



The magazine for Education PAs & Admins

EDPA

SUMMER 2017

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(formerly "NAHPA")

How to lead by delegating

10 things assistants do better

How to recognise success

Creating an induction pack

How to disagree

Time to get uncomfortable

Coping with stress & strain



EDUCATION PA

16th anniversary issue

Welcome to **EDPA**: SUMMER 2017



Angela Garry—Editor

Just wish the weather would make its mind up! Is it Summer or do we need to dress for Autumn?

Welcome to the Summer 2017 issue of EDPA, the leading publication for PAs, Secretaries and Administrative staff working in education. Having been first published in the summer of 2001, this is our 16th anniversary issue.

As always, we strive to bring you pieces written by and for the PA, secretarial & admin community, working with worldwide experts and trainers on a range of topics, to bring articles to motivate, inspire, lead, demonstrate, encourage and support you in your ever-increasingly busy roles in schools.

If you would like to be involved in the creation of the magazine, or have any feedback, please do get in touch. There is an absolute wealth of knowledge and experience in our membership, and if you have acquired a skill or some knowledge in your role which you think would be of benefit to others, please don't keep it to yourself! Contributors receive two printed copies of the issue in which they are featured, plus a pdf version which can be attached to job applications or used in performance reviews.

Please get in touch—you can email me at editor@picaaurum.com

Best wishes to all,
Angela Garry



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Contents:

2	Welcome / Contributors	pack for new staff
3	10 things assistants do better	21 Why continue?
4	How to disagree	22 Isipho Update
6	It's time to get uncomfortable!	23 What's a PA?
7	How to lead by delegating	24 Perfectionism sabotage
10	What are we to do?	26 Coping with stresses and strains
12	To be or not to be	29 Quick tips to learn a new skill / ?
14	How do you recognise success?	The PA Cartoon
16	PA Interview	30 Editor's Update
18	Some quick words of wisdom	31 EDPA Readers Panel on CPD
19	Putting together an induction	32 EDPA Aims

The A-Z of this issue's contributors:

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- **Lerato Sikhosana** is studying secretarial and administrative skills, under the Isipho Bursary scheme in South Africa.
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Regulars:

- **Andy Case** is a cartoonist, illustrator and music mogul by night, and talented teacher by day. He is the author of a book for small children, and is working on more volumes for the near future.
- **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 EDPA's editor, author of "Brave PAs" and "The PA & EA Circus", and a global PA Trainer, with 24 years' experience in admin & PA roles. She has also written several children's books published via Pica Books www.picabooks.co.uk



10 things that assistants do better

...than anyone else! **Bonnie Low-Kramen**, formerly a celebrity PA and now a speaker / mentor to PAs globally, reveals **YOU** are one of the most important people in any workplace.

"The only way to do great work is to love what you do." – Steve Jobs *

It's about love.

The great assistants all love what they do. They unabashedly and unapologetically love their work in support of others. They blow off comments like, "You're just an assistant," because they know better. Personal assistants are some of the brightest, most organized and resourceful people on the planet. That is why not everyone is cut out for this demanding work. They are very far from being "just" anything. The smartest people in the business world know to invest in the true power of the assistant.

I worked for 25 years as the personal assistant to Oscar winner Olympia Dukakis, and I loved it. Yes, I said it. Friends would say that I was one of the only people they knew who genuinely loved their job. That always struck me as important feedback as I observed how often the world treats assistants with disrespect. That happened to me too. Working with a movie star did not make me totally immune. Now I teach *Be the Ultimate Assistant* workshops for assistants all around the world and I want to share some universal truths about this thing we call love. These apply whether it is an assistant in Maryland or Malaysia or any point in between.

Here are the top 10 things that assistants do better than anyone else:

1. They are relentlessly adaptable. They love the variety the job offers and that no two days are ever the same which makes it easy for them to shift gears at a moment's notice.
2. They love a challenge. "No" is usually not an option. True confession: I used to play a game at work called "How few emails or phone calls in the shortest time will it take to get this answer?" I won if it took three or less in five minutes or less.
3. They underplay their power. Looks can be deceiving. The assistant has the ear of her manager and wields tremendous influence. Do not underestimate this. Seriously.
4. Making people happy is their goal. Going above and beyond is SOP. Personal assistants have an innate desire to please and to figure out the myriad of ways to do that. Assistants are born with a "service heart" and receive great pleasure and satisfaction from being supreme implementers.
5. They read minds. They usually need a clue or two. A look on



their principal's face or the way a fellow staffer responded at the staff meeting. Great assistants are clairvoyant and truly know when "it is a good time" to approach the boss, and more importantly, when it is not. Anticipating what needs to be done is their gift.

6. They love to put out fires and bring order to chaos. The assistant is the go-to person in any crisis whether it is prepping for Hurricane Sandy or untangling a meeting gone haywire.
7. They are master jugglers. The best assistants enjoy managing 12 invisible balls in the air and are able to handle #13 and #14 too. Just give them a fresh cup of coffee.
8. They are hungry to learn. Assistants know that they need to commit to life-long learning in order to stay at the top of their game. Smart CEOs and business leaders recognize this need and invest in their assistant's professional development.
9. They are connected. Resources are an assistant's best friends. The best assistants have the widest and deepest networks. They know the magic power of relationships to get it done...now.
10. They yearn to make a difference. Assistants are the ultimate enablers for their managers and companies. It gives them great pleasure to see the results of their plotting and planning. They don't need a lot of feedback. A little goes a long way.

If fully utilized and are well managed, assistants are the eyes and ears of their principals and can be the powerful secret weapons of every organisation.

*** If you haven't heard Steve Jobs' famous 2005 commencement speech at Stanford, it's worth much more than the 22 minutes running time. It's at www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHWUCX6osgM**



(Reproduced with permission from Bonnie Low-Kramen's blog at <http://bit.ly/EDPA-Summer2017-BLK>)



How to disagree...

... or, more specifically, how to disagree with someone **BIGGER** or **HIGHER UP** than you.

Amy Gallo writes:

Your boss proposes a new initiative you think won't work. Your senior colleague outlines a project timeline you think is unrealistic. What do you say when you disagree with someone who has more power than you do? How do you decide whether it's worth speaking up? And if you do, what exactly should you say?

What the Experts Say

It's a natural human reaction to shy away from disagreeing with a superior. "Our bodies specialize in survival, so we have a natural bias to avoid situations that might harm us," says Joseph Grenny, the coauthor of *Crucial Conversations* and the cofounder of VitalSmarts, a corporate training company. "The heart of the anxiety is that there will be negative implications," adds Holly Weeks, the author of *Failure to Communicate*. We immediately think, "He's not going to like me," "She's going to

think I'm a pain," or maybe even "I'll get fired." Although "it's just plain easier to agree," Weeks says that's not always the right thing to do. Here's how to disagree with someone more powerful than you.

Be realistic about the risks

Most people tend to overplay the risks involved in speaking up. "Our natural bias is to start by imagining all the things that will go horribly wrong," Grenny says. Yes, your counterpart might be surprised and a little upset at first. But chances are you're not going to get fired or make a lifelong enemy. He suggests you first consider "the risks of *not* speaking up" — perhaps the project will be derailed or you'll lose the team's trust — then realistically weigh those against the potential consequences of taking action.

Decide whether to wait

After this risk assessment, you may decide it's best to hold off on voicing your opinion. Maybe "you haven't finished thinking the problem through, the whole discussion was a surprise to you, or you want to get a clearer sense of what the group thinks," says Weeks. "If you think other people are going to

disagree too, you might want to gather your army first. People can contribute experience or information to your thinking — all the things that would make the disagreement stronger or more valid." It's also a good idea to delay the conversation if you're in a meeting or other public space. Discussing the issue in private will make the powerful person feel less threatened.

Identify a shared goal

Before you share your thoughts, think about what the powerful person cares about — it may be "the credibility of their team or getting a project done on time," says Grenny. You're more likely to be heard if you can connect your disagreement to a "higher purpose." When you do speak up, don't assume the link will be clear. You'll want to state it overtly, contextualizing your statements so that you're seen not as a disagreeable underling but as a colleague who's trying to advance a shared goal. The discussion will then become "more like a chess game than a boxing match," says Weeks.

Ask permission to disagree

This step may sound overly deferential, but, according to Grenny, it's a smart way to give the powerful person "psychological safety" and control. You can say something like, "I know we seem to be moving toward a first-quarter commitment here. I have reasons to think that won't work. I'd like to lay out my reasoning. Would that be OK?" This gives the person a choice, "allowing them to verbally opt in," says Grenny. And, assuming they say yes, it will make you feel more confident about voicing your disagreement.

Stay calm

You might feel your heart racing or your face turning red, but do whatever you can to remain neutral in both your words and actions. When your body language communicates reluctance or anxiety, it undercuts the message, Weeks says. It sends "a mixed message, and your counterpart gets to choose what to read," she explains. Deep breaths can help, as can speaking more slowly and deliberately. "When we feel panicky we tend to talk louder and faster. You don't want to be mousey or talk in a whisper, but simply slowing the pace and talking in an even tone helps calm the other person down and does the same for you," says Grenny. It also makes you seem confident, even if you aren't.

Validate the original point

After you've gotten permission, articulate the other person's point of view. What is the idea, opinion, or proposal that you're disagreeing with? Stating that clearly, possibly even better than your counterpart did, lays a strong foundation for the

discussion. "You want your counterpart to say, 'She understands.' You don't want to get in a fight about whether you get her point," Weeks explains.

Don't make judgments

When you move on to expressing your concerns, watch your language carefully. Grenny says to avoid any "judgment words" such as "short-sighted," "foolish," or "hasty" that might set off your counterpart; one of his tips is to cut out all adjectives, since "they have the potential to be misinterpreted or taken personally." Share only facts. For example, instead of saying, "I think that first-quarter deadline is *naïve*," you can say, "We've tried four projects like this in the past, and we were able to do two in a similar time period, but those were special circumstances." Weeks also recommends staying neutral and focused: "Lay off the players and be vivid about the problem. Try to make it an honest disagreement, a worthwhile advancement of thought."

Stay humble

Emphasize that you're offering your opinion, not "gospel truth," says Grenny. "It may be a well-informed, well-researched opinion, but it's still an opinion, [so] talk tentatively and slightly understate your confidence." Instead of saying something like, "If we set an end-of-quarter deadline, we'll never make it," say, "This is just my opinion, but I don't see how we will make that deadline." Weeks suggests adding a lot of "guiding phrases" like "I'm thinking aloud here." This will leave room for dialogue. Having asserted your position (as a position, not as a fact), "demonstrate equal curiosity about other views," says

Grenny. Remind the person that this is your point of view, and then invite critique. Weeks suggests trying something like, "Tell me where I'm wrong with this." Be genuinely open to hearing other opinions.

