

Executive Stress

OFFICE SUPPORT®

"Professional Assistance for the 21st Century Professional!"

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Welcome!

BOY! AFTER THE devastating end to 2005 for us personally, 2006 hasn't kicked off any better. The VA industry lost a great leader and mentor on 3 January with the sudden death of Janet Jordan. An online memorial was held for Janet on 13 January New York time. More info about Janet's fantastic contribution to the industry is included in this newsletter.

This sudden death was then followed by the news that one of my husband's dearest friends was lost in the Cairo bus crash - Lu Prenner. Lu was an absolutely wonderful man - always smiling ... loved his coffee and his fishing ... and always gave without expectation of receiving anything in return. His memorial service was a testament to the man he was with hundreds turning out to honour him. We'll miss you Lu.

On the work front, I've been very busy catching up having now returned to my home office after working 3 months onsite for a client at Salisbury. There's been lots of enquiries for services recently - so the popularity of Virtual Assistance is on the increase. Don't forget our referral policy!

I'm currently on the steering committee of



the inaugural Online International Virtual Assistants' Conference (more news coming soon on that!). This proves to be a very exciting conference/exhibition as it will be entirely virtual utilising some terrific technologies.

I was also interviewed by California-based WomensRadio recently - and I'll be sending a separate link to the interview for those who would like to have a listen!

Recent news that is front of mind for us all right now is the devastating cyclone that hit the Innisfail area recently. Teams of volunteers are currently working to help the people of the community rebuild. I've recently been in contact with the Disaster Relief Centre and volunteered my services as a VA for anyone needing to send emails or faxes, make calls to loved ones, or businesses wanting to get in touch with suppliers and contacts - or who just need to keep their business ticking over while rebuilding is underway. If you know anyone who needs help pass my details on - I'll be glad to be of service to them - FOC of course!

Till next quarter!

Virtually yours

Lyn P.B

"Only as high as I reach can I grow,
only as far as I seek can I go,
only as deep as I look can I see,
only as much as I dream can I be."

Karen Ravn

We're Registered!

IT TOOK HAVING my domain taken, but I finally got my act together and had my business name/logo registered as a trademark. In the early days of the practice I had

www.executivestressofficesupport.com as my domain name. For obvious reasons, after two years I let the renewal lapse in favour of the easier www.execstress.com.

Well an organisation in the US took the domain up and has it pointed to a directory of virtual businesses. This can prove very costly for me.



I took steps to register my business name/logo here in Australia and am in the process of registering it in the UK and US, in hopes that it will give me some sort of bargaining power when I approach this company to get my domain back.

But this is a good warning for anyone in business. And I received some sage advice - albeit a little too late: never give up a trade mark, domain name or business name you're not prepared

to let someone else use, even if you're no longer using it. (Thanks Lionel!)

What's Inside ...

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Phishing | Page 2 |
| No Reply Emails | Page 3 |
| Martha v Maxine | Page 3 |
| Janet Jordan - Memorial | Page 3 |
| Cost of Staff | Page 4 |

Who's to blame for phishing?

AND WHAT IS IT ANYWAY??

(fish'ing) (n.) The act of sending an e-mail to a user falsely claiming to be an established legitimate enterprise in an attempt to scam the user into surrendering private information that will be used for identity theft.

Phishing is now an established part of computer life. Almost everyone gets messages that seem to come from banks and other companies – the idea is to trick you into going to a web site, that looks like the real one, and entering your account details and password. Once the bad guys have that info all sorts of trouble can ensue.

But who is to blame for these messages?

It seems some people don't understand the phishing messages are NOT real and don't come from the company they pretend to. That especially applies when the messages appear to come from a company you've never dealt with.



"Why does Citibank keep writing to me – I've never used them"

"Paypal is a nuisance – they keep sending me emails about an account that doesn't exist."

"How and why does my bank send messages to me at a different address from the one I've given them?"

Phishing is done by criminals and has nothing to do with the targeted company. The email addresses are 'farmed' in various ways in the same way that spammers do.

You should treat phishing messages in the same way as you do any other unsolicited messages – delete them.

The targeted companies, after a slow start, now try to warn customers about fake messages. Aside from that there's not a lot they can do to stop the flow of messages. Some action can be taken against individual scams but even that's hard when the origin and hosting of the scams is spread across many countries.

