

proActive

JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT ASSISTANTS

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

CAREER AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

EUMA TRAINING DAY

MANCHESTER – MARCH 28TH 2009

I LOVE MY JOB

ISSUE NO 32



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From the editor

The "Training Day" of the European Management Assistants held in Manchester on March 28th 2009 was an outstanding success !



"Project Management", the central topic of the training was indeed a lively, fast paced and highly interactive gathering!

The trainers from 'One Step Ahead' shared with us their brilliant experiences around the following aspects:

- How to establish ways to meet the challenges and benefits of well managed projects,
- How to turn theory into practice,
- How to communicate effectively the added values of our projects within our business units,
- How to release the leader within us in term of decision making, negotiations, conflict resolution, and finally
- How to devise practical strategies for improving effectiveness in working in teams and focusing on people' potentialities.

The editorial team wishes you all a nice summer recess, see you all in Slovenia!

Odile Huchet
Editor in Chief

FOCUS ON SLOVENIA

The **Ljubljana (Slovenia) table** drew much interest enticing everyone to their wonderful country for the 35th Annual Conference taking place 18 September 2009. Topic: "Make it easy – with original thinking" . They were giving away gifts and literature of Slovenia.



Acting European Chairman's Message



Following the fruitful Spring council meetings and the motivational training day on "Project Management" which allowed for invaluable networking among our European colleagues, a well deserved THANK YOU goes to the UK organizing committee. We have also enjoyed the well organized welcome reception at the City Hall of Manchester, the Council dinner at the Manchester United Football Club and the City tour.

Working towards the success of the 2009 Spring Council & Training Day in Manchester, members once more experienced that the key to a successful team is co-operation. By sacrificing their personal time, they managed to bring together a large number of members and non-members in order to support our efforts. The EUMA UK organization was successful because of you – the team workers – the UK Organizing Committee. Well done!

In an effort to convince you to consider a volunteer role within EUMA, I encouraged all EUMA groups to get involved in the organization of the 2010 Conference. Luckily EUMA Belgium decided to host the 2010 Conference & AGM even though they hosted the 2007 Conference & AGM! Thank you EUMA Belgium! We look forward to be back in Brussels!

The volunteer environment is changing, and the volunteerism should be seen as a negotiated and

mutually beneficial arrangement rather than a one-way sacrifice of time. Volunteers are the lifeblood of associations and association boards rely on these members to play a significant number of roles within their association. It is volunteerism that makes it possible for associations to provide high quality member-services while maintaining costs at an affordable level. Without healthy volunteer participation, an association can lose its relevance to the membership, and, as such, its reason to exist.

In conclusion, volunteering generally provides a great source of personal satisfaction and sense of accomplishment while serving the needs of the association as well as opportunities to grow as a professional. Professionals and volunteering go hand-in-hand and today's professional association is the result of volunteers getting together and creating an organization that meets the needs of the profession.

So, let's work together, proactively, to meet the challenges of our shared professional and personal goals.

Help us build a better Association. Get involved. You will be glad you did.

Being involved also means being aware!

Have a good read and continue to think positively - this is the cornerstone of success!

Maria Lazarou
Acting European Chairman

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to give our thanks and appreciation to all our sponsors who either sponsored the business prize draw, drink receptions, coaches or provided gifts for our goodie bags given to all our delegates as follows:

- Go Green Bags
- Cherry Tree Gallery – gift for the goodie bags
- First Transpennine Express – gift for the goodie bags
- First Rail Support provided the coaches for the dinner
- Hays Secretarial – sponsored drinks at the Civic reception
- Cadburys – gift for the goodie bag
- Environment Agency – gift for the goodie bag
- Scholl – gift for the goodie bag
- Leitz – gift for the goodie bag
- Executive PA magazine – gift for the goodie bag
- Manchester United FC – gift for the goodie bag and sponsored the pre dinner rinks at the Council dinner
- Moulton Brown – gift for the goodie bag Midland Hotel – provided the book "The History of the Midland Hotel"



Christine Hellauer – winner of the top prize - 2 night stay in Monte Carlo

Business card draw winners:

Christine Hellauer - 2 night stay in Monte Carlo courtesy of Monte-Carlo SBM Resort

Aira Hanninen - Fujitsu S510 Scansnap courtesy of Fujitsu UK

Antonia Eliascou - Laptop bag courtesy of abbi New York Persuasion

Caroline Jäggle - 'Blueprint for success' book - courtesy of Bill Docherty, Persuasion

Peggy Feyaerts - 1st class rail tickets courtesy of First Transpennine Express

2009 Spring Council & Training Day on Project Management

Civic Reception Manchester Town Hall

A Civic Reception was held in Manchester Town Hall to mark the opening of the Spring Council and Training Day 2009.

On arrival at the Neo-gothic building, we were treated to music and dancing from "Fiddlers' Fancy"; a women's Morris Dance side from Stockport. Our own Sheila Anderson (North West Regional Chairman) performed along with the team.



The original Fiddlers' team was founded in the late 1880's by a Stockport fish merchant, Charles Burgess Fiddler, to provide recreation and entertainment for Stopfordians and collect money for local charities.

The Fiddlers fish business continues (now supplying chip shops) and the family allow Fiddlers Fancy Women's Morris to use, as its emblem, their trademark smiling fish. In line with the aims of the original team, Fiddlers Fancy carry on the tradition of collecting and performing for charity, as well as undertaking professional bookings and dancing at national international festivals.



