

NEWS NOTES



Editor: Wendy Smith

The tips in the blue boxes in this newsletter were shared at the 2012 Fall Workshop

Don't create piles! Use the FAT Method for each paper you touch. Either:

- File it,
- Action (take action), or
- Trash It

The 2 minute rule:

If you can respond to an email in under 2 minutes, take action right away. Don't wait.

Attitude is Your Key To Success!

OR: If you think you will succeed, you will!

(Submitted by Dawn Reed)

- Your attitude toward your life influences your behavior.
- Your attitude determines the level of your job satisfaction and professionalism.
- Your attitude affects everyone who comes in contact with you, either in person or on the telephone.
- Your attitude is not only reflected by your tone of voice but also by the way you stand or sit, your facial expression, and in other nonverbal ways.
- Your attitude is not fixed. The attitude you choose to display is up to you.
- Remember that no one is ever rewarded or promoted because of a bad disposition or negative attitude.
- If you have more enemies than friends, it is time to examine your attitude.
- Remember, your mental limitations are of your own making.
- It is not defeat, but rather your attitude toward it, that whips you.
- Your attitude is your real supervisor.

From A Guide to Surviving and Thriving in Today's Workplace

2013 Council members

Brenda Aysenne, Sr. Chair
Wendy Smith, Jr. Chair
Valerie Reed, Recorder
Donna Signa
Trina Bax
Cathy Warren
Dawn Reed, Technical Advisor
Drusilla Fratesi, Mgmt. Analyst
Archie Tucker, Sponsor
Ann McGee, WBSC
Tammy Dorman, Ex-officio

Helpful Websites

(Submitted by Trinia Bax)

Desk Demon

(www.DeskDemon.com) Desk Demon touts itself as the "world's largest website for administrative professionals". Whether that is true or not remains to be seen. However, the amount of content on the Desk Demon is impressive to say the least. Unlike many websites, Desk Demon is easy to navigate and includes a broad range of administrative articles, career advice, message boards, and office. And the best part is that all of its content is free. When you log onto the site, just be careful to make sure you are on the U.S. version since a parallel version of the site exists for the U.K.

The Effective Admin

(www.theEffectiveAdmin.com) Like Desk Demon, the Effective Admin website is dedicated to providing a broad range of resources for administrative professionals. Yet the content of the Effective Admin site is unique and earns it a slot in your "Favorites" tab. Make a special effort to check out the sections on administrative job descriptions and "Expert Q&A for Admins" where administrative professionals answer questions sent in by surfers just like you.

Use a Tickler File System to hold paper documents or reminders that require later action. On the given day, you can look in the corresponding slot and see what you must accomplish or what you need to prepare for.

Do you want to know the easy way to add an attachment to that email you are sending?

With Microsoft Outlook opened, simply drag the unopened file over Microsoft Outlook and let go of it. Outlook will automatically generate a new email with the attachment. The subject line will be filled out for you!

Professionalism

(Submitted by Brenda Aysenne)

Professionalism in the workplace is based on many factors, including how you dress, carry yourself, your attitude and how you interact with others. The definition of professionalism indicates that each person perform their tasks with genuine earnest and honesty. It refers to a person doing his / her job with sincerity, and maintaining professional etiquette and ethics in the workplace.

How to Show Professionalism in the Workplace:

1. **Adhere to your commitments** - Live up to your commitments every time.
2. **Realize the sensitivity of the work that you represent** - Make sure not to jeopardize the confidentiality of your organization or misuse it any way. This will help make you trustworthy.
3. **Treat everyone with respect. That means everyone** - from upper management, peers, and administrative staff to vendors, clients and competitors, to the person on the phone and the stranger in the elevator. Respect and communication in a business environment gives all employees the feeling of safety and collaboration.
4. **Value the time and effort spent by others** - Do not take other members of the organization for granted.
5. **Always maintain ethical conduct** - Be honest and refrain from deceitful practices.
6. **Smile and put your best face forward** - Friendliness and understanding go a long way to creating an atmosphere of teamwork. Maintain a positive can-do attitude even during stressful situations.
7. **Admit your mistakes** - We all make mistakes. Admitting your mistake shows that you are not only human, but also a professional. Don't be surprised at how understanding people will be when you admit that you have made an error.
8. **Display competence** - Competence is the culmination of what you say that you can do and what you actually can do. Competent employees know their job and which skills they are capable of. It is not arrogance. It is an honest display of competencies.
9. **Take a leadership role whenever possible** - Show that you are willing to accept responsibility and produce results.
10. **Keep personal issues at home** - Refrain from using the company's time for personal issues. While personal issues will be considered by management when required, employees need to refrain from discussing it during office hours. This keeps the office environment free from empathy-related biases about productivity.