Acknowledge their authority

Ultimately, the person in power is probably going to make the final decision, so acknowledge that. You might say, "I know you'll make the call here. This is up to you." That will not only show that you know your place but also remind them that they have choices, Grenny says. Don't backtrack on your opinion or give false praise, though. "You want to show respect to the person while maintaining your own self-respect," says Weeks.

Principles to Remember

Do:

- Explain that you have a different opinion and ask if you can voice it.
- Restate the original point of view or decision so it's clear you understand it.
- Speak slowly — talking in an even tone calms you and the other person down.

Don't:

- Assume that disagreeing is going to damage your relationship or career — the consequences are often less dramatic than we think.
- State your opinions as facts; simply express your point of view and be open to dialogue.
- Use judgment words, such as "hasty," "foolish," or "wrong," that might upset or incite your counterpart.



It's time to get uncomfortable!

Ever heard the expression “Keep doing what you always do, and you’ll keep getting what you always get?” There’s no better time to embrace change and new challenges than NOW, writes Tandy Hanff.



It’s perfectly normal to feel comfortable with the familiar and uneasy with anything new or different and these, very natural, feelings make it hard for us to embrace new challenges without fear or trepidation. It’s said that only 2% of us regularly step out of comfort zone, but we can achieve so much by doing so!

How can you motivate your team members to step out of their comfort zone?

Recognise goals achieved:

On the whole people work better with a specific goal to strive for, so a great way to encourage people out of their comfort zones is to allocate a particular target that they need to achieve.

It’s sensible to break goals down into smaller, manageable stages to reduce the fear factor and make each step seem more approachable.

If it’s hard work and a bit nerve-racking, then recognition and praise for each stage achieved can really motivate an individual to try harder and want to attain the end goal that little bit more.

Mentor and motivate:

The real key to helping staff to step out of their comfort zones is good leadership.

Understanding what motivates the individuals in your team is invaluable in enabling them to take the next step.

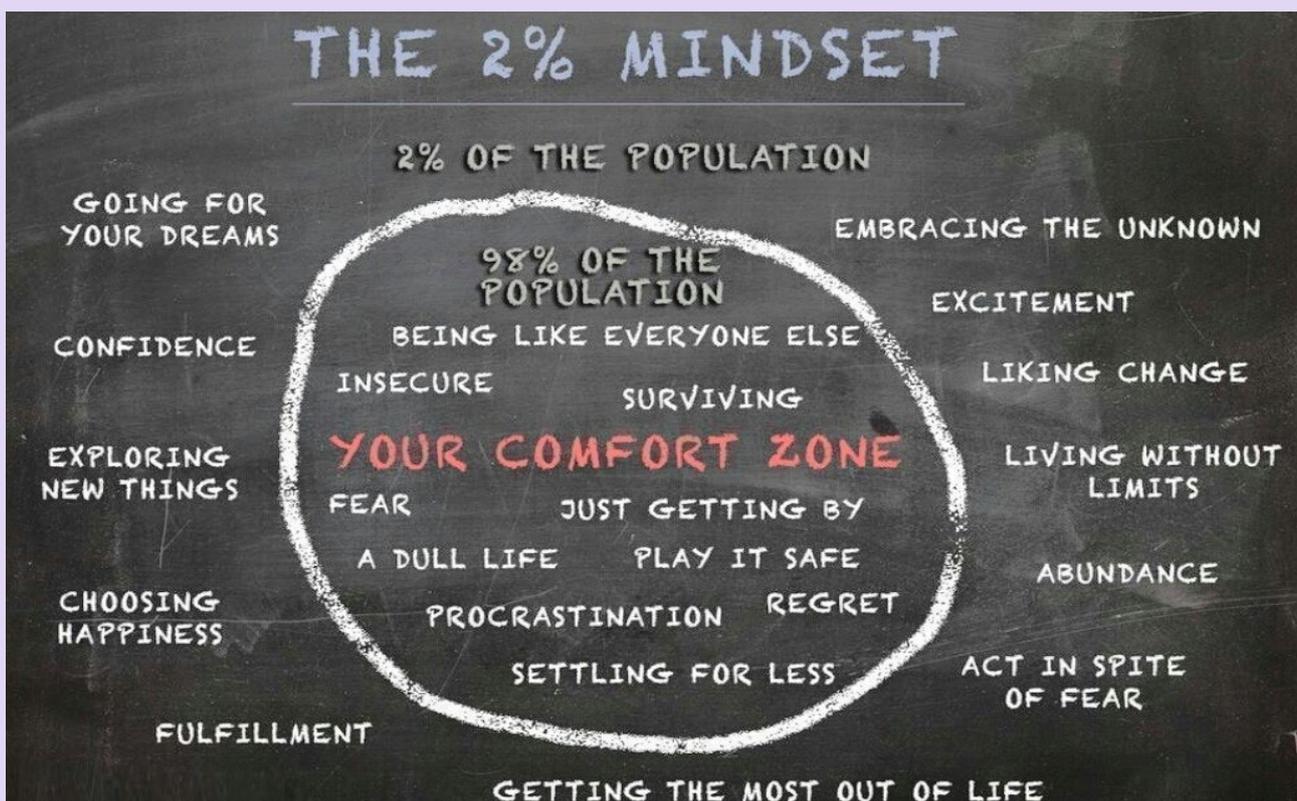
Mentoring and one-to-one attention can develop this even more efficiently. It could be as simple as mentoring team members yourself or looking within the team for staff with different strengths to help their fellow team members work on given areas.

Identifying and utilising the skills you already have within your team is a straightforward solution and hugely effective. It also has the added bonus of helping those who are assisting others to gain in confidence and feel more motivated.

Remember it’s for the good of the individual and the school as a whole:

As staff develop and feel able to take on new skills, more expertise will be available to the school. This frees up leadership time as teams will be in a position to take on additional responsibilities, allowing senior leaders more time to work on other areas.

Encouraging staff to step out of their comfort zones is really about maximising your workforce, not only for their own personal development, but also for the good of the school as a whole.





How to lead by delegating...

Teri Fishbourne is here to tell you why you are in the ideal position to take lead your school's team of administrative staff.

So you've been in your role a year, maybe two—or more much more—and one day you notice that a piece of work completed by someone else in the administrative team hasn't been done to the standard you would normally work to, and which you know the school's Head would prefer.

What of the following do you think you should do?

- a) Moan about it to the person who did the piece of work;
- b) Moan about it to their boss;
- c) Moan about it your boss;
- d) Keep it to yourself, but make a mental note to never delegate work to that person in the future—whilst adding it to your list of grudges (“no-one here works as hard as I do”); or
- e) Put forward a well-thought out and well-reasoned business case to your boss as to why you should given responsibility for

the everyday management of the administrative team.

And, of course, your correct answer should be (e).

Why? Because you are in the best position to lead the administrative staff to success, by giving them a role model to follow, assisting them with their learning and development, delegating tasks, pushing them to move further in their roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that the whole team works well together whilst consistently producing work of a high standard.

The “Three Buts”

- **“But I’m busy”**, I hear some of you say... Aha! But you WON’T be, once you get things moving.
- **“But I can’t trust others to do the work that I do to a high standard. It’s so much quicker if I do it.”** This is a complete fallacy—you are effectively beating yourself with a big stick and ensuring that you will be the busiest person on the team because you cannot entrust others to take on some of your workload.
TRAIN THEM to do so!

- **“But I can’t trust them to be confidential in what they see, hear, read and type.”** Again—TRAIN them on the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

Talk with them about the types of documents they work with on a daily basis, to explain to them which documents it’s OK to talk about with others, and which must remain confidential within their office, the admin team, the staff, or within the whole school—and don’t forget to explain WHY.

Trust them to take on some level of confidentiality, and if you and they are both happy with it, trust them a bit more...

One of the major things required of you as a team leader will be the ability to successfully delegate work across the team.

What is successful delegation?

If your team know both what to do and why, and can see their place in the chain of command whilst also seeing their importance in getting a task done with the best possible result, sharing the workload (as

well as sharing the rewards) amongst the team, then you will have achieved successful delegation of tasks.

Why do people fear delegating tasks?

Common excuses for not delegating a task to a colleague include:

- I'm too busy
- I can't trust anyone else to the same quality of work
- No-one has my ability / speed / meticulous eye for detail
- I would feel guilty passing my work on to someone else
- If they succeed, will this show me as lacking in some way?
- I am the only person capable of performing this task.

Using these excuses are often what we say when avoiding the issue of work overload

When should you delegate?

One of the main problems that people have when stepping up into a team management role is the inability to appreciate that delegation is essential to their success. The belief that you can perform a better job of a particular task is not a valid reason to keep doing it yourself. As a team manager, you need to keep the bigger picture in mind—what is your school aiming to achieve? When considering which tasks to delegate, ask yourself:

If I delegate this task, will it give me more time to focus on tasks that are of higher value to the Head and the school?

Will it allow me to develop the skills of one my members by expanding their experience and expertise in an area of work?

Will it offer someone with a fresh view of the task the chance to

provide a more innovative solution than I would have done?

If you answer yes to any of these three questions, you should consider delegating the task.

Whenever you delegate

Make sure that whenever you delegate work to someone, they are focused on an objective that is:

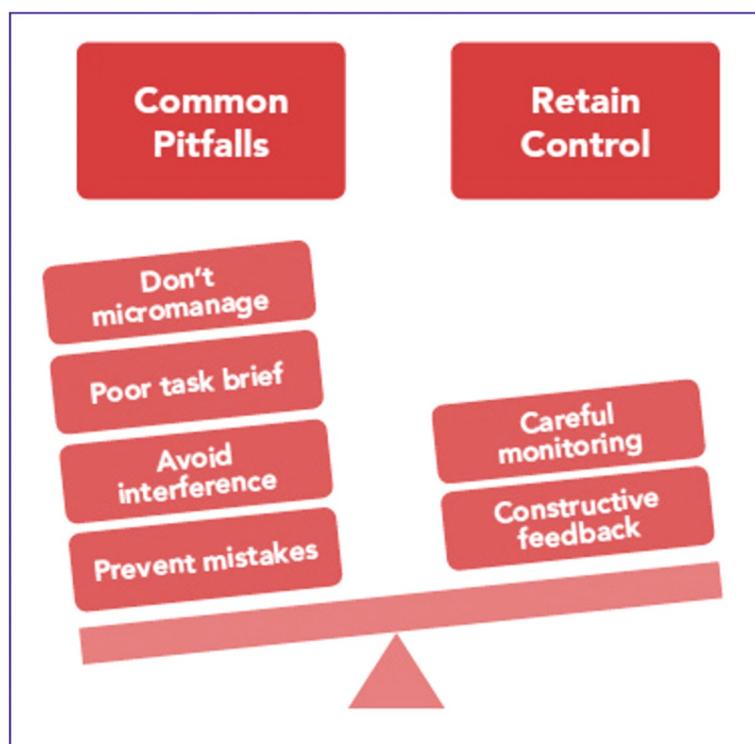
- clear;
- concrete;
- time-limited;
- realistic;
- challenging; and
- capable of evaluation.

