



The Association of Headteachers' PAs NAHPPA

SUMMER 2016
ISSUE 45
ISSN 2397-1932

2001-2016: 40 page 15th Anniversary Issue



Event management
masterclass

Isipho: the PA Gift

The future of
Admissions

Tackling difficult
conversations

Planning for
success

Confessions of the
Secret PA

**Managing up:
managing your goals,
tasks and working
relationships**

Welcome to NAHPA: expanding & evolving !



Angela Garry—Editor

NAHPA is expanding & evolving!
The first issue of the magazine was in Autumn 2001 — and had 16 pages with an introductory article “celebrating our school secretaries”, reproduced here in pages 4 & 5. In 2004 the magazine grew to 28 pages, then settled 32 pages in 2007 until the present day. Since I became involved with the magazine in 2010, I’ve brought in articles from trainers and PAs around the world, and last year when I took ownership of NAHPA, I vowed to reduce both the number and size of images within the publication, in order to make room for more material.

Today, we take the next step forward: **NAHPA is 15 years old**—and this, our 45th issue, reaches 40 pages, bringing more insight from people working in education, and items of relevance to PAs and admins worldwide: plus look for our important name change announcement (see back page) to take the magazine further in the future!

Please email editor@nahpa.org.uk with any further suggestions for NAHPA.

Onwards and upwards!

Best wishes to all,

Angela Garry



ISSN 2397-1932 (printed issue).

NAHPA magazine is owned and published by Angela Garry, trading as *Pica Aurum*.

Registered office: 10 Sydney Road, Draycott, Derbyshire, DE72 3PX, UK. Tel: +44 1332 874327. © Angela Garry & NAHPA 2016.

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The A-Z of this issue’s contributors:

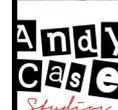
- **Carol Bailey** is PA to Headteacher at Poole Grammar School, England.
- **Terri Fishbourne** is an Executive Assistant who has worked in schools and industry for 20+ years in the USA.
- **Anel Martin** is an award winning former PA, now full time trainer and coach who is passionate about assistants and the valuable work that they do.
- **Nasreen Nanji** is Executive Secretary to the All School / Administration Director at the International School of Tanganyika, Tanzania.
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- **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.
- **Tandy Hanff** is our resident in-house IT guru and self-confessed geek), with 20 years’ self-taught computing experience.

ALL REMAINING ARTICLES:

- **Angela Garry** is NAHPA’s editor, author of “Brave PAs”, and a global PA Trainer, with 24 years’ experience in admin & PA roles.





The Association of Headteachers' PAs NAHPA

Networking / Resources / Survey

There's an enormous range of resources out there that could help you enormously in your role — just a small effort once a week on your part can make all the difference!

THE NAHPA discussion group on LinkedIn

All NAHPA subscribers are invited to become members of the discussion group and new members should receive an email to join the group shortly after they've subscribed to the magazine. (If you have not received this email, please contact editor@nahpa.org.uk). On receipt of the message, click the link to join the group—and, if necessary, create yourself a free user registration on LinkedIn.

"OK, I'm on LinkedIn. Now what?"

1. Join groups that are directly connected to the work you do, the work you want to be doing, and causes that light you up and spark a passion. LinkedIn Groups provide individuals with similar interests to post, share, and even converse on topics and issues in which they are interested and about which they want to share information. A good rule of thumb is to strive to participate in LinkedIn Groups about once a week. Find great content and share it appropriately. (Make sure you have read the content, so you know what it says.) The NAHPA group is specifically JUST for NAHPA subscribers, and is set as a "private" group—which means that whatever is discussed or posted in the group remains private to the group members only—the contents of messages are not searchable via engines such as Google.
2. Engage members of your Group by asking a question. Sometimes individuals will post provocative questions to spur a debate or discussion. Be careful not to be too provocative...you could get yourself in trouble...but asking if members of the group have been successful pursuing a particular strategy or program might spark some conversation that could benefit the entire group—not just you. If your question or post is relevant to more than one Group to which you belong, then post to all of them. Be mindful, however, if you belong to a lot of Groups. You don't want to be flooded with responses all at once.
3. You can change your settings for each and every single group for which you are a member—to determine whether you receive daily, weekly or NO messages from the group via email. (To do this, click the small cog symbol at the right side of the group's name, to go into your settings page for that group.)
4. Be conscious of the fact that you are building a personal and professional brand when participating in Group discussions. Be courteous, be thoughtful, and contribute in a positive way in every post and every interaction. LinkedIn isn't like Facebook where individuals sometimes let their emotions get the better of them as they engage in political or philosophical debates or discussions. LinkedIn is a professional venue, and the tone should always be respectful and professional. Keep your snarky remarks to yourself. (I wouldn't recommend posting snarky remarks on Facebook, either, but we have seen that in abundance along with hastily posted and sometimes hastily withdrawn Tweets that were formulated in the heat of the moment. LinkedIn is definitely not the place for rudeness or sarcasm.)
5. One source of great content is LinkedIn's very own 'Pulse' section, which is helpful because LinkedIn uses your profile page to determine your interests. When you click on Pulse, you will see the various articles that LinkedIn thinks you might find of interest. When you find something that warrants being shared, feel free to like the article,

comment on the article, and share it with one or more of your groups.

- Don't be afraid to put yourself "out there" - ask questions, post your own answers to other people's questions, comment on articles that are posted by others. Don't just view the space as a "chat board" - see the discussion group as a valuable source of free resources to help you with your job, by learning from the expertise of others, and a fantastic space for you to share your knowledge and experience with them in return. Even if there are only twenty members in a group with 5 years' experience each in their roles, this adds up to a hundred years of knowledge and expertise that you can draw upon—and some groups have many thousands of members.

An increasing number of PAs these days are offering Virtual Assistant (VA) services from their homes in spare time—some with the intention of switching to part-time in their day jobs, others with a view to moving to full-time working from home for themselves. If you're in this situation, you could use your participation in LinkedIn Groups to drive up your online visibility and presence in hopes of creating more traffic and the possibility of business, and to learn from other VAs out there.

Share valuable content, and as people come to know, like and trust you, they will gravitate toward you and may become your next client or customer naturally. You have to let them come to you, however, so guard against the overly promotional post or self-promotional discussion in your next Group post.

LinkedIn is a great resource for professionals and it provides a powerful way for entrepreneurs to find leads, prospects, and clients. It is also a great place for sharing valuable information, however, that advances contemplative discussion, thoughtful sharing, and even collaboration.

Nurture your LinkedIn network and build an online reputation (brand) as someone who brings value to every conversation in which you participate.

Understanding LinkedIn and using it to your advantage will be well worth the time and effort you put into building your relationships within your Groups.

Suggestions of Groups to join:

- NAHPA
- Global Education Administrators
- International School Administrators
- PAs, EAs, Vas and Senior Admins

Each of these groups will put you in touch with PAs working in (in the first three groups) education and in PA roles throughout the world. The fourth group is enormous, with around 75,000 members globally, so there's even more chance of finding the elusive answers to your burning work-related questions!

"I don't have time to read LinkedIn or this magazine or networking in general!"

Don't think that all of this has to take an enormous amount of your time—if you just put aside 10 to 15 minutes per week to have a look at what's been posted recently by other PAs on LinkedIn, this will keep your finger on the pulse of much of what's going on in the global PA community.

Let me ask you a question: ***do you normally arrive at work, 10- 15 minutes before you are due to start working?*** If yes, then you do have time to look at LinkedIn at least once per week. Or: ***do you take your full lunch break every day, or do you return to your work a few minutes early?*** If yes, set those few minutes aside to look at a LinkedIn group, one day per week. And: ***do you find it difficult to find time***

to read this magazine each term? If yes, then don't try to do it all in one go! Just aim to read an article or two per week. Use a post-it note as a bookmark, to mark where you've got up to in the magazine, so that next time you pick it up you can quickly skip to the last page you read and continue reading from there.

Continuous Professional Development is EXACTLY that—continuous. Little bits of learning here and there.

Having been a busy PA in a school myself, I know for sure that almost NO school PA or Admin tends to have a spare hour per week to spend on anything. That's why I suggest a few minutes here and there. Learn in snippets, use the knowledge you gain throughout your week.

You'll be surprised how quickly a few snippets can add up to increase your knowledge, build your skills-base, further your expertise, grow your confidence, etc.!

The NAHPA Survey 2016

We asked — and you are answering. The results of the NAHPA 2016 survey are still being collated.

Several readers have asked for more time to submit their responses, so in order to give more of you a chance to respond on the survey from the last issue, we are extending the respond-by date til 31 July 2016.

You can download the survey from www.nahpa.org.uk/files/Download/NAHPASurvey2016.pdf — fill it in and then scan / photograph the pages and email your responses to editor@nahpa.org.uk

Three respondents will be picked out at random and will be awarded a copy of "Brave PAs: the ultimate guide to being outstanding in a tough job" by NAHPA Editor Angela Garry. So get your responses in!

Please send your NAHPA 2016 Survey responses in: 3 at random will be awarded a copy of "Brave PAs".

Adding Value to Leadership

New Course

A must-see course for PAs and Admins

- ✓ A comprehensive how-to for the PA who wants to offer the best support to senior leadership
- ✓ How to work at your peak level when there are conflicting demands on your time
- ✓ Innovative ideas to save your Head vital time
(Just 1 hour a week = a week of 'free' time over the school year!)

Angela Garry

Previously shortlisted for both the UK Headteachers' PA of the Year and the *Times* PA of the Year awards, Angela has combined her teaching and PA skills to become an acknowledged expert trainer in educational administration. She is also the author of *Brave PAs* and the editor of the *National Association of Headteachers' PA* magazine, both leading publications for PAs and secretaries working in Education.

It's more than time management

Manage yourself, not your time, under a constant flow of interruptions
Make it easier to juggle your numerous 'top priorities'
Maintain high standards, no matter what your workload and pressures
Measure the outcomes of your support

A master-class on multi-tasking – 8 vital areas covered in depth:

- 1. Aiming high:**
Identifying ways to be exceptional in your role
- 2. Stepping up:**
Taking on tasks that will free up your Head
- 3. Time-saving:**
Different ways to reduce time-wasting activities so you can focus on important tasks
- 4. Gate-keeping:**
Fielding enquiries for your boss to protect their time
- 5. Handling difficult situations:**
Dealing with angry parents and working with difficult staff
- 6. Networking with peers:**
The value of connecting with peers and sharing expertise
- 7. Balancing:**
Tips and tricks to realistically maintain a healthy work/life balance
- 8. Technology:**
Methods for taking better control of a busy inbox, task lists and calendar

Links to free resources to enhance your future learning

Free copy of NAHPA magazine for every delegate



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Revisiting NAHPA's first issue

As the magazine increases in size for the first time in over ten years, we look back at the very first issue's opening article, to see what, if anything, has changed...

celebrating our school secretaries



In most schools the secretary is still receptionist, nurse, PA to the headteacher, fountain of all knowledge on children, parents and staff and often clerk to the governors as well. The super secretary of the 21st century is also the data clerk, office manager and usually the bursar.

The range of skills employed in the modern school office has expanded more in the past ten years than in the previous one hundred. Information technology has often taken the drudgery out of tasks such as typing envelopes and standard letters, but can occasionally lead to problem solving skills being needed instead! In the days before PCs, a typewriter was the key office machine. In today's office the computer and printer enables the secretary to word process, do the accounts, desktop publish and manage the school database. Year by year the expectation of quality rises - presentation becomes critical, accuracy is everything, and as the technology improves, so do the demands made of it and the staff who use it.

Pupils will become more aware of and able to use their IT skills as more and more schools start to make the most of new technology. Therefore all the people who come into contact with pupils need to be able to understand it too. At present, nine out of ten schools are connected to the Internet and by next year, all schools will be. This means that support staff, as well as teachers, need to be able to understand what the children are learning. Asking a year six pupil how to run a spell-check isn't an option!

The investment in technology has required a similar investment in training to use the technology.

Again, it is the super secretary who has been the recipient, sometimes enthusiastically and sometimes reluctantly. With the same caring spirit that she shows to a hurt child she would face up to the prospect of a new challenge. One of the positive outcomes of meeting other secretaries on courses has been that mutual-support groups have been formed. The majority of primary schools have one secretary so that the ability to phone or email a colleague in another school provides a vital way to keep in touch with someone who shares experiences and problems.

We have halved the amount of paperwork which schools are sent, as we promised to by 2001, which has taken some of the burden of administration from support staff and teachers. We've made form filling a lot easier too, which means that not only teachers and heads, but support staff also, have more time to spend doing what they are best at - teaching, running the school and supporting teachers and pupils.