Manchester Morris Men also treated us to quite a few dances in the Cotswold style

from the south of England. Unlike North West teams who wear wooden clogs, Cotswold dancers wear soft shoes and bells and clash sticks or wave handkerchiefs to ward off evil spirits such as in the dance called "Queens Delight".

This form of English folk dance can be traced back to the 13th century, but many think it goes back to an even earlier pre-Christian time. It is a part of ritual dancing found throughout most of Europe and particularly with Moorish dancing from Spain. From Moorish, we get Morris

Margaret Stuart welcomed our Acting European Chairman, Maria Lazarou and the lady Lord Mayor; Councillor Mavis Smitherman. With her lovely Mancunian accent, the Lord Mayor gave a short introduction and mentioned why she had her hair sprayed green, this was to mark the recent Irish Festival, which had taken place in Manchester the week before and joked that she may dye it red and white for St George's day.

Speeches were followed by a drinks reception and Canapés were served. 88 members from both Europe and the UK attended the Civic Reception.

Members were enthralled with the beautiful Town Hall which was built (sparing no cost – less than £1m at that time) in 1887. The inside is lavishly decorated with



vaulted ceilings, rich murals and mosaic floors which depict the cotton flower on which Manchester's industry was founded and the bee which is both the emblem of Manchester and our Spring Council events because Manchester is a hive of industry and Mancunians are busy bees.

Many thanks to Hays Secretarial who provided the soft drinks at the Reception.

Angela Mistry, UK National Membership Officer
& **Sheila Anderson**, UK North West Chairman



Members arrived at the Midland Hotel at 8.00 am for refreshments more networking and to look around the trade show. A varied array of exhibitors were on hand to talk to the delegates during the interval breaks such as Susie Barron-Stubley, Managing Director of Castalia Coaching and her PA Karen Butler.



Peter Lloyd and Lauren Smith from the North West branch of EUMA UK's corporate member Hays Secretarial and First Rail Support.

Georgie Dutton,
Editor of UK Impetus e-magazine

2009 Spring Council & Training Day on Project Management



Maria Lazarou welcomed everyone to the training day in Manchester and introduced the 3 trainers: Diane Vanbrant, Phillip Massey, Angélica Alphenaar from "One Step Ahead":

Following on the theme of Manchester United from the night before, the 3 trainers

One definition of project management could be: "The discipline of planning, organising and managing resources to successfully complete a specific goal."

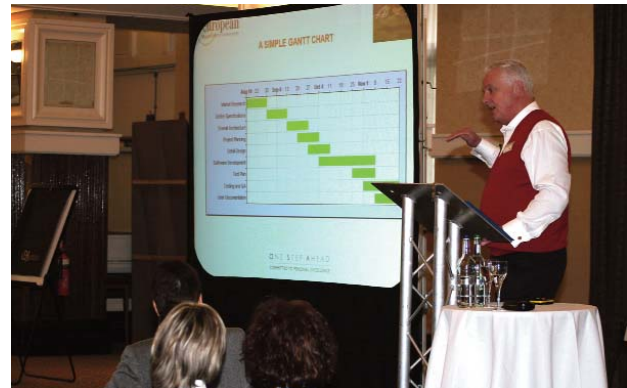
There are different technical methods/software to use for project management such as using excel spread sheets or PRINCE2 - **PR**ojects **I**N **C**ontrolled **E**nvironments which was developed for the Government in the UK and used across Europe.

The latter method forces you to go through each stage, step by step without missing anything out.

People usually underestimate how long things will take as 'stuff' happens – delays happen, people are late etc. Using a Gantt chart can help you see required actions clearly with the timeline running from the top. Everything that needs to be done should be listed with the time required blocked out although the blocks can overlap or 'stack'.



arranged that the 123 delegates be organised into 12 tables and each table was named after a Manchester United footballer. Each table of 10 were given a green card and a red card to hold up (green for when exercises were completed and red for when we wanted to stop proceedings to ask a questions or to let everyone know the team table were not quite finished with discussing a particular exercise). We also heard the referee's whistle blowing to indicate the end of an exercise which all added to the fun of learning about project management. Within our team tables we all introduced ourselves to our team members by saying our names, which country we were from, our job role and our reason for wanting to be at the training day and tell everyone the most successful project that we had been involved with so far was because of The buzz around the room was electric and everyone was keen to participate and have fun learning.



The question was asked: "How do we keep on top of a busy Gantt chart"? and the answer is to agree to have regular reviews and update meetings.

Our goals and milestones should be written according to the 'SMART' acronym: Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Timed.

We should write the project scope brief on paper and keep looking back at it to make sure you remain on track.

Think about:

- Who you need to help you with your project? – this could be a group of people who come together to work as a team
- Do your team members have all the skills required between them? Egg: chairmanships skills, technical, accountancy etc
- Allocate resources/agree roles – who is responsible for what?
- Attain the authority to make decisions for the project

Remember that there are lots of time thieves that are unavoidable and that will have an impact on the project such as other unforeseen high priority issues requiring attention at the same time, people may become ill or maybe the budget gets cut as well as general interruptions such as telephone calls and the normal



Phillip Massey explained that time is of the essence in project management and that they would project manage the day. The better your time-keeping the lower your stress levels become.

day-to-day work required of you.