11. **Demonstrate the core values of professionalism** - Appropriate attire, etiquette, punctuality, organization and dedication to your job, just to name a few.
12. **Project a positive business appearance** - It has long been recognized that those who dress professionally will behave in the same manner.
13. **Be polite in speech and body language** - "Please" and "Thank-you" go a long way in establishing a good working relationship.
14. **Turn off or silence mobile devices** - This will minimize distractions for you and others. It shows that you value the time spent by others (see rule #4).

Characteristics that Undermine Professionalism:

- **Gossip:** Do not gossip. It is not only detrimental to the work ethic between employees; it can also place one's job in danger. A person can quickly lose their aura of professionalism by being a target of or a participant in office gossip.
- **Negative attitude:** Your attitude colors everything you do.
- **Poor attendance and frequent tardiness.**
- **Unprofessional body language:** Yawning without covering your mouth and chewing gum in the presence of others are just a couple of examples.
- **Excessive fragrance or not-so-fresh body odors:** Be clean and fresh, but keep fragrance to a minimum.
- **Unkempt fingernails:** Women with inch-long nails or unusual polish colors are not taken seriously. Clear polish or a French manicure is the most professional looking. Ragged or unclean nails make a poor impression. Remember that people notice hands just after their face.

While the basic principles of individual professionalism are universal, it is also defined by a set of responsibilities set forth by an organization for its members to follow. Incorporating professionalism in the workplace is a critical element for any company desiring to achieve success. Professionalism is a concerted effort by all within the workplace to provide the utmost of their ability each and every day and a concentration on quality of service and work. It is imperative that management sets certain criteria that all within the organization easily understand and should follow.

Sources: *professionalismintheworkplace.net*; Buzzle: "Conducting Professionalism at Workplace"; eHOW: "How to Show Professionalism at Work" and "Responsibilities of Professionalism".

Organize your emails by either dragging the email into a document file on your hard drive, or to a cabinet file in Outlook.

Suggestion: Drag **important emails** you want to keep long term to one of your document folders on your hard drive (if needed, rename it for easy searching). **Temporary files** can be dragged to the cabinet file in Outlook.

Office Organization

(Submitted by Tammy Dorman)

Manage Your Time

- Use a planner to track appointments and tasks. It can be a paper-based notebook, a computer software program, or an electronic handheld device.
- Create at least one hour of uninterrupted time per day to tackle projects and action items.
- Allocate twice as much time for a task as you think it will take. This accommodates for interruptions and stopping to get more information.
- Break large projects down into small, sequential steps. Schedule these steps into your day with your planner.

Tame Your Desk

- Keep only supplies you need on a daily basis on your desktop.
- Create a paper flow system for your incoming documents.
- Use your in box only for items that haven't yet been reviewed.
- Avoid looking at documents and placing them back on the desk. Follow through with the decision you have made about the document.

Supercharge Your Communication

- Write an agenda before making a phone call so you don't forget the important points.
- Keep a record or schedule follow-up calls of what you've delegated so it doesn't fall through the cracks.
- Be clear about the response you need when sending messages to colleagues. They can then provide a full response, even if they don't reach you directly.

Conquer Your Filing

- Create a filing system for your electronic documents that mirrors the one you have for paper. Sort, file, and purge electronic information regularly.
- Keep a file index (a master list of file names). Check the index before creating a new file to avoid making duplicates. Also use it when deciding where to put new documents.
- Refer to your company's records retention plan for guidance on how long to keep documents.
- Keep the most recent papers in the front of the file. Whenever you open it, the current information will be on top.

From National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO)

Active Listening: Hear What People Are Really Saying

(Submitted by Valerie Reed)

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness, and on the quality of your relationships with others.