Any organisation relies on support staff to make sure the wheels are running smoothly. A group of staff who are critical to the success of the school are the secretaries, PAs and other members of the support team. In a primary school the school secretary has always been the focus of school life, but in recent years the role has changed to meet the needs of local management and the information age.

**Stephen Timms,
Minister for School Standards**

← NAHPA insert: Minister of State (Education and Skills) (Schools), Jun 2001 - May 2002

In the same way that the work of the school secretary has changed, so have the people employed. The new super secretary joins the school with all the traditional caring and social skills but she often also has advanced ICT or financial skills. Working in a school provides an opportunity to use these skills with greater freedom and responsibility than in a commercial environment. Schools need many and varied skills as there is always a continuous set of tasks to be done and only one person to do them - unlike a big office where there may be a postroom, an IT department and a facilities manager.

It is still a job that appeals to those who want to be able to work during term times and school days in an environment where the needs of parents and children are recognised. Today, the new school secretary is likely to arrive with a wide range of ICT skills and an expectation that the technology will work for him or her, as well as being an asset in achieving the various tasks of a typical school day. The new secretary may well want, or need, to push the headteacher into exploiting the systems more fully to exploit the

power of the Internet and electronic communications. The super secretary is a key person in creating a school for the 21st century.

The Government is actively supporting "work-life balance", and a role such as this can offer a great deal of flexibility for someone with commitments outside work. It is also a demanding, although ultimately rewarding job - how many other jobs ask you to work on a budget report, introduce new parents to the school and be told a joke by some of class six all in the space of a couple of hours?



How much has the role of school PA or Administrator changed and moved forward in YOUR school in the last 15 years?



Tackling difficult conversations



Last year's Hays PA survey showed that over 40% of PAs / EAs in years 0-4 of their roles are responsible for managing staff.

However, the average age at which a manager in the UK receives any training in how to manage people is 42—meaning most of us are left finding our way in the dark.

Carol Bailey, PA to the Head at Poole Grammar School, shares some suggestions from her career on how to hold difficult conversations with colleagues that you line manage.

"When I first started as a very naive Headteacher's PA nearly 20 years ago, the job was quite basic. I was essentially a secretary with no other responsibilities or authority, used to doing the Headteacher's bidding and making his tea or coffee!

Since then the role of Headteacher's PA has been recognised as an important and senior position in most schools. Along with this recognition has come more responsibilities and opportunities to line-manage other colleagues and oversee the running of different departments.

Although I relished these opportunities and actually think I made quite a good job of them, the most difficult for me was having to have what is generally known as a "difficult conversation" with someone.

In the early days I was guilty of putting it off, thinking it would go

away or resolve itself. The first lesson I learned was that it doesn't go away, it very seldom resolves itself and usually only gets worse!

So I thought I would lay out my hard won tips for having a difficult conversation. I don't pretend to be an expert and I am certainly not saying this is the only way but I have found that by applying these measures it has made it easier and in most cases has achieved the outcome I was looking for.

First of all, when something is not going well, or other colleagues are complaining that something is not done, or something has been done but isn't right etc., you know it is time to have a conversation.

I have found that on the whole most people want to do a good job at work and there are very few that deliberately go out of their way to be awkward or unhelpful.

So bear this in mind when a conversation is needed: never ambush or take someone by surprise and then launch into a tirade about their shortcomings!

Try to talk to someone in private and say that you are concerned about whatever it is you want to talk about and suggest a meeting perhaps the next day so you can discuss the situation.

This gives them time to think about what they might want to say, which ultimately might make the conversation and resolution quicker! Don't schedule a meeting for several days or weeks in the future as this will only make the colleague worry and ultimately be on the defensive.

At the meeting try to remain friendly and open to solutions.

Make your position completely clear from the outset, ask them for their take on the situation and allow them time to talk.

There may be something going on in their private life which is impacting on their working life, even though we might all say we should keep things separate.

In practice this is not always possible and at least knowing what is happening might make things easier to deal with.

If the problem is one of insufficient knowledge or experience, ask them how they think they could improve. Encourage them to recognise their own shortcomings and what would improve the situation.

Try to put in place training and regular support, and be prepared to give your own time or ask another senior colleague to act as mentor.

If the problem is more of a personality issue, i.e. they are having a clash with another colleague or just not doing the job as you would expect it to be done, then the solution may take longer.

Again try not to rant and "tell them off": nobody wants to feel they are being disciplined.

Lay out the tasks that are not being

done and ask for an explanation. Do this in such a way so that the employee has the opportunity to say why he/she has not done something: be prepared for them to have a completely different idea that hasn't been considered.

Personality clashes are the most difficult problems to deal with, and at the end of the day you may have to accept that not everyone is going to be best friends.

All colleagues must have high expectations of how they wish to be treated and if someone's behaviour falls short of this then unfortunately the only outcome may be an escalation to a disciplinary procedure – which is something else entirely!

To sum up:

- Don't put off having a difficult conversation with someone;
- Be completely clear in your own

mind on what the problem is and what outcome you are looking for;

- Allow time for a meeting, it will always take longer than you think and be prepared to give your own time to help support the situation;
- Take notes and schedule follow up meetings;
- Above all be respectful and kind: we are all in this together!"

Carol Bailey has spent 18 years in post at her school, and is due to retire at the end of this term.

NAHPA wishes her a happy and healthy retirement, and thanks her for sharing some of the wisdom she has learned in her role.



A quick guide to mentoring for PAs



Asking for help is never a bad thing – especially when it comes to your career. No one knows all the answers, and it’s always of tremendous benefit to have insight from another person.

There are a few things you must do before you begin seeking a mentor.

Know what help you are looking for from a mentor so that you can identify somebody appropriate to your needs. For example, don’t ask someone who focuses on personal growth to assist you if your prime focus is to enhance a skill set (such as using a software application).

Decide how you want the relationship to work. Do you want a face-to-face meeting in person, or would you be happy to work with them via phone or Skype, or even email? How often – and when – are you looking to make contact? Should it be via a scheduled timeline, or do you want to wait for a triggering event (perhaps a tough situation at work)?

Have a goal in mind. You are seeking a mentor for a specific reason – what is it? Clearly identify the outcome so the mentor knows how to best help you. A goal such as “you want everyone to like you at work” is probably too broad. Think in smaller terms such as you want to have a better interaction with two specific people at work who disrespect you.

(If you are looking just for someone to dump on, seek out a professional or a friend who’s a good listener –

this is not a “mentoring” situation.)

Now you’re prepared to start your search. There are many resources available to you.

Your own place of work. If you have other PAs and administrative staff at your school, you might consider setting up an in-school mentoring system, where you can help each other in your professional development.

LinkedIn. When it comes to networking professionals, LinkedIn is the place to be! You can use the site to make connections – and use the discussion groups to ask questions / answer queries. As a NAHPA subscriber you can join the “NAHPA” group, specifically for school PAs – or you can join a more generic PA group like “PAs, EAs, VAs and Senior Admins”, to share knowledge and expertise with other PAs around the world.

Local PA networks. New networks for PAs are springing up all the time – seek out your nearest one, and find out how to connect with other local PAs.

Sometimes people confuse mentoring and coaching. According to Management Mentors, here are some distinctions.

- A coach is task oriented; a mentor is relationship oriented.
- A coach is short-term; a mentor is long-term.

- A coach is performance driven; a mentor is development driven.

In short, coaching is used when there is a well-defined goal that is based on improving skills and performance. Mentoring is valuable for career development, providing general guidance, setting and achieving goals, making decisions or facilitating problem solving.

Finding a mentor is like building any relationship: use your judgment (i.e., do not take the first person who comes along), determine if there’s chemistry, validate qualifications, and have some flexibility. Again, a mentor is not someone upon whom you can foist all your problems: they are a professional, trying to help you.

A good mentor will:

- M** – Motivate you to accomplish more than you think you can.
- E** – Expect the best of you.
- N** – Never give up on you or let you give up on yourself.
- T** – Tell you the truth, even when it hurts.
- O** – Occasionally kick your butt.
- R** – Really care about you and your success.

Look for people with these qualities when you are searching for a mentor—and do your best to embody them yourself when you are mentoring others.

The art of event management



Ingrid van der Weide has many years of experience as an event organiser—both as a member of her children’s schools’ PTAs and also within her own job at leading event co-ordinators, MashMedia.

So you’ve been tasked with organising the next event! How exciting. This is your opportunity to create the most enjoyable and memorable experience for your attendees regardless of the type of event, the scale of the event or the target audience.

The real skill of the event planner is not to run around ragged doing everything yourself. It is the ability to draw upon the wealth of experience and willingness of those around you to help you deliver the best possible event and achieve your objectives.

But first, make sure you understand the objectives of the event:

- What is the purpose of this event?
- Who is it for?
- Where will it be?
- When will it be?
- What do you want attendees to

come away with?

- What elements do you need to consider?
- What budget do you have?

And so on... There’s always 101 questions.

As a veteran of two Parent & Teacher Associations spanning a 10-year period, and a career in event organising across the corporate and not-for-profit sectors, the range and scale of events I have worked on has been incredibly diverse.

The common factor across all events has been the satisfaction of walking away knowing that you did all you could to make each event a success. Success, of course, comes in all shapes and sizes and that doesn’t mean there haven’t been any disasters along the way or things you could have done better. You always have to start somewhere and you always learn something along the way.

The team approach

Event organising is far more enjoyable and rewarding when you’re working with a team to share the workload and bounce ideas with.

So look around you to see who has relevant experience, enthusiasm, time and will be resourceful. Look inside

and outside your immediate circles and try to include some of your key target audience to give you great insight into the things they like or dislike, how to engage with that audience sector to ensure the best possible turnout and to give you ambassadors within your target audience to help spread the word. If your event has multiple target audiences then a representative of each target audience will help you get the best results.

There is no rule to the number of people you need to create a team – it rather depends on the type of event, the scale of the event, the number of stakeholders involved in the event and whether it is a public or a private event. You can always add to the team along the way.

Team engagement

Getting your team as excited about the event you’re planning as you are is key.

Get everyone together for a brainstorming session and gather as many ideas as possible. Accept every idea at the outset as the free-flowing exchange of ideas can encourage some fabulous opportunities, experiences and results.

Before you begin the more sobering task of narrowing down the ideas, explore how could you make that most fantastic outrageous idea work, who could help you make that idea work.

Put all your ideas together and present them to your boss or whoever you need to before you get carried away with too many plans.

Once you have the go ahead, put together your event plan, what you need, when you need to have it by and who is going to do what.

Communication now becomes crucial



to keep your team, stakeholders and your authoritarians in control.

Regular updates on where you're at, what the plans are coming to fruition and what you're still working on will continue to build the buy-in.

The art of delegation

As an event planner there is a natural desire to keep the jobs you love and delegate the jobs you hate.

Break down all your tasks into manageable chunks and you will be surprised at who is willing to do what.

A good event planner will delegate a lot of the jobs they love as chances are they're the ones that everyone else likes too.

It's OK to keep some of them as you also have to be enjoying what you're doing too and for any job you hate, find a friend to do it with. It's never so bad when you're sharing the pain.

When delegating any task always try to be as clear as possible on what your team member or volunteer will be taking on. What you want them to do, the timescales needed and what outcomes they need to achieve.

It could be as simple as reporting back at the next meeting with the information required and then if there is agreement, for them to carry out the task. People are generally happy to do whatever is asked of them if they know what is expected of them.

Christmas and Summer Fairs have always been a great example of teamwork especially where the different stalls are delegated to the different year groups or classes.

Other nifty tips include a quick scout of parent emails to see who works where. Never under estimate the power of parents! They are almost always a fantastic engaged human resource.



When a child spends 5-7 years at any one school both in primary and then in secondary schools, parents usually want the best for their child.

If your event is going to enhance their child's experience at school they will go the extra mile to help make that happen.

Of course, that will not be every parent. Some are time poor, so prefer to make donations. Some are cash poor, so prefer to donate their time. Some are excellent networkers so can point you in the direction of what you might be looking for.

Some will have direct experience in tasks you're looking to fulfil and some will work for companies and organisations that may provide you with products and services.

A lot of employers will favour causes recommended by their employees and a lot of larger corporations have corporate social responsibility initiatives to incentivised by employee engagement. For example, HSBC actively encourages employee volunteering and will match raised funds or give grants for worthwhile projects.

No budget, don't worry

Events cost money! Of course they do but there are so many ways around of achieving elements of your event without it having to cost the earth. Bartering, fundraising, begging and borrowing can all generate amazing results.

Local organisations, particularly those that are targeting local residents or families, are only too happy to offer products and services in return for promotion:

- Your local flower shop may be willing to donate bunches of flowers or table decorations in return for an advert in the event programme.
- Local estate agents will pay for display advertising boards with your event on them in people's front gardens.
- The local supermarket or Off Licence / liquor store will give you goods for a hamper.
- The local printing company will often print your programme or flyers free of charge if they can have an advertisement in return.

