressing enthusiasm
- is motivated by social recognition, group activities, and relationships
- may fear loss of influence, disapproval and being ignored
- values coaching and counselling, freedom of expression and democratic relationships

When communicating with the i style individual, share your experiences, allow the i style person time to ask questions and talk themselves, focus on the positives, avoid overloading them with details, and don't interrupt

Style does not define the whole personality – just one observable dimension of the complex person. It reflects the pattern of behaviour that the person perceives will best meet their needs.

So, how do we discern a person's style?

People with the D style place an emphasis on shaping the environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results.

them.

People with the S style place an emphasis on cooperating with others within existing circumstances to carry out the task.

A person with an S style:

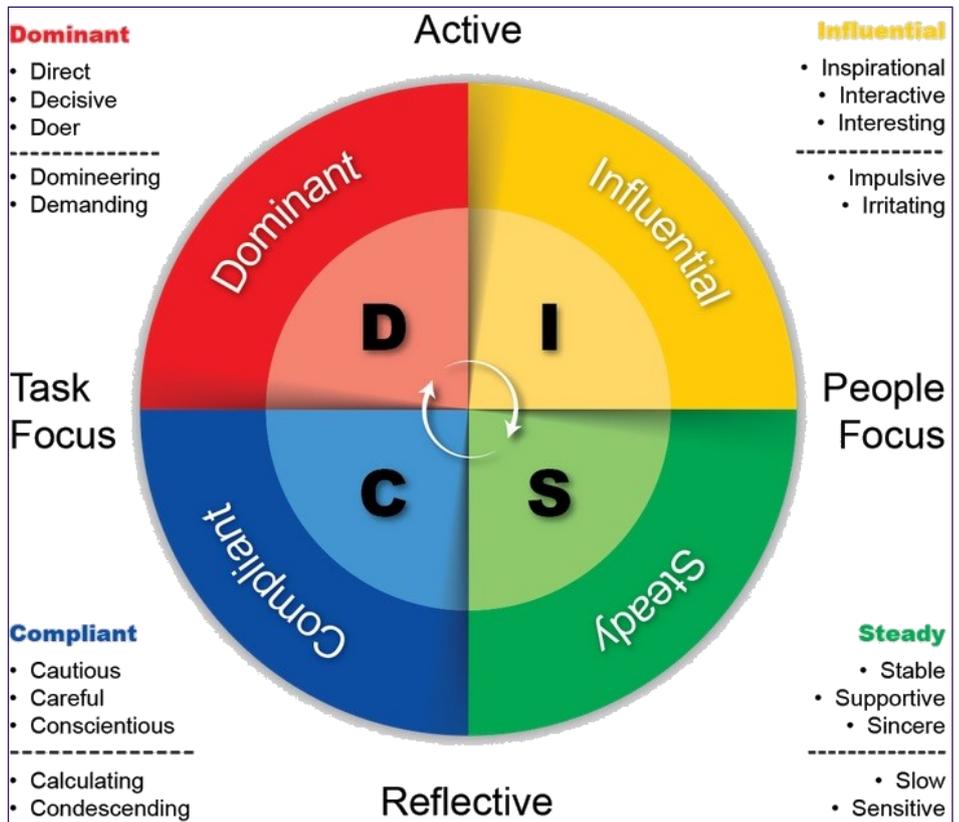
- is motivated by cooperation, opportunities to help and sincere appreciation
- prioritizes giving support, collaboration and maintaining stability
- is described as calm, patient, predictable, deliberate, stable and consistent.
- may be limited by being indecisive, overly accommodating and tendency to avoid change
- may fear change, loss of stability and offending others.
- values loyalty, helping others and security

When communicating with the S style individuals, be personal and amiable, express your interest in them and what you expect from them, take time to provide clarification, be polite, and avoid being confrontational, overly aggressive or rude.

People with the C style place an emphasis on quality and accuracy, expertise, competency.

A person with a C style

- is motivated by opportunities to gain knowledge, showing their expertise, and quality work.
- prioritises ensuring accuracy, maintaining stability, and challenging assumptions.
- is described as careful, cautious, systematic, diplomatic, accurate and tactful.
- may be limited by being overcritical, over-analysing and isolating themselves.
- may fear criticism and being wrong.
- values quality and accuracy



When communicating with the C style individual, focus on facts and details; minimize "pep talk" or emotional language; be patient, persistent and diplomatic.

Are you keen to find out what style you are – take a test for free online. You can do this via a five minute test at <https://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test>

Remember, we judge ourselves by our intentions; others judge us by our behaviour.

What can you do with this information, once you've taken the test?

The DISC model provides a common language that people can use to better understand themselves and adapt their behaviours with others - within a work team, a sales relationship, a leadership position, or other relationships.

DISC profiles help you and your team:

- Increase your self-knowledge: how you respond to conflict, what motivates you, what causes you stress and how you solve problems
- Improve working relationships by

recognizing the communication needs of team members

- Facilitate better teamwork and minimize team conflict
- Develop stronger sales skills by identifying and responding to customer styles
- Manage more effectively by understanding the dispositions and priorities of employees and team members
- Become more self-knowledgeable, well-rounded and effective leaders.

Remember: all DISC styles and priorities are equally valuable. We are all a blend of all four styles—and your work, management and leadership styles are also influenced by other factors such as life experiences, education, and maturity.

Michele Thwait's is a public speaker, life coach, writer, certified facilitator, trainer and mentor, at her company Empowered 4 Success, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, and is a regular contributor to EDPA magazine. She is also one of the founding members of the Isipho admin bursary.



Handling media queries

You're going about your daily business, dealing with some correspondence, when the phone rings. You answer it, expecting it to be a call from the local authority but it's not. Instead it's a BBC journalist and she'd like to know if there's any truth in the rumours about teacher discrimination at your school. So, what do you do next?

If your answer is anything between "I don't know!" and "panic?" you're not alone. Being thrust into the media spotlight is the last thing that most schools are prepared for. Yet in reality that's exactly what's happening. Schools are increasingly finding themselves in the media glare thanks to controversial education debates, policy decisions, the injury or death of pupils, bullying, teacher malpractice and funding issues.

If there's a lack of preparation amongst schools it's hardly surprising. Dealing with the media can be a daunting prospect and it's usually easier to hope that the press never come calling and ignore the issue altogether. That's not wise, though.

There are so many reasons why the media could be interested in your school. Often it's about unplanned events and you have to assume that the media will know about these incidents almost as soon as they have happened.

This can be disconcerting because you might get a phone call about an incident and have to deal with it immediately. It is naive to think that this will never happen to you. If you are new to your role in a Headteacher's office or the School Reception, you will get used to receiving media calls on a semi-regular basis, fishing for information. But living with the media needn't be as daunting as it seems.

The first step is to sit with your Head and create a plan of action for handling any media calls... Who will you turn to for support? What will be your key messages? Who is the most appropriate member of staff to take part in any interviews? Should it be a "Headteacher only" approach, or, if there is a particular issue occurring at the moment, can an "official response" be created which can be used by certain members of staff as and when the media get in contact? How will you communicate with parents and pupils? How can you take control of the situation? Even tackling the hypotheticals makes the reality easier to navigate when it finally happens.

How a school deals with the press determines how they deal with the school: journalists can act like feeding sharks and ignoring them isn't going to do your school any good. They simply want to know what is going on, so by

staying in communication with them you can give them what they want but in a more controlled way. Invariably when people refuse to talk to the press they've made the story worse because that's when poor assumptions are made.

How you communicate with the press is up to you. If you have a lot of journalists and cameras at the school gates you could hold a press conference or read out a message that conveys your situation. Give them clear and concise messages and make your position clear. Even if you are unable to give them any information it's worth announcing this so that they know where they stand. If there's one big no-no it's "no comment".

Messages aren't just meant for the press either. You also have to remember the parents and pupils. Telling the press one thing but telling parents another is going to cause mistrust. In fact, it's worth seeing your communication with the press as an opportunity to inform parents of the latest situation.

Remember: there's every chance that parents and children will be interviewed outside the school gates, so the last thing you want is misinterpretation. Also, incidents can be disruptive for the school so constant communication with the pupils will help create a united message.

It's not all bad news though. Media attention doesn't always mean negative attention. In fact, the press is just as eager to hear good news about schools. By keeping constant dialogue with the press you can announce your successes and raise your school's profile within the community. It's worth building a relationship with trusted journalists and keeping them informed about developments. Work with your Head to form a partnership with local media, so that you become a trusted contact for journalists. Invite them into the school when you have something to celebrate. Working with the press really can be a positive experience and the sooner school managers get to grips with that the stronger their schools will be.

Isipho year 2: an update

Last year we told you of Isipho, an innovative new project helping young women from South Africa. Recipients of the Isipho (“gift” in Swahili) bursary would be offered training and mentoring to become Personal Assistants.

We asked Isipho’s directors, Teri Wells and Anel Martin, for an update.

Welcome to our 2017 Isipho Admin Update!

As our first birthday draws near we would like to share our journey thus far with our supporters and friends. We started out as a group of very committed and passionate assistants who wanted to make a difference, no matter how small.