People confuse important and urgent tasks and forget to work on the important tasks first; as time passes by the tasks become both urgent and important.

We should be realistic, be kind to ourselves and not put ourselves under stress and therefore we should add another 20% of time required so things do not overrun. If you know something is going to happen then plan for it.

People buy people

We need to get the buy-in from key individuals and we generally buy from those we feel comfortable with and those people who understand what we need.

Keys to success and a way to save time and get people focused on what needs to be done is to:

- Focus on other people and their agendas and not just on your own agenda.
- Organise regular well prepared task force meetings sending out agendas beforehand and making sure the team feel as responsible as you and that they contribute to the meeting so it's not just you leading the meeting.
- Even when you have a large number of members of the team – treat each one individually.

Before you go to meetings you should socialise with people one by one and 'catch up' with them and gain their trust. You could run your ideas by them – 'test the water'. Try and extract their ideas – they may suggest things you have not thought about. Having their buy in beforehand makes your position stronger. Asking for feedback will help you achieve success.

Get to know the individuals who have power and who can influence the outcome.

Teams are made up of different kinds of people with different skills. Communicate at the other person's level so that it is interesting for them, remembering to use the same style language as them and lots of detail if they are **detailed** people or an overview if they are not. **Activists** will want to know what their role is in the project and your enthusiasm will give power to the **pragmatists** in the team. **Reflectors** will require time to mull things over in the minds before giving their opinion.

When you are leading a project you have to manage the team – their time, expectations and flow of project. Set up an action plan, timeframe, milestones and deadlines but remember to have the team's buy in.

Inform everyone at the meeting of:

- Where the project is up to and what the project has achieved so far
- What's still outstanding
- What's the end goal/objective (if you are running a project over several months it is hard to keep a 'helicopter view') – Keep the end of the project in mind

- How are we going to get there?

Get an agreement/verbal contract at the end of each meeting so you are all together at each step of the way.

Remember WIIFM (What's In It For Me) – people are more willing and enthusiastic if they know what is in it for them, what can they take from it as everyone has a lot of work to do already and need to see something come out of it. Make the project interesting for everyone.

Key questions for WIIFM:

- What financial or emotional interest is there for them?
- What motivates them? When you are the team leader you have to be a 'sales manager' and get to know them and what makes them 'tick'.
- What information do they want from you and how do they want it to be presented?
- If they are not positive about the project – what will win them around? People bring in objections and hurdles but by being open and honest and actively listening to others the project becomes more realistic.

You can deal with negativity by using assertive communication (not aggressive or passive) – express your needs, wants, ideas, feelings in an open and honest way.

Assertiveness is not about dominating others. Assertiveness is about the value of clear, calm and open communication. Use active listening skills and reflect their objections back in a clear, calm communicative manner. Set your emotions to one side although this may be difficult when you are passionate about the project.

Assertiveness means being honest with yourself and with others, saying what you feel and think but not at the expense of others – you should never lay blame.

Show that you understand the point of view of others and behave in a rational and adult way. When you show you are listening and empathising they begin to feel relief that someone is listening to them and is trying to see where they are coming from.



Try and understand why they are objecting and putting hurdles in the way – what is the background to this?

(Everyone has 'emotional luggage' from past experiences).

You should also leave your 'luggage' behind and go into meetings with an open mind talking about ideas in a clear and rational way. The project manager has the power to lead this group in this way in order to gain a more productive outcome.

There are 3 steps to combat the feeling of when someone irritates you for whatever reason so that you are able to deal with that person. You cannot change someone although people can be trained and coached but you definitely can change the way you behave towards others, then they will change their behaviour towards you.

Step 1: Actively listen to what is being said (without preparing an answer before they finish speaking) and watch their body language

Step 2: Say what you think or your opinion about the situation

Step 3: Say what you want to happen/how you see the next step

Evaluating your project

Quote from Melissa Delft, Belgium

"Evaluation at regular team meetings during which an open, motivated and assertive communication is the key to the successful implementation of the project. It is clear: a project is a vicious circle and it is the responsibility of the team to make the circle strong enough to face any kind of obstacles and to get to the desired outcome. Project Management is team work!"

Evaluate the effectiveness of your project. The Project Manager needs to be respected and have kudos for having successfully completed a project. You should also talk about your success in projects when having your appraisals.

Evaluate your project by: Return on Investment (ROI)

$$\frac{\text{Gain from investment} - \text{Cost of investment}}{\text{Cost of investment}}$$

Eg. $\frac{\text{Gain } \pounds 300\text{K} - \text{Cost } \pounds 100\text{K}}{\text{Cost } \pounds 100\text{K}} = \text{ROI} = 2 \text{ (or } 200\%)$

Key points:

- Work out what is part of the cost eg factors to include: materials, market share, working hours, equipment, transport, hotel accommodation etc.
- Quantify the advantages and benefits – was it a success? Write a definition of what has been gained to be able to communicate why you bothered doing the project.
- Do your ROI calculation and write a short review document to have it on file – a corporate memory so

people understand what was gained and achieved.

- Review the project with your manager – use it in your performance appraisal and perhaps ask for a salary raise.

The group then watched a video on "Leading a project team" and were asked to make notes and were later given a quiz with prizes given for correct answers.

Learning points from the video:

- Define the project together
- Get the right people on the team – check they have the skills you need
- Write the definition down on paper – this can be used as a prototype

Project management starts with excellent communication:

What ... do I want to achieve?