Mufti days, where students can turn up to school out of uniform for £1 can often generate hundreds of pounds (depending on the size of your school, of course). Holding an auction at your

What events might you be involved in? Awards ceremonies, open evenings, Prom, Christmas / summer fairs, fund-raising activities...

event can often generate hundreds upon thousands of pounds.

Partnering with local community organisations such as cubs, scouts, brownies, sea cadets, football clubs, rugby clubs or even other schools can often provide you with your additional equipment requirements. Most things can be sourced. You should simply not be afraid to ask.

Nor should you be afraid to negotiate on any quotes you have received. Having always used the rule of three quotes you can more often than not negotiate down the most favoured supplier. Asking if that's the best price they can offer can also yield pleasantly surprising results.

Promoting your event

Now that the event planning is well and truly underway, take some time to think about how you are going to get your attendees to come to your event.

What promotional channels are you going to use? By now, you should already have your ambassadors who have been busy spreading the word.

There are so many other channels you can use that are low or no cost including: flyers, postcards, social media, online event sites, event

diaries, invitations, newsletters and so on.

Ensure you use a variety of mediums and regularly repeat the messages. Most people need to see things three times before they respond and make it as easy as possible to sign up.

There are so many online tools that can take a lot of the administrative work off your hands. Online ticket sites, fundraising sites, venue search sites, app builders and more.

Like clockwork

As the day of your event draws near, make sure you have your checklist of what needs to be done when.

Methodically go through your checklist each day to ensure you haven't missed anything.

Remember there are never any disasters, there are learning curves and changes of plan that happen from time to time.

More often than not, whatever we're faced with, your attendees may never need or care to know.

The most important thing is that they leave having fully enjoyed themselves and got out of the event what they needed to and you have got out that

event what you needed to. Then it's satisfaction all round.

Thank you

The most important thing of all is to remember to thank everyone who was involved in the event in whatever way, whether they were a sponsor, donor, fundraiser, volunteer, supplier, visitor, benefactor or in any other way.

Letting everyone know how their involvement made the world of difference to your event engenders goodwill for the next time.

Ask for feedback and testimonials – as an event planner you will learn more from what didn't go so well than from what did work. Constructive criticism is incredibly powerful to institute change and do things even better next time.

Hopefully, you will have enjoyed the experience so much that there will be many next times.

If you would like any guidance or suggestions on any events you are organising feel free to ask the author, Ingrid van der Weide, by emailing ingrid@4mgsolutions.co.uk.





Bravery is: Managing your relationship

This article is a chapter from Angela Garry's book "Brave PAs: the ultimate guide to being outstanding in a tough job" - the only professional development book for PAs, EAs, Secretaries and Admins working in education.

Bravery is: Managing your working relationship with your boss.

You need to be behind what your boss stands for. Not every single little tiny thing. You can never be that sure of everything they do.

I mean *most* things— the fundamentals – what they stand for, what they believe in, what their aims and goals are for the school, what their vision is for the future of the college, what changes and innovations they want to bring to the university.

You need to support, respect and

believe in your Head teacher or Principal and what they do. If you aren't in agreement with what they are working to achieve, then I'm afraid you are working in the wrong job.

How could you possibly provide the best support to someone if you aren't behind them on what they do?

If you find that you only believe in half of what they do, then you must be spending 50% of your time disagreeing with them.

That's not going to be conducive to a good relationship or to providing excellent support for them – so my rule of thumb is that you need to believe in your boss for at least 75% of what they say and do.

In order to provide the best support possible to your boss, you need to believe in them, and by doing this, you can develop a fantastic working relationship with them.

This doesn't mean you are going to be 'best buds', but it does mean that you trust each other wholeheartedly and each understands the other.

The four relationship types

There are four main stages to your working relationship with your boss.

1. Telling relationship

This generally occurs in the early stages of your role, and also in some junior roles, although there are some managers who continue in this vein for much longer.

During this phase, your manager will tell you things: they will look at a situation, make a decision, share the outcome with you and tell you what they need you to do.

It is a necessary phase as it informs you of what is needed, to what standard and when. However, it's a stage that you can, and should, grow out of – after a while you should be developing these skills and decision-making processes for yourself.

Once you have moved beyond the telling relationship stage, it can feel quite strange to return to it if you change jobs because you will have started to manage your own

workload more.

I experienced the telling relationship stage not only early on in my career – but also when I moved country in 2000 and took a temporary contract at one firm where I was one of a team of four PAs, one of whom had been appointed as the Senior PA.

Regardless of our level of experience, she insisted on doling out work to each of us, piecemeal and telling us in great depth what to do with each task. To me, this felt very restrictive and I believe it's a working relationship stage that you can – and should – grow out of.

2. Explaining relationship

This is a little further into your working relationship when your manager trusts you and has taken you into their confidence, so they will start to explain to you why they have made certain decisions.

This builds your relationship to a more detailed level, giving you much more of an understanding of what is required in your role,

including the whys and the wherefores, rather than just being informed that something needs to be done.

This can prove very useful when working on a new task or project, when your manager needs additional commitment from you or when they want you on their side to assist in 'selling' an idea to other staff.

This can be a great phase to go through: you will learn a great deal when your boss explains what they mean, how they are thinking and the bigger picture as to where things are going. It's the perfect environment for you to look at your own skills and see what you need to improve in order to fit with the information and understanding that you are now gaining of the organisation.

As your working relationship with your manager develops further, it's important that you keep asking questions, finding out more and learning in greater detail. This is what will set you apart from the other administrators in your

school, college or university, and because you are continually learning about the institution and how your role can make a difference.

I've had some great explaining stages with some of my bosses – helping me to really get to grips with the whys and wherefores of the organisation, and learning how I could make a difference.

It's then what you do with this knowledge that helps you move on to the next relationship stage...

3. Consulting relationship

This stage brings together the best elements of both you and your manager. It is when they start asking you for your thoughts on various issues, and you make joint decisions between you.

Reaching this stage with your manager shows that they hold you in great trust, recognise your expertise in what you do and believe that you are working with them in partnership

I spent over five years in my most recent role – and for the first year my relationship with my boss was at this consulting stage, before growing further.

What I had to say counted for something – and that really mattered to me. It felt really liberating, and the working relationship that we had grew from there, into what I felt was a real business partnership.

4. Empowering relationship

This is when your manager empowers you to take free rein over what you do and how you handle situations, allowing you to make necessary decisions without consulting them.

This requires complete trust on both sides of the working relationship. Your manager has confidence that you have the skills and abilities to handle this level of



additional responsibility, and faith that you will represent them and speak on their behalf in the mannerisms and style that they need you to.

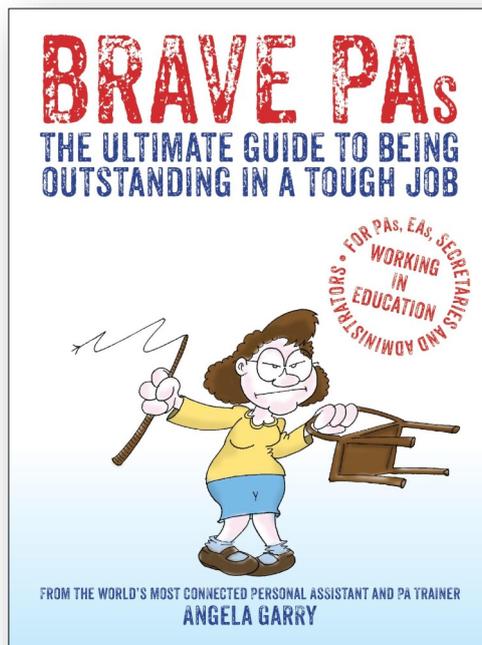
I've reached the 'empowering' level of working relationship with four of my managers throughout my career (the two CEOs during my four years at an international seaport, a Deputy Vice Chancellor at a university, and the Principal of the Academy) and in each of those roles I felt an enormous sense of satisfaction about my work, the level of responsibility that I held, the recognition that I received for it, and the value in which I was held by my manager.

It's a remarkable feeling, and something to really build towards.

It is vital that you see your working relationship with your manager as a two-way street. Whilst you should be aiming to have an empowering relationship with them, the other side of having a great relationship with your Head teacher, Principal or Director requires that you need to have the courage to speak freely to them on important matters – and not just that they offer you the space to speak.

Of course, if you tell your boss something they don't want to hear, they may not want to listen to you. But if you broach the subject with them sensitively, by starting with something along the lines of, 'There's something that I think you need to be aware of ...' or 'May I tell you how I see something?' they are more likely to be receptive of your words.

From my work with PAs in schools worldwide, I've gathered lots of hints on how to improve your working relationships with your Head teachers and principals in order to better manage how you work together.



Brave tips for managing your manager

- **Empathising**

Put yourself in your Head teacher's position for a moment: if someone booked back-to-back meetings for you for an entire day, how would you feel at the end of the day? You will (a) no doubt be exhausted by the end of the day but also (b) you will have had no time to action anything, make phone calls, send emails or pass to your PA any details of work that has come out of those meetings.

So, empathise with your Head teacher and think about giving them a couple of short 'breathing space' gaps during the day to allow for this. This also provides a buffer for any meetings that overrun slightly, without kicking the rest of the day's schedule off-kilter.

Your Head teacher may say they don't need these gaps, but believe me, once they've got used to having them, they will realise how much they need them to get things done in-between meetings! And for your part, the better you can get to know your Head's role, the more you can just go ahead and

make the appropriate things happen without them having to tell you about them, because you have learned to anticipate what's needed.

- **Respecting each other**

As I've said, it's vital that you support, respect and believe in your Head teacher or Principal and what they do. Without this, how can you build rapport and support them in running the school or college? Everyone needs some feedback every now and again, so if you respect them, honour what they say, believe in them or find them inspirational, let them know it!

My office was next door to the Principal's office, so he walked through my room to get to his. If I had a visitor in my office and my Principal came through to go to his room, I would always introduce them to each other, adding (about the Principal), 'He's the most inspiring person I've ever worked for.' It was a completely true statement, and I didn't feel at all embarrassed saying it. 'Give credit where credit is due!', I say!

- **If in doubt, ask**

If you are unsure about something your Head teacher has said, ask them for more information. And if, after they have given some more information, you are still in doubt, ask again – ask for it from a different angle so that you can understand how best to support them. You can help your Head teacher to be more successful by asking thoughtful questions to clarify issues. Never assume and end up making a poor decision because you haven't taken the time or effort or were too embarrassed to get the right information. Remember, you are working in a place of learning, and your Head teacher is trained in disseminating information, so they

should be able to explain something in a different way for you if you are unsure from their first explanation, and they should welcome that you are checking with them when you are unsure.

• **Become a manager yourself**

As the Head's PA you are in a prime position to develop your own role into that of a manager – working with the school or college's admin team.

Ask your Head teacher to recommend some leadership and management books and to point you in the direction of useful

articles.

Consider attending professional development workshops or seminars that could help you to build your leadership skills.

Demonstrate to your Head teacher that you would like to learn from them how to lead, emphasising that you can help instil their values and ideals in the admin team based on your close working relationship.

Not only does this then mean that the whole team will be working more cohesively, with the same aims, objectives and goals as the Head teacher, but it also

demonstrates your competence and your commitment to making the school the best it can be.

“Brave PAs: the ultimate guide to being outstanding in a tough job” is available from Amazon.

Signed copies can be ordered direct for £12 inc. P&P for NAHPA readers. To order, send a cheque to the address at foot of page 2, or email editor@nahpa.org.uk for details on how to pay by invoice or credit / debit card.



Your school's chance to celebrate you!

As a PA or administrator in a school, you are absolutely vital in the success of your school. You, your teaching assistant colleagues, and all of the other support staff in your school, you all ensure that the Headteacher and the teaching staff are able to go about their daily business of educating the children of our future.

UK-based union UNISON are holding a special day to celebrate the importance of school support staff. This will be taking place on Friday 25 November 2016, from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm.

MARK IT IN YOUR DIARY!

‘Stars In Our Schools’ is set to take place in schools across the UK. Unison say *“It takes a whole team to make a school a safe and happy place for children to learn. School support staff help children learn, keep children safe and healthy and make sure schools run smoothly. They are the caterers, the admin staff, the finance officers, the teaching assistants, the librarians, the ICT technicians, the parent support advisers, and more. The unsung heroes.”*

Schools will be holding award

ceremonies, special assemblies and tea parties in schools across the UK to say thank you to support staff for all they do.