We felt that there was so much complaining and negativity about the state of the world, the economy, poverty and unemployment (5 million young people unemployed in South Africa alone), but no concrete action beyond that. South Africa was also plagued with violent student protests about the cost and access to education.

It is natural to think “but I am only one person, how can I change anything?” We feel like we cannot influence the world in a meaningful way as an individual or even a small group. We however, decided to change our paradigm on what and where we focus our energy.

The questions we had to ask ourselves included, what can we do? Where do we start? What do we care about? What do we want our legacy to be? And that, friends, is how the journey began!

So a team of beautiful souls set off to

ISIPHO ADMIN



make a difference. We were naïve at times, not everything went according to our plans, we faced challenges, red tape and disappointments but if you ask any of us if it was worth it, then you would get a resounding YES!

Two of our four students from the 2016 intake have done incredibly well and their success has motivated us to keep focussed on changing one life at a time.

Iris Mothwa has made us very proud. She started off as a quiet, slightly withdrawn young lady.

We had concerns about her, wondering if she would be able to interact with people as assistants do daily, however we found her situation so compelling that we could not turn her away.

You see, Iris is the head of a child household, she is the provider for her 4 siblings and we knew that if we gave her this opportunity it would change her life and employment prospects forever.

Iris has not disappointed, in fact Iris has blossomed. She has worked exceptionally hard and achieved amazing academic results. She has grown in confidence and has said to us that she wants to inspire her siblings to make something of their lives.

She has stolen our hearts and she has

become a daughter to all of us.

We are currently giving her more work exposure in the hope that she will be successfully placed very soon.

We have no doubt that she would be a wonderful, responsible and mature (way beyond her years) addition to any company and hopefully we will be able to share that good news in the very near future!

Our second incredible student is Lerato Sikhosana, a petite but feisty young lady. We will never forget the first day we met her. Those big glasses and even bigger smile.

When we met she was doing people’s hair on the weekends to make ends meet and volunteering during the week at Orange Farm which is a township near Johannesburg.

During the interview, we asked many questions and saw her face light up several times, but the excitement in her eyes when she talked about her ladies soccer team (of which she is the captain) was absolutely electric.

Well, they always say that sports help you develop discipline and in this case it rang true. Lerato kept her eyes on the goal (pun intended) and has blown us away. She not only completed her studies successfully but during her work experience week



**Photos: (left to right)
2017 Isipho intake Rosina
Molamodi and Ambrotia
Amogelang Molelekwa on their
registration day at college**

continue their support in 2017.

We are blessed beyond measure that we are surrounded by those that have become fondly known as Isipho Angels!

Many times, in 2016 we felt that the mere words “Thank you” were just not enough.

When we were in need, someone always came forward to support us and for that we are so grateful.

The overwhelming feeling we are left with, is that people are actually good, they really do care and if you ask for help, people will support you.

What an amazing take-away for us.

With love and thanks from
The Isipho Admin Directors xx

If you would like more information about the Isipho Admin project please visit www.isiphoadmin.org.za or contact Teri Wells via email at teriwells@gmail.com or Anel Martin anel@isiphoadmin.org.za

If you feel that you would like to contribute financially to this cause you can visit the funding page at <https://gogetfunding.com/isipho-admin-bursary> - every little bit makes a difference and together we can ALL achieve something incredible.

she made such an impression that she is now a full time employee with the company — they offered her a job!

Like proud mamas (Moms) we must brag a little... Lerato only OFFICIALLY graduates in May 2017, she will need to take a day’s leave to attend her graduation ceremony!

Having an income means that Lerato has now moved into her own place.

She proudly shared pictures of her new abode and we all agreed that a house warming party was in order.

It is amazing how a life can change in a few months. This little bird has taken flight and we are so privileged that we could play our part.

So was the first year of Isipho all smooth sailing? Nope!

We had two students sadly who did not successfully complete the year. The circumstances are irrelevant here but the situation was utterly devastating to the team.

It made us question if we did enough, if we were skilled and experienced enough to handle a passion project that was this complex, with individuals facing such tremendous odds.

Many tears were shed, lots of hard discussions had, but we grew, it made us stronger as a project team, and most importantly we learnt some hard but important lessons.

So, onto year two!

Well, we had to sort through 328 submissions but sadly only found two candidates that qualified in line with our criteria, but as a team, at the outset, we made a conscious decision to focus on quality over quantity as we view this project as a long-term commitment.

Our newest recruits had their orientation day on the 7 February 2017 and started their exciting academic year on 13 February.

We look forward to seeing **Rosina Molamodi** and **Ambrotia Molelewa** achieve and grow this year and beyond.

We have been so overwhelmed by the generosity of the PA community globally, the trainers and the companies as well as individuals that came on board during 2016 and

The team behind Isipho Admin: Anel Martin, Michele Thwaites, Cathy Williams Harris, Susan Broodryk Engelbrecht and Teri Wells





Concerned about returning to study?

EDPA's ICT Guru Tandy Hanff says if you have not studied for a while and have been thinking about enrolling on a course – go for it!

You might consider your life to be rich and full already but you will undoubtedly make new friends whilst attending training courses with people whose interests and knowledge can enhance your own experiences and career.

The key to success – use a study guide

One of the useful items for those of you who may not have studied for a while is to use a study guide to plan your time. This should be useful not just for undertaking a college or distance-learning course but in your home and work life as well.

EDPA recommends the “My ‘ME’ Book” series by Angela Garry.

Volume I is for helping you in identifying, planning, working towards and achieving your personal life goals.

Volume II is for students of any age to help with planning work, studying,

writing reports and essays, and revising for exams.

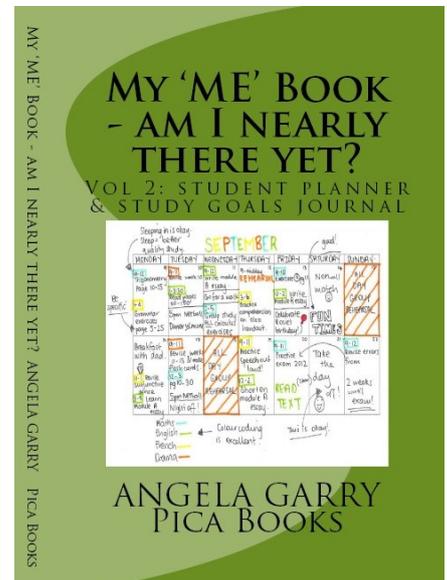
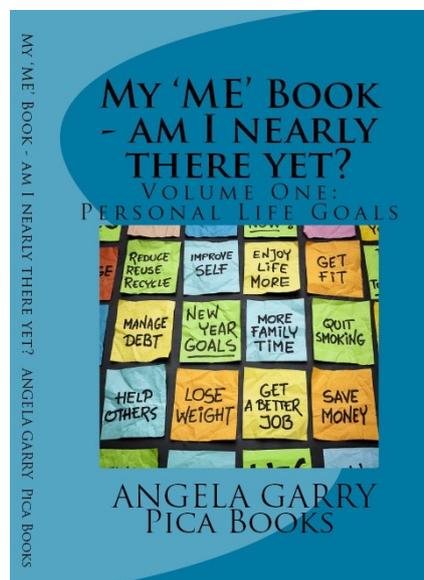
Some of the basics from the volume 2 study guide follow:

Know your study

- Several shorter bursts of study are more effective than long hours spent reading or researching.
- You'll be more effective when you're fresh and alert – if you are a morning person you will not be very alert at midnight; equally if you are night person, you

probably won't get much done early in the morning.

- Reading can be fitted in during other routine activities – on the bus or train to and from work for example.
- Are you a reader or a listener? Make recordings of your study sessions and listen to them at another time to embed learning.
- See if any of your research materials are available in another form, e.g. talking books. Variety



will help to enhance learning.

Structure your learning

- Make appointments with yourself – make a note in your diary to study. If you keep putting off your study time, you will spend most of your leisure time feeling guilty and thinking about it anyway. This also allows you to allocate leisure time for true relaxation.
- Keep reviewing your structure and times – maybe the weekend is better for leisure and not so good for study. It's important to balance both.
- It's easy to weight your study towards the subjects and topics you find particularly interesting or easy. Plan to try and complete more difficult/less interesting topics early on and "reward" yourself with more interesting and easier study later.

Where do you study?

- The dining table is not the best place for study, with family and friends able to distract you. If you are short of space at home, try the library or college and book space there if appropriate. If you do need to use the dining table, make your family aware of your study time and ask their cooperation.
- Make sure your study space is well ventilated, well lit and is a good temperature – too hot and you will feel sleepy, too cold and you won't be able to concentrate properly.
- Above all try and be in a quiet space to allow for good concentration and thinking time.

Supportive study

- If you know others who are studying the same subjects, take it in turns to host a study session, set an agenda, organise contributions or plan a debate.
- Set up an e-group for sharing information.
- Share research and reading by splitting up subjects and summarise or highlight for each other.

One thing you'll need to decide what's right for you is: should you attend a training course with others—or undertake distance learning on your own? These lists of pros and cons might help your decision-making.