How ... will I go about achieving it?

Who ... Needs to be involved? – bring in experts if required

When ... will I know it was a success?

Where ... Shall I hold my meetings?

Should it be in the office or out of the office where we would have no interruptions?

Why ... Is this project important to me/the company? – what's in it for the key people and individuals?

Communicate your vision in a clear concise way – you can use the 'elevator speech' model whereby you only have 2 minutes (or as long as it would take you to take an elevator trip) to get your point across in a succinct and clear manner. This should be a maximum of 3 sentences.

- What is the objective of your project?
- What will it bring to the company and the people?
- How will we know if we have been successful?

The clearer we are about what the exact objective is then the more clearly we can measure the success of the project. If you are asked to repeat the project you will know it has been a success.

In communication, the words we use account for 7% of communication, tone of voice accounts for 38% and body language accounts for 55%.

You decide on whether you will buy from someone by watching their body language – influence and persuasion depends a lot on non verbal skills and first impressions count.

There are 6 skills for success to come across as the expert:

1. Strong posture
2. The right movements (do not fidget, be careful what you do with your hands eg, if hands in pockets or behind back then you do not look as trustworthy as if down by your sides or in front of you showing your

palms) – do calm movements – it reduces stress levels

3. Facial expressions – when you smile – people smile back at you
4. Pausing

When you pause – it means you are not shying away from comments and it puts you on a higher level. If you breathe and pause you become less stressful

5. Varying your voice/tone

Do not use a monotone as it is boring and you don't get your message across

6. Eye contact – if you keep eye contact you are more likely to gain respect and trust and be seen as an expert

You can use the 4 following learning styles of Honey & Mumford when communicating and understanding how people take in new information.

- Theorist** Take in information by reading, they need details, facts and figures and they need to be able to trust you
- Reflector** Like to reflect on what is being said and to be given time to think about it before they offer their view or conclusion. They like to get it crystal clear in their head before replying.
- Activist** Spontaneous, energetic and need to give their opinion and share their ideas.
- Pragmatist** They like action points and to understand how it works in real life, how it will work for them and their company.

From people's reactions you can become to understand how they process information.

Conclusion Tips

- Send a follow-up newsletter once your project has gone live with an update
- Keep key individuals informed about any ROI you can measure
- Keep a file with feedback and mentioning successes present to key individuals
- Keep your project in the limelight to make you stand out in the crowd so next year the project is remembered

The groups were asked to write a personal action plan and write down what they had learned from the day and what they would now use/do differently to help make future projects successful.

The trainers stated that there are 3 kinds of people:

Those that make things happen

Those that watch things happen

And those who wondered what the hell happened!

We were told that the trainers knew that all EUMA members are the ones that make things happen and thanked us for our keen attention and co-operation making the whole day a successfully managed project.

Members who attended the Training Day are now very much more aware of Project Management and how they can contribute to a successful working environment.

The training day ended with Chantal SNEIJKERS presenting Maria LAZAROU with a well deserved gift, in behalf of the European Committee members, for all her hard work over the weeks and during the Spring Council and Training Day for not only doing the work of the Deputy Chairman but also Acting European Chairman.

Sue France,
UK National Public Relations Officer

Have you ever planned a birthday party for a 7 year old? Or made all the arrangements for a 3 week family vacation in California? Or organized a meeting for the European management team of your company, with hotel arrangements, an evening at the opera and separate social events for the spouses? Then you are very familiar with "project management". Yes – these are all "projects". In fact every task you do that consists of more than one step can be considered as a "project". And let's face it – projects are interesting (and fun, and scary, and daunting, and stressful). Putting together all the lists of necessities – people and things - , establishing a time line of when what has to be done, setting the milestones to check if I am actually within my timeline, etc. etc. For me the best part of a project is doing the risk assessment – what has to happen to make the project a success? Or even better – what has to happen to make the project a complete disaster? The brainstorming sessions for this are

usually memorable.... And not to forget the wrap-up party after a big project has been successfully completed!

You got a lot of project management basics at the Training Day in Manchester - why not try them out with the next bigger task you have at work? A project management approach can make a commonplace task more interesting; bring better results and more satisfaction. If your company offers project management courses, talk to your manager about attending one. Or perhaps evening courses are offered by your local college? Projects are part of our daily life, and the more we know about them the more successful we will be!

Linda Nitschmann
Deputy Chairman EUMA Austria

Setting up your own company: Olivia Vandesande accepted the challenge

Running a project is about the discipline of planning, organizing and managing resources to bring about its successful completion. The primary challenge is to achieve all the project goals while taking into account typical constraints such as scope, time and budget.

We asked Olivia Vandesande, Managing Director and Founder of Ollygos, how she managed the project of setting up her own business and how she experienced the project flow.

Ollygos, Homeshore Assistants stands for an organisation that provides support services to clients by employees that work in a 100 % home working environment.

All employees of Ollygos have regular employee contracts for an indefinite period. They are fully equipped by Ollygos with all technology that is needed to perform their services from their home base: PC, fax, state of the art telephone (VOIP), webcam, and mobile phone.

The services provided to the client : administrative support (email, agenda, logistics, PowerPoint presentations), telesales, telemarketing, cash collection, translation services, copywriting, web content management - in fact all activities that can be performed from the home base and where no travel is involved.