To find out more information about how your school can be involved and what you can do to celebrate both your own role and those of your colleagues, there are details available at www.starsinourschools.uk.

And for those of our subscribers who are not in the UK, why not find a way for your school to be involved in your own version of “Stars in our Schools”, and help to make it a global initiative?



Photo: Nasreen Nanji with NAHPA Editor Angela Garry

face include giving priority to the job in hand over other tasks that may be pending from the previous day. In addition, sometimes colleagues view their job as urgent while my supervisor has set other priorities for me. At times, liaising with internal departments and following up to complete the work can be challenging as well ensuring that the work progresses according to the established targets and timelines. Finally, managing visitors who arrive without appointments can be a big challenge.

What are the difficulties / challenges facing your school and how does the school address these?

We are lucky in that the school is very supportive and does not face challenges such as low employment and low literacy amongst the community we serve. Being an international school, we are prone to having community members moving on more frequently than if we were a state school because international teachers are able to take up assignments in other countries and they enjoy having the opportunity to work in a variety of cultures. The school faces this challenge of a transient population by documenting policies and procedures. In fact, part of my work is supporting this documentation and serving as a resource for people who are new to our community.

What are the positive influences – where and how do your pupils benefit from those outside the school?

We have a very active parent community who are supportive of creating a fantastic learning environment for the students. Some parents take up volunteer roles on the

Our featured PA / Admin

For this issue's feature, NAHPA went to Nairobi, Kenya! Editor Angela Garry met Nasreen Nanji at a professional development event for international school admin staff.

Nasreen works at the International School of Tanganyika in Tanzania.

NAHPA: Hi Nasreen. Welcome! Could you give us some information about your job please?

Nasreen: I have been working at the International School of Tanganyika (IST) as the Executive Secretary to the Director since January 2009. IST, established in 1963, is a private, not-for-profit co-educational day school that offers a full educational programme for pupils from early childhood (age 3) to pre-university.

The school has two campuses: an Elementary Campus serving students from age 3 to Grade 5 and a Secondary Campus serving students from Grades 6 to 12. The student body is made up of more than 1000 students representing more than 60 nationalities. IST offers the rigorous International Baccalaureate in addition to an extensive after school activities programme.

We're all aware that the role of Head's PA / School Secretary is incredibly varied, with no day tending to be the same as the next. What are the challenges that you currently face in staying on top in your role?

Every person faces challenges in his / her role that he/she needs to overcome and that's all part of having a job. Some of the challenges that I



International School of Tanganyika
Challenge | Support | Inspire

school board while others volunteer in the parent networks to coordinate events such as talent shows, the Global Issues Service Summit and International Day that are well received by the students and the entire community.

What is the most important thing you have learned within your role?

The diversity of the community helps us all to understand each other and to learn about others' points of view. For example, I have the chance to help others learn about my culture and they, in turn, help me to learn about their traditions and culture. Often, we find we have more similarities than differences. In my role, in addition to the IT and operational skills I have mastered, I have learned a lot about how to address people and keep their concerns in mind to help improve our school's attention to customer service. The soft skills, such as being polite, friendly and approachable, are essential in my role.

How do you see your role developing in the next two or three years?

In the coming year, my role will expand to offer additional support to our human resources department as well collecting data for reports for



various key performance indicators.

Imagine the scenario – you have won a competition and are being whisked off for an all-expenses paid holiday with your loved ones on Monday for two whole weeks, with no access to the internet or phone (so no chance of communication with your office). There isn't another member of staff available to cover your role for the full two weeks, but your Headteacher agrees that this is a holiday opportunity of a lifetime so gives you the OK to go. What THREE aspects of your role simply MUST be

carried in your absence by one of your colleagues?

In my absence, I must ensure that my emails are checked daily and acted upon as required, that my supervisor's calendar is maintained and updated daily, and that urgent items are delivered to my supervisor for action on a sometimes hourly basis.

Finally, what are you most proud of in your role?

I am proud that one of the groups I headed for our school's Kaizen programme received the best leader award. This was an honour because my group included people from departments whom I don't normally work with and hence did not have a strong working relationship with before the group was formed.

Nasreen Nanji is Executive Secretary in the Director's Office at the International School of Tanganyika, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

If you are interested in being a featured PA / Secretary / Administrator in a future issue, please get in touch!

Photo: Nasreen Nanji with her Director, Martin J Hall





Secret PA confessions



Tying in with our piece on difficult conversations, in this new 'Secret PA' feature one NAHPA reader has got in touch to share her story of working with a staff member who refused to accept her authority.

"When I was still fairly fresh out of University (in my mid-20s), I was employed as a PA in a large school where I was put in charge of the admin office and two other secretarial staff – one full-time, one part-time. Both secretaries were female and both were substantially older than I was – in their mid-to-late 50s. The full-timer (let's call her Beryl) absolutely, point-blank and to-my-face, refused to accept that I had any authority over her whatsoever.

She refused to do work that I gave her. She refused to listen to me when I explained that I had been employed to run the office and to be in charge of the team. She shouted me down when I queried what she was doing or how she was doing something.

She kept moaning "I'm a proper secretary, these idiots don't know what they're doing" - referring to the leadership of the school and their requests for her to undertake items of work which I soon realised she was incapable of.

She basically bullied the other staff into NOT giving her difficult items of

work to do—and had got away with this for many years at the school before I was appointed.

I tried cajoling her. I tried reasoning with her. I offered training. I tried telling her she was being difficult and that she was making it hard for me to run the office in the way in which I had been appointed.

I took it higher and spoke with our HR manager, asking for clarification and their guidance on what to do. Unfortunately for me, it turned out that all the staff were terrified of this woman – and one of the leadership team subsequently let it slip to me that they had specifically appointed me to try to manage her, thinking that maybe a younger person such as I might be able to turn her around in the few years she had remaining before retirement.

They said they could back me up, but only to a certain extent: it was down to me to work out how to work with her. In short, it was a nightmare time for me – much as I loved the job and the people I worked with, I found it very difficult to deal with Beryl.

Finally, one afternoon I snapped and said "I've had enough of this, Beryl. You are acting extremely unprofessionally—how can you

possibly keep banging on and saying about yourself that you're a 'proper secretary' when you act like a child, refusing to move with the times and hiding your own inadequacies behind shouting and bullying?"

This seemed to be the only thing that got through to her. It felt brutal but it was all I could do at the time. She took a few days off to rethink her position, and six months later she left.

This all happened just over ten years ago when I was in my first role where I was in charge of staff, and I'd had no management training. Was I right? Was I wrong? What else could I have done? I've always wondered. I haven't had a similar situation since, so I still don't know! How do any NAHPA readers deal with a staff member on their team who will not accept their authority?"

How would you have handled this situation and how would you have advised this issue's Secret PA? Send thoughts to editor@nahpa.org.uk

If you'd like to be a Secret PA and share a story from any area of your experience of working in a PA / admin role in a school, please get in touch. Names and details will be kept anonymous 'to protect the innocent'.



Working with two difficult groups

As a PA, Secretary or Administrator in a school environment, it is inevitable that you will be spending time in the company of two of the most challenging groups of people in ANY environment: pupils and their parents.

For those of you who are settled into your role, you may feel that you deal with this challenge easily – but was it always so?

When you first arrived at your school you may not have worked with either group before. Experience and knowledge comes with time – but what can a brand-new-in-post PA or admin do to build that experience quickly?

Here are some tips and experiences collected from some NAHPA readers:

Working with schoolchildren

- “I was an only child growing up, and we didn’t live near any other members of my family, so there were no cousins or kids around

apart from my school friends. This is my first job since I graduated and I’ve been here ten years now. None of my friends had had kids yet – so this was my first experience of being in a ‘looking after children’ role of any sort. In the early days of my job, if I was unsure how to deal with a child who had been sent to me, I did whatever I could at the time—and then as soon as I could afterwards, I asked my Headteacher what she would have preferred me to do. I asked her what sort of language she’d have liked me to have used, what sort of responses she’d have liked me to give, and how I could best represent her to the pupils. My job was to be an extension of her, so I needed to learn to work with the children in the same sort of ways that she would. She was happy with this approach and helped me enormously in building my confidence in working with children.”

- “Whenever a child has been sent to my office to see the Head, about 9 times of 10, he’s in a meeting so I’ve had to deal with

the child til he’s free. This is where you need to have a spare chair and some table space in your room or wherever it is that you work, so they can sit down. Give them pen and paper, ask them to write what has happened that has caused them to be sent to you. Or give them a book to work through—maybe ask your Maths and English departments to give you a couple of spare textbooks to keep on your shelf.”

- “I work in a primary school now, and have previously worked in a secondary school, and the two are very different. I’ve found the pupils in secondary more easy to reason with, whilst some littler children can be inconsolable at times when something has upset them: I’ve felt more of a ‘surrogate parent’ to them at times. Maybe I’ve become more motherly after having worked with older pupils for a few years, or maybe I just pity the little ones more when they come to me upset about something, I don’t know, but it seems to ‘get’ to me at a different level than it used to with the bigger kids. It’s a small

primary school and I'm a first aider so I have lots of pupils come to me all the time with aches and pains and scratches and cuts and bruises, and it breaks my heart seeing a little child crying in pain or upset. But I don't feel I can be tougher on them, even though I was with the pupils at the secondary school I worked out before."

- "Sometimes, I've had crying children come to me for help. A good way to deal with this is to ask them their name and year group, then say "sit there a minute, I'll be straight back, I just have to deliver something next door, then I'll be back with you." Then dash next door to another office or to reception, and ask them to track down the child's mentor or Head of Year or someone else who can casually "drop by" your office and help out as quickly as possible. You then go back to the child and spend your time calming them down a bit, give them some sympathy and a tissue, encourage them to focus on their breathing. I've said "I have a couple of really useful yoga techniques for when I'm upset" and then teach them to breathe in for four, hold it for seven, and breathe out for eight—then repeat.

This change in breathing (and the resulting change in oxygen reaching their brain) should calm them down fairly quickly, plus it gives them something to focus on rather than whatever it was that's upset them. With luck, the help you've called for will turn up soon. If not, give the child a pen and paper, and like the naughty pupil, ask them to write down what happened. This keeps you out of the argument / incident, and will be useful for their mentor / Year Head etc., for sorting things out when they arrive."

Working with parents

- "In my school I've noticed a marked change in the way parents think about their children's education. It used to be really important to them when I started here in 1998 and they'd study with the child at home—but now there are so many electronic babysitting devices (phones, tablets, laptops, social media, TV,) that parents seem to spend less time helping their children to study now and their expectations of the school have changed. They seem to think it's the school that has to do more now, even though we're already working harder than ever, and many parents don't seem to see their children's learning as partially their responsibility too. I spend a lot of my time taking calls from angry parents who feel that the school is failing their child, but I've noticed that when I attend to take minutes in their meetings with the Head, they don't seem to do anywhere near as much with their children in evenings, weekends, school holidays to encourage their learning. It's almost like the newer parents feel that they are absolved from that side of things."
- "I started working here just over a year ago, my first job in a school. When I came for the interview, the Headteacher asked what I knew of working with parents, and I said I would treat them all the same, firmly and professionally and calmly. He laughed at this—and said "Oh, if only that were possible!". Now I know what he meant. Yes, I can be like that with all of the people I come into contact with, but each family also needs something different that suits them. Some need a quieter tone of voice, or a motherly attitude from me. Others need me to be extremely business-like and matter-of-fact. I deal with some of our Admissions

and that's an eye-opener, as it shows me a whole other side of some parents. I've had some mums crying in my office, begging for a place for their child when there was absolutely nothing I could do—the year group for their child was full, there was a waiting list, there was no chance of a space—and I've just had to be sympathetic and tell them we can't help. I've had a couple of families offer me money to 'sort things out quietly' - the first time this happened the Head was in her office next door and overheard, and she came storming into my room and gave the parents 'what for'. That was really useful—I made note of some of the things she told them. I'm not as firm as she is, but I still get the points across if anyone else tries the same. I think that's one great thing about working here—I've learnt a new method of dealing with something almost every week!"