Attending a college class or training course	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentive to attend – there will be a register and someone will be checking on you • A 'taught' course – where there will be self-study, you will be led by a trainer who is on-hand during sessions for immediate answers to questions • It's what you know – you work in a school, so educational environments are not alien to you. The course might even be taking place in your own school. • Peer support – you will meet new people in your sessions who will be invaluable support for assignments and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time commitment – with work, family, meetings and social life, it can be difficult to attend a class on the same day each week. • Flexibility – the course is taught, so you will have to keep pace with the rest of the class and there isn't often the opportunity to quickly move ahead, or to catch up if you are slower than others. • Deadlines – these are often set in stone with little flexibility, so aren't always achievable for people with lives that are already crammed full. • Nerves – if you have not set foot in a classroom in the role of a student for some time, it can be daunting!

Distance learning	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility – you choose when, where and for how long you study each time, which is great to fit in with an already busy life. Plus, no commutes to college! • Self-study – you choose how quickly you complete tasks / units and have the opportunity to take more time over some parts and do others more quickly. • Online support – many courses have active web forums or chat rooms where you can post questions and read responses from like-minded colleagues across the country. • Location - you don't have to live near a particular college to take their courses, you can be anywhere. • No classroom pressure – many people returning to study after a long gap are nervous about being in a classroom again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation - with no regular class to attend and no-one taking a register, it can be hard to get motivated to log on / get your books out. • No immediate response – you don't have a teacher on hand to ask immediate questions – and waiting for a response by email or phone can be frustrating if you can't carry on without it. • Lapsing deadlines – with only a phone or email reminder, it is easy to put deadlines to the back of your mind. • Technology – most systems are robust and rigorously tested, but websites can go down (as can your own internet service provider), which can be annoying if you are studying a course that's only available online.

- Circulate cuttings and case examples.

Keep organised

- Keep a file of useful websites and examples of information obtained for future use.
- Plan how you will file and reference your information for later use.
- Summarise or highlight key information for later review.

- Break a topic down into smaller tasks, estimating how long each task will take. The topic will be less daunting and you can "reward" yourself when each task is ticked off.

Happy studying!

The "My 'ME' Book" series Vols I & II by Angela Garry are available from Amazon.co.uk for £10 each and provide space for a year's journaling and planning.



Pay: a discussion for you & your Head

Are YOU being paid peanuts and not recognised for your vital work in YOUR school?

You know how sometimes an article can jog your memory of something?

Recently, I was reminded of Mark Goulston's rather excellent article on the importance of thanks and praise for assistants (see "**How to give a meaningful Thank You**", from February 2013 - available on the Harvard Business Review website <https://hbr.org/2013/02/how-to-give-a-meaningful-thank>). The article brought to mind a Personal Assistant who had shared with me her story about one of her former bosses.

Since 2010 I have been delivering training, mentoring and coaching sessions worldwide for PAs, Executive Assistants, Secretaries and administrators. Kelly* attended one of my training sessions in 2013, around the time Mark was writing his article. She was at that point about three years into her job at a leading finance organisation. Within my training session I had mentioned the importance of thanks - and she came to chat with me afterwards on how much this had resonated with her.

This was what Kelly told me of her story:

"I'm really happy in my current job and I get on very well with my Chief Executive and my colleagues. Maybe it's rare in the finance industry but it's actually quite a caring culture at the company, and we are actively encouraged to notice and appreciate each others' efforts. One of my previous jobs was totally different though..."

"I was the Chief Financial Officer's personal assistant at a bank. He was quite 'old school' and a couple of times while I was there he referred to PAs as 'secretaries with an attitude', which I very much disliked but he thought was a bit funny and clever. He'd say it to visitors to his office - in front of me. They'd smile, I'd wince politely, they'd go into their meeting, and I'd sit at my desk thinking of ways to get him back..."

"I never did though, I was far too professional in my work and I became more determined, I suppose, to prove him wrong and to make him appreciate what I did, by going that extra mile on things, putting in additional effort."

"Looking back now, I can quite easily

see that his doing down of my skills, his lack of thanks and praise - and his lack of acknowledgement of any sort about my efforts - was actually making me want and need them all the more, and I became a workaholic, yearning for some sort of acknowledgement of my hard work. Of course, I didn't see this at the time. Nobody does in that situation, I suppose..."

"The more I worked, the harder I worked, the more effort I put in, the earlier I came into the office and the later I stayed to get things done, the less he seemed to notice. The pressure grew all the time, and I became more and more unhappy, more and more tired, more and more determined to get things right enough that my boss would have to see how good I was, surely he would see it one day? But he never did."

"A colleague from another branch of the bank came into my office around 9am one day for an all-day meeting with ten or twelve others, plus my boss, who hadn't arrived yet. He and my boss were due to meet for an hour first before the others arrived for the major pitch on a project. He commented on the two empty coffee

cups on the shelf behind my desk - hadn't the room been cleaned last night, he asked? I explained that they were my 'first thing in the morning' and 'one hour after arrival' drinks from this morning. "You mean you've been here over an hour already?" he asked. "About two hours, actually, to get the final things ready for this meeting", I said.

"He sat at a spare table in my office and got on with some paperwork whilst waiting for my boss to arrive. When my boss finally came in half an hour later, the colleague said jokingly to him "You work Kelly much too hard, you know. Do you know she's always in the office so early each day?" My boss smiled and replied "She thrives on the pressure, she wouldn't have it any other way."

"They went into their meeting. I was split in two trains of thought. Part of me thought, yes, I did seem to thrive on pressure, I worked hard and got into routines to get me through a lot of work swiftly. The other part of me thought, no, I wasn't thriving at all, I was miserable, over-worked, over-wrought and exhausted, and why couldn't my boss see that? Probably because *I* hadn't seen that until then.

"The all-day meeting was about a really major project, which could have a big impact for the organisation. I'd spent an enormous amount of time in the weeks leading up to this meeting, putting together the documentation, the presentation slides, the handouts, etc. The other attendees arrived and joined the meeting. I flitted about, organising teas and coffees, making sure the lunch order was finalised, making yet more copies of papers after someone spilled coffee on theirs, and mopping up the spilt drink. As I was doing this, I heard my boss say something about how they ought to halt the confidential discussions whilst "the little woman was cleaning the table". No mention of the fact that I had typed all of the confidential documents that they were looking at, or of the other hard work that I had put in to ensure that everything was ready for this major meeting. Just a sly comment that implied that I couldn't

be trusted to hear something confidential.

"I went back to my desk and got on with my work. But I also spent the day thinking (and fuming!) about what had been said. At the end of the all-day meeting, the visitors left, and the colleague left. My boss came out of his office, beaming from ear to ear. "We've got the project 'go ahead'", he said. "This is going to be major. Of course, you're going to need to put in some harder work from now on, but at the end of this project it's going to mean a lot. I'm even going to get a nice big bonus out of it." He was so proud. Something on my face must have registered for a second... "I'll see you right, don't you worry. In fact, I'll go and sort that out now" he said, and he left for the day.

"A small part of me thought "Wow, has he gone to speak with someone about a bonus for me?" I went home, exhausted. When I got into work the following morning, everything was the same as usual. I did an hour and a half's work before my boss swanned in with an unfeasibly large bouquet of white lilies, wrapped in paper, which he plonked on my desk. "This is for your hard work on the project" he said, and went into his office. Not even a "Thank you" and certainly no hint of a bonus for me.

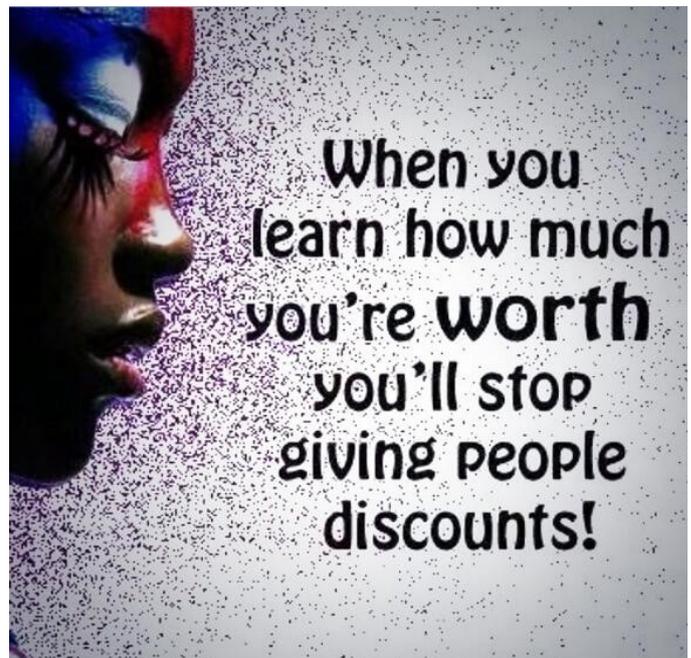
"White lilies have been traditionally used as a highly scented flower to mask the smell of death. We've had white lilies at family funerals. I don't like their smell, and because of the funerals, I associate them with death. To be brutally honest, I hate white lilies. They're not a cheerful flower. And they're certainly not a 'thank you for all your support' flower. What did these flowers mean to me? They signified the death of my role.