There are no other equivalent organisations in Europe and moreover, because all its employees are working from home, Ollygos is a company with a 0 % ecological footprint.

Launching a business is a huge project. How did you get started?

I started the project because I experienced in my former job that travel time to the office takes up quite a lot of time and can be considered superfluous. While I was working in the Amsterdam office, the collaboration with my assistant in Antwerp was working perfectly well although we only had long distance contact with each other.

Technology today enables a great deal of activities where no travel is involved anymore. That experience was the start of the project to set up Ollygos. It was a major step as I would give up my secure executive job in a well performing multinational organisation, but I accepted the challenge.

A project has a well-determined beginning and ending. Do you see the end of the launching project as soon as the first business rolls in or after a year when you will have had the time to evaluate?

Everything starts of course with the idea, where as a



second step the evaluation of the idea pops in. This first evaluation went together with some market research (possible clients, possible employee benefits ...) before actually launching the business.

As soon as the first business rolls in, you get the confirmation that your market research has worked out and that the idea is being accepted by the market. However, evaluation does not have to be seen as the end of the project, it is something which has to be done on a regular basis in order to be able to review and to improve.



Ollygos

HOMESHORE ASSISTANTS

Defining, planning, implementing and evaluating are the different steps each project is comprised of. Which phase did you experience as the most crucial one?

The most crucial one is defining the project together with market research.

One can have the most brilliant ideas, but if they are not clearly defined and there are no customers or interested parties to go along with these, it will not work! I would definitely say: Get the basics right!

Do you have any suggestions for dealing with the unexpected stumbling blocks which are bound to occur in the course of a project?

Reviewing each phase of the project at regular times is crucial. There is no such thing as a tablet of stone in a project. Things and circumstances can change at any moment for different kinds of reasons and you need to be prepared to react efficiently.

You need to have different kinds of scenarios, scenarios you can fall back on in case of emergency. Make a good SWOT analysis beforehand which will help you to master both internal and external factors.

Which competences do you consider a must for each Project Manager?

A Project Manager distinguishes himself/herself by excellent organisational skills, flexibility, helicopter and longer term view! In fact a Project Manager needs to have the extra spark to assure the originality of the project.

Thanks a lot Olivia for your time and sharing your experiences with us. For more information on Ollygos, visit their website on www.ollygos.com

Melissa Delft
melissa.delft@telenet.be

Virtual Assistant - A joint twinning event with EUMA Germany

What is a VA (Virtual Assistant)?

And how do you get your way to be a VA?

YOUR UK PA Business support services for the international executive in the UK

Former European Chairman Gillian Richmond set up her own VA business in the UK a few years ago and shared her experiences with EUMA Members and guests from the Twinning partners Switzerland and Germany.

Definition of a VA: “A service provider who specializes in providing administrative support service from a remote location”

After having received detailed basis on how to generally start-up the own business, the group focused on the particular business features of the VA:

Who would benefit from your VA services?

- freelance consultants
- Senior advisers
- independent Board members
- Startups
- Artists
- Trade fair participants
- Event organisers
- Political party

How would you market yourself to them:

- cold calls
- attend trade fairs and leave business cards
- references / former business contacts
- Commercial stationary: flyers, etc...

- write articles in business publications
 - secretariat support for hotel chains, airport and leisure business centres
- And very actively network!!!!

What particular challenges could you face?

- No revenues at the start of the business
- Understand clients needs correctly
- Client conflicts
- How to face all needs if all are urgent?

How would you resolve these challenges?

- Have financial reserves for one/two years
- Offer tailored solutions to their needs
- Formulate clear client contracts
- Be professional like mad!

The training took place at one of the most beautiful places in Lugano: the terminal meeting facilities of the Funicolare Monte Salvatore (www.montesansalvatore.ch) with splendid views over the lake of Lugano.

The Training Day ended with a dinner in the Hotel Parco Paradiso in Lugano Paradiso (www.parco-paradiso.com).

Patricia Jacob
Chairman EUMA Switzerland

Managing the Manager from Hell



How did this happen? You had a great interview with your future boss. Everything clicked: same values, same interests, and same working style.

By the second week, you realise you made a BIG mistake. There's either too much work or not enough. Nothing you do is right, no matter how hard you try. Your boss never has

time to talk with you, or he is yelling and screaming and breathing over your shoulder.

Different personalities need to be handled in different ways. Strategies need to be developed so you are managing your manager, not the other way around. Easier said than done, you say?

Here are some practical tips on how to keep them in line. You might recognise a few from your own workplace.

The Overloader:

A way to deal with such a boss would be to suggest that your workload be shared by lower-level people in

the organisation who "need development." Or perhaps the company could bring in a college student willing to work for free to get internship experience to put on his résumé.

You, of course, would supervise these people to demonstrate your excellent management skills.

The Underloader:

Have you ever been told in an interview how busy an office is, only to find after you arrive that you sit there day after day with nothing to do? Meanwhile, the boss is running around and completely ignoring you, or, she is never there. It's hard to sit and pretend to look busy for eight hours, even after sending email greetings to every person you have ever met.

Your strategy here is to let your feet do the walking. Make appointments with colleagues for quick, information-gathering sessions. Ask them what they always wanted to accomplish but never had the time to do. Offer to help. Next, find out with which groups in the company your department works with. Make appointments with them, too. By casting your net beyond your boss, some projects will surface that you can volunteer to tackle. This way you can keep busy at the office - and look like a hero if you can manage to pull them off.

