

WELCOME!

Welcome to this issue of Career Communiqué!

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CAREER *communiqué!*

Managing your interruptions.

I trust that everyone is experiencing a productive March. If you are anything like me, maintaining a steady flow of productivity can often prove challenging due to continual interruptions during the day.

While I don't want to appear rude when I receive unexpected calls from friends or colleagues, trying to regain momentum and concentration even after only a five minute interruption can often prove difficult. With the pending deadline of my newsletter and timetable rearranged to allow some serious writing and development time, not five minutes into beginning and the phone rings, emails hit my inbox ... and the rest is history. I'm sure you have experienced similar issues within your work. So how do we strike up a healthy (and friendly) balance and better learn to manage these interruptions.

The telephone has been renowned as one of the biggest time wasters in the workplace. Even with good intentions a five minute call can often drag out to 15 minutes or half an hour or more, and a few of these each day can seriously affect your productivity scale. So what are some

strategies that we can implement to avert distracting phone calls.

If you need some definite quiet time with no interruptions at all, switch your phone to message bank, voice mail or divert your line to a secretarial answering service.

Don't put off until tomorrow, what you can do today.

Scheduling your diary with blocks of time that you are not available will allow you to complete work that requires concentration and thought, without constant interruptions by staff or unnecessary telephone calls.

When contacted unexpectedly by a friend or colleague for a non-business related matter, allow yourself 3-5 minutes, tell them about it, time yourself, and end the call politely when the time is up.

If making calls to a client or colleague for a specific purpose to avoid ongoing conversations, ask them if they have five minutes spare to discuss this issue and stick to that time.

Continued P 4

SUGGESTIONS?

Do you have a suggestion for a topic that you would like covered in our upcoming newsletters. Please forward your suggestion to: communiqué@aresumewriter.net

**INTERESTING
TIDBITS!**

Absence minded

HR Monthly - Page: 20-21 : 01-Mar-2004
Original article by Helen Carayannis

Australian employers need to take a lot of care before dismissing an employee on the grounds of excessive absenteeism. They must ensure any such action is not in breach of any contract or agreement with the employee, nor does it breach any appropriate law. In seeking to reduce overall staff absenteeism, research shows that companies that encourage the notion of work/life balance have low absentee rates, as do companies who require their staff to provide medical certificates for days off sick.

[Source: My Business Daily 12 March 2004 – ABIX]

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10 TIPS FOR CRAFTING S.M.A.R.T. INTERVIEWING STORIES

With small businesses following Fortune 500 companies in the hot trend toward behavioral interviewing, it's critical that job seekers be prepared to deliver fact-filled stories when responding to the query, "Tell me about a time when you. . ." Many interviewers prefer that job seekers deliver interview responses, or stories, using the CAR or STAR method (acronyms for Challenge, Action, Result or Situation/Task, Action, and Result).

For our purposes, we'll use the SMART format, which stands for Situation with Metrics, Actions, Results, and Tie-in. The last item, Tie-in, is key. It neatly links the response back to the employer's competency question, allows the individual to inquire further into the employer's needs, and helps focus the conversation on how the candidate can DO the job instead of simply AUDITION for the job.

These 10 tips can serve as a guide for writing SMART stories.

1. Use the "it's about them, not me" perspective when describing your stories. This means that, ultimately, your SMART stories must be related to "them"—the employer and *their needs*. Think in terms of what will motivate the employer to buy, the return-on-investment you offer, and

your benefits vs. features.

2. Write SMART stories about your work at each of your past employers. The heaviest concentration of stories should be about your current or most recent experiences. Pen a SMART story for each recent accomplishment on your resume.

3. Assign themes to your SMART stories that underscore competencies for the target position. For instance,

competencies for a customer service rep might include customer-focused orientation, interpersonal judgment, communication skills, teamwork, problem solving, listening skills/empathy, and initiative.

4. Write SMART stories for non-work experiences if you are just entering the work force. It is fair game to draw on volunteer work, school experiences, and general life incidents. (If you sense you need additional experience, identify and quickly act on how you can best prepare yourself through reading, attending a course, job-shadowing, volunteering, or taking a relevant part-time job.)