"I sat at my desk and typed a resignation letter, resigning with IMMEDIATE EFFECT and stating that I would take my remaining holiday entitlement - all 16 days of it - during my notice period. It was close to Easter. This meant that I gave a month's full notice, but didn't owe the organisation another day or my time. I didn't even owe them that day - my annual leave entitlement was enough for me to walk out, there and then. So I did.

"I printed two copies, signed them both, and put one into my boss's in tray and the other into the internal mail tray in the corridor, in an envelope marked to the Director of HR. I emptied my few personal things from my desk. And I put the lilies in my office bin which I stood on my desk - next to a handwritten note saying "Thank you."

"My 'thank you' note wasn't to say 'thank you for being a great boss' - oh, no no! It was to say 'thank you for showing me that I needed to do this for myself, and that I needed to make the decision to leave'. Then I walked out, crossed the road and signed on with a temping agency, who found me a full-time role to start just a couple of days later. I never went back.

"After a few months of temping in several offices, a week here, a couple of weeks there, I found my current role and I love it. I'm not looking for a boss who tries to thank me for every single little thing I do day in day out, but being genuinely thanked every once in a while



when I've been working hard is SO joyful and means SO much."

Note: Kelly gave me her permission to repeat her story here, on condition that I change her name for anonymity purposes.

To bosses worldwide, the bottom line is this: **Take on board the amount of work that your assistant does for you. Notice the number of hours they put in on your behalf. Look at the amount of success you achieve as a result of their efforts. And then THANK THEM.** Genuinely. Mean it. Not just a quick "thanks a million" as you walk out of the door, or a "Tks" at the end of an email.

Let your assistant know that their work is appreciated, that their efforts are appreciated, that what they do **MAKES A DIFFERENCE.** Then I want you to do something more. **PAY THEM ACCORDINGLY.**

Administrative Assistants, Personal Assistants, Executive Assistants, Secretaries, whatever you choose to call us in our roles, are paid VERY little for the level of expertise and professionalism which we demonstrate on a daily basis. And yet, more and more, you expect more from your assistant.

In the Hays / Executive Secretary survey (results published in July 2015), 63% of managers / executives credited their assistant with working at MANAGERIAL or DIRECTOR level. There is no excuse for paying such a worthy worker a pittance for their efforts in ensuring that you do well in your role of running the organisation. **Without the support of your Assistant, where would you be?**

PAs and EAs the world over are supporting the leadership of businesses, working in partnership with their bosses, to run organisations. **We are not the stereotypical "take a letter, Miss Jones" secretary or no-brained receptionist from the cartoons of the 1950s. We never were.** We are working in partnership with you, we have well developed skills and expertise, we soak up your knowledge in order to keep the organisation running all day while you are out at meetings. We deal with your visitors, your phone calls, your correspondence, with the knowledge and learning that we have developed in

our roles. **We help you to lead your business to success. All of that deserves thanks, praise and appropriate remuneration.**

As I've said before, it's all L'Oreal, you know. **We're worth it.**

As a more recent example of the raw deal which PAs and EAs often find themselves in, I was contacted last month by a Headteacher's PA from the Home Counties in England. She asked for some advice on developing within her role, and told me that she was currently contracted to work for 35 hours a week—but usually found herself putting in at least an hour and a half per day on top of this, bringing her to a 42.5 hour per week total on average. She was not paid anything extra for these hours.

Feeling dissatisfied with her role, how she was treated, and what she was paid for her efforts, she was looking around for another role elsewhere. At the end of the summer term in July, she had an interview for another role as a Head's PA, and her current Head was asked to give her a reference. Sadly, she wasn't offered the role—so this meant that she returned to her role with her boss now knowing she wished to leave. As often happens when an employee 'nearly leaves' like this, a counter-offer was made by her headteacher—in this case, she was offered a £1,000 per year upgrade in salary if she worked on an additional project which would require another 7.5 hours per week from her. She wasn't sure she wanted to agree to this, but as there seemed no other option at the time, she accepted.

Shortly afterwards the counter-offer turned sour. Her headteacher said "the school doesn't have the additional money after all so we cannot pay you the extra money, but you must still put in the extra work".

I asked the PA for details of her salary. She had been earning £14,000 per year, for a contracted 35-hour working week, for 40 weeks. This equated to 1,400 hours per year, at £10 per hour. To carry out her role as she had been before the counter-offer, she had been working 42.5 hours per week on

average, equating to 1,700 hours per year. This brought her average hourly rate down to just £8.24 per hour—whereas if she had been paid for these additional hours at her contracted £10 hourly rate, she'd have received an additional £2,200 gross salary!

Worse still, under the counter-offer conditions of "7.5 extra hours but no extra pay" this meant she was working 49.5 hours a week: i.e. more the 48-hour working week in the UK's 'working time directive' or 'working time regulations'. This would equate to her working for 1980 hours per year—and if she were to continue to do this with no additional pay, it meant she was working for £7.07 per hour. **I pointed out to the PA that this is BELOW the UK minimum wage of £7.20 per hour.**

Searching online whilst talking to her, I then found that a standard Customer Assistant role — with NO responsibilities for supporting management — in her nearest Lidl store would offer her between £8.25 and £9.64 per hour dependant on her level of experience. I advised her to use this information to create a business case to put in front of her headteacher. She is now applying for ANY role anywhere else, in order to get out of her current situation. I wish her well...

Some questions to our readers: What is YOUR time & expertise worth?

Work out your contracted hourly rate — AND then the rate that you are ACTUALLY working for if you are doing extra hours.

How much more would you receive if you were actually paid at your current contracted rate for those extra hours?

Just working an extra 7.5 hours per week is the same as working every Saturday — or nearly TWO MONTHS of the school year — for free.

By all means you can be devoted to your job and know that what you do is worthwhile, but are you being paid FAR too little and not given adequate recognition for your hard work?

If you feel you are worth more, use this information to put forward a business case to your Headteacher, and ask them to read this article.

4 agreements for your school



In 'The Four Agreements' shamanic teacher and healer Don Michael Ruiz exposes self-limiting beliefs and presents a simple, yet effective code of personal conduct learned from his Toltec ancestors.

Full of grace and simple truth, the four agreements are these: Be impeccable with your word. Don't take anything personally. Don't make assumptions. Always do your best. It's the how and why one should do these things that make this a book worth reading and remembering. How could YOU use these within your school to make a difference?

BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

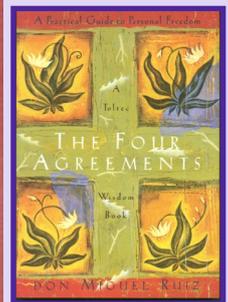
Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.

ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST

Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.



'The Four Agreements' is available from Amazon.

5 ways to help your Head's effectiveness

Teri Fishbourne looks at 5 things you can concentrate on which can help your boss to be more effective

- **Periods of stress.** Is your Head grouchy in the morning, or running around at the end of the day trying to get things done? Look for a pattern about what takes place when. Then work around these periods of time so as to not add any additional stress.
- **Communicate.** Whether it's the good, the bad, or the ugly, you and your Headteacher must talk to each other. Always be honest and never try to hide anything. Never promise more than you can deliver. Be reliable and dependable.
- **Time Management.** Don't waste your Head's time with little things. Develop a system where you know when to involve him/her in something: e.g., screening meeting invites, taking phone calls, and identify what constitutes an "I need to know" discussion.
- **Co-operate.** The last thing the Head wants is (a) infighting between staff, and (b) whiners and complainers. Part of your job is to do whatever is asked of you – within reason – and that includes working productively, both inside or outside the admin team.
- **Moving Ahead.** It takes a lot of hard work to get ahead, and you won't if you're not doing the items mentioned above. Add the need to make more sacrifices and that's how you move up the ladder. If you're fortunate to have a Headteacher who believes in mentoring, all the better. Treat your potential future as you would any other investment.



Organising your school's prom

Originating in America, the School Prom is for 17-18 year old high school leavers, whilst in the UK it is for year 11s leaving Secondary School (ages 15/16) and Year 13s following A-Levels (ages 17/18). Even Primary Schools are now getting in on the act for their leavers moving up to Secondary. Jo Egan has provided the following vital guide.

End of year school and college proms are now as popular in the UK as they are in the US, where all significant academic years end with a fabulous celebration. They have become and a much expected highlight of the year and glamorous reward following intense hard study and exams.

For prom organisers it is also a great opportunity to learn invaluable project skills. However, organising events on a professional level is no mean feat and it can be overwhelming and daunting to organise something of this scale for the first time. Mistakes and oversights can not only have a serious impact on the end delivery of the event but often come with a financial

cost.

Here are some tips and best practice to help you organise a successful prom.

Set up a Committee

Set up an organising committee with clear roles and responsibilities.

You are likely to need someone to look after budgets & money (with a dedicated bank account), venue liaison, attendees & responses, event dressing and entertainment. Allocate regular diary times, at least once a month, to meet and discuss progress and take minutes of discussion points and actions required. If your school or college has organised proms before, you may find the previous organisers will be willing to share their tips and advise.

Budget, Budget, Budget!