Delegation 'pitfalls'

- Avoid micro-managing the task: This means giving your colleagues the freedom to make decisions, even if you feel you are more skilled at doing so. Many of us have the bad habit of continuing to make decisions once we have delegated a task. This undermines the authority that

we have handed over with the task and hinders its achievement, as well as wasting some of your time—which was one of the reasons for you delegating the task in the first place. It can also cause dissatisfaction amongst the team members.

- Take time to set up adequate control systems that give you adequate feedback on the progress of all the activities you have delegated, so you can take corrective action if necessary. This will allow you to feel more secure in being able to highlight and rectify any mistakes made by the team.
- Do allow others to make mistakes: our best lessons come from errors we have made and learned from. Situations which have caused embarrassment are usually things we only want to experience once, so we tend to learn from the bad experience and avoid repeating it in the future. Using your control checks, you can make sure that you don't let a team member



make a really high mistake that could harm the school or their position within it—but allow them to make small mistakes which should be considered an investment in their personal development.

Delegation is one of the most important management skills you can learn and master.

Focus your efforts on the parts of your work most beneficial to the school—and learn to delegate as much of the remainder as you can to the administrative team. Your role as Head's PA / Leadership Support should be that—supporting the leadership of the school in the best way possible.

When you delegate a task, use the three principles of delegation:

- Ensure the team member knows and understands the results expected;
- Give them the responsibility to complete the work to your satisfaction, while you maintain the ultimate responsibility and ownership of the tasks; and

- Ensure that the level of authority which you delegate to them is consistent with the team member's usual level of responsibility and role.

Essential Qualities for Leadership

- Enthusiasm. Can you think of any leader who lacks enthusiasm? It is very hard to do so, isn't it?
- Integrity. This is the quality that makes people trust you. And trust is essential in all human relationships – professional or private. 'Integrity' means both personal wholeness and adherence to values outside yourself – especially goodness and truth.
- Toughness. Leaders are often demanding people, uncomfortable to have around because their standards are high. They are resilient and tenacious. Leaders aim to be respected, but not necessarily popular.

- Fairness. Effective leaders treat individuals differently but equally. They do not have favourites. They are impartial in giving rewards and penalties for performance.
- Warmth. Cold fish do not make good leaders. Leadership involves your heart as well as your mind. Loving what you are doing and caring for people are equally essential.
- Humility. This is an odd quality, but characteristic of the very best leaders. The opposite to humility is arrogance. Who wants to work for an arrogant manager? The signs of a good leader are a willingness to listen and a lack of an overweening ego.
- Confidence. Confidence is essential. People will sense whether or not you have it. So developing self-confidence is always the preliminary to becoming a leader. But don't let it become overconfidence, the first station on the track leading to arrogance.





What are we to do?

Some musings on the current state of education in the UK and around the world, from English teacher Diane Solomon.

What are we to do?

A welcome smile in the morning, 'put your proper shoes on'...'put your tie on'... parents rushing off getting to work or simply happy in the knowledge they're dropping their darlings off to be educated. Is this indeed happening?

Schools are cutting down more and more on administration staff – the administration and teaching assistant staff are being asked more and more to fill in and take on roles heretofore reserved for more staff.

Note my repetition of 'more'! Can we really survive effectively with 'less'?

What are we to do?

As an English teacher I find myself more and more beleaguered by

photocopying, chasing up funding for activities, struggling to order stationery and other requirements facilitating teaching and learning, decorating classrooms, etc.

What are we to do?

The reprographics lady is also in charge of health and safety at the school. She is going crazy trying to get teachers to fill out health and safety online training activities. They are running around unwilling, unable and struggling to manage.

A group of my year 11s have told me that the reduction in administrative staff means that the reception is often unmanned at lunch time; students can go out and do. They have complained that there are students who go out and smoke around the corner.

What are we to do?

The schools are stretched to the limit. They have come up with some innovative and ingenious plans: use

parents, use university volunteer students, make the existing Teaching Assistants work longer with more responsibilities and the PAs work extremely unsociable hours, give admin staff other responsibilities; responsibilities that would never have fitted into their requirements before and outside of education would be unheard of. We even have Accounts staff and PAs phoning and visiting parents' homes in order to check up on attendance.

What are we to do?

Recently in the Guardian an educational expert was quoted as saying, about teachers: "My belief is that high systems of accountability and scrutiny may improve the bottom 10% of teachers but it stifles the rest. It takes away their autonomy and creativity and that drives away the best people." Wise words but this goes for all the staff in our schools; we need people to be allowed to get on with their jobs – allowing them some

movement out of the parameters of their prescribed job.

When people are allowed freedom to decide they usually improve in productivity and attitude.

We need teachers and administrative staff communicating and working together more. This needs to be facilitated by a 'can do attitude' rather than a restrictive, 'job worth' attitude.

Recently an email went out from the wonderful reprographics lady begging for teachers to volunteer to be Health and Safety Monitors in my school. After much pressure I agreed to go on the training. This does not pay any more and perhaps my reason for doing it is not completely noble: I feel that I need to do extra (outside of teaching and all that, that entails) or my 'boss' will start to think I am not pulling my weight.

Consider that I already: plan and prepare lessons, give extensive feedback, contact parents, put marks on the system, report good and bad behaviour, do duties around the school, run two afternoon revision sessions a week, help out in two of my free sessions for other teachers who

are struggling with bad behaviour in their lessons, attend and present professional development sessions, and a myriad of other sundry activities, for all my students and the school.

Because the reprographics lady cannot possibly handle all the photocopying I often have to do my own every single day.

What are we to do?

Much research and many reports have been written about how other schools in other countries are faring.

Many countries like France fare much better than ourselves in managing the stress levels of both teaching and admin staff simply (it would seem) by making pupils and parents more responsible for their education.

While researching in Italy I discovered that teachers did little to no marking. Assessments were held quarterly and swapped between schools to be marked. If a pupil does badly it is considered that the pupil has not put in the effort and the parents do not blame the school at all.

The administrative staff in Italy are

also more involved with the teachers, parents and general running of the school. The whole educational community seems happier with pupils being prepared to start their own businesses or go off to university by the age of 18.

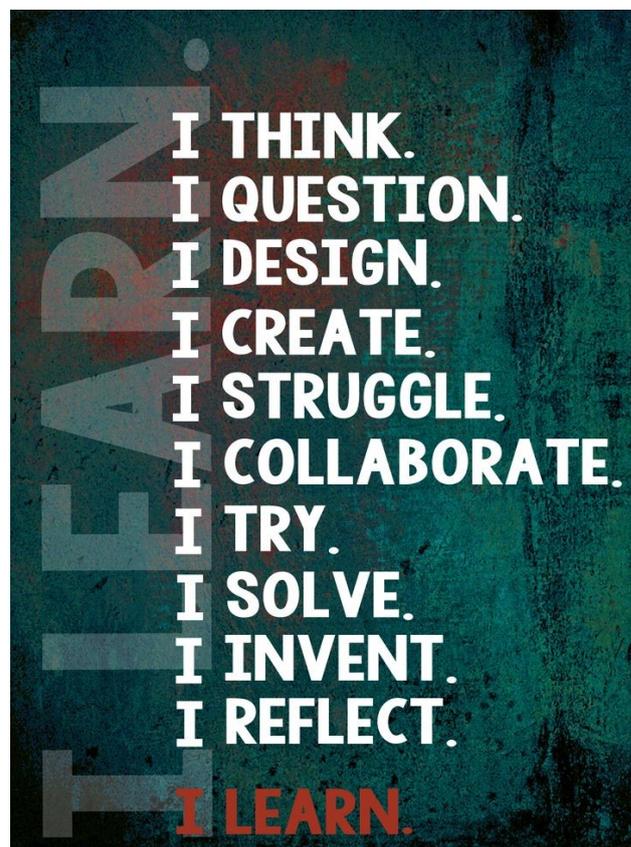
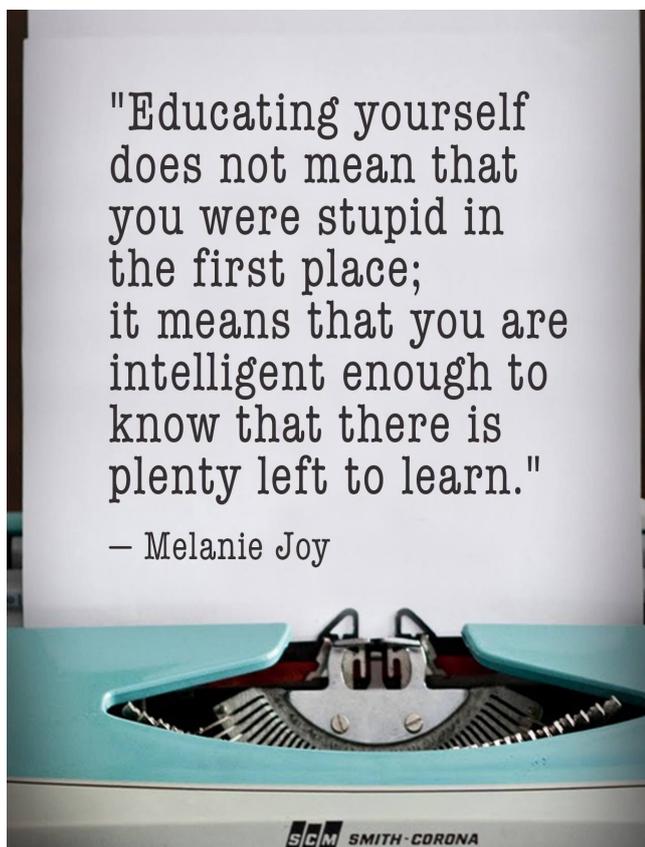
Japan is often cited as having one of the best education systems in the world – sadly this does not measure the high rate of suicide in young people and their deep unhappiness at the stress and pressure.

A friend working in South Korea told me that their pupils had to clean the classrooms at the end of the day.

When I've castigated pupils here in the UK for littering and making a mess their rote answer is: 'the cleaners do the job – that's their job.' This is unacceptable that we are allowing this attitude to breed.

What are we to do?

Diane Solomon is a secondary school English teacher spreading her time working in Nottingham and North Wales, and has previously taught across the UK and South Africa .





To be or not to be

Who are you? Have you looked at yourself recently to see what your strengths and your weaknesses are? Michele Thwaits poses some vital questions and encourages us all to look at ourselves more closely.

Are you confident in yourself or do you have insecurities?

Do you think you are a positive influence on the people around you, or do you give off negative energy?

Do others know who you really are?