- We listen to obtain information.
- We listen to understand.
- We listen for enjoyment.
- We listen to learn.

Given all this listening we do, you would think we'd be good at it!

In fact, most of us are not, and research suggests that we remember between 25 percent and 50 percent of what we hear. That means that when you talk to your boss, colleagues, customers or spouse for 10 minutes, they pay attention to less than half of the conversation. This is dismal!

Turn it around and it reveals that when you are receiving directions or being presented with information, you aren't hearing the whole message either. You hope the important parts are captured in your 25-50 percent, but what if they're not?

Clearly, listening is a skill that we can all benefit from improving. By becoming a better listener, you will improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, persuade and negotiate. What's more, you'll avoid conflict and misunderstandings. All of these are necessary for workplace success!

- **Tip:** *Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness. By understanding your personal style of communicating, you will go a long way towards creating good and lasting impressions with others.*

About Active Listening

The way to become a better listener is to practice "active listening." This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, try to understand the complete message being sent.

In order to do this you must pay attention to the other person very carefully.

You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by whatever else may be going on around you, or by forming counter arguments that you'll make when the other person stops speaking. Nor can you allow yourself to get bored and lose focus on what the other person is saying. All of these contribute to a lack of listening and understanding.

- **Tip:** *If you're finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say them – this will reinforce their message and help you stay focused.*

To enhance your listening skills, you need to let the other person know that you are

(Continued on next page)

Active Listening: Hear What People Are Really Saying

(continued)

To understand the importance of this, ask yourself if you've ever been engaged in a conversation when you wondered if the other person was listening to what you were saying. You wonder if your message is getting across, or if it's even worthwhile continuing to speak. It feels like talking to a brick wall and it's something you want to avoid.

Acknowledgement can be something as simple as a nod of the head or a simple "uh huh." You aren't necessarily agreeing with the person, you are simply indicating that you are listening. Using body language and other signs to acknowledge you are listening also reminds you to pay attention and not let your mind wander.

You should also try to respond to the speaker in a way that will both encourage him or her to continue speaking, so that you can get the information you need. While nodding and "uh huhing" says you're interested, an occasional question or comment to recap what has been said communicates that you understand the message as well.

Becoming an Active Listener

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say.

1. Pay Attention

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts.
- Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language.

2. Show That You're Listening

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

3. Provide Feedback

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to

reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is," and "Sounds like you are saying," are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say." "Is this what you mean?"
- Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.
 - *Tip: If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: "I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?"*

4. Defer Judgment

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish each point before asking questions.
- Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

5. Respond Appropriately

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.
- Treat the other person in a way that you think he or she would want to be treated.

Key Points

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do!

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself frequently that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviors and concentrate on the message. Ask questions, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

Start using active listening today to become a better communicator, improve your workplace productivity, and develop better relationships.

www.mindtools.com

Reviewing your emails once a week helps you organize your emails, dejunk, and verifies you have completed needed tasks.

Turning Your Email Files into Searchable Adobe PDF Files

(Submitted by Annetta Ebelhar)

Is your mailbox crowded with past year's emails? Try converting a year's worth of emails into one PDF file and save it to your hard drive for easy searching. Here's how:

Single Email to a pdf

- At the very top of your email tabs, the last item is "Adobe PDF"
- Click on the email to be converted to a PDF
- Click on "Selected Messages"
- Click on "Create New PDF"
- Save into your selected file in your Document file

OR

Right click on the message and at the bottom of the list is "Convert to Adobe PDF" or "Append to Adobe PDF"

Entire Email Folder in Your File Cabinet in Left Column

- At the very top of your email tabs, the last item is "Adobe PDF"
- Click on the email file to be converted to a PDF
- Click on "Selected Folders"
- Click on "Create New PDF"
- Save into your selected file in your Document file

OR

Right click on the message and at the bottom of the list is "Convert to Adobe PDF" or "Append to Adobe PDF"

Once you have created your PDF email folder, you can scroll or do a search for a specific email and also open any associated attachments.

searchable

Sortable by "From", "Subject", "Date", etc.

Scroll through all items in the folder

View email attachments

Example of email file that has been converted to PDF

The Office of National Programs Presents
"An Introduction to ARIS"

The tips in the boxes in this newsletter were shared at the 2012 Fall Workshop

Label files in your Outlook to mirror those in File Management. Label File Management files in ALL CAPS and label your files in lower case.