Sounds boring but this is arguably the most critical element to get right and track with a very close eye. Before you start to plan anything you will need a realistic idea of numbers, budget per head and overall total. It is possible to organise a prom on a shoe string budget, similar to a party, but realistically this gets more difficult as numbers increase as inevitably you will need more specialist suppliers and equipment

(Venue, Caterers, DJ, etc

Start with approximate numbers – considering how many people are in the relevant year group. Some schools will consider merging their prom with a local or sister school or college.

Once you have an approximate idea of numbers, obtain a range of competitive quotes for the costly aspects: the venue, catering (if separate), entertainment. Deposits and payments are likely to have to be made in advance of the event so it is important to manage cashflow and chase up payments. Always allow a contingency fund of approximately 15% for unexpected charges.

Venue choice is king

As with any event the choice of venue can make or break an event. A realistic idea of numbers and budget will steer your options. Consider what type of venue you want to use? Your school or college may be able to provide a hall or outdoor space for a marquee, but often most proms are considered to be the start of a new life chapter leaving the school or college environment so an external venue is preferable.

You may even have a generous benefactor who volunteers their home, marquee or business premises to be used. A lovely offer but be warned this may lead to additional

conditions that you may not wish to agree too and usually require much more work to set up and manage the prom on the day.

For most prom organisers an external venue is the best approach, allowing the organisers to relax and also enjoy the event and introduce that bit of glam to the prom.

Local sports clubs, community halls are an option and all will have their own individual prices, variations of what is included and conditions of use.

Hotels and event venues are 'well-oiled machines' in the delivery of many types of events as this is their day-to-day business and many provide inclusive packages for proms. Typically packages will include a hall or room hire, operational and service staff, a welcome drink, catering, lighting, dressed tables and chairs etc. Some provide more in their packages and others can apply additional charges (such as for security, chaperones, DJ, dancefloor, microphone, speakers, etc.) for this can vary from venue to venue and it is important to ask each venue for all additional prices that may apply. You will have to enter into a legal contract with these types of venues and it is always wise to get advice in this area.

For larger numbers, these type of venues are often the only option for health & safety, and fire regulations.

Catering considerations

Regardless of your choice of venue, catering is one of the most subjective elements of any event and it is important that menu choices will appeal to most of your attendees.

Consider whether you require the wow factor of a formal sit down dinner, something more informal such as a buffet or barbeque? Again your choice of venue will advise on what is possible in terms of internal or external catering options and present you with a range of menu prices and options.

Remember to ask for and cater for any special dietary requests.

Top Tip:

If considering hotels and specialist external venues for your prom consider using an experienced venue finding specialist, such as www.hoteldesks.co.uk. They provide free and impartial venue search services assist you with your venue selection and act as a broker on your behalf to negotiate rates and contractual terms and options. They are paid a small booking commission from the hotels they book, which is not reflected in the venues rates presented to you. In fact they tend to negotiate significant discounts that you would not usually be able to obtain direct and you also benefit from their overall expertise in planning events and contractual advice.

Joanne Egan is a Director at Hotel Desk, global venue finding experts based in the UK. She has helped organise countless proms for schools and colleges throughout the UK.

Note from EDPA:

With reported figures showing that 85% of all UK schools host a school prom, it's important to remember the costs involved when organising the event for your school. What can your pupils and their parents afford? Some typical costs in the UK are:

- Ticket entry between £20 - £30.
- Professional photographers (often arranged at the school) from £10 per child.
- Prom dress from £30 - £500+!
- Boy's suit hire - £50 (hire); £140 (purchase).
- Make-Up/Hair – £35 - £60 for full 'prom' package.
- Transport – Anything from £150 per hour for a standard Limousine (8 people) to £2000 for a Helicopter (4 people).

In total, the average UK household spends £220 per teenage daughter and £157 per son attending the school prom—compared with around £630 per child in the USA. And don't forget to factor in the seemingly all-important fake tanning session!

Holding a prom can be an attractive addition to the school calendar for many headteachers because it provides a 'reward' for all the hard working students who have got through their exams and are ready to face the next phase in their lives.

It's also helpful in discouraging bad behaviour in the weeks leading up to it: "one more step wrong, and you'll be banned from attending"...



Probing Questions

If you are given an area of responsibility relating to your school's admissions, what sort of questions might you expect from parents? We've compiled a list from suggestions from Readers.



Schools attract pupils by their reputations, so most go to considerable lengths to ensure that parents are presented with an attractive image.

Modern marketing techniques try to promote good points and play down (without totally obscuring) bad ones.

But every Headteacher knows that, however good the school website/prospectus is, it only serves to attract parents through the school gates. The parents make their final decision on applying for a place for their child, dependent on what they see and hear.

When parents look to choose a school for their son or daughter, the key factor is that it will suit them. Many children and their parents are instinctively attracted (or otherwise) to a school on first sight.

But even if it passes this test, and 'conforms' to what the parents are looking for in terms of location and academic, pastoral and extracurricular aspects, many parents will want to check into this further to satisfy themselves

that the school does measure up to what their instincts tell them.

Choosing a school (or, as the application forms word it, "listing your preferences" for a school) can prompt additional questions for parents and students alike.

Different schools have different foreseen benefits. Increasingly more Academies are opening, who are able to change their catchment areas and are therefore not restricted by geographical or educational authority boundaries and have more autonomy over how they choose to spend your child's Pupil Premium / funding money.

International Schools have the added benefit of being able to embrace a sense of pride while encouraging a respect of and interest in international thinking, standards and cultures.

Research over recent years suggests that in many cases the most important factor in choosing a school is the impression given by the Headteacher.

As well as finding out what goes on in a school, parents need to be reassured by the 'aura' of

confidence that they expect from a Head.

How they discover the former may help them form their opinion of the latter.

As the Headteacher's Assistant or the Admissions Officer / Assistant for the school, you are seen by all to be acting as an extension of your Headteacher and how you answer parents' questions is incredibly important.

From discussions with our EDPA Readers Panel, we have drawn up a list of varied points which parents may contact you about.

The order in which they appear below does not necessarily reflect their degree of importance to each parent, but how you answer them could be crucial to the parents in "choosing" / "preferring" to apply to your school or not for a place for their child.

Questions about the Headteacher and the school in general:

- How accessible is the Head, whose personality is seen by most parents as setting the 'tone' of the school?

- Will my child fit in?
- What is the overall atmosphere?
- To which organisations does the school belong?
- How has it been accredited?

Questions on the quality of teaching:

- What is the latest inspection rating, and where can I find a copy of the report to read?
- What is the ratio of teachers to pupils?
- What are the qualifications of the teaching staff?
- What are the school's exam results? What are the criteria for presenting them? Are they consistent over the years?
- Is progress accelerated for the academically bright?
- How does the school cope with pupils who do not work?

Questions on communications:

- How often does the school communicate with parents through reports, parent/teacher meetings or other visits?

Questions on problems, policies and procedures:

- How does the school cope with pupils' problems?
- What sort of academic advice is available?
- What is the school's attitude to discipline?
- How does the school deal with bullying – either in person or via internet / phones?
- Have there been problems with drugs or sex? How have

they been dealt with?

- What positive steps are taken to encourage good manners, good behaviour and good sportsmanship?

Questions on religion, sport, culture, the arts:

- What is the school's attitude to religion?
- What is the attitude to physical fitness and games?
- What sports are offered and what are the facilities?
- What are the extracurricular activities?
- What cultural or other visits are arranged away from the school?
- What steps are taken to encourage specific talent in music, the arts or sport?

Practicalities:

- What is the uniform? Can I access funding for this?
- What steps are taken to ensure that pupils take pride in their personal appearance?
- What are the timetable and term dates?

- If there are fees, when are these due?
- What are the boarding facilities like (if any)?

Pastoral help:

- Is there a dedicated person to look after new students from different backgrounds / ethnicities / religions?
- Does the school have a recommended guardian service?
- Does the school have a dedicated and strong pastoral team?
- Is it possible to have the names and addresses of parents with children at the school to approach them for an opinion?
- Does the school have a dedicated teacher for Mother Tongue languages or ESL?

If you are not sure how to answer any of the above questions, please discuss them with your Headteacher, so that you can give the best possible answers for your school.

And if you would like to join our Reader Panel, get in touch!





Using neuroscience with angry parents

This is a topic which readers keep requesting as there are so many different ways of dealing with difficult situations and angry parents. Award-winning PA and PA Trainer Sue France looks at the issue from a neuroscience point of view, to show why parents act as they do and how to deal with them.

Assistants, working in the education environment and in particular for the Headteachers are often faced with angry parents.

I have been an angry parent myself because when you have a child your first natural instinct is to protect them from any kind of real or perceived danger or upset - more so than they would feel if it was about themselves.

Parents become highly emotive and neuroscience proves to us that when we allow our emotions to take over (when our Amygdala is flaring) then our 'executive brain' (Pre Frontal Cortex) is unable to do its job of making rational decisions, regulating our behaviour, keeping our emotions under control and being able to act

rationally with forethought, empathy and understanding.

Their Amygdala has put them into 'fight' mode and their body has released adrenalin.