Citibank in the US does try to identify their real messages – they include the last few digits of your account number near the top of genuine messages from them. As long as you know what those digits are you can tell if the message is real.

You'd think that options like digitally signed messages would be an obvious choice for financial institutions but the support for signed messages in email clients is poor.

Most spam filters also try to detect phishing messages but it's hard for software to tell the difference between fake messages and real ones.

If you're looking for an email from a bank or Paypal have a look in your Junk Mail folder, it might have been put there by accident.

Edited article courtesy Email Essentials #4.04

No Reply Can be Very Meaningful...

Reliance on email is now so matter-of-fact that we can forget that all communication is a two-way street - a message received usually needs a reply. In business, this is particularly true when asking questions, making project plans, or communicating with co-workers and managers.

Missing a meeting or arriving at the wrong place or at the wrong time can occur because the sender didn't realize that his or her message was not answered. Senders need to remember that the message may have never been received, gotten lost in a big inbox, or was simply ignored. If a formal scheduling mechanism is not available to book events, one can avoid these "no reply" problems with a quick phone call or IM.

But it's also true that in certain cases no communication still communicates something. The absence of a response could be *I am ignoring you, your requests, or your issues* for any one of a number of reasons: and speaks louder than words ever could. The recipient chooses a powerful response by saying nothing at all.

Interpretation is everything. Depending on the context of the flow of communication, it may indeed be that the real message is:

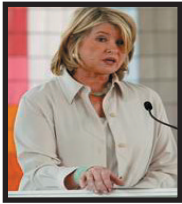

- * I am too busy to deal with it.
- * I lost/accidentally deleted it.
- * I am so put off by what you have said, I won't answer it.
- * I won't put a response in writing for fear of going "on the record."
- * My spam filter ate your message.

Janet Asteroff (editor: Richi Jennings)

eSOS Note: It's worth remembering email etiquette dictates that all messages should be responded to within 24 hours ... even if it's just a few words to let the sender know you received their email OK. Messages get lost and sending a quick note ensures you won't be contacted weekly by the sender asking whether their message made it to you.



I'm with Maxine!

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Martha's Way</p> |  <p>Maxine's Way</p> |
| <p>Stuff a miniature marshmallow in the bottom of a sugar cone to prevent ice cream drips.</p> | <p>Just suck the ice cream out of the bottom of the cone, for Pete's sake! You are probably lying on the couch with your feet up eating it, anyway!</p> |
| <p>To keep potatoes from budding, place an apple in the bag with the potatoes.</p> | <p>Buy Hungry Jack mashed potato mix, keep it in the pantry for up to a year.</p> |
| <p>When a cake recipe calls for flouring the baking pan, use a bit of the dry cake mix instead and there won't be any white mess on the outside of the cake.</p> | <p>Go to the bakery! They'll even decorate it for you.</p> |
| <p>If you accidentally oversalt a dish while it's still cooking, drop in a peeled potato and it will absorb the excess salt for an instant "fix-me-up".</p> | <p>If you oversalt a dish while you are cooking, that's too bad. Please recite with me the real woman's motto: "I made it and you will eat it and I don't care how bad it tastes!"</p> |
| <p>Wrap celery in aluminum foil when putting in the refrigerator and it will keep for weeks.</p> | <p>Celery? Never heard of it!</p> |
| <p>Brush some beaten egg white over pie crust before baking to yield a beautiful glossy finish.</p> | <p>The Mrs. Smith frozen pie directions do not include brushing egg whites over the crust so I don't.</p> |
| <p>Cure for headaches: take a lime, cut it in half and rub it on your forehead. The throbbing will go away.</p> | <p>Take a lime, mix it with tequila, chill and drink!</p> |
| <p>If you have a problem opening jars, try using latex dishwashing gloves. They give a non-slip grip that makes opening jars easy.</p> | <p>Go ask that very cute neighbor if he can open it for you.</p> |
| <p>Don't throw out all that leftover wine. Freeze into ice cubes for future use in casseroles and sauces.</p> | <p>Leftover wine?????????? HELLO !!!!!!!</p> |

Janet Jordan - Her Legacy Lives On

Janet Langford Jordan, MVA, PREVA, and president of Virtual Assistance U, was a recognized industry leader in the virtual assistance field. In addition to her VAU post, Jordan was president and CEO of 1st Choice Master Virtual Assistant, 1st Choice Online Transactions and 1st Choice PREVA, virtual knowledge/assistance practices based out of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Mrs Jordan's virtual assisting career began in 1980, long before the term "Virtual Assistant" was coined. As a widowed, single parent, Jordan (then Langford), raised two small children doing home based secretarial work. Her clients consisted of insurance agents, speakers and other road warriors who needed an expert in typing, travel arrangements and customer relationship management. From that humble beginning, Jordan grew her VA industry knowledge and expertise to its present day state.