Breaking down folders into subfolders is helpful.

Make the AFM website (<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/>) the home page on shared computers. It has a launch pad for WebTA, AgLearn, USBank, etc.

Create folders for individuals, then file appropriate e-mails in those folders.

In Memory

A tribute to Office Professionals who passed while in service

Patricia (Tricia) Ogburn Brown



Patricia (Tricia) Brown started her career with the USDA in November 2007 at the Auburn, Alabama Location Support Office as an office automation assistant. Prior to her employment with the USDA, ARS, Tricia worked with her husband (the late Frank J. Brown, M.D.) of 28 years in a general medical and psychiatric practice for the indigent and underinsured in Georgia. She was the mother of one child,

Elizabeth Brown Tackett (Fair). Tricia taught World literature and writing for two years when her daughter entered high school. She had a diverse work experience in real estate, insurance, and executive recruiting; however, she spent most of her married life as a housewife and mother. Tricia received her B.S. degree in English, Secondary Education, at Auburn University and her M.P.A. from Georgia College and State University. She was a veteran of the United States Air Force and served in the Middle East. Tricia loved her job, and she never met a stranger. She especially enjoyed getting to meet many of the other MSA OPs at previous training workshops. She is greatly missed. Our sympathy continues to go out to her family. *(Written by Tammy Dorman)*

Telecia "Tee" Gail Burton

Do you remember the presentation "ARIS Platform" at the Office Professional (OP) Training Workshop, Gulfport, MS, given by Telecia, Linda and Ann?

Do you remember the Agreements Webinar given by Telecia and Linda?

Do you remember Telecia serving as a mentor (maybe even to you)?

Do you remember Telecia's service to the Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals (notably as Junior Chair and Senior Chair)?

Do you remember Telecia's service on Selection Committees for OP hiring?

All of these attest to the exceptional Office Professional that Telecia was as well as the exceptional quality of her work and work ethic portrayed during her career as an Office Professional with USDA, Agricultural Research Service. Thirty-two years of service are also a testament to the significant knowledge that will be missed as OP's from many Locations called upon her for advice and direction.

She was more than willing to be of service to OPs and share her experience and expertise. The least favorite of sharing her knowledge was making presentations, but she did this in an effort to facilitate training for OPs. Telecia was a true professional that supported OPs with actions.



Telecia "Tee" Gail Burton, 53, died Tuesday, June 25, 2013, at her home in Oxford, MS. She began her service with USDA, ARS in September 1980, serving for 19 years with the Southern Insect Management Unit in Stoneville, MS. She transferred to the National Sedimentation Laboratory, Oxford, MS, in 1999 where she served as Program Support Assistant for the Watershed Physical Processes Research Unit and was serving as the Program Support Assistant for the Water Quality and Ecology Research Unit at her passing. She is survived by her husband, Donald Burton, and son, Andrew Burton, as well as her mother, a sister, and two brothers. She loved her family and friends. Her hobbies were reading, walking, and traveling (especially to the mountains).

As Office Professionals we will remember her dedication and loyalty to her co-workers and to ARS. *(Written by Linda Fulton)*

A Philosophy for Life

Keep your **THOUGHTS** positive...
Because your thoughts become your **WORDS**.

Keep your **WORDS** positive...
Because your words become your **ACTIONS**.

Keep your **ACTIONS** positive...
Because your actions become your **HABITS**.

Keep your **HABITS** positive...
Because your habits become your **VALUES**.

Keep your **VALUES** positive...
Because your values become your **DESTINY**.

*Unknown Author
(Submitted by Cathy Warren)*

How to change desktop icons

Select icon

Right click

Properties > Change Icon > Browse > Shell 32 >
Select > Ok > Apply > Ok

JANUARY 2013—Lisa Wiggins Lisa began her career with USDA 22 years ago. She is currently the Office Automation Clerk at the Genetics & Precision Agriculture Research Unit in Mississippi State, Mississippi. Her supervisor is Linda Fulton. Lisa earned her Bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies from Heritage Academy and Mississippi University for Women.