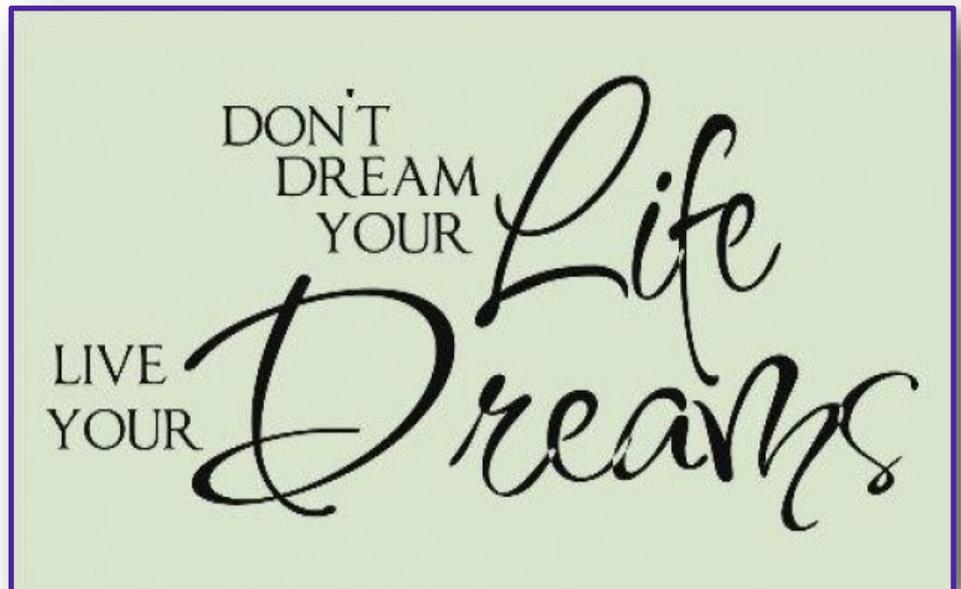
And most importantly, do you know who you really are?

What do Susan Boyle, Paul Potts and JK Rowling all have in common? Well they are all British for one, their success did not come overnight or easily and they were not lucky enough to have instant fame and recognition in the spotlight.

You watched the show Britain's got Talent. What was your impression of Susan and Paul when you first saw them? Probably not very good just from what you saw. Right?

And yet, Paul went on to win Britain's got Talent in 2007 and Susan in 2009.

Both of them were bullied at school and yet despite that, they won one of the biggest shows in the world.



JK Rowling won her fame, as you know, from the Harry Potter series – she too did not have a very happy childhood.

"The soul is placed in the body like a rough diamond, and must be polished or the lustre of it will never appear" - Daniel Defoe

You may be somewhat frustrated, troubled, down in the dumps on the surface but you know, everyone I have met is truly extraordinary. And yes, you are one of those people. Hidden deep down inside of everyone, including you, is the human spirit. That is your diamond and it is always there. YOU are a unique individual. If we were all the same, I am pretty sure this world would be a little boring.

For many of us, time can be tough. And it is during those times that we can fully appreciate our capacity for endurance and how bright our spirit can be. We need to polish that diamond within us all the time. No one else can, only you. So how can we move forward and be the best we can be?

Know what you want

You may have a talent that you are dying to express and develop. You know what you would like to be doing, want to be happier, want to communicate better with others, have more fulfilment in the workplace.

Wishing or thinking about it is not going to make it happen. You need to have a conviction so strong that you can base your life on it. Go with your gut feel.



For years I wanted to work for myself – I want to go into training and speaking full time. Yes there were times I doubted it would ever happen – there were times I was scared to take the leap of faith – I was worried about financial security. Many, many thoughts went through my mind and I just never got round to doing it. And then I was retrenched!

That was the kick start I needed to get my act together and I had to take that leap of faith and get out there and just do it.

Engage with your intention

Nurture your vision every day. See, feel, hear how you will be experiencing fulfilment of the life you want. Use your imagination – dream it, believe it, achieve it!

If I asked you to close your eyes and just imagine where you dream or envision yourself to be – where would you be? What would you be doing? What would you be you feeling in that moment? Are you tingling all over your body? Are you smiling? What do you see? Is your picture clear or fuzzy?

You need to truly believe in what you want to do because if you don't, no matter what hurdles are on the path you will see them as a permanent block.

A positive and confident person sees those hurdles as a little hiccup, a hill to step up and over and carry on. No matter what hurdle comes your way, remain focused on your goal, on your dream – the light is there at the end of the tunnel and as you get closer to it, it gets bigger and bigger – it never dies.

Practice your passion

If you have a talent – keep working with it. If you want to be happier, do things that make you happy.

Be willing to learn, practice, improve and make mistakes from time to time. Yes, make those mistakes. Your intention will speak volumes.

You want fulfilment – adjust your attitude. I have seen what happens to someone who continually

complains, always sees themselves as the victim and is never happy. Moan, moan, moan. It is not a nice person to be around – don't be that person.

“Nothing will work unless YOU do. Illuminate!”- Maya Angelo

If you don't make it happen, no one else will. If you want to see change, you need to start with the change. If you want to communicate better, you need to start changing the way you communicate.

If you want fulfilment, you need to start by doing something for others and putting a smile on their faces and pretty soon you will be smiling too.

It all starts with YOU. No one else. The choices you make define you. So if you are making bad choices, don't be surprised that nothing is going the way it should in your life.

Make the right choices – move in the right circles – go in the right direction – you need to be happy and content with yourself and your life – make it happen!

Raise your energy – turn up the heat

Love yourself and be grateful for everything you have in your life, right now.

Learn to forgive (and forget) and laugh at the mistakes you make along the way. They are not fatal. Many a wealthy man/woman today has made many mistakes – they just carried on till they got it right.

Feel that enthusiasm each and every day for your vision – as if it has already happened. Stay open for the remarkable to take place. And it will!

When I talk about the work I do, the deep desire I have to help others and share my experiences, I bubble, I smile, my whole body tingles all over – I am excited – I am happy – I am confident – I believe in what I am doing – I feel freaking amazing! (And yes I am smiling as I am writing this to you).

“There are two ways of living your

life. One is as though nothing is a miracle; the other is as though everything is a miracle” – Albert Einstein

How are you living your life? Life itself is a miracle don't you agree? If you are not seeing your life as a miracle – wake up! Smell the roses! Look around you! Look in the mirror – YOU are a miracle. YOU are unique. YOU are special. YOU are one of a kind. Be proud!

Gather positive people around you

Like attracts like. Enthusiasm rubs off on you – it is infectious, just like a smile. At the very least, spend time with people who are supportive and for you. Enrich yourself by getting to know others who are actively creating the best for themselves – learn from them.

They say you are associated by the company you attract and keep. They also say treat others as you would have done unto you. Rather say treat others as they would like to be treated. The wheel turns – what goes around, comes around. What are you attracting? What are you giving out? What are you radiating?

Get rid of the clutter

Clean out. You will feel liberated and free. So what is holding you back from going for your dream? What is your fear? What baggage are you carrying within yourself that is holding you back? Get rid of it. Let it go. Lighten the load so that you can move forward with ease.

Organise yourself for success

Find ways of dealing with the necessities of your life so that you are not distracted. Only agree to what you will actually do. Learn to say NO.

I know of someone who just can't say NO yet they complain about how unhappy they are and blame the person they can't say no to. You only have to say it once.

Don't set time limits

Why limit yourself? Go beyond. Do

more. Stretch yourself. Learn to live in the present moment. There will be times you will need to act and then times when to hold back.

There will also be times when you need to speak and then times when to just be quiet. As time goes on you will know which is which at the right time and right moment.

Use your time wisely. It is amazing what you can do when you just let yourself go and do it. No holding back.

Believe in yourself, believe in your vision

Don't doubt yourself. You have your dream, you have your vision – it remains just that until you actually do it. Make it a reality – make it a goal and work towards it. YOU can do it.

Treasure yourself

Look after yourself – take care of yourself. Eat foods that are good for your body, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep, exercise regularly, make time to have fun and relax – stay focused on your vision and your intention.

Taking care of your health is a wise investment of your time and attention.

YOU have the power to choose who you want to be. Be the greatest, grandest and the best you can be.

*Dream it
With all your mind!*

*Believe it
With all your heart!*

*Achieve it
With all your might!*

This is a quote I live by daily and keep reminding myself. It is possible, you are possible. Nothing is impossible. It may take time to get there, but I did it. I was specific in my goals and what I wanted, and I got it.

YOU can do it, just believe in yourself!

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

How do you recognise success?

MaryEllen Tribby, Founder/CEO WorkingMomsOnly.com, created her “Success Indicator” which is renowned throughout the training world as a leading indicator for identifying successful and unsuccessful behavioural traits.

EDPA repeats her original article here, with permission.

A few months ago I spoke at an event that Steve Wozniak also spoke at. As you can imagine, when it was time for Steve's session, it was jam-packed. Packed with attendees, vendors and all the other speakers.

As I sat there and listened to Steve poignantly share the story of Apple and his relationship with Steve Jobs, I was enthralled. He started from their middle school years and went right up until the present, after Steve Jobs' passing.

It seemed like he did not leave out a single detail. He just talked. There was no power point presentation, there were not even note cards -- he just told his story from his heart. What struck me the most was not

Steve Wozniak's extreme brilliance or his exuberant passion.

No, what struck me the most was his overwhelming sense of gratitude. His gratitude for having the opportunity to make the world a better place. To help us all to be able to communicate with loved ones, to run our businesses better and to have an enhanced life.

That evening I had the opportunity to sit with Steve at dinner. This was one of the smartest individuals I have ever met, and he was literally thanking all of us at the dinner table for allowing him to create some of the best technology in the world.

This experience prompted me to go

back and examine a chart I created a year ago about the characteristic traits of successful people vs. those of unsuccessful people.

I have enhanced that chart and added traits that I believe to be some of the most important because nothing in life is satanic.

This chart was inspired and composed after meeting and working with some of the smartest, most successful entrepreneurs in the world, many of whom are dear friends.

The following is that chart I compiled of characteristics, traits and behaviors of successful people vs. unsuccessful people.

Drum roll please . . .

THE SUCCESS INDICATOR

By MaryEllen Tribby

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

- Have a sense of gratitude
- Compliment
- Forgive others
- Accept responsibility for their failures
- Keep a journal
- Want others to succeed
- Keep a "to-be" list
- Set goals and develop life plans
- Continuously learn
- Operate from a transformational perspective
- Give other people credit for their victories
- Read everyday
- Talk about ideas
- Share information and data
- Exude joy
- Embrace change
- Keep a "to-do/project" list

- Have a sense of entitlement
- Criticize
- Hold a grudge
- Blame others for their failures
- Say they keep a journal but really don't
- Think they know it all
- Operate from a transactional perspective
- Secretly hope others fail
- Don't know what they want to be
- Never set goals
- Take all the credit of their victories
- Watch TV everyday
- Fear change
- Fly by their seat of their pants
- Talk about people
- Horde information and data
- Exude anger



PA Interview

“Julia”, a primary school secretary, answers our questions about her role. She’s asked for her details, school and location to be kept anonymous.

