



# SECRETARY'S DIGEST

A publication of the Distinguished Secretaries Society of Pakistan

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## THE PA & EA CIRCUS

Integrating the many parts of the  
Personal and Executive Assistant



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## LINKS

Administrative Professional  
Organisations in South Asia  
and Asian Pacific region

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## EVENT

To watch out for

January/  
February 2019 – Tea Meeting  
April 2019 – Secretaries Day

Our Website & Email Contact

[www.dssp.org](http://www.dssp.org)  
[dssp.71@gmail.com](mailto:dssp.71@gmail.com)

## Editor's Note

*"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending" – Maria Robinson*



As 2018 draws to a close and we get ready to welcome 2019, the DSSP will enter a new era under the dynamic leadership of a new Executive Committee. It is unbelievable how fast time has moved on as I now pen my last editorial as the Editor of the DSSP. I have thoroughly enjoyed my stint as an editor. It has been a challenging and satisfying journey. I am excited to think about the new possibilities that await me with more time in my schedule, but I am also sad to leave a position that has been so satisfying and enjoyable.

I have never ceased to be amazed by our DSSP Facebook page review system. Our future remains bright. Increasingly, soon our readers will access our website content on handheld devices.

Over the past couple of years, I have come to know many of the overseas authors and reviewers whom I first met "remotely" by reading their articles, manuscripts, and critiques. Later I met these same authors and reviewers face-to-face at professional meetings and watched their careers flourish. One of them has become a close colleague of DSSP too. It is sad for me to step down from a position that gives me a reason to be frequently in touch with old friends and allows me to meet new professionals entering the field of administrative professionals.

It has never ceased to amaze me that the people I requested to do this unsung work always said yes. It is a reflection of an incredible professional commitment and a generosity of spirit.

I would like to end with a quote by Walt Disney, "If you can visualize it, if you can dream it, there is some way to do it."

I will miss being an editor!

Now let's ring in the New Year 2019, with much joy to you and your family.

Marina Fernandez



# DSSP goes Desi!

Our annual gala this year was Desi Dhamaaka! Lady guests were in glittering ghagra-choli, shalwar-kameez and even sari. Men escorted with shalwar-kameez and waistcoat, completed by colorful scarf presented by DSSP at the entrance, while ladies were given 'cangans'.

President Cheryl conceived the 'dhamal' months ahead, and detailed planning and working followed by the Executive Committee (EC). The fun started on the morning of the gala when the desi look was created, with stage and table décor made by our past Treasurer Mahnaz Irani, with all hands-on-deck from the EC. Standaes and banners from sponsor companies – our mainstay throughout the year – followed. When the General Manager of Avari Towers heard about our theme he came in the evening to admire the ambience, which brought



cheesy smiles from us all!

The DJ's music got everyone's feet – and arms! – moving and swaying, with just the perfect lighting creating a very romantic mood.

Cheryl hosted the evening and introduced the Executive Committee who were supposed to enter with some desi steps, and Member Glenda D'Souza performed the best, followed by a 'dhamal' led by our Editor Marina Fernandez.

Hors d'oeuvre of 'chat' and

lassi titillated everyone's palate and got them into the mood to play games. Elimination dance with four provinces got it going. "Thalay may kia hay" conceived by our Social Secretary Valentina Fernandes was another fun to figure out items in a stitched bag by feeling them. Table with most correct answers bagged the prize. The Wadera March, a turban-tying competition created a lot of energy with ladies tying the turban and decorating it to the

selected man at their table. Our member Bakhtawar Marfatia participated as the 'man' from her table! The 'Wadera March' began with embellished turbaned candidates competing to out-beat each other.

Lucky Draw for all attending DSSP members was possible with sufficient gift items – largely due good contacts of our Secretary Naureen Rodrigues – put a smile on each one. Our Immediate Past President, Natasha Mavalvala got the bags sponsored in which goodies were given at the entrance, and our Treasurer Clara D'Souza handled the multifarious payments and receipts behind the scenes.

Well past 1 am some were still dancing and taking pictures, some did not want to leave at all! This felt good after months of team work. Come join the Executive Committee: you won't know what fun it is till you do!





# A visit to our former President - Josephine Alexander at the Maryville, a home for the elderly, run by Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

In her imitable thoughtful manner our DSSP member Villy Daruwalla, informed the Executive Committee that Josephine was in a Home and that it would nice if we went to see her. The Executive Committee agreed and on Saturday November 10, 2018, we visited the Home and spent time with Josephine, and other residents at Maryville. It was actually a pleasant experience to visit an old age home and spend some time with the elders present there.