Continued P 3

**S.M.A.R.T. stands for
Situation with Met-
rics; Actions; Results,
and Tie-in.**

GET YOUR QUESTION'S ANSWERED!

Don't forget to visit our new forum at www.aresumewriter.net/forum where you can drop us a line, share your comments, ask a question, or respond to other peoples' concerns. Feel free to stop by when you have a free moment and say hello—tell your friends! And remember to check back regularly as we will be adding hints, tips and other articles on career-related subjects.

INTERESTING
TIDBITS! - CON'T

More women at the top really pays off

The Australian Financial Review - Page: 52 : 02-Mar-2004

Original article by Catherine Fox

There is some evidence to suggest that women executives at the top level can contribute to the performance of a company. It may be difficult to alter the culture of a corporation initially. However, the benefits of gender diversity are worth campaigning for. By including women in senior management, companies are able to increase their human capital. According to research, diverse groups are usually more innovative.

[Source: My Business Daily 2 March 2004 – ABIX]

CAREER *communiqué!*

10 TIPS FOR CRAFTING S.M.A.R.T. INTERVIEWING STORIES—con't

5. Regardless of what point your career life is at, *everyone* should recollect influential or life-altering events throughout youth and adulthood. Write SMART stories about these times.

6. Numbers speak louder than words! Load the stories with numbers, dollar amounts, productivity measurements, comparisons, and the like. (Be cautious about conveying proprietary or confidential company information.) Be specific and offer proof. Instead of saying, "I learned the program quickly," make it crystal clear with language like, "I studied the manual at night and, in three days, I knew all the basic functions; in two weeks I had mastered several of the advanced features; and by the end of the month, I had experienced operators coming to me to ask how to embed tables into another program."

7. Include emotions and feelings. Yes, feelings. When describing the situation, don't be afraid to include details such as these: "the tension among the team was so serious that people were resigning"; "the morale was at an all-time low"; or "the customer was irate about receiving a mis-shipment that occurred because of our transportation vendor." When writing about emotions or feelings, be mindful NOT to whine or disparage anyone, even if through a veiled reference.

8. Avoid personal opinions. You can,

however, include the opinion of a supervisor or another objective party. Instead of saying, "I believe my positive outlook really helped keep the customer happy," rely on someone else's opinion: "My supervisor commented in a memo how my outlook helped us save a key account that was in jeopardy of being lost. I have a copy of that memo if you'd like to see it."

9. Pace the stories so that each is approximately 2-3 minutes in length. Set up the story briefly with facts, place the greatest weight on the action portion of the story, wrap it up with numbers-driven results, and tie it back to the interviewer's needs. Occasionally, vary the delivery by dropping in a result at the front end of the story.

10. Make the stories relevant. You have a myriad of experiences in your background. Sift through them and select the stories that best substantiate your competencies, knowledge, skills, and motivation to excel in the target job.

Source: Career Coach Academy



QUESTIONS?

Do you have a question that you would like to ask our Résumé Writers or Interview Coach? Please forward them to discover@aresumewriter.net. Your question may be selected for inclusion in our next Career Communiqué! Issue.

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MANAGING YOUR INTERRUPTIONS-CON'T

Emails are fast becoming problematic as well, with hundreds of emails being forwarded and received every minute.

- ◆ Schedule certain times of the day that you download, read and answer your emails, otherwise you will spend your entire day looking at each and every email entering your inbox.
- ◆ Invest in a spam blocker that will manage and bounce back unsolicited emails. You can be robbed of valuable time having to sift through unwanted emails—let your email spam blocker stop them from being downloaded into your email program.



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Guest– Writer Spotlight: Business Basics and Black in Style

The year is finally taking shape. The kids are back in school and businesses are back into full swing again. I always find January a struggle as I start planning my year and implementing the ideas I finished the last year with. It can be a bit mismatched which is how many of you may be feeling with your wardrobes and the clothes you have to wear.