- "Parents at our school are paying a lot of money for their child to be educated, so quite naturally when they phone in or come to visit the school they often feel that their child is the most important child in the school. International School parents can be really pushy and very insistent, particularly those from certain cultures. You get to notice this as times goes by. It's good to see that they are so concerned about their children's education, but it can make things difficult if you have a parent who phones in constantly, or keeps visiting the building at almost every opportunity."
- "It's a major part of my job, meeting and talking with parents. I'm their route to the Principal, and it's important for him that I can protect his time—so in his first meeting with any group of parents he always makes a point of bringing me into the meeting. He tells the parents - "This is my assistant. I trust her with

everything in this school. If you need me, if you want to talk to me, or if you want me to know something—tell her first. She will deal with almost everything for you on my behalf. She has my full authority and backing to do so and I trust her fully. I want you to trust her too. There are times when I will be out and about, or in meetings—but she will pretty much always be around during the day—so she should be your first point of call if you need to reach me.” This usually goes over quite well, and the mums in particular then befriend me a bit, to try to make sure their child gets the best care in our school. Occasionally a parent will sidestep this and will try to ambush the Principal in Reception—but he will always walk them to my office and leave them with me to deal with whatever they are concerned

about. Then the next time they come in, they come straight to me, as they know that he’ll do the same again, so it makes it easier for me to work with them. And do you know what? Hearing the Principal tell someone he trusts me so much, on so many occasions, has really boosted my confidence—I feel that I can take on almost any problem or find a route towards solving things that I never could have done when I started working here.”

- “I’m still learning to handle parents at our school. Sometimes it feel like the Head and I are a team-working with them: he takes on the dads, I take the mums. I’m more confident talking with the mums at the moment, maybe it’s

a female thing. I still feel a bit intimidated by some of the dads when they phone in or visit. But I’m working on it. It’s all new learning. I’m in my second year as a school PA, having come from a corporate background before, where I never came into contact with customers or shareholders, so having parents actually phone or visit, not just write in, is still pretty new to me. I know the friends I have who work in PA roles in big organisations are horrified at the idea of having a customer suddenly turn up in their office, angry and irate, or upset and worried. It just doesn’t happen in business environments! I love that we have contact with the pupils’ families, even if I’m still finding my way in talking with the dads.”

If you’d like to be part of our new Readers’ Advisory Panel who we might contact on certain topics, please get in touch!

The PA cartoon

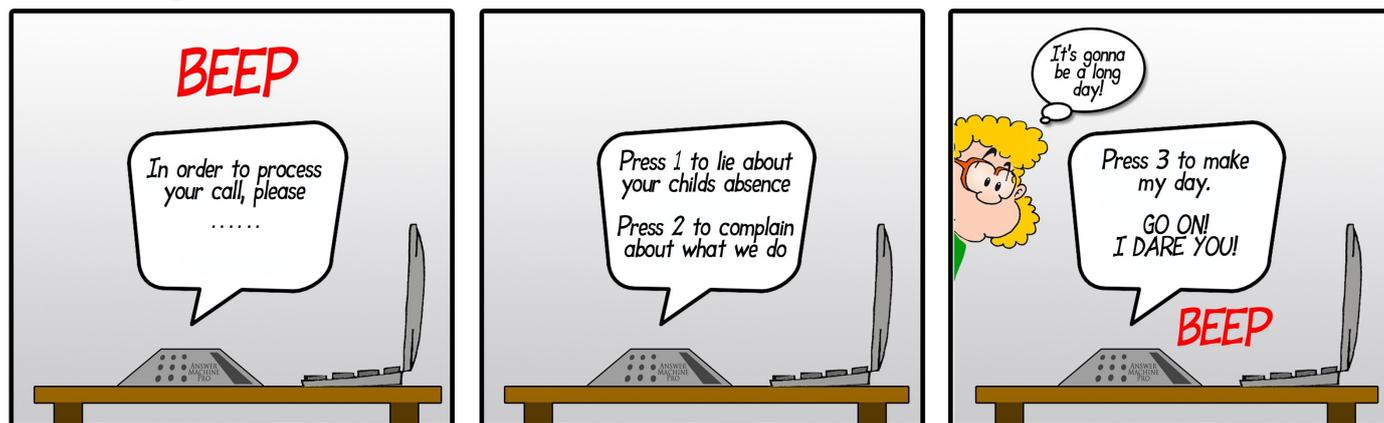
Here’s the latest in our series on the life and times of the Head’s PA, by talented teacher and illustrator Andy Case. This time: the Head’s changed the voicemail system...

Andy Case

Studios

andycasestudios@gmail.com

God’s Right Hand by Andy Case





The future for school admissions

As part of your role, are you involved in Admissions for your school? Claire Sarris shares her innovative thoughts on looking at the admissions process in a different way, and the future for Admissions.

As I further push on into my (loud cough) 30-somethingness and have more than a demi second to contemplate life, I have begun to recognise and partially accept that I may be regarded as a living contradiction. Why? Well, thanks to the constant presence of social media in my life, I have a tendency to 'publicly' state one thing and then say or do something that completely dispels my mantra and allows others to do that thing we all do in private: judge.

For example, I really do not like shopping. At all. I find the whole process incredibly tedious and actually

quite stressful. I do, on the other hand, love to invest in a 'positive purchase' (PP) or nine. Now, to make this very clear from the outset, this is not shopping. No. 'Positive purchasing' is that good old friend that offers that kick of contentment and that shot of satisfaction when you are buying into something that you desire, that you deserve, that you trust and will remain loyal. 'Positive purchases' will infinitely improve your existence.

In a day and age where the 'consumer experience' is scored, analysed and measured within an inch of its life, it got my old grey matter ticking over about my own 9 to 5. During a recent 'PP', I was alerted to a prestigious brand that 'levy' their staff to the sum of £100 from their salary, every time they score less than a 8/10 in a mandatory customer feedback survey but outlay a £50 performance bonus when a 9 or 10 is achieved. If I worked for this noted brand, where customer experience feedback is 'profitable or

penalising', in my role as a Transition Coordinator within an 'improving' secondary academy, would I be paying my employer each month or would my employer be paying me?

The word 'Pan' in my world before September 2014 would have been preceded with the words 'frying', 'sauce' or 'Peter'. When responsible for the transfer of primary pupils to secondary education, you soon learn that 'PAN' is an acronym for 'Predicted Admission Numbers'. These three little words are normally represented by numerical digits – a statistic which a Head Teacher will first look for on the publication of the school offers list.

Ultimately, the 'PAN' gleans two very significant pieces information for a school:

- 1) how many students you are to expect in a cohort during the next academic year and
- 2) how much money your school will be receiving for those students. Ch-ching!

In an era of perpetual cuts and austerity in all public services, this bears great implication to budget forecasts, staffing levels and so forth. Therefore, the 'sell' of any educational brand is essential from the outset. You must go forth and 'retail the details'; market the ethos and highlight the USP of the organisation to a varied but potentially profitable marketplace.

With the imminent grey cloud of 'complete academisation' within the English education system looming, slick profit making education trusts brandish their 'autonomy to rule' over the Local Authority—asauruses, who are regarded as dusty, archaic, prehistoric in policy and approach.

Parents and carers are outfitted with OFSTED judgments, league tables and a cascade of educational reports to ponder when choosing the right school for their child.

The catchment battles ensue, with some academies resorting to polished advertising on the side of public transport, high resolution flash-interfaced websites, wristbands, bags, taster days, phone apps, all in the name of high value branding, beating their competitor and raising the schools appeal in their catchment market and beyond.

There always has been and always will be those schools associated with success, achievement, discipline and so forth. In most cases, quite rightly so, a good school with quality teaching and strong leadership, where a solid reputation rather than results can raise the value of property within a postcode boundary.

As with every coin, you have the heads and you have the tails – there are schools that sit in low aspirational communities with a poor educational track records, regarded as underachieving, underperforming, failing and often unfairly mistaken as solely poor.

I believe good teachers and more importantly, proactive students are found within all schools; caring parents

with high aspirations for their children, regardless of social background or educational attainment exist.

Academisation was introduced to address failure and to equip schools with more self-regulation away from regional control. Now, amidst the perpetual policy change that serves our system no favours, all schools are now required to academise by 2020, regardless of a school's OFSTED status.

We must ask 'how do we ensure that there is a mutual 'positive purchase' occurring between school and student?' "How do we ensure that admissions into any school are fair, transparent and non-selective?" Will the 'try before you buy' market become more and more competitive and will this make the whole process detached, stressful and misleading for families?

What matters are the foundations and everybody's foundations vary. Most recently, having spent a lifetime in professional rentals, I became a proper grown up (or that's what I have been told I have to legally refer to myself as!) and scoured the property market to buy my first marital home. Yep, the ultimate positive purchase that you "will be paying for, for the rest of your days, so choose wisely and do some homework." Those flippant words from my old dad over Sunday lunch still echo in my ear today.

This major life transition was a mere expectation to most but secretly; I was petrified: "what if I got it wrong?" "what if I made a mistake?", "what if I my neighbours didn't like me?". I mean, I knew I had a budget, certain practical specifications and the support of a savvy husband but really, I'd never had a mortgage before and solely undertaking the 'affordability checks' at my bank made me cry tears from the palms of my hands.

I'd never liaised or employed a surveyor, structural engineer or a solicitor and honestly, other than a generic but limited understanding of their roles within society, I didn't have

the foggiest what they did or more importantly, what they would do for me. When I tentatively brought this up with my peers who had already seemingly 'skipped' onto "the ladder of doom", this was spoken about as a measly step in a normal process that was beginning to keep me awake at night. The positive purchase of a 'dream home' became an isolated nightmare in my head that I began to avoid. Ignore. Alternate positive purchases were sought and bought (no shopping involved!) and if putting my fingers in my ears were the solution, I was already wrist deep!!

Now, relate my story to that of a primary pupil contemplating secondary school or a parent trying to 'Keep up with the Joneses' rather than objectively consider the right school for their child.

The fear of the unknown is a powerful thing and I have witnessed time after time the dual mirrored anxiety of student and parent, immersed in SATS preparation and taking their eye off of the imminent life change ahead of them. It is easily done.

Like the purchasing of property, school admissions can be a long-winded, waiting game of cat and mouse. You view in September, apply in October, receive an offer the following March and then your child will most probably start their new school in the following September (although increasingly, more schools are now starting their Year 7 cohort in the July of the academic year).

The current application process from primary to secondary education is an essential yet disjointed and detached bureaucratic system that involves parents, pupils, schools and admission authorities. Many schools now offer a programme of 'Open Events' from school tours, taster days and activity evenings and these can begin in some schools as early as Year 4, during the summer term. Parents and students are enticed into foreign buildings to sample school dinners, perform daring scientific experiments and have a

staged cuppa with a prefect. Parent visits and tours into our schools have proved a fascinating learning curve and eye opener; discovering the fundamental expectations and concerns of the third partner in a school-student triangle, that will ultimately result in a decision to shape their child's future.

I have stood with the biggest smile, clutching forms and marketing materials in the glass reception of my own school campus, where I have meaningfully morphed into a super synergized 'Agent of Transfer'. I am an educational agent, mediator, solicitor, negotiator and counsellor, all rolled into one.

I have become that very person I craved during my own positive life purchase: I am the one who 'sells' but supports; who demonstrates that it is okay not to fully understand, it is OK to question things, and there is no such thing as a stupid question in this game. I would rather the question be asked than not at all and it is my responsibility to create an approach and environment to allow parents and pupils to do this.

It is my responsibility to translate the vision and ethos of the school; the 'essential' behaviour, pastoral and

academic policies – but to contextualise that with personality, care and attention. I want the purchase of a school place only to be positive. Like buying my house, I understand the importance of details and data – and the need to marry this with instinct and emotion. When I first walked up to my new home, I knew it was the one. In the pit of my stomach, it was for me, albeit the most expensive property on our 'to view list': but we had to make it work. In an era of allegations of 'exam factories' and outcome only agendas, it is important for pupils and parents to feel comfortable with their learning partner: grades, like the small print, signify achievement and progress but to be able to apply these in life, the school 'home' must also accommodate the development of character, resilience and passion.

And as I sit and text my interior designer, I am continually learning, changing my plans with my own nest. It is our relationships with the various 'experts'; plumbers, builders, designers that matter – and in the school context, the teachers, the support staff who constantly 'assess and improve' to bolster student

progress, as you would within a house.

With everything in life, there are strengths and there are weaknesses. It is how you develop the relationships with these experts that is key to consolidating improvements, along with the investment of time and care.

As noted in the recent OFSTED report 'Key Stage 3: The Wasted Years', it is fundamental to ensure that there is consistency and parity in the academic and pastoral transfer of any child through the primary-secondary educational stage. All parties involved with such a significant purchase hold a responsibility to ensure that a student is 'secondary ready'.

My advice for anyone looking into the Admissions at any school would be: yes, use the 'Right Moves' of the world; websites and glossy brochures paint a good picture, but go and seek out 'the Agent of Transfer' at the school. Ask questions, get a gut feeling and create a relationship with your new school as soon as you can.

At a recent education conference in my city, I was congratulated for a full 'PAN' pre-admission for the 2016-2017 cohort (there were only 4 schools in my city who achieved this; 3 marked as Outstanding and 1 that has just come out of Special Measures). The secret? Simply, people matter; from the pupils to the parents to the teachers. The investment in people will build the reputation of a school that will prove stronger than any other brand value.