EDPA: Hi Julia—can you tell us, briefly, what is your job?

Julia: I am a School Secretary at a very small village primary school with a very small number of staff.

My responsibilities are basically whatever needs to be done, from administering the school dinners to completing the school census for the Education Department.

I’m responsible for everything from booking and arranging school trips to doling out first aid to children with scraped knees.

I also order stationery and any other supplies needed for the school,

arrange for contractors to come in and service the alarm systems, complete repairs and do anything else the head teacher needs me to do.

How did you get into it?

I’ve always wanted to work in a school (like I would imagine many school admins out there were, I was brought up reading Mallory Towers!) and thought of being a teacher when I was at school but I was too impatient to be out earning so that didn’t happen.

I have a Business Studies qualification, O levels, secretarial qualifications and my ECDL and these are definitely necessary for the job, plus I’m always keen to learn new skills and new computing tips that can save time in my busy day.

Jobs in school admin are popular with mums for obvious reasons and not always easy to come by but I had been the volunteer secretary for the

school playgroup for a couple of years so I was already known to the school when I applied for my current job.

Can you describe a typical day to us?

There is no such thing as a typical day!

Today I started by sorting out the day’s numbers for dinners, prepared the menus for next week’s lunches and distributed them to the children.

I made sure all the paperwork was ready for the school trip one class was going on.

I helped with the ongoing arrangements for the Summer Tea Party and the arrangements for the imminent arrival of two visitors from our African partner school.

I’m a qualified First Aider so I also spent some time looking after a child with a bleeding leg.

I fixed a computer error for the head teacher, played with the school cat, and ordered stationery.

In between all this I answered the phone, sorted out all the queries, dealt with various problems that parents came to me with and said a sad farewell to our French assistant

who is leaving us during the half-term break.

Oh! And I think I dealt with about 100 emails along the line, both mine and the head teacher's!

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love the fact that every day is different and nearly every day is fun.

The children are lovely for the most part and I enjoy the contact with them while not having to actually teach them.

Some days are challenging and need decision-making on my part when the head teacher is not there. Other days are pure escapism - we had a whole school Tudor Christmas one year when we all got to wear costumes all day!

After this half-term break, we are having a day where everyone is dressing up as superheroes, so I'm currently trying to work out who I will be. We involve ALL the staff in these sort of activities, and at some point in the day I'll be visiting the Reception Class to ask them to help me find my superhero cape, and to tell them a story and answer their questions.

It's such a small school that there are quite a few instances like this during the school year where I get to be involved with the pupils possibly far more than a school secretary would be in a much larger school.

And the least enjoyable part of your job?

I honestly can't think of anything I don't like about my job. I look forward to going in every day.

Outside of the job itself, living in a small village can be a challenge sometimes because we staff are constantly seen as 'available' to the local community when we go shopping or out to the park.

Parents constantly stop me in the street to ask me questions about school matters, and it's hard to not turn round and say to them "please go away and leave me alone until Monday, this is MY weekend, my time with my family."

My husband often tells me off when I feel like this, he calls me a grouch because of it. But he's from the village originally, so he is used to the situation. I moved here when I married him, so I'm still getting used to it, I suppose, but I'm definitely more of a "city gal" who wants to maintain a bit of distance between home life and work, if at all possible.

What are the common misconceptions that people have about the work you do?

I think people probably assume that all I do is typing and answering the phone but those are probably the smallest part of my job. I think they would be amazed at how much is involved in running a school and how much of that devolves on the School Secretary, especially in a small school like ours.

What are the main skills you need to work as a school secretary?

Apart from the obvious office-based skills, I think you need a sense of humour, the willingness to take on any task, the ability to prioritise, to be efficient and well organised and to be able to think on your feet and adapt to whatever a particular day calls for.

You've got to be diplomatic and confidential, and able to take any stresses and challenge that are thrown at you, meet any problem head on.

Good interpersonal skills are essential as you deal with a wide range of children, parents, staff, governors, visitors, sales people, contractors - the list is endless and you need to be able to form good relationships with them all.

Tell us a little about the benefits that come with the job.

An obvious benefit, particularly for women like me who have small children, is that you (more or less) work school hours and have the school holidays off work.

Pay is reasonable, depending on the grade of your job and there is a certain amount of job security as the school will always need admin staff.

For me the main benefit is the

enormous job satisfaction, the involvement in the life of the school which in turn means involvement in the community.

What advice would you give someone wanting to break into this career?

There is understandably a lot of competition for jobs in schools because of the hours, holidays etc.

Apart from the usual office qualifications and experience I would say that if you can demonstrate an interest in school life or working with children e.g. volunteering with your local PTA or playgroup, Brownies, Guides, sports team, etc. It will give you an advantage over other candidates.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

I very much hope I will continue working in my little school at least until my two children finish secondary school age and head off towards college. It's a role that suits my lifestyle really well, and apart from anything else, it's the best job I have ever had.

AND JUST FOR FUN...

First in the office or last to leave?

First in and (apart from the Head) last to leave.

Tea or coffee?

Coffee.

School canteen or packed lunch?

Packed lunch unless I was feeling lazy, then it's school lunch.

The lift or the stairs?

We only have stairs.

Out after work or straight home to bed?

Neither - straight home to housework and dog walking!

We believe here at EDPA that it's good to share. If you'd like to be the EDPA PA Interviewee sometime, please get in touch!



Some quick words of wisdom

Some gentle food for thought and words of wisdom for your office wall or door—for you to keep, and to give to the pupils in your school.

BEST DOCTORS IN THE WORLD:

1. Sunlight
2. Sleep
3. Exercise
4. Diet
5. Self-confidence
6. Friends
7. Laughter
8. Love

Maintain them in all stages of Life and enjoy a healthy life.

The older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting for.

Love while you still can and be grateful.

AS WE GET OLDER...

- As we grow older, and hence wiser, we slowly realize that wearing a £300 or a £30.00 watch—they both tell the same time.
- Whether we carry a £300 or a £30.00 wallet/handbag—the amount of money inside is the same.
- Whether we drink a bottle of £300 or £15 wine—the hangover is the same.
- Whether the house we live in is 300 or 3000 sq. ft.—loneliness is the same.
- Whether you drive a £8,000

Honda or a £80,000 Benz—they both serve the same purpose.

- You will realise that your true inner happiness does not come from the MATERIAL things of this world.
- This means that, when you have mates, buddies and old friends, brothers and sisters, who you chat with, laugh with, talk with, have sung songs with, talk about north-south-east-west or heaven and earth—THIS is true happiness!!

UNDENIABLE FACTS OF LIFE:

1. Don't educate children to be rich. Educate them to be happy. So when they grow up they will know the value of things not the price.
2. Best awarded words: "Eat your food as your medicines. Otherwise you have to eat medicines as your food."
3. The one who loves you will never leave you because even if there are 100 reasons to give up on you, he or she will find one reason to hold on.
4. There is a big difference between a human being and being human. Only a few really understand it.
5. You are loved when you are born. You will be loved when you die. In between, You have to manage!
6. If you just want to Walk Fast, Walk Alone! But if you want to Walk Far,



- Classroom management styles, rewards, sanctions and behaviour controls used within the school; and
- Extra-Curricular Activities.

You should also think about any other elements that could be a useful part in the Induction Programme for new staff—including introducing them to the various members of the administrative team so that they know who to go to with various queries. (Quite often, if you don't do this, YOU—the school PA—end up being the “be all and end all” of queries for all the new staff.)

You could also include information on:

- Areas with which mentors may support/help newly appointed teachers;
- Extra Information like sponsors, local businesses / universities which are involved in the school on a regular basis;
- Information about the governors—particularly which ones have responsibility for the subject area which the new teacher will be joining; and
- Information for new governors themselves about joining the school.

So—start pulling together all the information you can. Then you can start compiling an induction pack. For the most part this can be provided

electronically to new staff—on a memory stick or a Cloud storage folder, for example—but some items will be better if provided in printed format.

Ideal contents for your school's induction pack:

This is by no means an exhaustive list and you may think of a whole range more items which are pertinent to your school. But it's at least a good starter list:

- An Induction Procedures Checklist—detailing the various people whom the new member of staff should be meeting with over the first few days and for what reason
- Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Blank timetable sheet
- Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Procedures
- Class list
- Code of Practice for Special Needs
- Curriculum Documents Format
- Curriculum Guidance for the school's stages—KS1/2/3/4
- Curriculum Teams/TLR Teams
- Directed time
- Educational Visits Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Holiday list

- INSET notes
- Library information
- List of important contact numbers and email addresses
- Literacy framework
- Map / plan of the school and its catchment area
- Medical register
- National curriculum handbook
- Numeracy framework
- Planning master sheets
- Policies file (including list of all policies and statements)
- Pupil records
- Reading scheme
- Registration procedures
- School brochure
- School Development Plan
- School Emergency Evacuation and Closure procedures
- School rules/Code of Conduct
- School timesheets
- SEN register
- Staff absence procedure
- Staff handbook
- Staff structure / list including photographs, roles and responsibilities—with particular links to the new member of staff highlighted
- Staff meeting dates
- Teachers reading record notes
- Timetables
- List of any other policies which are not included, plus details of where to obtain them from the school's network
- For new Governors, you should include a Governors Induction Checklist
- For teaching staff who have an allocated teaching room, an inventory listing of equipment in their room.



Is there anything I've missed? Email in and let us know!



The magazine for Education PAs & Admins

EDPA

Why continue subscribing to EDPA?

Editor Angela Garry writes on why you should maintain your subscription to EDPA.

This issue of EDPA was in preparation during and just after the June 2017 election. Where it was inevitable that, whichever party won, budgets for schools are likely to be smaller and smaller in the new future.

We'll be sending out renewal invoices in the coming weeks—and I would urge you to renew your subscription in order to keep adding to your Continual Professional Development throughout the school year.

In some schools, you may find your Finance department telling you “We can't afford it” or asking you if you really need the magazine. I'd ask you to tell them how vital it is that you receive some form of CPD in your role—and that you tell them the value for money which can be gained from renewing your subs for the leading magazine for PAs and Admins in education.

The subscription cost for the magazine has remained the same for the past two years—and is actually £2 per year cheaper than it was from the previous publishers who ran the magazine from 2001 until 2015 when I took over ownership.

With the school year being 39 weeks in the UK, your subscription to EDPA costs less than £1 per week. Each 32-page issue (barring the front cover and contents page) provides 30 pages of CPD info, relevant to furthering you in your role. That's 90 pages per year at

less than 40 pence per page. With training courses around the country priced in the hundreds of pounds, **where else can you buy a year's CPD for £35?**

If your school tell you that they cannot afford to maintain your subscription, how much is your development worth to you? Can you manage to pay for it yourself, by setting aside £1 a week?