At this point when an angry parent comes at you, your own Amygdala will go into action as it is there to protect us from danger and you, yourself may feel that you want to do one of the 4 F's:

FIGHT back

FLEE and run away from them

FREEZE and just stand there and not say anything and you go blank as your brain (Pre Frontal Cortex) can't think what to do

FLOCK i.e. go and find someone else to help you.

Therefore you need to keep your own emotions under control and tell yourself, this is not about you and this is not about the person, it's about their behaviour because they have very strong feelings about something that has happened to their child or the way they believe their child has been treated. It's about a child's welfare whether perceived or real.

How you react and respond will either escalate or diffuse the situation!

- Remember to **welcome** them with

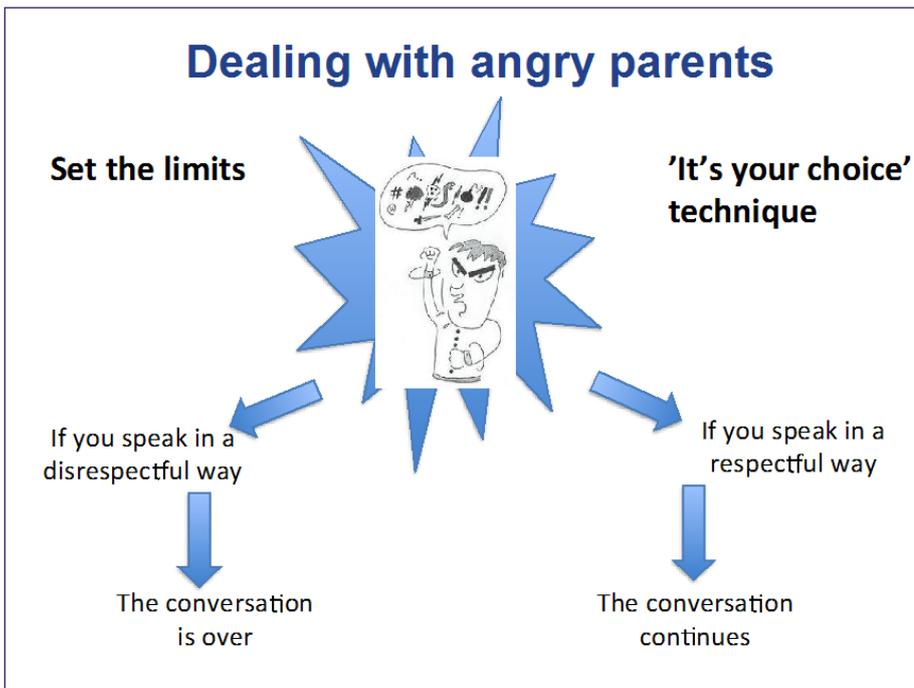
a warm smile and give appropriate eye contact (ie not staring) and speak calmly with a **neutral tone** and soft voice.

- Hold out your arm out to **shake hands** (if appropriate as this will depend on religion and culture). Touch has been proven to help build trust and honesty.
- **Thank** them for coming to see you or your Headteacher and that you are there to listen to their concerns and help in any way you can and that together you will find a resolution to whatever is bothering them.
- Stay **calm** and let them know that you want to **hear** what they have to say as indeed sometimes they have a valid point and actions may need to be taken so it does not happen again.

If they are extremely angry and ranting and raving and even perhaps swearing, you need to let them know 'the rules' and set the limits in order to proceed.

(see diagram on next page)

The brain treats having a choice as a reward (rather than being told to do something without a choice which the brain may perceive as a threat) so if you let them know that it is their choice to either speak to you in a respectful way and the conversation will continue or if they are



disrespectful in any way either by physical or verbal then the meeting will finish and the conversation is over at this time and you will make an appointment for them and see them once they have calmed down. It may be necessary to book an appointment if your time or your Headteacher's time does not allow an immediate meeting. However, where possible see the parent if you can make the time even if your Headteacher cannot see them straight away as you may diffuse the situation without them having to see the Headteacher at all which is adding massive value to your Headteacher.

Always remind yourself that parent's emotions are extremely strong and

that they are acting out of love, concern and protection of their child!

Parents may come back and apologise once calmed down (as will colleagues) as later they realise they simply lost control in the heat of the moment.

Parents want to be heard and listened to attentively so that they know you really understand their point of view. First you need to listen and understand why they are feeling so angry and then you can make any suggestions and come to any conclusions to help them and their child.

Diffuse the situation and calm the angry parent by:

- Take them to a private area but with caution (say I can see you are upset let's talk about it here where we have more privacy).
- Offer them a seat and make them feel respected (it communicates you are willing to listen and to find a solution).
- Offer to get them a drink as leaving them alone for a little while will help calm them down.

- When you leave the room let a colleague know what is going on - ask them to knock in 10 mins and inform you they need to speak with you - if all ok, then continue.
- Make a judgement whether it may be appropriate to have someone else in the room with you.
- Treat them like you would want to be treated if you were the one with a complaint.
- Make them feel important and listened to by listening with an open mind and keep quiet without interrupting until they have said what they came to say. They will feel better for just saying it as that, in itself is therapeutic for them!
- You should ask if it is okay to make notes and write down their concerns.
- **Validating** their emotion is important to help them calm down so show genuine concern, empathise with them and say "I understand what you are saying and I can see you are angry/frustrated/upset." You don't have to agree with their point of view but you can let them know you understand why they have come to see you.
- **IMPORTANT!** Always keep the child's welfare in the forefront of your mind.

You should not enter into an argument or disagree with them, your goal is to understand the situation, end the conversation and have the parent leave in a better frame of mind and have some action points to take forward.

They are not going to be able to listen to you or think logically and rationally until you have listened to them and let them know they have really been heard.

Once they have said what they wanted to say and have started to calm down, get to the root of the problem as fast as possible and rephrase back to them what you have understood to be the problem.

Bear in mind the parent may only have the child's version of the incident and you will probably need to investigate further.



Thank the parent for highlighting their concerns and let them know you will have to make further investigations.

You can ask for their suggestions and what they want to happen and seek a preliminary solution pending further investigation.

At least you can tell them what actions you are going to take and put a time frame on it.

Make it clear you are passionate about their child's learning experience and want them to do well. Always be polite and remain firm

and objective. You can share a strategy on the way forward and move in the direction that will help the child that you both want to help.

Sue France FCIPD FInstAM INLPTA is an international, motivational speaker and is available for bespoke in-house workshops and also runs public workshops in conjunction with Osiris Educational Training.

She also runs all inclusive 'Workations' in Spain and Scotland and you can find more information on

these at www.suefrance.com/workation. Or email sue@suefrance.com.

She is also a coach and the author of the award winning 'The Definitive Executive Assistant & Managerial Handbook' and 'The Definitive Personal Assistant & Secretarial Handbook' 3rd edition published August 2015 now with neuroscience. Both books have been endorsed by The Institute of Administrative Management and are used on business admin courses and by secretarial colleges.



Are you paying attention?

Terri Fishbourne asks: "Or are you dissociating?"

When you listen to someone, do you sometimes find that either your mind has drifted off or that you want to interrupt with some idea or thought of your own?

Paying attention can be very frustrating for the person trying to convey their message. They fight to keep the interest of the other party, or end up having to fend off the unwanted interruptions.

However the solution to the problem resides with the receiver.

If you find that you have this

problem, you need to make a few changes in how you listen, which equates to paying attention.

To keep your focus on the speaker, tilt your head slightly and look the speaker in the eye.

Then, lock onto a key point the person is trying to make and, when there's a break, repeat back what you just heard in question form: e.g., "So are you really saying that we should be doing x, y, and z?"

Be sure to plan for disruptions ahead of time. For example, if a meeting is scheduled for 12:00 to 13:00 and you typically eat lunch at 12:30, keep your growling stomach at bay by having a

small snack first to tide you over.

If the distractions are from a source outside the meeting environment, ask to close the door or remove the problem somehow.

If you remember your mother telling you to "stop fidgeting," that may not apply in certain situations.

In the work environment, fidgeting is viewed as unprofessional and even rude.

However, when working on an individual task, fidgeting can help keep you focused.

Good fidgeting ideas include doodling on a piece of paper while talking on the phone, and wiggling your toes while typing a letter.

According to Sydney Zentall, Ph.D., "an activity that uses a sense other than that required for the primary task... can enhance performance".

The best lesson is to watch what others do when you're speaking.

Notice what shows they aren't listening – and then consider if that's something you may be doing that needs attention!

Terri Fishbourne is an Executive Assistant. She has worked in a two schools and several organisations in industry for 20+ years in the USA.





Picture: Every PA / EA learns to be a mime artist in some way, shape or form—knowing when to listen and when to keep out mouths shut.

started to embrace the learning that resulted from the error.

I stopped saying to myself that I wouldn't do it again. Instead, I join in the conversation with my boss to discuss what other options I could have used, working out how I could resolve this sort of thing in the future and listening to the message behind it all: my good intentions and my integrity were not in question. It was not a fault in me as a person, it was something that I had done which could be rectified and worked on.

I'm not saying for one minute that I enjoy having an error pointed out to me – I don't think anyone does – but it is important to be able to develop the type of working relationship with your manager which enables you to talk together about issues. There is no need to just sit there, feeling exposed to criticism and unable to do anything about it.