Lisa reports being the “godmother” to her mother’s two cats named Wayne and Wanda. Lisa loves both league and tournament bowling, golf, knitting and reading. She specifically enjoys reading her Bible, biographies, autobiographies, mysteries, and American history. She also enjoys nature photography, road trips, playing the dulcimer and keyboard. Lisa also dabbles in writing music and enjoys listening to bluegrass, swing, big band, jazz, classical, pop and rock from the 1950’s to 1990’s and contemporary and traditional Christian music! Lisa also enjoys listening to SuperTalk Mississippi and AFR Talk. She has several favorite television programs: Swamp People, Pawn Stars, Ice Road Truckers, Antiques Roadshow, and Flip Men.

FEBRUARY 2013—Leon McNeal Not all positions in the Series that the MSA Council serves sit at a desk doing travel, T&As or CATS! Some of the clerk positions meet other needs that their Locations have. Leon is in one of these positions! He has worked for ARS for 13 years in Location Support Staff under the supervision of Carlean Horton, Administrative Officer.



Leon is married to Janice. He has 4 children: daughters, Sharva, 26 and Brittany, 15; sons, Cameron, 25 and Andrew, 24. He also has 3 grandchildren to keep up with! Leon reports liking to watch his favorite football team – the San Francisco 49ers! He also just likes watching any football or basketball on television. As a hobby, Leon sells snowballs in the summer time. It seems there are several reasons for this activity: added income and working alongside his youngest daughter. Yes, he drives his snowball truck around local neighborhoods selling snowballs and ice cream to kids and yes, it plays the same music we all remember from our childhoods!

MARCH 2013—Althea Hunt Althea Hunt has been the Program Support Assistant at the Cotton Chemistry and Utilization Research Unit for her whole ARS career of 13 years! She is currently under the supervision of Dr. Brian Condon at Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans, LA. In 2007, Althea was awarded the ARS Office Professional of the Year. The award was based on her willingness to always be helpful. Following Hurricane Katrina, she helped her RL (and took on another Unit, as well) to transition to temporary locations, continue the research, and move back to SRRC.



Althea is currently single with one daughter, Nichole, that attends college at the University of Louisiana – Monroe. She does describe coming from a large family which loves to get together with each other. When asked for clarification about how large her “large” family is, she reports being one of 12 siblings! Wow! She has family in New Orleans, of course, but also in Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio and Georgia! This large family keeps Althea busy and she never has a dull moment.

Althea and one of her sisters in New Orleans share in the care of their 91 year old mother! Althea stays every weekend with her mother providing housekeeping, cooking, bill paying and an ear to listen to their mother’s quick wit! An example of her wit: Althea’s mother has macular degeneration but her mother is certainly able to report that Althea has more gray hair than she does! Althea says that her mother is a laugh a minute!

Althea reports loving to travel, read and watch old movies. She has just returned from visiting Mexico for a nephew’s destination wedding! One last thing, Althea, as a realist, wants to make sure we understand that she absolutely loves her weekend, morning coffees with a little dab of Southern Comfort added to make the day move right along!

APRIL 2013—Charles Darnell Charles Darnell has been the Office Automation Assistant at the Catfish Genetics Research Unit in Stoneville, Mississippi for 7.5 years. He is supervised by Dr. Craig Tucker. Charles’ Government service extends 11 years prior to his ARS service with his Army career. He is a disabled veteran that served as a Recovery Specialist and many more positions. Charles has received many Army awards and trophies but his most prized is the ARCOM Award, the highest peace-time award given, for maintenance excellence!



Charles has been married to Delorise for 37 years and they have 3 daughters and 1 son. These adult children have given Charles and Delorise 5 grandchildren: 3 girls and 2 boys. Some of these children and grandchildren live here in Mississippi with the rest residing in Texas. Charles claims that Texas is his home since he lived there for many years beginning back in 1979.

Charles loves preaching and teaching! He is a pastor for a church in Greenville and the training and teaching that he does is as a pastor. He received a BA degree in Pastoral Ministries from Central Texas College and Hill University. The other hobbies and activities that Charles is interested in include traveling, driving and fishing. He has driven 18-wheelers for a couple of years as part of that love of driving and traveling. Charles also claims that he will fish for anything that bites in most of the area lakes including Ferguson, Lee and Washington.