Now, I wonder if my boss will be open to a £50 performance bonus for me this month? – I have a few positive purchases to make!

Claire Sarris was responsible for the transition arrangements and admissions at a 11-18 secondary Academy in the East Midlands and is about to take up a new role at Groundwork Greater Nottingham as Lead Fundraising and Development Officer, where she'll continue working with children and young people throughout the region.



Are you and your colleagues aware that there are such things as “secret apps” out there, which your pupils might be using on their phones? When investigating cyber-bullying in school, look out for these!

As if life wasn't scary enough for parents and teachers, here is another issue to look for and monitor!

Secret phone apps have been a hot topic in the news lately about school students, and they are definitely something that need to be brought into the awareness of those working with them.

The applications are not necessarily new, but the technology is constantly advancing.

Private photo vault applications on smart phones can have the appearance of very basic images such as calculators and calendars. Once you open the application, you can enter a secret code or two, and this is where the dark side of smart phones can begin.

Hidden images that students would not want their parents to see are being stored and shared by students. Students think these pictures are hidden on the apps, but there is nothing to say that the developers of these apps could not expose the pictures.

These types of news stories have headlined nationally over the past year and are raising major concerns.

How can school staff and parents spot these vault applications, as most are seemingly rated 'E' for



Secret Phone Apps

everyone? Look for multiple versions of the same app on a child's phone. The most common is the calculator app. Also, check the child's phone history for new app downloads and then search the app with a Google search to understand its content.

Teenagers love similar applications that may be more familiar such as Snapchat, Kik, and Whisper. Again, these are all popular trending applications where messages seem to disappear after a certain timeframe—but do they really? A helpful article is at <https://www.common sense media.org/blog/snapchat-kik-and-6-more-iffy-messaging-apps-teens-love>. The article not only explains several trending applications, but offers very helpful information regarding each application, and outlining what parents and teachers need

to know.

You might like to pass the following helpful hints to parents and carers (although they are most likely easier said than done!):

- Don't let your children take their phones to bed with them at night.
- Don't let them have a phone without parental supervision.
- If your child uses a family computer, keep it in the open, and under supervision.

Again, this is obviously not an easy subject matter, but it's one that can even lead to severe legal penalties to the students and their parents. These types of things may not be the easiest to monitor or catch, but at least you have a few more clues on what to discuss openly with your children. Open communication may prevent the issue from even beginning .



ICT: tips for Microsoft Outlook

Microsoft report that only around 35% of features in their packages are regularly used. NAHPA's IT guru Tandy Hanff gives some top tips that you might not be aware about, which can help speed your work processes.

Microsoft Outlook is an incredible piece of software for managing email, tasks, calendars and meeting invitations for ourselves and our bosses – and sometimes there can be simply so many messages that it can seem that we spend all day dipping in and out of our inboxes. Shortcuts can help speed your working with the software – so here are some of the best short-cuts that you might not know are available.

AUTOMATING

- If you find yourself regularly performing a particular task then Quick Steps can save you time. You'll find a set of predefined Quick Steps in the middle of the Home tab, but you can also programme your own Quick steps. Click the drop-down arrow > New Quick Step to create a customary programme that can

categorise, move, flag and delete messages with a single click.

- If you regularly write the same text you can save it as a Quick Part for easy insertion into your emails. Simply highlight the text in the composer window, then switch to the Insert tab > Quick Parts > Save selection to Quick Parts gallery. In future, when you start typing the phrase, you'll see it pop up as a suggestion – hit return to insert it in full.
- To move messages that don't directly relate to you (that you have only been CC'd into) go to Rules > New Rules.... Then click the "Advanced Options" button. In the Rules Wizard, select "where my name is not in the To box" and then in the next screen, "move it to the specified folder."

CALENDAR TIPS

- Archive appointments you no longer need by changing calendar properties and setting up AutoArchive: right-click your calendar > AutoArchive > Default Archive Settings > Apply > OK.
- If you often need to view the calendars of everyone on your team at the same time, you can create a calendar group. Begin by clicking Calendar. Then, in the Manage Calendars group of the Home tab, click Calendar Groups >

Create New Calendar Group > enter the name of the group > OK. Select the names of the contacts you want to add to the group > Group Members > OK.

- Outlook can automatically add public holidays to your calendar and it has nearly 100 different locations to choose from so it is well worth putting these in if you work closely with offices in other locations. To add public holidays go to Options > Calendar > Add Holidays, and choose the countries that you are working with.
- To add a second time zone to your calendar go to Options > Calendar > Time zones > Show a second time zone. This is great if you are setting up meetings with different countries on a regular basis.
- To create a recurring meeting invitation for colleagues or internal employees at your company, click Appointments. In the box that appears, enter the recipients to the meeting, the meeting name, text that you always want to appear in the message body and anything else that might be relevant. Save it as an Outlook Template. To retrieve your saved templates go to New Items > More Items > New Form. Under Look In select User

Templates in File System. Here you will find your saved templates.

- To keep a declined meeting for your records or to keep it in your calendar you may Copy and Paste this meeting (Ctrl+C, Ctrl+V), decline the original meeting and keep the copy.
- To move emails to a calendar appointment Right click on the relevant email and select Move from the drop-down menu, click on Calendar and this will open up a new appointment in your diary containing the relevant email.

COLOUR CODING

- If you want to highlight your Executive's emails so that you see them as soon as they come into your inbox you can change the colour of the subject heading. To do this go to View> View Settings> Conditional Formatting (or Automatic Formatting) and select the appropriate colour.
- Use Outlook categories to help identify items that are important to you. By assigning colours to categories, you can quickly see what different messages, appointments and tasks relate to. To sort your categories, click Categorise> All Categories and rename the existing ones. You can change colours, add new categories and set shortcut keys for each category here. To add an item to a category, select it and press the shortcut key.

CONTACTS

- If you use Outlook and SharePoint at work, you can see contacts in your organization. If you have an account on Facebook or LinkedIn, you can also use the Outlook Social Connector to view updates from those sites without having to leave Outlook. Click View> People Pane> Account Settings to get everything set up.
- Use the Link Contacts feature to link multiple contact entries for a person together so that the information is more easily accessible. Click the contact you're interested in and view their information by choosing Home> People. On the right of the screen,

click Link Contacts, and a dialog will open showing the contact entry or entries for that person. In the Search People box type some identifying information for that person and Outlook will return any other contact entries which may be a match for that person. If they are the same person, click on that entry to link the details.

HANDY TIPS

- Block all future email from a sender by clicking the Junk drop-down on the Home tab> Junk email Options. This opens a dialogue box that lets you specify what you count as junk and what you don't – here you can blacklist entire domains and even entire countries.
- If an email sender is not junk but not relevant at the moment you can click Ignore. New emails from this sender will be sent to the trash folder as soon as they arrive.
- Outlook can group emails into conversations, so that a single click shows all related messages together. Go to the View tab and tick Show as Conversations. Click the Arrange By> View Settings from the drop-down menu to configure additional grouping options.
- To keep your side menu clutter-free, set up certain folders as favourites. Go to View> Folder Pane> enable Favourites.
- You can apply retrospective filing to important messages by renaming their subjects to make them easier to find. Open the email in a new window and click in the subject line. Delete the old subject and type the new one in. Click 'Yes' to confirm the change.
- You can create new emails, appointments, contacts etc. using the New Items drop-down on the Home tab. If you don't want to delve into the Outlook interface, right-click on the Outlook icon in the Windows 7 or 8 taskbar to open a list offering direct shortcuts to create any sort of new item.
- You can use Smart Art in Outlook

as you would in PowerPoint. Go to New Email> Insert> Smart Art.

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

- Alt+S can be used to quickly send an email.
- Click Alt+R to reply to all in email or switch to the work week calendar view.
- Click Alt+W to forward an email or switch to the weekly calendar view.
- Copy any text to your clipboard, then in Outlook press Ctrl-V. Outlook creates a new message (or note or whatever item, depending on the folder you're viewing) containing the text you have copied.
- Ctrl+1 and Ctrl+2 can be used to move between the inbox, calendar, contacts etc.
- Ctrl+G opens the "Go to date" dialog which can jump to any date in the calendar.
- Ctrl+M+F9 to quickly start the Send/Receive process.
- Ctrl+R can be used to quickly reply to email.
- To quick insert your signature, Just hit Alt+n, then type "as" and Enter.
- You can use Outlook's virtual Post-it notes for reminders, quick notes, temporary bits of text or anything else. Click Ctrl+Shift+N.

SAVING THE DAY

- You can attempt to Recall a message if you have sent it accidentally, if you act quickly. Go to Sent Items and double click into the sent email, then go to Message> Actions> Recall This Message. The dialogue box will give you two options: Delete unread copies of this message and Delete unread copies of this message and replace with a new message. Remember to tick the box option Tell me if recall succeeds and fails for each recipient.

SAVING TIME

- The Quick Access Toolbar is great if you use certain actions regularly. To set up a Quick Access button go to the top far left on your home screen and you will

see a drop-down icon. Select this icon to be presented with a drop-down menu and click 'More Commands...' You will now be taken to a pop-up box where you can add or remove Quick Access buttons.

SCHEDULING

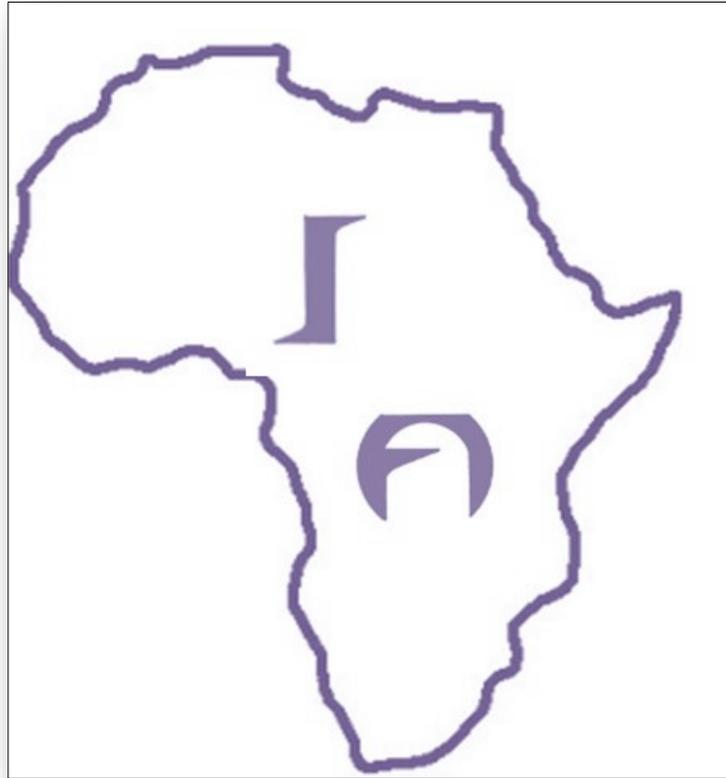
- To defer sending an email: write your email, then switch to the Options tab > Delay Delivery. This opens a requester with a "Do not deliver before:" field; enter a date and time, then click Close. After you hit Send, the message will be held until the specified time for sending.
- You can set up bulk emails and schedule them to send later by using the delay sending function. This is great for birthday messages, team messages when organising a big event, and thank you's.

SEARCHING

- Search for an email with a attachment simply by typing into the search bar 'from: Name of Person has attachment: yes'
- For any search you perform often, just save the search for quick and easy future access. Click on Search Folders in the left navigation menu, select "New Search Folder," and then either use the wizards or manually customize the search to your specifications.
- Use the filter option to quickly search for certain types of emails such as those with attachments, those dated within a specific time period and so forth. Within your filtered view, you can type into the regular search box to drill down further.

STOP BEING HELD HOSTAGE BY EMAIL

- Desktop notifications are pretty distracting and should be turned off— but if you want to know when your boss emails you. you can set up a rule to allow this. Firstly turn off all desktop alerts under the Mail Options, (go to Options > Mail and then disable the Display a Desktop Alert option), then create an Outlook rule to display alerts for messages from specific people sent only to you.



Isipho Admin - the Gift

'Isipho Admin' is a brand new bursary award for budding PAs in Africa. The first four recipients of the Isipho bursary were announced in March 2016: all four are in full-time education and aspire to becoming PAs. The bursary gives training opportunities which they would not otherwise have access to.

The word "Isipho" is Swahili for "The gift", and is pronounced "issy-poh". Anel Martin and Teri Wells are the idea-makers behind this innovative new educational opportunity, providing training for the South African PAs of the future. The scheme is small and hopes to grow year in, year out. Anel and Teri write to NAHPA:

As assistants working in the educational field you undoubtedly understand how vitally important education is, not only to the well-being of an individual but also to make a positive impact by countering the ravages of poverty around the globe. You see students every day and are privy to their personal circumstances including having limited access to opportunities as a result of situations they find themselves in, often not of their own making.