This month I am going to focus on how to wear black for those of us who aren't winters and do not necessarily shine in black. There are plenty of

tricks available to allow you to comfortably wear black and look good in it. This is something we need to keep in mind with autumn approaching, although who can tell with the incredibly hot weather and fires we have been experiencing this month.

I am also going to share with those of you either entering the workforce for the first time or deciding to rebuild your corporate wardrobe just how to go about it efficiently and economically.

HOW TO WEAR BLACK IF IT IS NOT YOUR COLOUR.

It was back in the 15th century that the Court of Burgundy became the

leaders in fashion of the time. It was here that black first became popular as a colour for men to wear after the gaiety and brightness of the other European courts. It was soon after this that it became the colour to be worn for both formal and festive events.

We can see how far black has come today when you consider it is almost the uniform of the masses. Black is the first colour we tend towards to hide our faults. No

wardrobe is complete without at least one black suit, a pair of black pants and or a black skirt. Add to that a black leather jacket and a pair of black shoes. How many wardrobes have I described in that short description? Most I am guessing. Now if everyone can't wear black how can we get away with all of this black in our c u p b o a r d s ?

The first thing you must keep in mind is that our face and skin tone are only affecting by those garments on our body from the waist up. So immediately you know your shoes, pants and skirts are safe. OK so how do we deal with the rest of it? What are we girls to do with our LBD (little black dress) that we all have?

“Black is the first colour we tend towards to hide our faults...”

SUBSCRIBERS CORNER

Do you have a horror interview story that you would like to share with our subscribers? Or perhaps you would like to share with others, some tips and strategies that has worked in your career? Please send them through to: communiqué@aresumewriter.net

Continued from P 4

Here are a few points to keep in mind.

- The more skin you show the less affect anything has on your face. So keep it strappy.

- Break it up between you face and the black garment. If you are wearing a black jacket ensure you have a top on in your correct colour toning to lessen the effect of the black. Also try and keep you collar out over the jacket.

- Wear an item of jewellery to break up the black.

- If your face is lined black will only fill the lines with shadow and age you further.

- If you have a LBD that does not reveal too much skin you can reduce the effect of the black by draping a sheer wrap, in you ideal colours, over the dress and look very glamorous.

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Business Basics and Black in Style—con't

Black can be our friend and our foe. Many people tell me how they wear black to make themselves look slimmer even though they know it is not one of their colours. I point out to them here that black is a combination of all colours and therefore a very dense and heavy colour. To wear it properly you need to keep the eye moving to other areas to hide any flaws you may have. If you wish to wear all black the best way to do that is with layers. Monochromatic colourings are very slimming so I would suggest black pants or skirt and top with a lighter long line jacket over the tops to create some movement in your outfit. For men you would be better to go with a jacket with some movement in it.

BUILDING A WORKING WARDROBE

Building a working wardrobe can be fraught with dangers. This is the first time we can meet our Grooming Gremlin. He is the nasty little character that talks us into buying that amazing tie dyed silk shirt with the mismatched buttons and the see through back that will go with absolutely nothing else we own, is not practical for work and will show off more than we are willing to expose. So it will sit for a couple of years at the end of our wardrobe until we decide it is time to ditch it. Many employers complain that the main

problem they have with many employees is their grooming. Now by saying this they do come to work clean every day but after the first couple of weeks it is as if they have run out of clothes to wear and honestly this is often the case. If you follow the following steps you will have a better wardrobe. Filled with strong co-ordinates and

many working options. More clothing for less money has to be good.

To begin with you need to plan these purchases. It is

a bit like cooking. Decide what you need first and go out and pick up your ingredients. As with cooking the better the ingredients are that you chose the better the end result will be.

I suggest you decide upon your central colour. This will be a neutral colour that will form the core of your wardrobe. If it happens that you find it in one store in matching pants, skirt, dress and jacket then go for it. Did I mention that this might not be an inexpensive exercise so be prepared to lay-by some pieces. Ideal neutral colours are black, navy, tan, chocolate brown, tan and taupe.

Continued P 6

Beware, building a working wardrobe can be fraught with Dangers.