Along with running her private VA practices which included clients who spanned the globe, Mrs Jordan also trained aspiring entrepreneurs to launch their own up-to-the-minute, compelling and relevant virtual assistant practices. As part of her philanthropic efforts, Jordan reached out to women's shelters to offer her VAU curriculum, free of charge, to victims of domestic violence. Her comprehensive training programs and boot camps earned Virtual Assistance U recognition as "The Benchmark for VA Training".

Jordan was a founder and served on the board of directors of VACertification.com, an independent certifying body for the virtual assistance industry. She also founded and served as co-host of the

Continued p.4

annual Virtual Assistant Conference, VAConference.com, providing educational and networking opportunities for the VA industry.

As a VAU learning leader, Jordan created future leaders in the VA industry. As a motivational speaker, she made a positive difference in the lives of thousands across the nation.

Mrs Jordan's full professional career spanned 38 years and included experience in the fields of consulting, coaching, human resources, marketing, training (including five years with Jostens Learning Group, a global leader in educational software), motivational speaking and executive/administrative support. As a small business owner for over two decades, Jordan brought a fresh, insightful viewpoint to the coaching and consulting arena. She served as an advisor-mentor for SmallBusiness.com and SHOJobs.org and understood the dynamics of running a small home based business, or a major corporation. Jordan's specialty was client relationship management; her passion was customer success.

During the course of her remarkable career, Mrs Jordan was featured in *Self Employed America Magazine*, *The Dallas Business Journal*, and in a year-long series on *The Mary Goulet Show*. Jordan, also a non-denominational bishop and Dr of Divinity, spoke to numerous civic and business groups about the virtual assistant industry and other VA topics. Since 2000, she was also an instructor at FunEd in Dallas, a community-based knowledge transfer center.

From Janet's Memorial: <http://janetsmemorial.com/>

See testimonials from VAs around the globe at:
<http://janetsmemorial.com/memorial.htm>

For Lu and Janet...

The world needs more people like you.

*Some people come into our lives
and quickly go.
Some people move our souls to dance.
They awaken us
to new understanding
with the passing whisper of their wisdom.*

*Some people make
the sky more beautiful to gaze upon.
They stay in our lives for awhile,
leave footprints on our hearts
And we are never, ever the same.*

The Cost of Staff

Have you ever thought what it actually costs you to have onsite staff? In addition to their hourly rate you've got expenses like payroll tax, superannuation, workcover premium, holiday and sick leave, paid maternity/paternity leave (in some workplaces), and the costs of office space, equipment (including wear and tear and upgrades), power, lighting and telephone. Then if your employees have benefits you have to factor in FBT. Not to mention lost time on office politics, smoke breaks and chatting around the water cooler.

Have a look at this comparison of an onsite secretary working a 40 hour week and a VA charging \$35/hour*:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| 40 Hour Week @ \$20.00/hr (46 working weeks) | \$36,800.00 |
| 4 weeks Annual Leave | \$3,200.00 |
| 10 Days Sick Leave | \$1,600.00 |
| Temp During Annual Leave @ \$35.00/hr | \$5,600.00 |
| Workers Comp | \$550.00 |
| Office Space (100 sq feet @ \$25.00/sf) | \$2,500.00 |
| Annual Bonus (2 weeks salary) | \$1,600.00 |
| Superannuation (9% of earnings) | \$3,300.00 |
| Other Intangible Costs (furniture, training, family leave etc.) - Minimum | <u>\$1,200.00</u> |
| Total Yearly Salary for Permanent Staff Member | \$56,350.00 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Total Effective Hourly Rate | \$27.00 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|

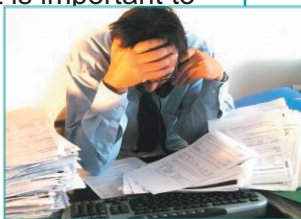
| | |
|---|------------|
| 50% Productivity Level (average) for Permanent Staff | \$54.00/hr |
|---|------------|

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| 100% Productivity for a Virtual PA | \$35.00/hr |
|------------------------------------|------------|

*Based on the actual pay conditions of a secretary who became a VA
(<http://www.akavirtualpa.com.au/FAQ.htm>).