The Name Caller/Yeller-Screamer:

It's more than a little disheartening to have two Master's degrees and years of experience, while being forced to endure being called the worst employee or the stupidest person ever, all because you didn't do something to the liking of your supervisor.

Your first tactic in this situation is to stand up while your manager is sitting. Say your back is killing you. It's much harder to be yelled at when someone has to look up at you. And if you talk in a very quiet voice, it might help calm her down.

Here, your best defence is an offence. Think of something to critique, in a constructive way, about how things are done in the department. Suggest better

methods that would improve everyone's ability to do their job. This is a great way to deflect attention from your alleged screw-up.

The Timekeeper:

The obvious strategy here is to get to work on time or have a really great excuse when you can't. (A sick child is usually not a good one if your manager doesn't have kids.) Save the long lunches for when he is absent or in an all-day meeting.

Run your errands when you have to be out of the building anyway to meet with clients or vendors. The good news is there is probably no need to get to work early or stay late, as no one will be there to notice.

A final word of advice for any kind of hellish work environment: get support from your peers. Chances are if you are being pummelled and picked on, they are too.

Finding a good mentor can also be invaluable. Choose someone who has been around for a while and is well thought of in the company. A mentor can give you advice on how to handle a political situation and how to control your boss.

And if the job is really bad, the kind that makes you crazy or threatens to wreck your home life, run, don't walk to the nearest exit. Get out of your cubicle and meet as many other people in the company as possible. That way you can get the skinny on other job openings and possibly arrange for an internal transfer. At least you'll know what to avoid in your next interview.



Evie Christodoulou

EUMA Cyprus

ANGELA MISTRY - UK National Treasurer and UK Membership officer

What are your activities today?

Where do I begin.....I returned to the industry in 2000 after having my own business for 15 years; where I was a market trader, those were the days; cold damp but very happy.

After leaving college, I worked for four years as a receptionist and sales administrator at a Knitwear Manufacturer/Importer and only left to get married and start a family, I would have never expected that it would take me 15 years to return to working for someone else. How things had changed – when I had last worked we were still using typewriters, carbon paper and telex machines; computers were only just coming into the forefront. I studied in the evenings to brush up on my skills.

I swiftly moved up the ranks from being a Bank Reconciliation Clerk to a PA/Secretary to an Office Manager and now to a PA/Administrator.

How long have you been in EUMA?

I joined EUMA a couple of years ago, but due to other commitments never found the time to attend any of the

meetings which I regret, it was probably fear that stopped me joining in, then last year, I decided to go for the role of National Membership Officer as I was ready for my next challenge. I am glad that I undertook that role as it has boosted my confidence and it continues to help me grow as a person. I have just been voted in as UK National Treasurer, and I feel honoured to have been given this opportunity. It proves that you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it and not to be afraid; it's our fear that stops us doing things. I am looking forward to my new role as National Treasurer and excited at the prospect of helping take EUMA forward into the 21st Century.

Anything about yourself?

I am a mother of two young adults, who still keep me on my toes, even though they are 21 and 20. I enjoy dancing, fine dining (that's where the extra 1lbs have come from!), I enjoy cooking, reading, travelling and generally enjoying life. I have still a lot of things that I would like to do on my tick list and I feel that there is so much more to achieve.

TRACEY MELLOR



Chris Baguley's Personal Assistant. She has 25 years' experience as a PA and has been with us for just over two years. She is an active member of EUMA, the network for European Management Assistants.

What are some of the key functions of your role?

I am responsible for managing Chris's schedule and the organisation of events. Most importantly, I am the first point of contact for new and existing clients. I liaise between the client and our technical departments, ensuring that we provide key information in a clear and timely fashion. Maintaining the high standard of our communications is the key to my role.

Before joining bridging finance limited you worked in the cultural sector - why did you decide to switch to financial services?

It was this role that attracted me. I knew I would be working in a team where my opinions were valued. I understood what Chris was doing in terms of building a reputation for great service and changing the

perception of short term funding amongst the professional sector. Bridging Finance Limited put great emphasis on the importance of high quality client care. The role was a great opportunity for me to put my experience in this area to good use.

You also work closely with Paul Hughes, our corporate development manager. How do you assist him?

As Paul is out and about most of the time, I play a key role in advancing his work here at the office. I facilitate meetings between Paul and our clients, helping us to understand their requirements and find out how we can provide them with the best service for their individual circumstances.

What do you consider your greatest achievements, both inside and outside of work?

This will sound rehearsed, but sharing in the success of the Bridging Finance Limited team really is the high point of my career! Outside of work, organising the week-long celebrations for my husband's fortieth birthday is probably the feat I am most proud of.

What is occupying your time at the moment, in addition to your day-to-day responsibilities?

As always we are a busy office, however a big part of my focus has been in the drive to extend the Bridging Finance Limited offering into the SME sector and we have undertaken an exercise to promote our unique offering to this audience.

JOKE van VROUWERFF - National Chairman EUMA Netherlands

What Company are you working for?

For almost five years I have been working for the CEO of "Ballast Nedam Bouw Special Projects" and I really can say "I have a world-job".



Ballast Nedam is a Dutch company group that is quoted on the stock exchange and which offers a wide range of products and services related to construction. We develop infrastructures, build houses and other buildings, and we provide services and products that are directly linked to these activities.