For the elderly who live in Maryville, they experience “the love and compassion of Jesus” through the nuns who take care of them. The lawn is freshly mowed and the ambiance homely. The residents pay a monthly fee and in return they get lodging, meals and security. They can even cook for themselves if they don’t like the daily menu and can go out and meet their friends anytime.

Jo was her expected exuberant self



and said she would love to conduct a ‘tambola’ when we next visited her. This would of course be subject to approval of Sister Maria Theresa, the head of the Home. Josephine’s room was remarkably neat and her attendant took good care of her which was very gratifying to us. She took pleasure in having a group photo taken there.

Couple of us were surprised to see

our one-time colleagues also residing at the Home. It felt so good to reconnect and recall other colleagues with them. All other residents also came out of their rooms and we chatted with them in the sunny veranda, culminating in a group photo. We spent a lot of time communicating with them. Then we distributed fruits and winter worthy gift to all. Talking to them and seeing the smile in their faces when they knew that someone visited them, was really heart-warming. We tried not to ask them about their past as they might have some bad experiences like their children leaving them there etc. Most of the people who live in Maryville aren’t abandoned but don’t have anyone else to go to. Many are here because their children moved abroad.

So totally it was a wonderful experience for all of us and we felt really peaceful that entire day. It will be a nice gesture if some of you can visit Josephine at the Home, particularly those who knew her well.





# “Administrative Dynamics – The WOW Factor”

24th ASA CONGRESS: 24th -28th September 2018

Host: Papua New Guinea Association of Administrative Professionals

24th ASA Congress, was on the heels of our Annual Gala held on 1st September 2018. The Congress was hosted by Papua New Guinea Association of Administrative Professionals (PNGAAP). In spite of being the most recent member of ASA, they took the challenge to host a congress. It was a learning experience for the delegates: the locals are mostly underprivileged, yet people of great faith and endearing politeness.

Despite the limitations, their spirit was high as the “WOW” in the Congress theme stood for “Women of Wonder” referring to what we admin professionals are considered for our role in the office! Our trio comprised President Cheryl Mathew, Immediate Past President Natasha Mavalvala and Treasurer Clara Ann D’souza, who had a very comfortable stay at Gateway Hotel., as the staff was very attentive, and equally pleasing were the facilities in the hotel rooms.

On the opening night, the chief guest was the Governor of New West Britain Province of Papua, whose memorable lines were: “God has given equal opportunity to all. We have to tap on those opportunities and also help society in any way you can.” This, in fact, is the ethos of the PNG people.

The main congress speaker sessions that followed in the next three days were chiefly personal accounts of the person on the given topic, giving an insight into the life and struggle of most of them. The topics were wide ranging: Effective use of IT in administration/Leadership and management/What next?/Women in micro bank-



ing/Cultural barriers/Bridging the gap (The young and the experienced/Code of ethics/Fitness and health/Propagating in the Asia Pacific. Once again what was very pleasing was that every day, sessions started with a prayer creating a very good environment.

Day Two was packed with activities: city tour, delegates photos by countries, cultural show, and ASA Bazaar! City tour was to the Parliament House, followed by photo-shoot. Our selection of DSSP delegation’s outfit of coral green kameez with embroidery and lace caught everyone’s fancy and to the delight of our team with requests for photos with other delegates. After the city tour, buses took the delegates to a cultural show at the Aquatic Centre and then there was the ASA Bazaar. At the Bazaar, the



Indian delegation were very interested in Pakistani fabric - had we known! Even then, our items comprising of scarves, stoles, jewellery, carpet mat and table runners were briskly sold fetching USD 252. The proceeds of the Bazaar were collectively donated by PNGAAP to an institution for people with special needs, the Cheshire Home.

Day Three had five speaker sessions with sports activities - Fitness and Health Session demonstrating aerobics, Zumba and yoga.

Day Four and the concluding day, started with group photographs and a couple of sessions. This was a challenge for our team whose mind was more on ASA Project Presentation that was to follow.

Eight ASA member countries participated in the Contest.

3-minute presentation was announced prior to the Congress, and accordingly our Immediate Past President Natasha Mavalvala gave a well-rehearsed 2-minute talk, followed by 1-minute PowerPoint Presentation but due to an IT glitch the opening slide did not show up. IASAP India’s project was presented by their member Hyacinth Arya who is a professional trainer, who also covered several projects that were carried out by their various chapters. With presentation of multiple projects, India won the Award. It was comforting to hear private whispers that DSSP’s project focusing on promoting the profession was considered very meaningful.