I worked in a school myself as a PA, for over 5 years—and EDPA (under its former name of NAHPA) was an absolute lifeline for me. It offered me a connection to other PAs and admins working in schools elsewhere, so that I could learn from them and share experiences. That's why I took on being Editor for the magazine in 2012 and then threw myself into the financial whirlwind of running a magazine and keeping the publication open when the previous owners decided to close it down.

With just three issues per year, the magazine has deliberately never aimed to be a vehicle to repeat the latest advice from Ofsted inspection teams or any country's education departments—you will receive this sort of information via your headteacher and your school's Senior Leadership Team.

The aims of the magazine remain:

- **to inspire and motivate PAs and Admins working in education,**
- **to offer relevant training information,**
- **to look at challenges faced by education PAs and Admins,**

- **to encourage PAs and Admins to share their experiences and learn from others,**
- **to point subscribers in the right direction for useful resources for CPD,**
- **to highlight the importance of the role of PA and Admins so that the roles get the recognition they deserve as being truly professional.**

And don't forget—along with the magazine, **there's also the EDPA/NAHPA networking discussion group on LinkedIn**, which is a private discussion space which you can use to reach out to other EDPA readers. The group is hidden from Google and confidentiality rests within the group's members: it's a confidential, secure space within which to discuss issues of concern or interest in your roles, without being overlooked by others outside of our community.

Please do use the space—post a message to introduce yourself, add a comment about your favourite CPD resource, mention something you've learned in your role which might help someone else in their role. In effect, post whatever you feel is of relevance to EDPA readers. It's a networking space, so get out there and network!

Obviously, I appreciate that all of our readers are busy people. We don't expect you to be spending hours on LinkedIn each week—but I suggest you set aside a minimum of 15 minutes or so per week on your professional development—and LinkedIn is a great space to do this. New subscribers are sent details on joining by email—contact us if you need them again.

Isipho Update

We're delighted to bring you an update from Isipho student Lerato:

My Journey with Isipho **by Lerato Sikhosana**

Isipho has been nothing but the best gift to my life. Isipho came, Isipho saw our potential, and Isipho loved and changed our lives.

My day one transformed into a bliss the moment I entered Redefine premises. Automatically I had hope when I met loving and humble interviewers who were there to interview us and shortlist successful candidates who were going to be the first beneficiaries for Isipho.

The very same moment my name was shortlisted, I knew that my life was going to change. Life has been so crucial and after I was officially introduced to Isipho, I started to see things in a different perspective and I started to believe that the world has possibilities and that everything has its own time.

I am humble and I would like to say I am forever grateful to our loving, caring, and inspirational mentors from Isipho namely: Teri Wells (Director), Anel Martin (Director), Susan Engelbrecht (Senior Academic Advisor), Cathy Harris, Lize Momberg and Michele Thwaites (mentors).

I am where I am today because of Isipho. The impact that Isipho brought to my life is indescribable and I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

I am humble and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity and I am thankful for the support from Susan Engelbrecht who showed support in all aspects and made me believe that



Lerato Sikhosana with her mentor Susan Engelbrecht



***** STOP PRESS****
Iris Athalia after her graduation ceremony

hard work pays off at the end of the day.

I cannot forget to thank our big international sponsors Executive Secretary magazine, BMTG LTD and our mentors from the secretary network who have been networking with us and giving us mentorship sessions through skype and dedicating their own time to better our careers and our lives holistically.

It's been a great and rewarding opportunity that I will never forget in my entire life. College life hasn't been so easy but with the endless support

from Susan Engelbrecht I will never look back. I am able to stand firm and project my positive thoughts because I am now a brand manufactured from a big brand known as Isipho.

I am now employed by Discovery because of Isipho.

I am thankful to Discovery and the supportive employees that I cannot mention all here. Their amazing support truly made a difference in my life - during college and now.

Lastly I would like to thank my Mentors Teboho Motubei and Mam

Angie from Orange Farm Skills Centre for the support and granting me the opportunity to be a mentor volunteer before they gave me application forms to apply for Isipho. I will continue to grow and give back to different communities.

'Isipho' is a Swahili word, meaning 'the gift'.

Isipho Admin say: "We are a Non-Profit company offering bursaries to aspiring personal assistants in South Africa: a charity shaping the PAs of the future. Our Mission is that we strive to select, fund and groom the best and brightest candidates to enter the PA profession and set them

up for future success. Providing opportunities where none existed. We want to leave a legacy! Veni vidi amavi."

For more information on how you and your school could become involved in making a difference for someone in South Africa and helping them to create a new and brighter future for them and their family, please visit www.isiphoadmin.org.za

Isipho is changing the world: one life at a time.

**** STOP PRESS ****

Just before going to press, EDPA has received some wonderful good news from our friends in the Isipho team in South Africa.

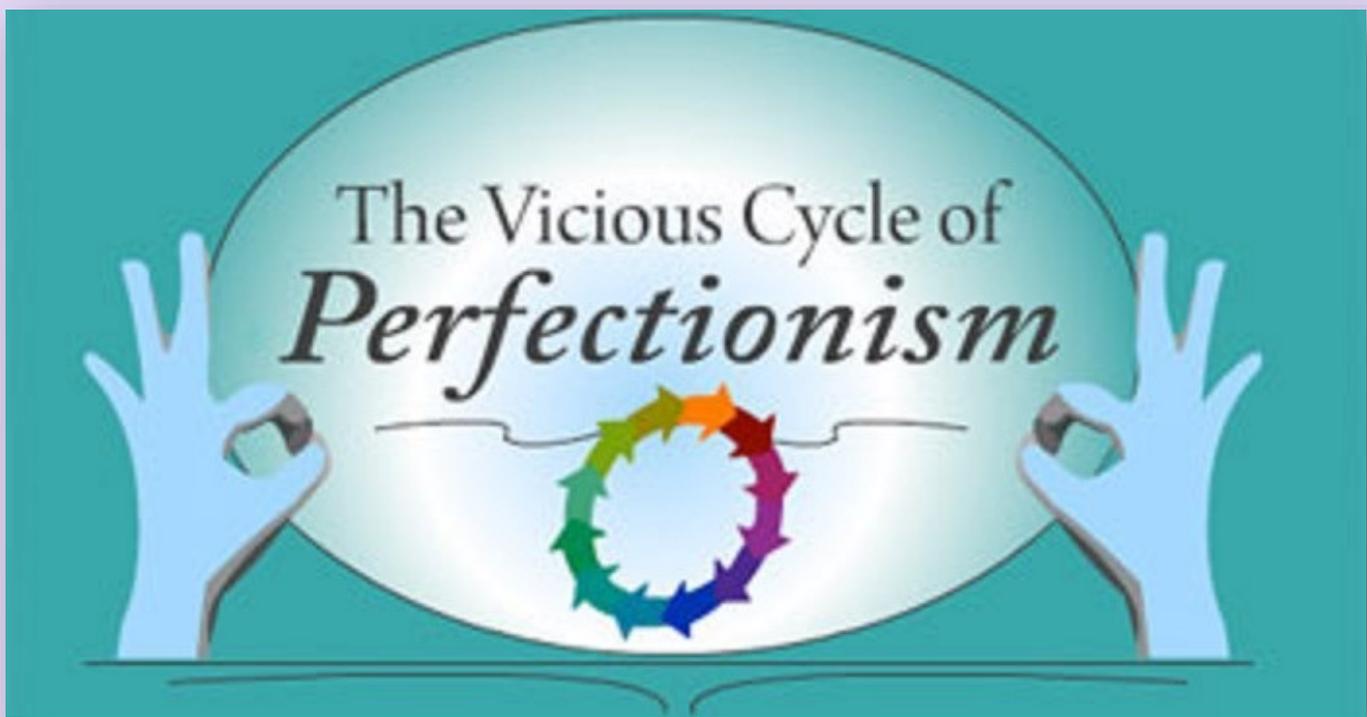
"Iris graduated today! Isipho is changing lives. What a blessing. Thank you sponsors, friends, mentors and everyone who helped in big and small ways. It takes a village to raise a child." (see photo)

EDPA offers our congratulations to Iris Athalia graduating from college. She is now employed in Administration at Gauteng Department of Social Development.

What IS a PA?

The UK National PA Survey asked "What IS a PA?" and received the following collective answers. Do you recognise yourself among the many roles fulfilled by PAs?





Perfectionism Sabotage

Are you sabotaging yourself— or even endangering your mental health—by being a perfectionist?

We all want to do a good job. However, at what point do you take your perfectionism too far and end up causing yourself more problems?

Your task list ends up being longer, you avoid deadlines, and you frustrate yourself to no end.

There are a few things you can do to help to both change your approach, and turn the situation around.

What do you do well?

From a time perspective, list all the tasks you can do quickly and easily. This allows you to give yourself permission to do other things that are not as quick and easy as a step below the perfect level.

What is the big picture?

If you were to list everything you needed to complete (because of your perfectionist nature), you'd find that

it's a list that would always have tasks, and that you'd never be caught up.

This is probably not how you want to spend your life, is it?

Look at the goal – whether it's for just one project, one day, or one area of your life.

What does it entail? What is the bare minimum (and that means the absolute minimal steps you can take) to complete this?

Try this and see if there is any negative ramification. You may be surprised to find out that the level you expect is not what's actually needed to have a successful outcome.

What can you achieve today?

If you only had a set amount of time to get a certain number of things done – and you had no choice but to finish them, how would you do it?

Something would have to go – and that would be your perfectionism. You would plan your time, make one pass at everything, and then maybe come back for some review if you have time.

Share with someone the end product and ask for feedback.

Other than maybe an error here or there, you may get the thumbs up for a job well done.

Focus on today and forget about tomorrow or the next day.

What can you remove from the equation?

If you find that each day as you drive to work that the condition of the inside of your car bothers you (because it's a mess), ask someone else to get it taken care of.

If you have a portion of a project that you know will kick your perfectionism into high gear, ask someone else to help you with it (or completely take it over).

What benefit does professional help provide?

In medical circles, some doctors believe that 70% of the population has some form of bi-polar disorder.

This involves having high (manic) and

low (depressive) experiences that keep an individual from moving down a straight line.

When you work at lightning speed, you can be having a manic episode.

If you don't reach the level of perfectionism you want, you will feel like a failure leading to a depressive episode. You end up repeating this cycle.

You have one of two choices: let go of your own expectations and try to keep moving forward as close to the middle line as possible.

If you can't do this, seek professional help.

What can perfectionism mean to the students in your school?

In the past 15 years, researchers have been releasing alarming statistics on a sharp and steady increase in children's mental illness, which is now reaching epidemic proportions:

- 1 child in 5 has mental health problems
- 43% increase in ADHD
- 37% increase in teen depression
- 200% increase in suicide rate in 10 to 14 years olds

For perfectionists, life is an endless report card on accomplishments or looks. It's a fast and enduring track to unhappiness, and perfectionism is often accompanied by depression and eating disorders.