Ballast Nedam ranks among the top five Dutch construction groups and aims to set itself apart by undertaking high-profile and profitable construction projects, based on the high degree of knowledge and expertise, available within the organization.

In 2007, Ballast Nedam generated turnover of 1.3 billion euros; 125 million euros of this amount was earned by the business unit Ballast Nedam Bouw Special Projects.

The group employed an average of around 3800 people during the year. Ballast Nedam Bouw Special Projects employs approximately 200 persons.

On March 20th 2009, Ballast Nedam held a special event in Utrecht. Deputy Minister Jack de Vries (Defense) had driven the first pile for construction of the Kromhout Barracks in Utrecht. The barracks will provide

employment for around three thousand people. The headquarters of the Royal Dutch army and parts of the Support Command and Defence Material Organisation are to be housed on the existing site of the Kromhout Barracks in Utrecht.

Construction of the initial two thousand workstations is expected to be completed by the end of 2010. The entire Kromhout Barracks is expected to be completed by the end of 2011.

Komfort will realize, exploit, manage and maintain the Kromhout Barracks. Komfort has incorporated all the elements of the design, building, finance, facility, services, maintenance and operational services in an integrated 25-year so-called DBFMO (Design, Build, Finance, Maintain, and Operate) contract.

Komfort is cooperation between Ballast Nedam, Strukton and John Laing.

In the picture: the FiftyTwoDegrees Building in Nijmegen built by Ballast Nedam Bouw Special Projects.

What is your role?

As the secretary of the CEO I am the spider in the web and I create my own job. I organize, communicate, have contact with the clients, take the minutes and am a part of the management team. All the standard and not-standard secretarial working items I manage and work out and I organize all the relationship events. Special events for such a company as Ballast Nedam are the typical construction events, such as "the first pile" and "to reach the highest level of a building".

Dorothy A Calderbank - PA to Deputy Head and Senior Management Team

I love my job because I get to meet

**Lots of people from all
Over the world and from
Various cultures.
Every day is different**

**Making inroads into seemingly endless and insurmountable tasks
Yet trying to keep an air of calm about the workplace**

**Just when there is light at the end of the tunnel, a pupil
Overlooks the fact that their visa has expired and, lo and behold, magic has to be worked
But for all that, I wouldn't change my job for all the tea in China**



FINLAND - Biennial February Seminar

February 5th, 2009 was the day when 80 members of EUMA Finland gathered for the eighth biennial Pearl Seminar, this time under the topic GOOD/BAD MEDIA. This half-day seminar took place in the auditorium of the leading Finnish commercial broadcasting company MTV in Helsinki.

MTV was established in 1957. The wonders of television had only just arrived in Finland a few years earlier when the students of Helsinki University of Technology had aired the first TV programmes. MTV was Finland's first commercial broadcasting company. Finland was among the forerunners at that time when Europe only had two other commercial TV companies: the UK's ITV and the Central European RTL.

After an address guiding the seminar towards the theme of the day, given by Ms Joanna Saarinen, the National Chairman of EUMA Finland, the Managing Director Pekka Karhuvaara from MTV was naturally entitled to open the seminar. Mr Karhuvaara has a long experience in the media business both in newspapers and Foreign Service in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. He is also a well-known TV personality in Finland. He shared some of his theses on power and media. According to Karhuvaara, in media the power is a form of authority. There is a lot of conspiracy and inconsistency in media, as we all want to be on-the-air and the media wants to stay neutral and not to be influenced by any activists.

The next key-note speaker of the seminar, Managing Director Suvi-Anne Siimes from the Pharma Industry Finland, gave a personal testimony on how media changes its focus from public affairs to a person's private life. She emphasized the importance of also being prepared for bad publicity and to remember that tomorrow they are always only yesterday's news. She advised the secretaries and assistants to support the boss in these types of situations and to leave the mistakes behind. Ms Siimes is a former member of the Finnish parliament and she has also been the Minister of Culture, Minister of Finance and the chairman of the political party Left Alliance.

Corporate governance and corporate ethics, especially corruption, was the topic of Ms Leena Linnainmaa. Ms Linnainmaa is a Director of the Central Chamber of Commerce in Finland. According to Linnainmaa, corruption is rooted in every society, more deeply in some than others. Corruption eats into competitiveness because it increases the costs of business transactions, keeps the level of public administration low and, most of all, results in less than optimal distribution of economic resources. To combat corruption, the laws of society should be clear; corruption is a crime. The laws also have to be enforced in an effective manner. The most effective way to fight business corruption is to cut its financing. The basic elements of good governance – clearly defined roles of decision-makers, rules of procedure, transparency and documentation - are particularly

suitable tools to fight corruption and to enhance competitiveness.

The seminar was concluded by Editor-in-Chief Merja Ylä-Anttila from MTV. According to her, the most important issue in the news business is credibility: the audience should get what has been promised by the news organization. The news must be interesting and the TV viewers want to know what is going on in Finland and outside Finland. TV viewers must be able to separate the actual news and the comment on that news - these two things must not be mixed. We must also trust on the fact that the news is objective and the opinion of the reporter must not influence the content of the news. This is a difficult objective because we all have different opinions and viewpoints. Ms Ylä-Anttila reminded us that the Internet is also very important media in the news business. The Internet is used 24/7 and in MTV, the news is updated constantly on the mtv3.fi-website, and this allows more information on the topic than the few minutes one has on-the-air. The content of the Internet is expanding both in the amount of users and information. She also reminded us that at the moment the information obtained from the Internet is free of charge.