Like other packed activities, the closing night entertainment was also the same day and our bone-thin trio had to muscle up for the skit the same evening.





Our skit was about bad customer service met by an airline passenger, at the ticket office and at the airport, and how the Coordinator saves the day each time. The passenger had a quirky role of hard-of-hearing, poorly dressed man who at the end reveals that he is an archaeologist travelling business class, to the embarrassment of airline staff and full appreciation from the passenger of the Coordinator, which role was played by our Treasurer Clara D'souza. The script was humorous and being the only stage performance was well-applauded, as other performances were cultural dances.

Beyond the Congress, DSSP made its presence felt at the Council of Presidents (CP) Meeting, by presenting amendments in ASA Administration Procedure Manual, inclusion of our President Cheryl in 3-member ASA Training Task Force and, request for a Permanent seat for DSSP among ASA CPs. Our late dear MOK had proposed amendments to the Manual to the ASA Secretariat in August 2017. This

was tabled at the CP Meeting and it was unanimously agreed that the final draft of the manual would be emailed to all CPs and Honorary Presidents for formal approval for comments. After the stipulated deadline, the amendments will be adopted.

At the previous Congress in Manila in 2016, DSSP had proposed that the host for ASA Congress could conduct a 2-day training in its country in the year prior to the Congress. This way the host country will get prominence for two consecutive years. During the present Congress a 3-member team comprising ASA President (PNGAAP) MeaLou-Isaac, our President Cheryl and Honorary President Melissa Ong of MAPSA Malaysia was formed to start work on this project to upskill and reskill of professionals, with the aim to develop them and also promote ASA.

DSSP's honorary representation on the Council of Presidents (CP) was regrettably lost with the demise of MOK who

had been the ASA President at both Karachi Congresses in 1990 and in 2014. A paper was presented by Cheryl showing the justification and advantages of 'transferring' the representation. Regrettably this was declined because the practice was that the Honorary President position on the CP was 'accorded to the President hosting an ASA Congress' and there was no instance where it was transferred. However, it was suggested that as practiced in other ASA member associations, DSSP could appoint a permanent ASA Coordinator for continuity and guidance.

Our trio returned home

with a memorable experience of this amazing new member country, and at the same time renewed friendship with ASA 'sisters' from other member countries, as well as forged new friendships, to take it all forward at the next congress.

The baton for the next congress was handed to SLAAPS – Sri Lanka Association of Administrative & Professional Secretaries -, who will host the 25th ASA Congress in Sri Lanka in 2020. They have promised to give a memorable Congress. So, members start saving and planning now and we can have a healthy number representing the DSSP this time. *Kia khijal bey?*





# The Annual General Meeting

**T**he AGM of the Distinguished Secretaries Society of Pakistan was held at the Beach Luxury Hotel on Sunday November 11, 2018. President Cheryl Mathew chaired the meeting, with Treasurer Clara Ann Dsouza, Immediate Past President Natasha Mavalvala and Secretary Naureen Rodrigues. The event commenced at 3.15 p.m. with the President welcoming the members to the Annual General Meeting of the DSSP.

The proceedings began with a brief summary of the projects undertaken by the executive committee since they were in office. The president shared that the executive committee visited the former DSSP President and lifetime member, Josephine Alexander who now lives at a home for the elderly, Mary Ville. The President encouraged members to pay Jo a visit.

The proceedings included confirmation of EGM minutes held on July 29, 2018, the Audited account for year ending June 30, 2018, re-appointment of auditors and restructuring of the Executive Committee.

The Audited Accounts, had no queries from members and was passed by the general body.

Members were then invited to a scrumptious buffet hi-tea at 007 Restaurant.





# Another Torch Passes at the DSSP

By Barbara DCruz

On Sunday December 16, 2018 DSSP witnessed yet another transition; the handing over and taking over of DSSP Executive Committee 2019-2020, which was celebrated with good intentions. It's a time when previous members step down, for the new members to take over and show their talents, skills and heart for the welfare of the DSSP. The ending is always a mark for a fresh beginning with new members and more creative ideas. What binds them together is their allegiance to the welfare of the institution and their resolve to emulate the spirit of the outgoing committee members. Thus continuity is assured in the life of the organization.