"Education is the movement from darkness to light" – Allan Bloom (1930 – 1992)

The situation in South Africa is dire (as is currently the case in many countries around the world). Here are the facts:

- 8.3 million South Africans cannot find a job.
- A university education in South Africa costs approximately \$7400

(£5,200) per annum and 95% of South Africans cannot afford it.

- 45.5% of the South African population is classified as poor – 10.2 million South Africans are classified extremely poor by world classification standards.
- The female population in South Africa is most affected by poverty and female-headed households suffer the most.
- Levels of poverty in age bracket 18-24 are the most severe in the country.
- 78.5% of adults with no formal schooling are the poorest of the poor.
- Out of a group of 100 Grade 1 pupils, only 40 will reach Grade 12. Of those, 28 will pass matric and just 4 will enter university. Of the 4, only 1 will graduate.
- Only 10% of matriculants find jobs.
- Approximately 122,000 children live in child-headed households. While this is a very small

proportion of children in South Africa, the number is not insignificant. These children also experience more poverty and a poorer standard of living than most people in South Africa when we look at their experience as a group.

The concept of Isipho Admin was born out of our passion for our profession coupled with an overwhelming desire to assist and be of services to talented individuals who would not otherwise have access to the opportunity of a tertiary education. As a team we know we can't change the lives of 8.3 million people but we can start by helping our initial four students.

The students for 2016 all come from very challenging backgrounds and are supporting either their unemployed parents or are heading up child households.

What they do have in common is a desperate desire to improve their lives by increasing their skills and the resultant "opening of more doors"

when it comes to opportunities for employment.

The ripple effect of assisting just one of these ladies is impacting not only them but their families and communities at large. It is pure coincidence that all the successful candidates this year were ladies: men are not excluded from applying.

Our approach to "changing lives" is to be as holistic as possible providing :

- Financial assistance to cover formal education at a respected South African institution including prescribed books and other recommended study material.
- Individual and group mentorship support for all students. Each student has been assigned their own mentor from the group of 'PA angels' in South Africa who put up their hands to assist in this project. The combined years of experience of the support team is over 100 years.
- Back to basics education. The support team will tackle issues including what is acceptable on



The four Isipho Admin 2016 recipients (front row), with their mentors in the Isipho team

2016 Isipho Admin PA profiles:

Teddy Montsikelelo Mnyakam is an independent young woman matured beyond her years. A confident leader within her community who knows what she wants from life and demonstrated that she can negotiate successfully in order to get things done. Fondly known to her new friends as the “hustler”, Teddy is a hardworking and innovative future PA, eager to learn, has a commitment to succeed and willing to take on the challenges that will come her way.



Iris Athalia Mothwa is a respectful and determined 25-year-old who plans on becoming a successful and accomplished PA. As the head of her home, she is a true role model to all five her siblings, two older than herself, three younger. Iris touched the Isipho teams’ hearts with her warmth and sincerity, a kindred spirit that showed us that this bursary will not only uplift her own self-development, but that of her siblings and community.



Salaminah Leopeng is a friendly and ambitious 19-year-old future PA, who would like to develop in all areas that pertain to the PA profession. She lives with her mother who is a domestic worker and is determined not be illiterate nor unemployable. Salaminah is very keen to gain as much knowledge and skills in order to become a well-grounded professional PA.



Lerato Sikhosana is a gutsy go getter, diminutive in frame, but big in heart, she is an intelligent and bright young up-and-coming PA that people will take note of. Already a leader within her soccer team, and a motivator within her community, Lerato is energetic, passionate and authentic, with a realistic approach to life and circumstances. She describes herself as an open-minded, respectful individual, who is keen to take a calculated risk, yet takes nothing for granted.

social media platforms, professional dos and don'ts specific to the PA/EA profession, making good life choices vs bad life choices, building and nurturing your personal brand, dealing with difficult situations (conflict management etc.)

The most important thing we are giving these individuals and their families is HOPE, with the goal being to break the cycle of poverty and unemployment and impact the lives of these beautiful young people.

Going forward we would like to be in a position to offer them financial assistance with their transport costs as public transport in South Africa is appalling and very expensive, particularly if you have limited or no income.

In addition the goal is to provide each student with an “interview” outfit so they can make a professional first impression.

The Isipho Admin Bursary is only made available to learners who want to pursue a career as office professionals.

We felt as a team that we wanted to support and give back not only to our communities but also to the profession at large. To the best of our knowledge this is the only industry specific bursary of its kind in the world today.

We hope to be able to create exceptional EA's for the South African market and to provide opportunities to those who really need them. Please visit our website www.isiphoadmin.org.za for more information or watch our video on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL-mxvZic60>

If you feel as passionate as we do about education and the PA profession and would like to get involved there are various ways to do so.

As is the case with any non-profit organization we require financial support but in addition to this we also need on-the-job training experiences for our students (office-based work exposure during vacation time), subject matter experts who can assist with their training and preparing them for the working world, books,

stationary and laptops. We also welcome suggestions to add value to the programme. Perhaps your school could sponsor a future student?

***“He who opens a school door,
closes a prison” –
Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885)***

For additional information, contact:



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NAHPA is proud to support the Isipho Admin programme, with donations of books, a distance learning course and Skype mentoring for each Bursary from editor Angela Garry.

If you or your school would like to get involved or help fund-raise, please do get in touch!

Ever made the mistake of signing off on an email to your boss with “love” or “xxx”? How do you end your emails?

Tandy Hanff looks at a wide range of sign-offs, not ALL of which are recommended to end your emails on a positive note!

Best – This is possibly one of the best sign-offs. I recommend it highly and so do the experts.

My best to you – Etiquette consultant Lett likes this one. I think it’s old-fashioned.

All the best – Harmless.

Best Wishes – A bit like a greeting card but it’s not bad.

Best Regards – I’m not sure on this— can you give anything better than “regards”? Is there a “best” version?

Regards – Fine, brief. I use this.

Rgds – No, no, no! Why not type three more letters?

Warm Regards – I like this for someone you don’t know very well, or when meant as a thank-you.

Warmest Regards – warmer than warm?

Cheers – a bit too “out for a drink” for my liking.

Take care – Ok for personal emails.

Thanks - an appropriate, warm thing to say. I use this.

Thanks so much – a little “I love you SO much”?

Thanks! – Exclamation marks rub me the wrong way, particularly in a sign-off like this as it can feel like forced, rather than genuine.

Thank you – More formal than “Thanks.” I use this sometimes.

Many thanks – I use this a lot, when I genuinely appreciate the effort the recipient has undertaken.



Successful Sign-Offs



Thank you for your consideration – sounds like you are in the 19th century still.

Thx – No, no, NO!

Hope this helps – I like this in an email where you are trying to help the recipient.

Looking forward to hearing from you—gracious and warm, and shows you are eager to meet with the recipient.

In haste – good when you don’t have time to proofread—or a bit lazy?

Yours truly – I don’t like this. It makes me feel like I’m ten years old and getting a note from a pen pal.

Yours – Same problem as above.

Sincerely – Lett also likes this but to me, it signals that the writer is stuck in the past. OK perhaps from a lawyer handling your dead mother’s estate.

-Your name – Terse but just fine in many circumstances. Probably not a good idea for an initial email.

-Initial – Good if you know the recipient and even fine in a business context if it’s someone with whom you correspond frequently.

Love – No, no, and no once again.

XOXO – really? For a business email?

Hugs – It’s hard to imagine this in a business email but it’s fine when you’re writing to your granny.

Smiley face - Emoticons are increasingly accepted, though some people find them grating. I wouldn’t sign off this way unless I were writing to my child.

High five from down low – I’m sorry, what? An attempt to sound cool, which fails.

See you around – Lett would cringe but this seems fine to me.

Sent from my iPhone – This used to bother me but it explains brevity and typos. I’ve erased it from my iPhone signature because I don’t want the recipient to know I’m not necessarily at my desk.

Typos courtesy of my iPhone – Ha ha for the first time. But not for the second or third...

Please consider the environment before printing this email. – really? Is there anyone out there who doesn’t know that printing uses paper?

Which sign-off do YOU use?

Don't plan to fail by failing to plan

Planning, prioritising, goal setting and scheduling: done well, they can make your job so much easier. Done badly, they can make your whole world seem so much more difficult....

Terri Fishbourne shares her list of the Top 5 mistakes that people make when setting goals—and how to handle failure.



Everyone makes mistakes. How often have you heard that? It's never been more important to remember than when you're struggling to reach a goal. Everyone makes them, but they can be prevented. Everyone wants success in reaching their goals. Failure to reach a goal can be heart

breaking, but that isn't the only motivation for not making mistakes when setting goals.

When it comes to setting and reaching our goals, mistakes can keep us from success. That's the whole reason for setting the goal in the first place.

Since failure to reach a goal can keep us from wanting to set another, it is important to avoid making them when you're setting up your goal and planning the steps you're going to take to achieve it.

Here are the most common mistakes people make when setting goals:

1. Unrealistic goals

This is probably the biggest mistake of all. It's good to have big goals and dreams, but when it comes to actually setting your goal, you need to make sure it's within your reach. It might be a huge dream. If it's something you're passionate about, go for it. Just break it down into realistic goals.

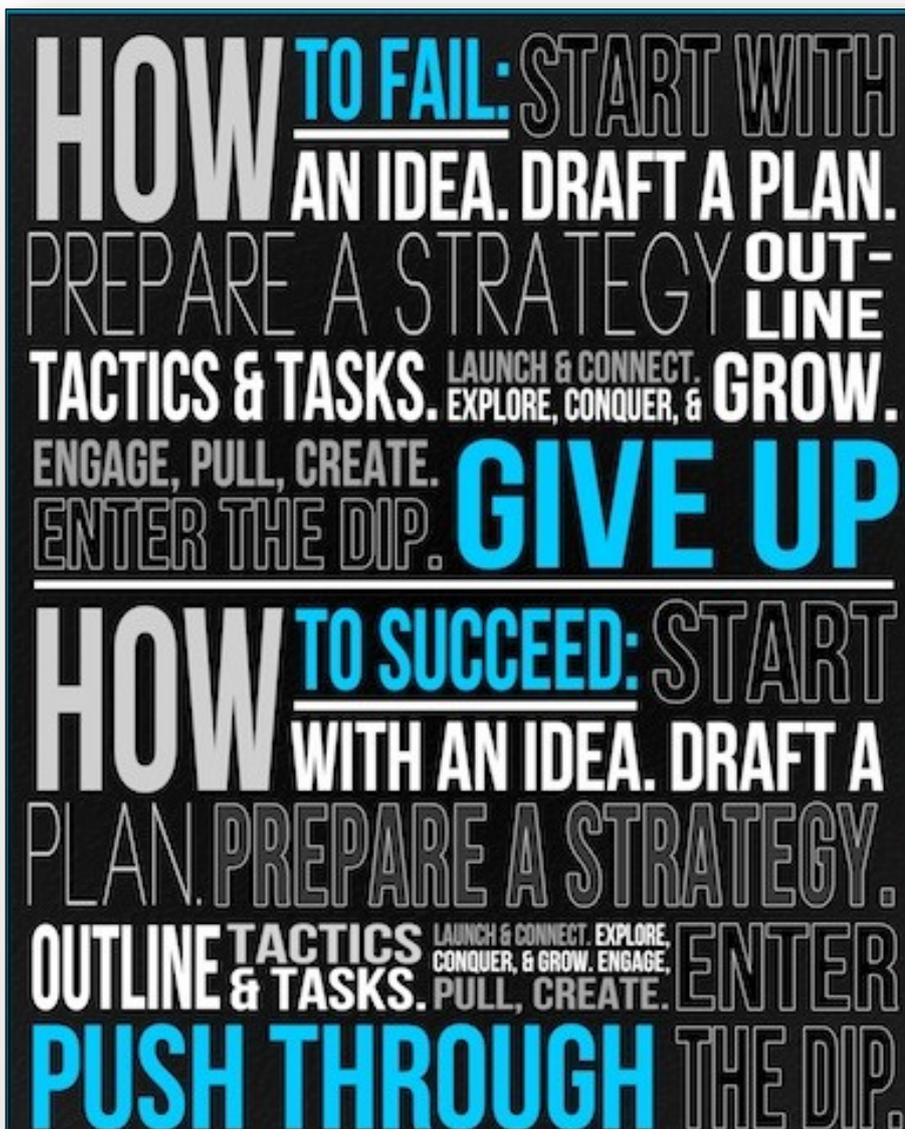
Take it a little at a time. You can't run a Marathon if you've never run at all.