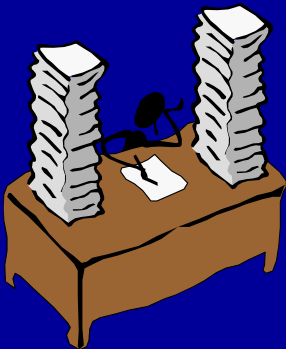
PASS US ON!

We hope you are able to use some of the information in our newsletter to enhance your career! Do you know anyone who may benefit from our newsletter. If so, please feel free to send them a copy, or send us through an email with their details to: communique@aresumewriter.net We will gladly add them to our subscribers list.

**MANAGING YOUR
INTERRUPTIONS-CON'T**

Having an open-door policy is great for staff moral, however can often hinder your efficiency if taken for granted.

- ◆ Ensure that your office is not overly visible thus causing people who are passing through to pop in to see you.
- ◆ Stipulate blocks of time that you will be available for staff to visit you either early on in the day, or towards the end of the day. This way you won't get a continual influx of people at your door.



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Guest– Writer Spotlight: Business Basics and Black in Style—con't

You may not want everything to match in the one fabric or it may be that your wardrobe does not need to be that corporate. So in that case find a jacket or pair of pants and build an outfit around that one piece. A complete outfit only needs to be a jacket, top and pants or skirt. Now using that same jacket or pants build another complete outfit that compliments the first. So by now you will have a jacket that can be worn with two tops and two bottom pieces and combined will create four separate outfits.

If you started with the jacket to really expand on what you have started all you will need is another jacket, another bottom and four more tops. You will have 11 pieces in your wardrobe that can create up to 36 different outfits. You won't need to wear the same outfit twice to work in over a month. As long as you ensure you start with a neutral colour in either your jacket or pants and build up from there. Fabulous trendy seasonal colours will look good for a season but don't have staying power. Buy good quality and complimentary colours for your existing wardrobe and you can't go wrong.

The good news is that once you have tired of the 36 pieces you already have you can start again with another core colour and build up another combination of working pieces that will keep that Grooming Gremlin at

bay and show you to be a Wardrobe Warrior.

About the Writer:

Melbourne born and based, Clare Maxfield is an inspiring and entertaining image consultant and speaker who has dedicated her life to the all importance of image and achieving personal goals. Visit Clare's website at:

www.corporateconfidence.com.au



Q & A:

I'm applying for a position with a doctor and I need to write a cover letter. The problem is that I worked in that office years ago, but not for this doctor. The doctor that I worked for has moved away, but I'm not sure how to address this in my letter.

Hi,

This is a great question, however prior to putting pen to paper you may like to do some research in order to find out further information regarding the medical clinic which could also be beneficial for inclusion in your cover letter.

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Your overall aim is to allow the doctor to be aware of your familiarity with the office, including procedures, current patient/client base, which will ensure your ability to proficiently re-establish yourself as a productive team member (rather than them having to retrain a new staff member who lacks previous experience within that environment).

This could involve:

- ◆ Colleagues with whom you have previously worked at the clinic may still be employed, so by re-establishing contact with them may be another great way to get your foot in the door. Consider asking them if it would be possible to mention their name in your letter, to inform the reader of your previous working relationship which will no doubt attract the doctor's attention.
- ◆ After connecting with your former colleagues you may also be able to ask them about the types of processes and procedures followed and utilised within the workplace. If these processes/procedures or even technologies are similar to the systems you once operated, mention this in your letter and ensure you highlight your ability to transition seamlessly into the workplace through having prior experience with their current methodologies/systems. You may even have contributed to

developing/setting-up some of these systems in your previous employment, demonstrating initiative as well as being a key driver for the successful operation of the clinic. This could also be drawn to the attention of the new doctor.

- ◆ Another area to consider would be if this doctor specialised in a particular medical field that the previous doctor was also involved in, thus allowing you to gain expertise in this area also – another added advantage.

I hope this has given you some ideas as to the information of relevance that would certainly make an impact if incorporated into your cover letter.