Beach Luxury Hotel was the venue chosen for this significant event. Glenda Dsouza was at the registration desk and navigated all the members to the novelty stall. A Novelty stall was displayed at the entrance of the hall. The items from the Annual Gala were disposed at a novelty stall @ Rs 50 per try. Proceeds will go towards charity. Each item on



the stall was worth more than Rs 50. The ladies participated wholeheartedly so it was a win-win situation!

Cheryl Mathews President of DSSP steered the event and welcomed everyone.

The two new Associate members introduced themselves at the event.

Certificates were distributed by Cheryl Mathew to the outgoing Executive members for their selfless efforts throughout the term 2017-2018.

Valentina Fernandes was welcomed as the incoming President of DSSP, torches were handed over by the outgoing executive committee members to the new executive members.

The New Executive Committee comprises of:

President: Valentina Fernandes  
Secretary: Naureen Rodrigues  
Treasurer: Clara Ann D'souza  
Social Secretary: Samantha Rodrigues

Editor News Bulletin: Sunnu Golwalla

ASA Coordinator: Cheryl Mathew

Executive Members: Glenda D'souza, Afroze Tungekar & Serena D'souza

Oath taking was carried out by outgoing President Cheryl Mathew and the Incoming President Valentina Fernandes. After Valentina Fernandes took the Oath she recited for the new executive members and they pledged thereafter.

Cheryl Mathew handed over the respective flag and keys of DSSP to incoming President, Valentina Fernandes. She thanked the executive members and wished all the new members the very best.

The website and logo was launched by Cheryl Mathew who gave us a brief presentation on the revamped DSSP's Website. Mr Irfan Rehman, our Graphic designer ended with responding to a few queries on the same.

The event was taken further with latest melodious Christmas carols playing softly in the background a fun-filled and brain teasing game of Christmas Riddles, played on individual sheets, at the end of the game, answers were checked and the winners were rewarded.

The gifts from ASA Congress held in PNG were distributed among DSSP ladies by a lucky draw. Followed by Brunch, the ladies enjoyed the Double treat with the scrumptious feast at Sea Front along with a serene atmosphere overlooking the calm waters. A game of Tombola was enjoyed, capping the event!





# Intentional communication

By Michele Thwaites

If I had to ask you to tell me how good your communication skills are – on a scale of 1-5 (1 being very bad and 5 being excellent) what would your rating be? Many people think they are a 4 or a 5 – amazing, right? Well in my training I do ask this question and then I go into an exercise to test that rating. I ask delegates to take a piece of paper and stand in a circle. Guess what I get? Some come up with a whole note pad, some come up with a note pad plus a pen and some come up with a piece of paper. The delegates who came up with a piece of paper were the ones who rated themselves a 3 which is the norm.

As we go further with the exercise they get asked to close their eyes and follow instructions on what to do with that piece of paper. At the end, when they reveal what their papers look like – they all look different. When I asked them to tear off parts of the paper, some felt the need to just fold, or roll their papers.

The reason I am sharing this with you is that the biggest part of communication is to listen. We should be doing more listening than talking. Yes, here we had delegates who heard my instruction, and I got varied responses. So why is that? Why, when you issue a simple and clear instruction as “Please take a piece of paper from your notepad and come and stand in front and form a circle”, some people do different things?

We all think differently, understand differently, interpret differently, listen differently. We are all unique human beings.

We are not all the same

There is a new element that I bring in to my communication training, and that is E-Colours. E-Colours is a process that helps us identify different personality styles and this in turn helps us understand ourselves and people around us better. Once you can understand why you do things in a certain way and it is different to others, you become more aware that we all think differently, understand differently, act differently and that we all have different communication styles and have different ways we behave. This is so important to know especially within the work environment and once people embrace it and use it they then take it home to share with their family and friends because it is applicable to anyone, anywhere at any time.

As human beings we don't want to know why the other person understands or interprets our messages differ-

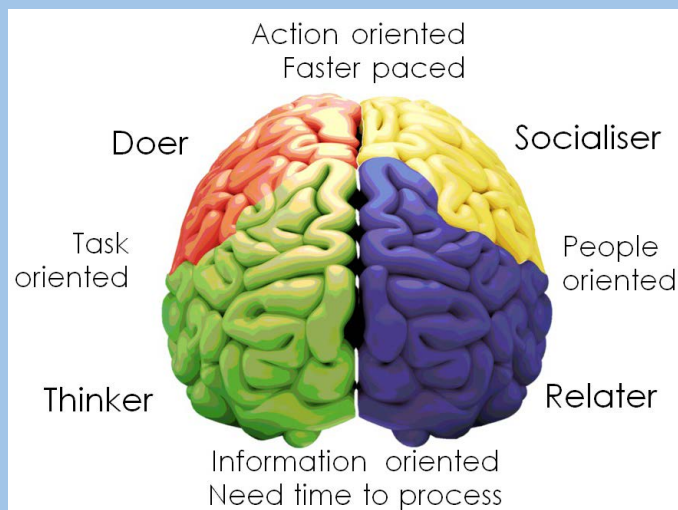
ently. Instead we get frustrated, irritated and impatient.