Criticism is one of those things that's hard to take, but over time it is better to have it than not to have any comments at all about how well you are doing something. I used to dread it; now I look for it. I ask the attendees on my training courses to complete feedback forms, and to be honest when doing so. (I also add, 'Be honest, but not brutal, please!' to encourage them to give constructive criticism.)

It takes bravery to receive criticism and turn it into a useful learning and development tool.

Many of the PAs I meet on my training courses describe working for managers who seem to criticise them all the time or who never seem to have a word of praise for them. When they ask me what to do, I share Jenny's story with them. She is a PA in the Fast East, who has experienced working for a boss who made her feel like this (she gave me permission to tell her story to others).

Jenny worked for three members of

Accepting criticism

We bring you a free chapter from Angela Garry's book "The PA & EA Circus: integrating the many parts of the Personal Assistant and Executive Assistant". Each chapter focuses on a different character / role within the circus. This chapter is based on the mime artist, and how to be an expert at not just accepting criticism but sometimes also holding your tongue...

The boss nodded his head around my door: 'Angela, could you just pop in for a moment so I can have a word?'

Earlier in my career, I hated hearing

this as I equated 'having a word' with my having done something wrong and there being a telling off on its way. And I was usually right: something I'd done had gone the wrong way or something I'd said had been off-kilter with someone else's view, and I'd then be told what I'd done wrong, who'd taken umbrage against it or how it had affected a project or a piece of work, and what to do about it.

I would sit there in the boss's office, red-faced with shame, feeling inadequate, silently kicking myself and mumbling apologies. I would walk out of the office feeling like I was completely useless, telling myself I would never do whatever it was again.

In more recent years though, whilst I still cringed inwardly at the invitation to go into the boss's office for them to 'have a word' and I still felt some shame at having done something that had been perceived as wrong, I have

her leadership team – two who praised her now and then for her work, but the third one only ever seemed to criticise her. Unfortunately for Jenny, this was the person who was responsible for carrying out her yearly appraisal. During the first few years of her job, the appraisal meetings were miserable affairs: Jenny felt that she was being told off for the entire time.

As she grew within her role, however, Jenny noticed that the two directors who praised her only ever gave praise to her – there was never any negative feedback at all. As Jenny observed, 'I knew I wasn't perfect and I knew I made mistakes sometimes, but either they never seemed to notice or they didn't care, so their praise started to mean nothing to me.'

This insight helped her to realise that the third director, the one she had thought of as highly critical, was actually the person who was helping her to develop most within her role, pushing her to become better at certain things, leading her towards a higher level of working. She added, 'I started to realise that criticism can be useful, so even when I felt that maybe the criticism I was receiving was a bit too harsh at times, I looked at it differently, trying to work out how best to use it to improve myself and my work.'

Jenny also started to challenge the two directors who only ever praised her work. She said to them, 'Please let me know if I do something wrong or that you are not happy with. I'd welcome your thoughts, and you are not going to "break me" or upset me if you tell me there is something that you'd like me to do better.' She now feels that she has a more respected standing amongst her colleagues and feels much happier about work in general.

Being able to hear critical comments, even to invite them when they are not forthcoming, and to work on them to your advantage is a great skill to acquire. It is also

one of the hardest – after all, no one likes to hear bad things about themselves. But it can be an incredibly useful learning tool: if we take apart the criticism that we receive and break it down into manageable parts we can build on it.

Remember, however harsh it may feel, "It's business, it's not personal..."

Being able to separate out the emotional aspect from criticism is a key aspect: using your emotional intelligence and remembering 'it's business, it's not personal'. The vast majority of criticisms you receive about your work will be about the ways in which you work, how you have done something or what you have said – not about you as a person.

Seven useful steps to receiving criticism are:

1. Listen Respectfully.

When a person is trying to tell you something negative, it is easy to get upset and focus only on the critical aspects of the discussion. You might be tempted to jump into the conversation and deal with the negative points rather than wait to hear what the speaker truly intended. It is best to hear the speaker out, asking only brief questions for clarity, if needed. Give the person a chance to fully explain any concerns that are being described. Maintain a positive attitude with facial expression and body language. Try not to tune out the points you disagree with while staying focused on the entire message. Make a mental note of the point and plan to address it when it is your turn to speak. The person who is speaking to you will appreciate your willingness to get the whole story before responding too quickly.

2. Be Sure You Understand.

In accepting constructive criticism, you will need to understand fully what has been shared with you. You don't have to accept blame or responsibility for something that doesn't make sense or that isn't clear. After hearing what the speaker

has to say, take time to ask questions or make comments to confirm your understanding of the situation being explained to you.

3. Acknowledge the Speaker's Point Of View.

As you listen, you may begin to disagree inwardly and eagerly await your chance to respond. But try to put yourself in the speaker's shoes. This can't be easy for them – they may feel uncomfortable about confronting you with something that is potentially negative, or she may be counting on your intelligence and understanding to accept the situation for what it is, a reasonable approach to solving a problem. You would not respect this person if she hid her real feelings or allowed a more serious problem to develop for failure to address it at its root.

4. Don't Become Defensive.

All of us want to be accepted and appreciated for who we are. We are embarrassed and sometimes feel guilty or ashamed when others notice a problem behaviour or a mistake we have made. That's why it is sometimes difficult to come across as one who can accept constructive criticism. But being open to learning and growing is a desirable characteristic in any job position or relationship. Don't feel that you have to "protect your turf" and go into defence mode just for the sake of appearing right—or even perfect. It helps to realise that you have a valuable opportunity to learn from a negative outcome and become a better employee, partner, friend or family member. While you may indeed have useful information that will enlighten the speaker or at least explain your actions, don't share those facts in a self-righteous way. Instead, try to maintain a humble but positive outlook that will make it easy for others to

work with you.

5. **Avoid Escalating Tensions.**
When discussing setbacks or limitations in a person's actions, the potential for escalating tensions is created. When we feel overly criticised or misunderstood, it becomes natural to bring up past issues or current problems that might otherwise have been overlooked. This is not the time to put all cards on the table, though. It is better to focus on the issue at hand and reserve any exchange concerns for a later time, unless they are related to the current issue.
6. **Follow Up With Positive Action.**
After accepting criticism graciously, accept the responsibility for making changes that will help matters improve. Some people will pretend to accept criticism, but then fail to make the necessary adjustments. Following up with suitable action will show others that you know how to accept criticism and can actually put it to good use, which will enhance your professional image and potentially improve personal relationships. You might even want to keep a written record of any changes that you do make so if the situation is later revisited, you have documentation that demonstrates your willingness to follow helpful feedback.
7. **Take the Initiative.**
You don't have to wait for others to take the initiative in giving you constructive criticism. You can ask those whose opinion and expertise you trust for advice or suggestions to help you do a better job or avoid making the same mistake. The only dumb question is the unasked one. Let others know if you need help or are struggling before problems become apparent. Most people are more than willing to provide assistance or answer questions to help you do a better job. Ask someone you trust for a

performance review at work or for an honest opinion in a friendship or interpersonal relationship. Then be willing to act on that information, if applicable.

It is also crucial to learn how to give constructive criticism to others

Learning to give criticism (or 'constructive feedback' as it is more often referred to) to others is something that you'll develop over time.

For example, you might be managing a project and need to steer a team member in a particular direction when they have gone off course, or you might be responsible for the office team and need to speak to someone about the quality of their work which has gone downhill sharply.

Another example where this is really important is providing feedback to service providers. Say you spend two or three days attending a training course, and at the end of it the trainer presents you with a feedback form to fill in.

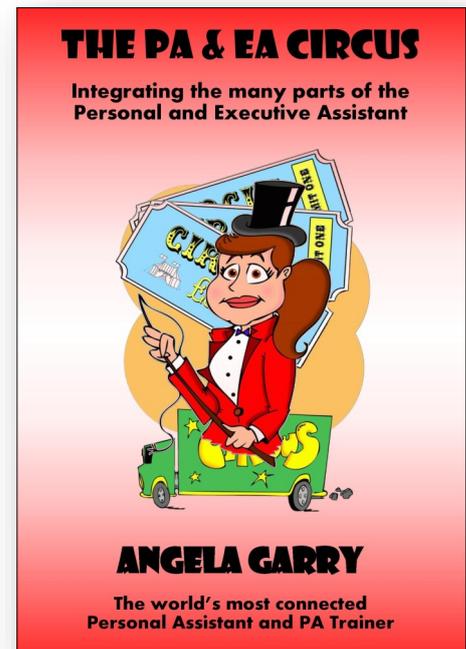
Aim to give some constructive feedback. If the form has tick boxes for you to show how useful the various sessions were and boxes for comments, as a trainer now myself, I would urge you not to just tick the boxes to say it was 'very good', 'good', 'average' or 'below average', and leave the rest of the form blank.

Whilst the tick boxes are good overall gauges for the effectiveness of a training course or seminar, the person receiving the feedback will also want some information from you about what was good, what was average and what fell below par.

Good feedback forms should give you space to include some comments, so use this to really give your views on how it has been for you.