One very essential reason for the success of the seminar was that the whole programme was very smoothly guided from one topic to another by EUMA Finland member, Maija Roitto, the National Training Officer of EUMA Finland, who acted as the moderator of the seminar.

After the seminar, the participants gathered in an authentic film and television studio, where they had an excellent opportunity to network and share their thoughts from the seminar at a delicious dinner. A cappella group Boston Beans from Helsinki University of Technology singing serenades and a funny magician performing card and balloon tricks ensured that the rest of the evening was also very entertaining.

Joanna Saarinen and Maija Roitto

EUMA Finland

GERMANY

EUMA Germany is very pleased to welcome Germany's best secretary 2009 as a member: Doreen Grötchen (29) from Berlin.



It was for the fourth time that the office supplies company Esselte Leitz (*) organised the competition "Germany's best secretary" ("Deutschlands beste/r Sekretär/in"). Out of 500 applications the 10 best secretaries had been invited to the final in April in Cologne.

Doreen Grötchen, Secretary to the Chief Representative of BVVG Bodenverwertungs- und -verwaltungs GmbH,



convinced the jury with her good general knowledge, her constantly good output as well as her calmness, charm and creativity in difficult and stressful situations. Andrea Eisentraut from Hamburg and Anna Saylor from Mainz were second and third respectively.

Marc-Oliver Schlichtmann (winner 2008 and Regional Head EUMA Hamburg) and I in my role as National PR Officer represented EUMA Germany as co-operation partner of the competition in the jury.

Further EUMA members who won former competitions are: Marc-Oliver Schlichtmann (first winner 2008), Tina Luckas (second winner 2008), Tanja Bögner (first winner 2006), and Uschi Wartha (second winner 2006).

More good news is that Esselte Leitz recently became Corporate Member of EUMA Germany.

Viera Schleidt
National PR Officer EUMA Germany

(*) Esselte (www.esselte.com) is one of the world's premier manufacturers of organizational solutions, bringing innovation, efficiency and style to the workplace and the home. Committed to simplifying consumers' lives, Esselte produces a broad range of filing and organizational products.

SWEDEN - Widen your Horizon with EUMA

Every year the company Företagsuniversitetet, EUMA Sweden corporate member, arranges a two-day seminar for assistants, which is very popular and well-attended. Our former Chairman Brittmarie Urve has been the moderator for some years and the collaboration with EUMA Sweden was this year even further developed, especially when it came to the item on the role of the assistant, a discussion session that was very much appreciated by the participants.

Företagsuniversitetet (in English: The Company University) is one of Sweden's leading organisers of seminars and events for professionals. They are Corporate Affiliate members of EUMA and during the last few years they have had close co-operation with EUMA Sweden. Företagsuniversitetet's annual conference **Vidgade Vyer** (Eng: Widen your Horizon) attracts participants from all over Sweden.

This year's conference was visited by over 90 participants and the themes were **Clarity, Confidence and Reliability in the Communication and New Times – New Needs**. When the demands in the organization increase, the roles of the employees also change, not least for the assistants and secretaries who need to take greater responsibility in securing that the administrative work in the office flows as efficiently as possible. During the two-day conference the participants learnt about communication, integrity and giving and receiving feed-back.

New Times and New Needs - New Roles for the Assistant. This was the theme for the discussion, led by EUMA. Else-Britt Lundgren, Chairman EUMA

Sweden, started by describing her role as MD Assistant at Eli Lilly Sweden AB, which is an American pharmaceutical company. She shared her experiences of the assistant's role and emphasized the importance of not being afraid to take on qualified tasks. "Don't be afraid, you are more capable than you think!" she said.



Invited as a speaker, Victoria Darragh, EUMA UK, management assistant at the recruitment company Hayes in London, gave a rather grim outlook of the market for assistants in the UK. She presented copies of newspaper ads for PA's and showed an interesting difference between Sweden and England. In the employment interview many younger bosses in England want the assistants to be able to write shorthand, which is never requested in Sweden. She also talked about a new trend, the Virtual Assistant.

Three EUMA members, representing different

companies in Sweden, Maria Riscado from Volvo Powertrain, Eila Sandberg from TeliaSonera and Ulrika Thelin from Ericsson, presented their companies' initiatives regarding development programmes for assistants. In all three cases, the initiative of starting up these development programmes has been taken by the assistants themselves.

They were at different stages, TeliaSonera have just done the pre-study and are about to launch their pilot, but due to the financial turmoil, this has been delayed. At Ericsson the situation was different; after going through a downsizing they had re-structured their administrative services and to a great extent changed the way of working for the assistants that remained, who had to take on a more coaching role. The next step for them has been to secure succession and look at what possibilities for advancement there are. They

have mapped their competencies, matched them to development steps and stored them in a type of "competence bank" within the company. The system works for the assistants to know what level they are and what possibilities they have with regard to education and also for the company when matching applicants to a new position. At Volvo the Next Step programme for Executive assistants has now run for several years and 6 programmes with some 20-23 participants each time have now been completed.

After the presentation there was a lively discussion with the audience, who wanted to share their experience about the work with competence development in their respective companies. The item was very much appreciated by the audience and shows that this is also needed to be addressed in other companies.