You can probably think about the different people you interact with in the workplace – some irritate you, some frustrate you, some you get along with just fine and some you have a good understanding of. I mean, there are people you give an instruction to, yet they come back with something completely different. You explain a task to someone, they say they understand, but again not done the way you intended it to be done. Why is that?

With E-Colours we work with four basic concepts – we use 4 colours to help identify the 4 areas of the brain.

There is a PDI questionnaire we ask you to complete and most people end up having two dominant E-Colours out of a possible 12 colour combinations. No E-Colour combination is better than the other. And there is no bad E-Colour combination either. E-Colours give us an easy and simple framework which allows people to understand ourselves and those around us better.

I could go into this in a lot more detail, but the essence of this is that when we begin to know our strengths and our potential limiters (not weaknesses, as we are just limiting what is possible or preventing us from moving forward or operating within our strength) we can understand ourselves more clearly. And when we understand ourselves we can then begin to understand others and why they operate in different strengths and have different limiters. We can appreciate and accept/tolerate others with their differences.



Your Doers and Thinkers are task oriented. They can quite happily get on with the job on their own.



Your Socialisers and Relaters are people oriented. They love interacting with people.

You will notice the Doers and Socialisers are action oriented and work at a faster pace. They come up with ideas and just want to get on with it.

However your Thinkers and Supporters are more information oriented and take longer to come to any decision. They need time to think about it and need a lot more questions answered to satisfy their curiosity and understanding.

We all fit into these groups and as I mentioned above, two will be more dominant.

Now if you open your skull and look at the brain, you will not find them in these colours. We have just used these 4 colours to help you identify the areas we are referring to.

#### Personality vs Character

We all have our own personality and our own characters. Some people think they are one and the same thing – not so.

We are born with a personality. This is who we are. And sometimes that is not a good thing. Our character is different. This is something that develops over time and depending on our situations, we respond in different ways. Your personality is like the cards you were dealt with. Your character is how you play those cards.

If we take a look at an iceberg – a third of it is above the water. Your personality is that one third above water. This is what people see and know about you. It shows your nature and your instinctive reaction. This is your natural way of communicating and ultimately your default comfort zone. In other words, you react without even thinking.

Your character is what is below the surface. Not many people get to see this side of you. This reflects your nature, your personal development, your background and your beliefs, your

family background, your self-awareness and your ability to manage your potential limitations. Your character typically allows you to respond.

How we respond to a situation or person can be quite different depending on what is below the surface of our 'iceberg' even if we share the same E-Colours. The conscious decisions we make, tap into our character, and are reflected through our personality. We react through our personality, but we respond through our character.

When responding, you are making a conscious decision to respond to stimuli instead of relying on an instinctive reaction; in other words, you choose to filter your response through your character.

Ask yourself this question - when do you think people typically get hurt, disrupt teamwork and get frustrated: when reacting or responding? Almost always when they react.

These both play a part in how we react or respond to people around us. If we are having a bad day at the office and someone says or does something we do not like, we tend to lash out or react in the moment. People see that and judge you accordingly, however, had they known what is really bothering you or had they said

or done something in a different way, you probably would not have lashed out. People knew if I was not having a good day that they just gave me an hour or two, I would have calmed down, thought about what was bothering me and responded appropriately. I understood that my problems were not theirs so why get upset when they don't understand. And that is what we need to do more often and not expect others to just understand – when they don't.

This will affect the way you start to communicate with people going forward – with more understanding and just being more aware of people and their behaviours.

What to do, what to do?

If you are curious about yourself and want to see where you fit into the 12 E-colour combinations, why don't you take the test? It is only 35 questions and will take you about 15 minutes. It is actually amazing to see how close and accurate it can be. You can do this by going to <https://www.equilibria.com/PDI> home.

You are welcome to let me know the results on [michele@empowered4success.co.za](mailto:michele@empowered4success.co.za) and if it does make a difference to the way you approach and do things going forward.

Good luck!