To demonstrate this – imagine that your manager said to you at the end of the week, 'I'm giving you 3 out of 5 for this week,' and then said nothing more, you would want to know why

Picture: Available via Amazon.com or signed copies can be ordered direct from editor@picaaurum.com



you didn't get a 4 or 5, or what you could change so that you could get a 4 or 5 in the future, wouldn't you?

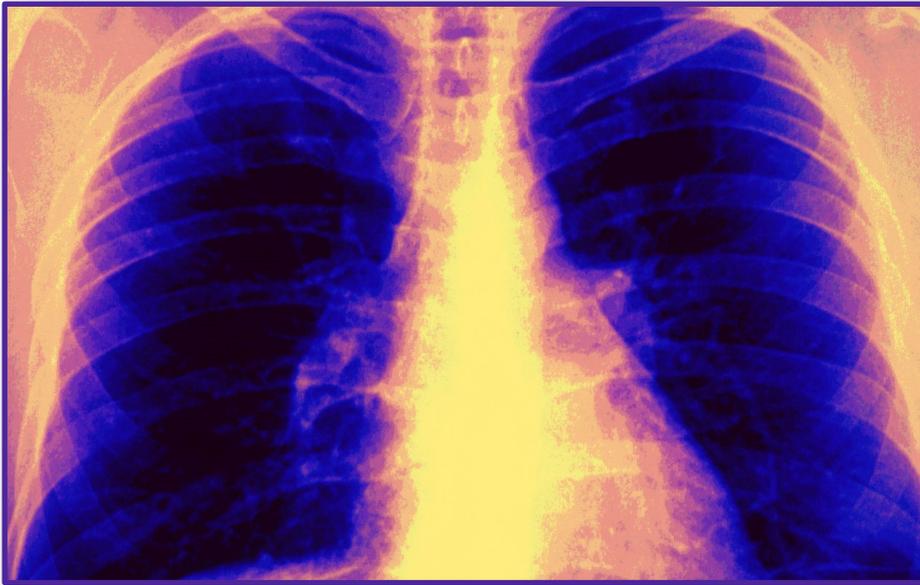
Also, don't be ambiguous – 'I really enjoyed the course' doesn't communicate what you enjoyed exactly.

What did you enjoy?

- Being away from the office for two days?
- Learning in a conducive environment with a great trainer?
- Meeting other people in similar roles?
- Having time to snooze on the back row?
- The great lunches and snack breaks?

Put some detail.!

You can use this same approach when giving feedback or criticism to colleagues – by all means give marks on a scale to be measured against in the future, but back up your marks with specific useful comments on what was good, what was bad, and what can be improved upon.



Definitely not one of my usual photos from a training trip: doctors and nurses are all I've seen in weeks!

tablets (to make my blood less sticky and thereby reduce my risks of another clot, whilst assisting the existing clot pieces to dissolve), and by my heart racing in an attempt to counteract the lesser supply of oxygen from my damaged lungs. I've also still got neck pain from the fall, but the bruising has at least all faded now. I've been housebound a lot as I've simply had no energy. Plus whenever I have gone outside, the cold air hurts my lungs so I retreat indoors again pretty quickly. I'm looking forward to spending a week in Javea, Spain recuperating in a warmer climate at the beginning of March.

I've even been without the energy to work from my bed or sofa, which is almost unheard of for me. Add to this that Karen, my part-time accounts assistant, left for a new full-time job before Christmas, and it's meant that invoicing has got a little behind for a small number of subscribers, which I'm chasing up on now. I'm very glad that the various writers of the articles for this issue were all on time with meeting their deadlines for publication in order to get this issue of EDPA out to you on time, not delayed by my being ill!

Rest assured, I'm back on the way "up" again now, and am working on plans to make some further changes to the magazine, based on the suggestions and requests put forward in the reader survey last year. Plus I'm absolutely delighted to say that I've recently had enquiries about training work for the second half of this year, in Prague, Seoul and Thailand, which give me the incentive to make sure that I rebuild my strength and energy levels by then.

I've always felt that the PAs and EAs I've met around the world are a resilient bunch — and I realise I am too. I certainly know I'm lucky to be here, that's for sure, and reassure you that EDPA will continue for some time to come — I'm not ready to throw my hat in just yet! ***So, it's "Onwards and upwards" - see you next term!***



EDPA Editor's Update

Never have I been so glad to see an issue ready to print as this one! Why? Because it means I'm still here...

It's been a decidedly shaky couple of months here at EDPA Towers. On 19th December 2016, I suffered a pulmonary embolism — unbeknownst to me, a blood clot had formed in my right leg and suddenly broke free, travelled upwards through my body, and split into two pieces which lodged, one in each of my lungs.

I collapsed — in rather spectacular fashion, taking out the entire glass front door of an oven with the back of my head and shoulders — and was knocked out for several hours before coming to and calling for an ambulance. Then it was a blue-light rush to the local hospital where I was looked after by a magnificent team of doctors and nurses, to whom I owe great thanks.

I've taken pride over the last five years in the fact that I have coped with some pretty bad ill health (including several surgeries) and in creating a new career and source of income for myself when it became clear that I could not continue in my role as a full-

time Personal Assistant any longer, but the last couple of months have been an even bigger ordeal to get through.

After the initial shock-horror of my collapse, once I was at the hospital the doctors got quickly to work. I was X-rayed and CAT scanned and ECG'd and as soon as the embolism was diagnosed the treatment became relatively easy. I was in hospital for four days, sedated a little at first, and put on oxygen and anticoagulants. I was worried about my head and neck as I had hundreds of tiny bits of glass embedded in my scalp which needed tweezing out and my neck hurt from the fall. Thankfully, the cuts didn't need stitches, no broken bones and no internal bleeding in my head, so I was deemed "fine" and was discharged just in time for Christmas.

I'm now probably on anticoagulants for the rest of my life (this will be confirmed in a few months' time), and I'm very conscious that I am lucky to be here at all, as apparently around a quarter of all pulmonary embolisms are only diagnosed post-mortem.

Since coming home, the main things I've been battling with have been the cold weather which makes my lungs really painful, and a constant feeling of sheer exhaustion caused by the anticoagulant

country to a nationally-organised programme.

Please get in touch if you would be interested in hosting such an event: including providing or booking the venue, establishing a delegate list, sending out booking forms, taking payments from attendees' schools, and hosting the event. You'd work with me to create the agenda for the workshop. The benefits of doing this for the school are convenience of date and location, plus after paying my training fee and travel expenses your school should even make a profit on the event – which could be used to pay for your own school's staff to effectively attend for free.

Possible topics could include anything

from how to provide quality support for your Headteacher, various elements of ICT to improve the quality of the PAs role, action planning for future self development, and dealing with difficult people. I have a list of over 40 seminar topics which could be used to create a one or two day programme.

If you would like more information on running a course from your school, please email editor@nahpa.org.uk

Distance learning option also available: buy a course book and work through it at your own pace. Purchase includes two hours of mentoring and coaching sessions on a one-to-one basis, via telephone, email and / or Skype.

BOOKS TO BUY

"Brave PAs: the ultimate guide to being outstanding in a tough job" by Angela Garry, £12.99

The only CPD book written specifically for PAs, EAs, secretaries and admin staff working in education. Available from Crown House Publishing, Amazon and selected bookstores. Kindle edition also available.

"The PA & EA Circus: integrating the many parts of the Personal and Executive Assistant" by Angela Garry, £12.99

CPD book for PAs, EAs, Secretaries and admin staff in ANY industry. Available from Amazon in paperback and Kindle edition.

Please forward to us any details of Resources which you'd like to share with your fellow members.

Moving forwards

As always, we welcome suggestions of topics for future articles which you would like to see, plus we also seek articles from our readership—so if you get the urge to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard, or voice to dictation system...) please do! We will return to interviewing at least one reader per issue, to find out about your roles and experiences of working in your schools. We're also creating a panel of readers to call upon for opinions / thoughts. If you'd like to put yourself forward for any of these, again, please get in touch.

Don't think that your voice cannot be heard and that you do not have a valid contribution to make—all of our readers have something to offer to each other. Plus contributing will look great on your own CV / resume, where you will be able to state that you are a published author, in the leading publication for PAs and Admin staff in schools!

All contributors receive an additional printed copy of the magazine plus a pdf of their finalised article, which can be appended to future job applications, added to your CPD folder, share with your boss at your next Performance Appraisal, etc. ***Together, let's make EDPA the best print resource and online forum for PAs, Secretaries and Admins in schools worldwide!***

To get in touch, just send an email to: editor@picaaurum.com

EDPA

Education PA - the leading publication for PAs, Secretaries & Admin staff in schools

The aims of EDPA:

- ***to inspire and motivate PAs and Admins working in education,***
- ***to offer relevant training information,***
- ***to look at challenges faced by education PAs and Admins,***
- ***to encourage PAs and Admins to share their experiences and learn from others,***
- ***to point subscribers in the right direction for useful resources for CPD, and***
- ***to highlight the importance of the role of PA and Admins so that the roles get the recognition they deserve as being truly professional.***

Best wishes to all — Angela Garry