So whilst many would-be VA users balk at what seems like an expensive hourly rate, often partnering with a VA is a much more cost-effective solution for their business than hiring a temp or employing additional support staff.

Would-be clients should also consider the experience and skill set of the VA they intend partnering with when looking at their rate. The old adage "If you pay peanuts you get monkeys" holds just as true for this industry as any other. VA rates swing between \$20/hr and \$50/hr. It is important to check what you get for that rate. VAs at the higher end of the scale have generally transitioned years of secretarial experience and often come from backgrounds as high level Executive PAs with a vast array of technological knowledge and a broad skill set. Those at the lower end of the scale are often just starting out, or are stay-at-home mums looking for a bit of extra money. Whilst there is absolutely nothing wrong with this, it is important for clients to assess their needs and ensure they partner with a VA who can adequately meet those needs.



Janet Jordan summed it up best:

"[VAs] can't get people to pay top dollar if [they], (1) don't understand the concept (2) don't understand [their] value and (3) don't look like a professional. If we don't take ourselves seriously, neither will clients. You attract what you are and if your site looks like the circus came to town, you can expect to attract clowns for clients. As virtual assistants, we redeem the gift of time for our clients. Up to three months per year in fact and if we can do that, our clients will gladly pay for the value imparted. In order to do that, we have to bring our "A" game and for some, that's out of reach."

If you have any questions about partnering with a VA don't hesitate to contact us!

What's a Blog?

Courtesy www.blogger.com

A blog (short for "weblog") is a personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world.

Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules.

In simple terms, a blog is a web site, where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. Or not.

Since Blogger was launched, almost five years ago, blogs have reshaped the web, impacted politics, shaken up journalism, and enabled millions of people to have a voice and connect with others.

And we're pretty sure the whole deal is just getting started.

A blog gives you your own voice on the web. It's a place to collect and share things that you find

interesting - whether it's your political commentary, a personal diary, or links to web sites you want to remember.

Many people use a blog just to organize their own thoughts, while others command influential, worldwide audiences of thousands.

Professional and amateur journalists use blogs to publish breaking news, while personal journalers reveal inner thoughts.

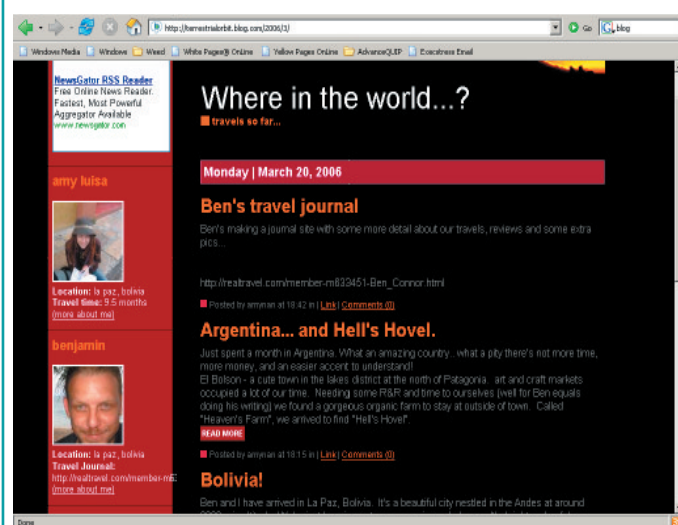
The blogging experience is about not only putting your thoughts on the web, but hearing back from and connecting with other like-minded folks.

Readers of your site from all over the world can give feedback on what you share on your blog. You can choose whether or not you want to allow comments on a post-by-post basis (and you can delete anything you don't like).

Group blogs can be excellent communication tools for small teams, families, or other groups. Give your group its own space on the web for sharing news, links, and ideas.

The fastest way to understand blogging is to try it out for yourself and there are many places on the net to get your started. Blogger.com is just one.

Example of a blog:



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