**Michele Thwaites**



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**A**NGELA GARRY is a fully qualified teacher and has worked in administrative roles in England and Ireland for 25+ years, with over 18 years of this in Personal Assistant roles. She has worked in a range of industries including a utility company, an engineering consultancy, an international seaport, a training company, a sixth form college, three Universities, and five years as the Principal's Personal Assistant in an innovative new inner city school, prior to 'going solo' as a Trainer / Coach / Mentor for PAs in 2014.

She has been shortlisted for several awards

including "Secretary of the Year 1998", "Head-teachers' PA of the Year 2010", "The Times / Hays PA of the Year 2011" and "WeAreTheCity Rising Star: Media and Journalism 2015", Angela has combined her teaching and PA skills to become a renowned trainer, mentor and coach for Personal Assistants and Administrators. On LinkedIn, Angela is the most connected Personal Assistant and PA Trainer globally.

Angela has delivered training / networking events and seminars for over 5,000 attendees (including 1,400+ Headteacher's PAs and Admins from 420+ schools) in 65 cities across the UK and

worldwide. She is CEO of Pica Aurum, a global training company ([www.picaaurum.com](http://www.picaaurum.com)), where she is a Trainer, Conference Chair, Speaker, Mentor, Coach.

Angela is Owner / Editor of EDPA (the leading magazine for school PAs and Admins) and Author of "Brave PAs" (for Education staff) and "The PA & EA Circus" (for assistants in all industries), plus two distance learning books – as well as a further 20 books for children and adults, which she produces via her publishing house Pica Books ([www.picabooks.co.uk](http://www.picabooks.co.uk)). She also helps other writers see their books through to publication.

## Aiming for 'well balanced'

**The Unicyclist: finding that all important "work/life balance"**

**M**aintaining a healthy work / life balance is crucial to being a great PA / EA. If you are permanently exhausted, think that you are at the end of your rope, feel unwell or are 'stressed out', you need to take time for you, to make sure that you have adequate time in your 'real life' outside of work to stay focused and well balanced.

Do you take all of your annual leave entitlement? Many PAs and EAs don't. Do you turn your phone off when you are away? Again, many don't.

And if you are ill, do you struggle into the office because you are so indispensable that you cannot stay home for a day's rest?

It is paramount that we pay attention to our own lives outside of work, and that we pay attention to any health issues. As detailed in another chapter, many PAs and EAs are giving away two working months of their time each year - for free - by working extra hours in the office. This means it is particularly important

to make sure that you actually take time off at some point and give yourself time to breathe and to regroup.

In any busy environment it can be very tempting to leave certain tasks for 'quieter' times (perhaps when the boss is away on holiday), when you will have fewer interruptions. However, not only is this bad planning, because it often means that the task becomes urgent because it has been deferred for so long, but it can also lead to you staying at your desk for longer than you need to and not taking off appropriate time for you during the break.

So, make sure you schedule some time off, and then make sure that you actually take it!

Before you go on your annual leave, it is wise to create a pre-holiday checklist to make sure that you are fully prepared, and aim to finish up whatever tasks you can before you go - to a reasonable extent. Don't work ridiculously long hours in order to clear everything from your desk before you head off for your week on the





Costa Blanca or Skegness ...

## Here are some tips for your taking time-off checklist.

### Delegate

If you are a senior-level administrator, distribute tasks among your staff - you will already know who can handle what. If you don't supervise other staff, seek assistance from a colleague you trust, and reassure them that you will return the favour when they go on their annual leave.

Keep a note of which tasks you have delegated to whom, which tasks you have completed and which tasks you haven't, so you will know what needs immediate action on your return. There is bound to be more to add to this list when you get back, but at least this will give you a starting point and will help you plan your first week or so.

### Organise minor aspects of your role

If your Executive is going to be in the office while you are away, make sure that you fill up the paper trays on the printers, replace any low toners and order fresh supplies - and let them know where spares are stored and how to change them.

It might be second nature for you to pop the printer open, change the toners and clean the print heads, but when your boss is suddenly inkless it is important that they know how to cope on their own! You might also want to leave a list detailing where you keep office basics like staples, pens and folders.

(I say this from experience, having received 'urgent' text messages from bosses in two of my previous jobs, one asking me how to replace the photocopier toner and the other enquiring where the spare teabags were kept!)

### Calendars

Make sure your boss's calendar is up to date, and that papers for any forthcoming meetings are in a prominent place, ready for them to take with them. Ask a colleague to keep an eye on the calendar for you - give them a paper copy of it before you go.