What makes perfectionism so toxic is that while those in its grip desire success, they are most focused on avoiding failure, so theirs is a negative orientation.

Perfection, of course, is an abstraction, an impossibility in reality, and often it leads to procrastination. There is a difference between striving for excellence and demanding perfection.

As adults, we must recognise that we can be the cause of perfectionism in children as we transmit it in small ways, some as silent as a raised eyebrow over a B rather than an A.

10 WAYS TO TELL IF YOU ARE A PERFECTIONIST

1. You are **highly conscious** and **hyper-critical** of mistakes.
2. You aim **to be the best** in everything you do, *even if* it is something that you are **not interested in**.
3. You spend **copious** amount of time to **perfect** something even *at the expense* of your well-being.
4. You set **absolute ideals**. There is only black and white, no grey.
5. You are your **harshest critic**. You beat yourself up over the smallest thing that goes wrong.
6. You **mull over outcomes** if they did not turn out as envisioned.
7. You are **defensive** towards **criticism** and have a **fear of failure** because they suggest imperfection.
8. You **only care** about achieving the **end goal**, paying no heed to the journey.
9. You have an **all-or-nothing** approach.
10. You are **conscious** of any situation which might give others the **perception** you are **not perfect**.

Perfection or Excellence?

Perfectionism

1. **Perfectionism** means thinking *less* of yourself because you earned a B+ instead of an A.
2. **Perfectionism** means being hard on yourself because you aren't equally talented in all sports.
3. **Perfectionism** means beating yourself up because you lost the student council election.

Pursuit of Excellence

1. **The Pursuit of Excellence** means thinking *more* of yourself for trying something new.
2. **The Pursuit of Excellence** means choosing some things you know you'll be good at—and others you know will be good for you or just plain fun.
3. **The Pursuit of Excellence** means congratulating yourself because you were nominated and deciding to run again next year—if that's what you want.



Coping with the stresses and strains...

A free chapter from Angela Garry's book "The PA & EA Circus: integrating the many parts of the Personal Assistant and Executive Assistant" - a professional development book for PAs, EAs, Secretaries and Admins in any industry or organisation.

Is the pressure of your role getting to you?

Time (or, more pertinently, not having enough of it) is often named as the number one concern for most people in the workplace. There is never enough time to accomplish everything, let alone managing all of the various priorities that PAs have to

deal with.

If in your role you have a continual, unrelenting stream of tasks, it can feel very daunting, as there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel.

Here are some of my tips to help maximise your effectiveness and make time work for you, whilst allowing yourself some time and space to de-stress a little.

Do something for you! Commit to including one task on your to-do list that is for you. Make a stop-off whilst on the way to the photocopier or elsewhere in the building, to say "hello" to another colleague in their office and ask them to lunch. Maybe your work area could use a little sprucing up, so straight after lunch do a 10 minute tidy round. Get up out of your chair during the mid-afternoon slump and take the walk you keep

saying you should be taking. Book a telephone call with your mentor to discuss your latest project. Or take a few minutes to log into LinkedIn, read some of the discussions in a PA / EA group, and answer someone's query.

Don't procrastinate. We always put off the toughest task until last, when, in fact, we should be doing just the opposite. Completing that tough task first provides a tremendous relief and can actually motivate us to a higher level, so that we work more efficiently and effectively on those tasks that aren't so hard.

Put it in writing. The simple act of putting words on a page (either on paper or your computer screen) allows you to see exactly what it is you have to do, and to prioritise the tasks. As we've seen earlier, the number of things that you can keep

track of at once is limited to a relatively small number. Neuroscientists recommend that, instead of trying to keep things in our memory, we should write things down – get it out of our brains and out there into the world. This is called externalising the memory, and it frees up the brain to be uncluttered and to leave space for you to think about the things you really want to think about. So make lists. Write stuff down.

Create your own due dates and ‘cut yourself some slack’. You will know in your heart of hearts whether or not you are a good manager of your own time. And since most of us are naturally *not*, why not start to include more realistic due dates with each of your listed tasks, based on your work habits. Build in a ‘buffer zone’ of extra time for certain tasks: for example, if you know that project X is due next Monday, and it will take you three days to complete, set a cushioned due date of five days rather than three. This will ensure that you start early enough and allow you two days extra to take into account any ‘unforeseen’ circumstances. If you actually can finish the task within the three days – or even within four – congratulate yourself and feel happy that you have completed it well before the deadline. It really is a case of mind over matter and therefore a much happier and healthier way to look at your work than to feel that you are always working up against yet another tight deadline.

Spend a few minutes on a task that you really enjoy. If you have a really difficult piece of work to complete and you feel stuck or like you are drowning in it – or you are working on a task which doesn’t hold your interest at all – consider stopping that task for just 15 minutes and doing something else. Spend five of those minutes making yourself a fresh cup of tea or coffee or going for a quick walk, then spend the remaining ten on a more pleasant or

quick-and-easy task. This can help to change your mood, making it easier to continue with the difficult task when you return to it. Quite often, taking a break and thinking about something different for a few minutes can give your brain time to review what you were doing and you can return to it reinvigorated – and hopefully you will.

Minimise time-wasting activities. Make shorter phone calls. Once you have dealt with their queries, thank visitors to your office for their time, and then see them out of the door swiftly and smoothly – don’t let them linger. If you need to stand over the photocopier for a length of time to copy some highly confidential documents, take your office mobile phone with you and make a few calls whilst you are waiting for the copying to finish, or make some notes on how to tackle your next tasks.

Just say ‘no’. There are only so many hours in a day, and if it cannot be done, it cannot be done. Even the Strongest Woman / Strongest Man in the circus can’t do everything all of the time. Admit to yourself that you are human (albeit super human!) and that, whilst you can get an enormous amount of work done, there are times when you just have to say ‘no’.

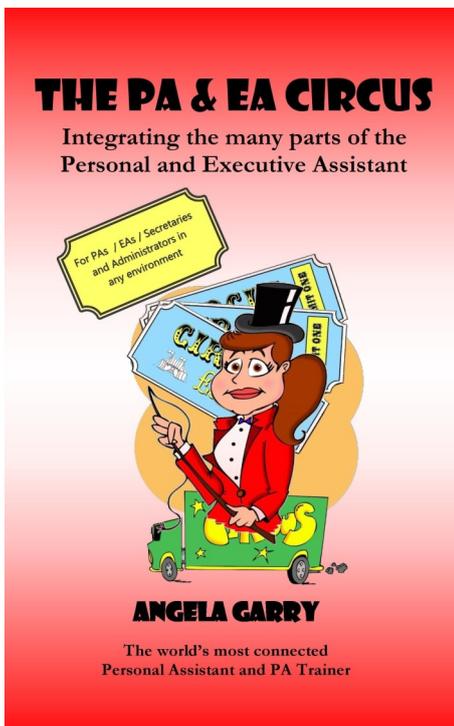
Plan a personal treat for your spare time. Make plans for some special personal time this weekend – it might be a massage, a day at the spa, a haircut, a good movie, a special meal or a night out with friends. Knowing you have a treat planned at the weekend can help you through the next few days, particularly if it is a stressful week at work.

Multi-tasking or switching? When we are doing several things at once, neuroscientists would claim that we are not actually multi-tasking, but switching from one task to another and back again, very quickly. It is claimed that the brain is not consecutively tasking but only sequentially tasking, and that we flit from one thought to the next very rapidly, giving us the illusion that what we’re doing is doing all these things at once – but that, just because we think

we’re doing something doesn’t mean we are. Personally, I’m not so sure about this. I know, for instance, that I can read a page of a book whilst singing along to a song on the radio, and that on many occasions when I used to do a lot of audio-typing, transcribing dictation, I would transcribe an audio recording with one headphone stuck in one ear whilst holding a telephone conversation with a colleague via the phone stuck against the other ear – without slowing down my transcription.

Use patterns to remember passwords: Passwords can be the bane of your life, if you let them. One for your online banking, one for your voicemail, another for your ATM card, your Amazon account, connecting into the parent portal at your child’s school, not counting your Windows log-in or webmail accounts passwords. It’s so easy to mix them up one against the other, or to forget them entirely – and then when re-setting them we often find that each system seems to have different requirements – some insist on at least one capital letter, one numerical digit, one “special” character, whilst others are more concerned with “*must be at least 8 characters*”, “*must not contain any one character repeated more than twice in succession*” or, horror of horrors “*must not be the same as any password used by you in this system in the last twelve months*”. Some passwords are assigned to you – others you must create for yourself. But don’t leave them written down anywhere they could be found!

So how on earth can you keep track of them? I asked a group of PAs some time ago what they do to keep track of their passwords. Some said they keep a list stored in a file on their computer. This, one of them said, was all very well and good, provided they could remember the password to the file (if they used a password protect it)! Others said that they keep groups of passwords and / or usernames in files that they store on their mobile



phones or on a Cloud storage facility. Which is great, until you lose your phone, someone finds it and then finds your file and hacks into your bank account. So you will need to decide for yourself on what method you use to keep track of your passwords.

Then there's the question of how to actually come up with new passwords... Some PAs reported that they went for patterns: for example, the first letter of each word from a sentence or the first line of a poem – followed by an arbitrary number (their

shoe size, their age when they got their first car, the number of children they have, etc.) Others went for mixing-up letters from the names of several loved ones. More still use pets' names or breeds, combined with the year they got the pet. Some PAs advocated adding a letter or two at the beginning or the end of their username to remind them of how they assigned the password for a particular account.

Whatever method you choose for creating a password, realistically you should not use any form of recognisable word – and you ought to not use that password on another account elsewhere, as if a hacker gets hold of your one and only password they have more chance of making things very difficult for you than if you have lots of different passwords relating to your different accounts on different machines, devices, websites, etc.

Take breaks at work: Many of us feel as though we are overloaded and overwhelmed by all the things that are happening and we can't stop work for even five minutes or we'll fall behind... The idea that if we don't take breaks, we are apparently being more productive. The neuroscience literature is very clear on this, and says that we NEED to take breaks, as there is a mode of our brain that is responsible for most of our creativity. the 'default mode network' or 'daydreaming mode'. This is

the part of the brain which hits the 'reset' button when you are stressed or have run into a brick wall in your work.

Bearing this in mind, give yourself an opportunity to enter that daydreaming mode every couple of hours or so at work – just for a few minutes. Read something – perhaps an article in a PA magazine or website, listen to music, look out of the window, get up from your desk and walk around, go and get a coffee or a cup of tea, take some paperwork down to the photocopier. Studies show that people who take regular breaks – and in some cases, naps of 10 or 15 minutes, although I'd recommend this only during your lunch break, not the rest of the working day!) – are more productive and more creative in their work, which more than makes up for the amount of time as breaks.