Set goals to build up your stamina and daily training goals to help you achieve the long-term goal of running the race.

Eventually, you can reach that big goal by reaching a lot of little ones. Setting the unrealistic goal to start with, however, sets you up for failure. It makes it way too easy to give up. You feel, "I can never do that," so you stop trying.

2. Calculating the time to complete a goal

When you plan things, they very often take more time than your originally thought. Just ask anyone



who is having their house remodelled and the contractor says six months tops to complete it, and a year later, they're finally finished. Things happen that are out of your control sometimes.

Sometimes, for any number of reasons, things just don't work out the way we plan. Things take longer to complete. When we don't reach our goals by the target date of completion we set in our plan, it is very easy to give up. It can make you feel like a failure.

Not reaching a goal in a specified time doesn't mean you're a failure. Knowing that ahead of time can help you calculate a time frame for your goal that's reasonable.

Add a little extra time to your plan to make sure you have plenty of time to complete it. It will prevent you from feeling pressured to complete it. Reaching the goal itself may be difficult enough without the pressure. If you finish earlier, that's great.

You'll feel extra good about yourself for finishing ahead of the scheduled target date. I'm not saying give yourself a year when it should take six months, but maybe give yourself seven or eight months to be sure.

There's no time to throw a pity party. Once you've determined what went wrong and planned another way to go after the goal, you need to forget the past and reset your focus toward the future.

Sometimes it may be painful to talk about to someone and you may not feel like you have the power to move on. Look back at a time that was very rewarding for you. Look at a former success to give you strength to move forward with a new focus.

With a new focus, a failure might not seem like it's the end. It can just be a rest area between where you are and what you want.

3. Setting goals others want for us

When it comes to your life, it seems like everyone wants to put their two cents worth in. You should do this, or you should do that...how many times have you heard those words. Probably more times than you can count. It's not that these people are trying to hurt you, it's just that they feel they know what's best for you.

Others aren't living your life, you are! You have to set your goals according to what will make you happy. Sure, there are times your goals will be based on what your boss tells you to do. That's expected if it's a work goal. If, however, it's a personal goal, it's just that...personal.



Too many times children start out life with aspirations to be a doctor or a lawyer just because their parents want them to. If that's not what you want, be polite about it, but tell them. Set your goal to be and do what you want...within reason, of course. Then, go for it!

4. Failing to review progress

Always check to see just where you are in the steps to reaching your goal. Document it. Take the time to review your progress. If you're taking a trip, you check your map or your GPS from time to time to see where you are and how far you have to go.

If you never check your progress on your goals, it's very easy for them to fall by the wayside. Checking them regularly will often let you see that you're ahead of schedule, and it will give you a reason to celebrate.

You may feel like you're getting nowhere, but when you check your progress, you'll see you really are.

It will also give you a chance to update your goals. Maybe your priorities have become different. Maybe you need to extend your time or alter a sub goal. Goals are like a tree standing by the water. They often bend and alter a bit, but they don't break. If you have to change something, do it. The important thing is to keep track of your goal until you reach it.

5. Failing to Appreciate Failures

Not being able to reach a goal happens sometimes. Does it hurt... sometimes it does. It's definitely no fun, after all, no one likes to fail. The problem is that some people accept this failure as a sign that they are a failure.

Failure is part of the human experience. The good thing is, you don't have to let that failure define who you are. You should take that failure, evaluate it, and learn how you can do better the next time. It takes courage to get up, brush yourself off, and try again. If you do, it will be easier to follow through on your goals.

Since failing at goals is a big issue, and since it's what keeps so many people from reaching other goals, here is what you should do if you fail:

How to handle Failure

Even the world's biggest optimist can get discouraged when they fail. Not achieving that success you want by failing at a goal can be a difficult thing to handle. An old song says, "You can't always get what you want," but it doesn't mean it doesn't hurt when you don't get it.

Too often, people tell you, "That's life." Why? It doesn't have to be. You need to look at that failure optimistically and look for ways you can use it to redirect your path and find another way to approach it.

Failure is just a chance to grow. It's time to plant a new seed, fertilize it, and watch it become something beautiful. If you look at a road map, you'll see there are many ways to get

to the same place.

You just have to find the way that works best for you. When you're faced with a failure, here's what you need to do:

• **Try a different angle**

Look at things from a different perspective. If you can't see one, ask a family member or a good friend to help you. Remember, your feelings are hurt, and it's easy to want only positive feedback. Don't just approach your "feel good" friends. Talk to those who will give you an honest opinion. It may be hard not to get upset from what people say, but you need to grin and bear it. Don't just walk off in a huff, listen to what they have to say so you can determine exactly what went wrong, why it did, and what you can do to fix it.

• **Move forward**

Always be open to thoughts and perspectives that can get you

started moving forward. People are quick to offer their perspective sometimes even when you don't want it. If that happens, smile, say thank you, and move on. When they are offering suggestions, you may have to look at the problem as if it's someone else's problem in order to stand there with a smile, but you can do it. Take out the good suggestions and toss out the bad. Look at what happened, find a way to fix it, and move on.

• **Reset your Focus**

Focus is imperative to reaching your goals.

Once you've analysed what went wrong and come up with a way to fix it, switch your focus to the new approach.

Reach out and grab the new goal and give it your complete focus!

Terri Fishbourne is an Executive Assistant who has worked in schools and industry for 20+ years in the USA.

Angela Garry (Author, PA Trainer, Editor & Publisher) reflects on recent months.

The Spring 2016 term was a "term of firsts" for me— I've worked with international schools throughout Asia up to now, but this term I had my

first times working with international schools in mainland Europe and in Africa—when I delivered various training sessions at the Council of

British International Schools (COBIS) conference for PAs in Bucharest, Romania at the beginning of February, and at the Association of

Editor's Update

International Schools in Africa (AISA) Professional Learning Institute, held in Nairobi, Kenya towards the end of April.

I always find it so exciting to work with school PAs and administrative staff and I encourage them to share their own expertise at the events: in Nairobi, for example, we had over 200 years of experience in school PA roles in the training room, not counting my own years—this gave everyone present some great opportunities for mentoring each other after the event.

For many of those present in both Bucharest and Nairobi, these were

and I've continued writing my own. In the 15 months from March 2015 to May 2016, I organised the publication of 15 books through my Pica Books branding (www.picabooks.co.uk).

The latest include three books for small children ("Holly the Lolly Van" by Andy Case, plus two of my own: "My friend Ella" and "Benton's Business"), and my personal life goals journal: "My 'ME' book" which is going to be followed soon by two sister volumes for students to achieve their study goals and for workers to achieve their professional development goals.

**Photo: with conference attendees
in Prague, May 2016**

I'm then been home for a few days, ironing out the last few articles for this issue before sending it to the printers and then flying to Jeju—a small volcanic island off the coast of South Korea where I'll be delivering a week of training for an international school.

Once I'm back, I'm booked for Manchester and London for a day courses for school PAs (see page 5). More dates have this been set for London (Sept), Birmingham (Nov) and Leeds (Dec) —contact Osiris and give my booking code to get full details.

I'll also carry on writing over July and August (with a surgery at end of July), on my therapeutic fiction series for



the first professional development events which they had attended in their roles, and the training was much welcomed.

Between these two events, I was a speaker in London at The PA Show in March and at the Office* show in May. At both of these events, I spoke on the topic of Self-preservation to prevent burnout—a subject close to my heart after we sadly lost PA Trainer Susie Barron-Stubley for took her own life last November.

I also delivered my "Two 'how to' days" course for PAs in Nottingham, I was the guest 'expert' on #Adminchat (free 1-hr Twitter Q&A for PAs) on 21 April, and I've continued working with a number of people to help them create and publish their own books,

I've just returned from a PA conference in Prague (in the Czech Republic), where I delivered a half-day workshop on 'an introduction to project management', showing how to best make use of the many skills already in your possession to take on projects without having to attend a formalised (and quite expensive) certificated course. The audience came from all over Europe—some were names that I knew from my networking but hadn't yet met, so it was great to finally put faces (and handshakes!) to the people I'd been in contact with for several years via email or LinkedIn—plus it's always great to make new connections with the others whom I hadn't had any contact with before.

children and young adults; a biography of author Helene Hanff, editing a children's book for a writer in South Africa, and my new course for aspiring writers (helping people to plan, write and create their own books), as well as the forthcoming UNIPA magazine which I think I will hold over for launching in early 2017 (rather than push it out for October, not quite ready). Plus I'll be off on my annual trip to Thailand in early October. In the background there are discussions about possibilities of courses in North Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and—wait for it—Hawaii next year.

Have a great remainder of the summer term, and keep pushing on with your learning and development.

Onwards and upwards!

School PAs and secretaries have to deal with two very different kinds of issues with student behaviour: those typical, active, inquisitive (and perhaps unruly) students who move through the office in the regular course of the day; and those students who have been sent to the office for follow-up with the head/principal due to overly disruptive behaviour. No matter which group they fall into, all students should be expected to follow the same set of rules, but the way you as a school staff member deal with them may be different. You need to be prepared to enforce the school's rules for student behaviour and be prepared to handle seriously disruptive students.

Communication is key

When you are speaking to students, there are two forms of communication you can use. They are alpha and beta commands.

Alpha commands are clear, concrete and specific, and allow a reasonable time for behaviour to occur: "John, sit in your seat on the count of three!"

Beta commands are vague and wordy, containing too many directives and not enough time for compliance: "John, sit down right now! Why don't you behave like everyone else? Don't say anything and look straight ahead! You just won't be obedient. Come up here and sit near me!"

Beta commands are typically used when people feel frustrated and angry—and should especially be avoided when communicating with students who have problems complying with directions.

Setting the Tone:

Prevention Strategies

You set the tone for your office much the same way that teachers set the tone for their classrooms. Students are people, too, and they carry a lot of "baggage" with them when they walk through the school door. The



Behaviour: everyone's business

tone of the school and the respect we give to students set an example of what we expect back from them. Here are some strategies:

- Greet every student who enters the office.
- Get to know students' names as soon as possible.
- Set an example of courtesy and friendliness.

Taking control:

Discipline Strategies

Handling discipline problems in the office is a real challenge for office personnel. You are "responsible" for the conduct of your students in the office but you quite often don't have the authority you need. Students must know you have the support of the school principal to effectively manage behaviour.

To prevent and control discipline problems:

- Do not threaten all students for the transgressions of a few.
- Individual behaviour problems that do not affect other students are best handled privately.

- Avoid threats or physical force. When a discipline problem is serious.
- Do not try to handle it yourself. Refer it to the head/principal or behaviour team.
- Speak to the offender(s) in a courteous but "I mean business" tone.
- Keep the student where you can see him or her.

Avoid 'Never Land'

- Never lose your temper.
- Never use physical force.
- Never use profanity.

Make notes:

- Keep details about the instances when you have been asked to supervise a student sent to the office for disruptive behaviour.
- Maintain notes on problems you have had with any students and/or their parents or guardians.
- Keep track of your ability to complete your regular assignments when distracted by disruptive students left in your care.

www.picaaurum.com

Training company, offering a variety of courses for PAs and Admins working in both education and corporate settings.

Timetable for 2016/2017 academic year to be released shortly.

Bespoke courses are also available.

www.admin.org.uk

The School of Educational Administration & Management offer a wide range of courses for school admins.

www.rta-training.co.uk

Regional Training Agency provide a

range of courses at varying times of year, for Support Staff.

TWITTER: #adminchat

Lucy Brazier runs an hour long weekly CPD session on Twitter, with guest experts from the global PA community. Register for free to Twitter, search for #adminchat—and sit back on a Thursday at 6 pm UTC to follow the chat.

The hour is in the form of a Q&A session—questions are posed to the guest expert—and anyone can participate by tweeting their questions.

If you miss a session, email Lucy's PA Matthew (wantmatthew@gmail.com)

who can send you a transcript.

Angela Garry will be the guest expert on varying topics on **7 July** and **13 October 2016**.

BOOKS

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

The only CPD book written specifically for PAs, EAs, secretaries and admin staff working in education.

Available from Crown House Publishing, Amazon.co.uk and Amazon.com and bookstores.

Kindle edition available via Amazon.co.uk

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

A name change:

As I said in my introductory note on page 2, NAHPA is evolving and expanding. We're intent on making the magazine, website and LinkedIn discussion group as useful as possible to all of our readers in schools worldwide. With a new sister magazine, UNIPA, in development for PAs and Admins working in Universities, it feels an appropriate time to announce a long-thought-about name-change from NAHPA to EDPA from the next issue..

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 continue to interview 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

The Association of Headteachers' PAs

NAHPA

EDPA

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

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