### In your absence

Update your boss last thing before you go on leave to let them know what has been set up to take place in your absence. Schedule a return meeting for when you get back, so that you can catch up on what happened when you were away.

Then head for the hills (or the airport!) ...

### Tidy up

Neaten your desk space. While you are away things will be dumped on it by other people, so it will make it easier on your return if you have cleared your work out of the way first.

### Reduce incoming emails

Without doubt, you will find a very full inbox of emails when you return. There are a few things you can do to alleviate this problem:

- Unsubscribe from any email lists you are

a member of, or set your account to 'no mail' on those lists.

- Send fewer emails in the last few days before your holiday - and hence get fewer responses.
- Empty your inbox before you go - file incomplete items in appropriate folders ready to be dealt with on your return.
- Set up an 'out of office' reply on your account that thanks the sender for their message and indicates that you are away and the date of your return. Include alternative contacts should they require immediate assistance.
- (Put a similar message on your voicemail on both your desk phone and your work mobile phone, if you have one.)

On your return, allocate yourself a reasonable amount of relatively quiet time to go through the messages that have piled up. Basically, take ownership of your email inbox - don't let it own you!

### While you are at it, try to SWITCH OFF your home computer / iPhone / Blackberry while you are away

I used to find this really difficult as I'm a sucker for technology and gadgets and the internet and Facebook and keeping in touch with my friends and reading my email and taking photos and so on...

I would take my smartphone on holiday and connect to free Wi-Fi whenever I found it to upload photos to my Facebook account.

I'd then end up checking my personal emails to see if there were any messages that needed my attention, and then I would find myself thinking, 'Oh, and while I'm doing that, I might as well check my work email account too ...'

It is an all too common story: many of us spend part of our holiday time doing more work.

Does this sound like you too? I would love to advise you, 'Put your hands in the air, and walk away from the tablet, iPad, iPhone or Blackberry. You are on holiday!'

It is apparent, though, that this isn't always practical or possible. You worry that the boss might need something urgently, so you just do a quick check -and before you know it, you have spent an hour or so of your holiday time on work-related emails.

So, should you or shouldn't you check your emails while you are on leave?

These questions remain hot topics judging by recent press coverage.

Some PAs are convinced that their bosses need them constantly and that today's 24/7 way of life means that you should be available at all times.

Others firmly believe that no one can really switch off and get the benefits of being on holiday if they are constantly online, so they wouldn't dream of checking their work email when they are away.

## How available do you allow yourself to be?

The 2014 UK National PA Survey asked PAs about their holiday habits:

Do you stay in touch with the office when you are on holiday?	
Yes, I check in daily	14.9%
Yes, I check in occasionally	29.5%
I am available if an emergency arises	33.6%
No	22.0%

This means that nearly 45% of PAs either phone in, pop in or check their office

email accounts when on holiday, whilst a further third are available for emergencies. Only a fifth of respondents said they kept their holidays

completely separate from their work. So what's the best thing for you to do?

It is not just about deciding whether you log in to your work emails when you are away. In fact, both you and your Executive need to be absolutely clear about what is reasonably expected of you.

It could be argued, for example, that you have been given a staff mobile phone expressly so that you can be reached at all times, in which case you need to leave the phone at work so another colleague can cover your role completely when you are away. Be brave. Set some boundaries.

If you or your boss are really convinced that something might occur that is so

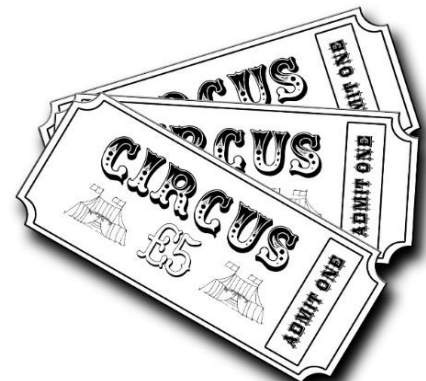
urgent that you need to be contacted when you are away, and you truly believe that you cannot say, 'No, I will definitely not be available when I'm away,' then go for the middle ground.

Set up a system with your boss before you go, whereby you give your personal email address to your Executive and tell them that it can be used in cases of emergency or extreme urgency only.

So, for anyone who emails your work email address you will be unavailable, but your boss can reach you if absolutely necessary.

However, if you have followed the various tips outlined in this chapter, then there shouldn't be any emergencies because you will have fully briefed your boss and a trusted colleague to take on tasks in your absence.

Have a great holiday!