Being strong doesn't mean, however, that we cannot allow ourselves to be human. After all, we each have our own vulnerabilities, and feeling inadequate (when faced with a large project or an enormous 'to do' list) is actually quite a common feeling amongst us – so don't ever feel that you are the "only one" who is struggling with something. Do not hold yourself up against a fictitious view that everyone else is more capable and stronger than you are.

STRESS AND STRESSORS

Stress

- Response to perceived threats or challenges resulting from stimuli or events that cause strain

Stressors

- Stimuli that cause physiological, psychological, and emotional reactions at any time

Quick tips to learn a new skill



**Need to learn something now
(if not five minutes ago)?**

**According to EzineArticles.com
there are 5 simple techniques
you can use to learn
something faster.**

1. Repetition.

Doing something repeatedly helps your "muscle memory."

2. Listen to music.

Play it in the background to help you concentrate. Listening to Mozart is supposed to temporarily increase your intelligence.

3. Association.

Use mnemonics. Find a word or phrase and associate each letter (or initial letter of that word) with the topic you're learning.

4. Think in Pictures.

Some people learn by reading, others by seeing, and others by feeling. Memorizing in pictures may help you recall your thoughts faster.

5. Watch Videos.

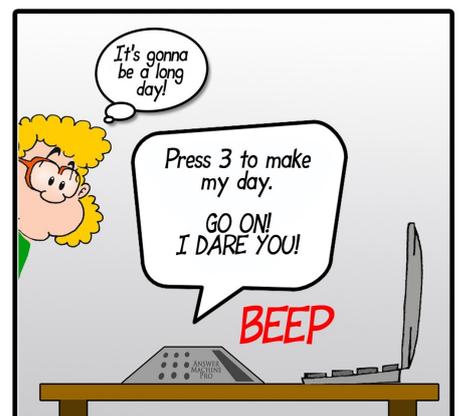
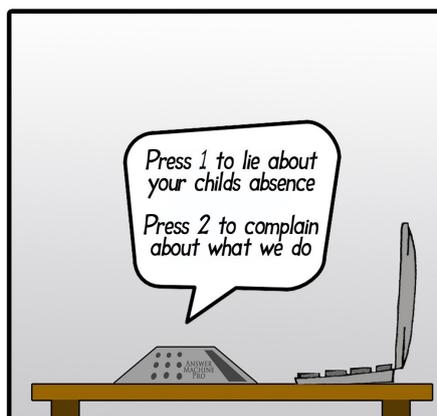
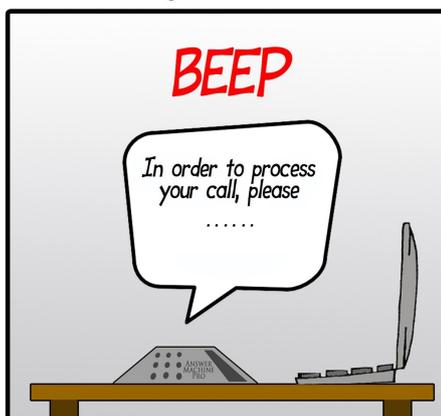
Seeing or watching others do a task or complete a process, then doing it yourself, brings you one step closer to having the new skill in your repertoire.

The EDPA cartoon

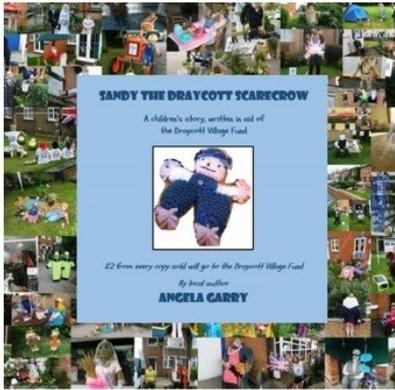
Our series continues on the life and times of a school PA, by talented teacher & illustrator Andy Case. This issue, the Headteacher has changed the school's voicemail message...

**Andy
Case**
Studios
andycasestudios@gmail.com

God's Right Hand by Andy Case

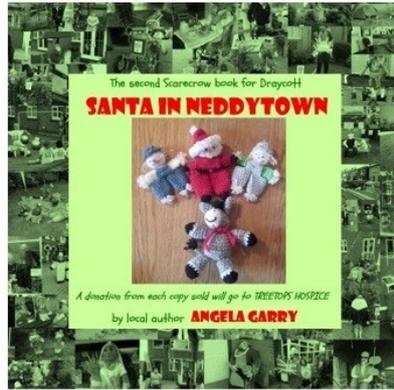


THE DRAYCOTT SCARECROW TRILOGY



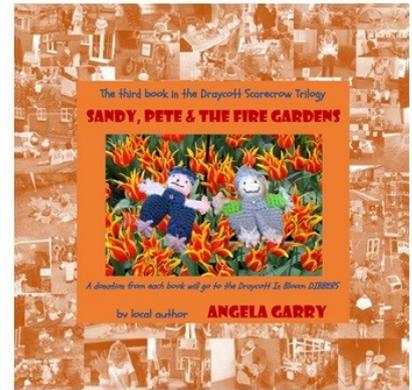
SANDY THE DRAYCOTT SCARECROW

proceeds to **Draycott Village Fund**
August 2016



SANTA IN NEDDYTOWN

proceeds to **Treetops Hospice**
December 2016



SANDY, PETE & THE FIRE GARDENS

proceeds to **Draycott in Bloom 'DIBBERS'**
June 2017



Editor's Update

Writing, writing, writing—and publishing! It's been a term of books...

My last log-in here was in February, where I was still feeling pretty unwell (and shaken) after having had a pulmonary embolism just before Christmas. I'd had to cancel two pieces of training work—the only times I've had to do this—as I simply wasn't fit enough to travel.

Since then, I've been recuperating and spent a wonderful week in Spain in March where the warmer weather made an enormous difference to how I physically felt as my lungs found it much less difficult to breathe than back home in chilly Blighty. Having soaked up a week of beautiful sunny

weather in Javea on the east coast of Spain, I then returned home to Derbyshire, landing at around 1am, to almost freezing temperatures. Immediately, I was hit by the cold any my lungs protested, making it very painful to breathe. Sadly, it felt that my break in Spain had been a case of "3 steps forward" and my return to home was "4 or 5 steps back" - and it took me nearly 3 weeks to get over the temperature difference!

Adjusting to new physical limitations, feeling exhausted most days, and not having much energy on a "good" day, has been pretty horrible. But looking at the alternative — that between 1/3 and 1/4 of pulmonary embolism sufferers die — I've kept trying to cheer myself up as much as possible,

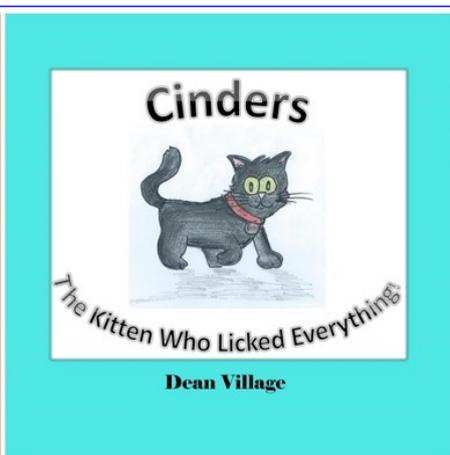
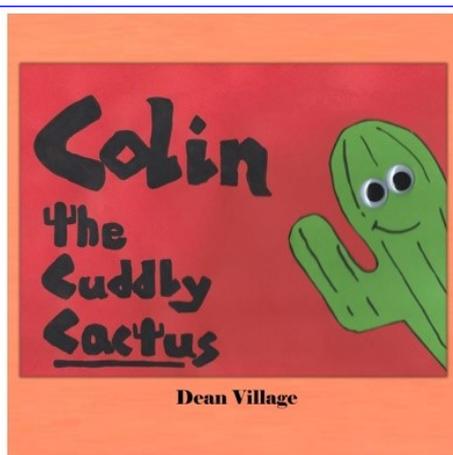
and not be too down in the dumps all the time. Hard work, I have to admit!

I received good news in May from my hospital consultant, who declared me safe enough to relaunch back into the real world. I'll be on anticoagulant medications for life now, but I'm OK with that as it should reduce the risk of recurrence to almost zero.

I've let myself do "treat" work for a while whilst building up more strength for delivering training work—and I've been concentrating on writing. I've finished my trilogy of charity-raising children's books for my village and have published two books by a local teaching assistant.

Meanwhile, training bookings are coming in for later in the year, and I'm confident I'm well enough now to carry them out successfully. I'm going to be heading to Coventry for a PA Away Day, to Ilkley for a school PAs meeting, to London to be the guest speaker at the Deloitte PA of the Year awards and to work on another PA Away Day, to Seoul in South Korea to work with a number of assistants from international schools and other organisations, and to a PA / EA summit in Prague. Somewhere amongst this will be my annual trip to Thailand working with international school PAs. Plus I've had an invitation to return to Moscow in February next year, to work with an International Schools group.

I'm on my way back up, I'm certain of it. **Onwards & upwards!**



- Take the time to review the speakers and the content of the sessions. Compare what will be learned to one or more tasks and document how the session will increase your skills in the tasks you have outlined. Give them one solid benefit; the what, why and how.
- For me - I am having my school pay for the conference and materials... however, I am paying for my flight/hotel and extending my stay for some extra R&R... especially since my birthday falls with the week of the conference.
- Offer to absorb some cost; e.g., you pay for lodging if the school pays for travel costs.

Where would I find the money today to invest in professional development and training?

- Commit to yourself that you want to advance, whether someone else pays for it or not. Bring your lunch one extra day a week rather than going out...have a garage sale...grab some odd jobs with your admin skills and set the money aside for a year.
- I always find the money for professional development because I am a lifelong learner. If you want it, you will figure it out. Skip the latte, bring your lunch a couple times a week, and before you know it, you can save enough to attend a seminar or conference and the benefits will last a lot longer than the coffee or lunch!
- You have to develop a career-minded mentality and the disposition to save money and invest in yourself.
- Many organisations do offer tuition assistance if the programme is related to your job functions.
- I actually started a small savings account and call it my professional development fund. If I'm willing to invest in my own professional development, then it's easier to convince an employer to match my investment. Employers value initiative and determination of the employee to find a way to continue their professional development growth.

Where would I find the time to invest in professional development and training?

- Attend training on one of your days off. Take a vacation day. Look for weekend training. Attend online courses. Go to night school.
- Believe you are an investment. Make time even if you have to schedule "vacation" to advance your career.

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

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

www.picaaurum.com

Training company, offering a variety of courses for PAs and Admins working in both education and corporate settings. Bespoke courses are also available—choose from a growing list of over 40 topics to put together a timetable which will suit you and your colleagues.

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

BOOKS TO BUY

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

The only CPD book written specifically for education staff.

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

CPD book for PAs, EAs, Secretaries and admin staff in ANY industry.

Both are available from Amazon (paperback and Kindle).

The logo for EDPA, consisting of the letters 'EDPA' in a bold, red, serif font.

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

The aims of EDPA:

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