# Say Goodbye to the Post-Holiday Blues!

BY Maria Henze

**M**aria Henze gives her top tips for dealing with back-to-work anxiety

You know that sinking feeling, when you have had a wonderful holiday, a totally blissful break from inboxes and meetings, organising events and putting out fires; and the day you have to go back to doing all those things again feels like it is approaching far too fast? Few and far between are the people who have never experienced “going back to work anxiety” after a holiday. This can be especially true after a long summer break. Did you feel it this year, when you went back to work after your summer holiday? You are not alone.

The feeling of dread has very little to do with how we feel about our jobs. We are professionals who like what we do and who are stimulated by our jobs. (If you do not like what you do or feel stimulated by your job, read no further, and instead invest all your time and energy in finding a different job or a different career altogether!). So, if we are not unhappy at work, why do we feel reluctant to go back after a break?

One reason may be as simple as dreading having to get up early and follow a schedule again, when you have been used to relaxing. You may also start to feel apprehensive when you think about the heavy backlog you know is awaiting you, in addition to the usual demands, as soon as you set foot in the office. Having been away, you may not feel you are up to speed and ready to deal with all that awaits you on your first day, or in your first week. Often, one negative feeling can lead to another, and all those negatives can conjure up a dark picture, building up feelings of reluctance and anxiety about the prospect of going back to work.

There are tricks to deal with all of this. One such trick is going back



to work in the middle of the week rather than on a Monday. Starting on a Wednesday or a Thursday is a gentle way of getting back into the swing of things, making sure you are not overwhelmed by a full week’s work straight away. Another trick is going to bed closer to your normal bedtime, the closer you get to the end of your holiday. If you travel across time zones, try to plan your trips to allow a few days at home to adjust back to your own time zone. It is no fun going to work when you are jetlagged, even at the best of times. You can make your return to work easier by preparing for it in advance. Finish off as much work as you can before you start your holiday. Delegate tasks that can easily be covered by others in your absence to avoid backlogs (and be prepared to do the same for them). Plan for your first week back in advance, including booking uninterrupted time for yourself, to go through your backlog in peace (300 unread e-mails, anyone?).

There is another, perhaps somewhat surprising, reason why people feel anxious and depressed at the thought of having to return to work. Many

people simply pack too much into their holidays. How many times have you planned your summer holiday for weeks or even months in advance? It is true that forward planning is a fantastic way to prolong your holiday enjoyment – the anticipation allows you to enjoy it long before it has even started. However, with too much advance planning, you run the risk of becoming over-enthusiastic and trying to fit too many activities into your weeks off. By not allowing yourself free time and opportunities to be spontaneous or to simply “do nothing”, you may end up feeling more exhausted than refreshed at the end of the break. One synonym of the word “holiday” is “rest”. It is important to remember that our bodies and minds need rest from time to time, in order to cope with the many demands we place on them.

Always remember that your attitude influences how you feel. Feeling grateful for your interesting job, wonderful colleagues, the difference you are making and the money you are earning will energise you and help you look forward to getting back to work.



# Welcome New Associate Members

## September-December 2018

Joyce D'Souza



Sylvia Conception



Mary Carida Peters



Rubina Bader



### A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

The entire Executive Committee, on behalf of the DSSP members, wish to extend an enormous and heartfelt thank you to our outgoing President, Cheryl Mathew, for the excellent job and leading us through numerous changes and challenges these past two years. Cheryl exhibited her vision and passion throughout her term as President, giving her 100% to the DSSP projects and other meeting activities which went smoothly and professionally!

Cheryl, we enjoyed working with you during these two years. Thanks for mentoring us and other volunteers, encouraging us to become more involved in representing the profession. Helping us polish our skills in a very professional way.

We all are proud to have served with Cheryl on the Executive Committee; sincerely we appreciate her mentoring during our tenure and look forward to her wise counsel during our next term.

A hearty thank you from all of us, Cheryl!

Sincerely,  
Executive Committee  
2017 - 2018

The Executive Committee's last EC Meeting was held on Saturday December 08, 2018 followed by lunch in order to thank Cheryl for her contribution as our President and celebrated the excellent term by presenting her with a lovely bouquet of fresh flowers and a mouth-watering Parsi lunch of Mutton Dhansak and a rich fruit cake as a hearty dessert. Cheryl thanked all of us and believed that it would not have been possible without the team's support. It was a very fulfilling tenure for all of us.

Naureen Rodrigues  
Secretary  
2017-2018







**2019**  
**HAPPY NEW YEAR**