

Administrative PROFESSIONAL Today

Business Management Daily

www.AdminProToday.com

1-Minute Strategies

- **Pace yourself perfectly when leaving a voice mail** by using this trick: As you say your phone number, write it in the air with your finger. If you can't write it as quickly as your tongue wants to say it, neither can the recipient.
- **Create a quick-and-dirty Excel chart in one keystroke.** Select any cells with the data table you want to chart. Then press the F11 key. Excel creates a column chart in a new work sheet. You can take the chart as is or alter it.
- **End with action.** Finish any planning memos with who will do what by when (participants, duties and deadlines). Bold key dates and e-mail addresses.
- **Speak up about unrealistic deadlines.** If a deadline is too short, let your boss know today, not days from now. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to roll it back.
- **Save time by storing "canned responses" on Gmail** for commonly asked questions. Save the reply once, and later you can select it from a drop-down menu and send it again and again. *Tip:* You can automate a canned response by keyword.
- **Hand-check visibility.** To determine whether a PowerPoint slide will be legible when projected, presentations expert Diane DiResta suggests placing it on the floor and trying to read it while standing. For flip charts, make sure that the letters are at least 3 inches high.

Avoid words that mar your image

Even casual remarks can enhance your professional image or harm it. So, think before you speak, and make statements that highlight capabilities, not weaknesses. Let's look at some phrases to avoid:

✓ **"I'm too busy/I don't have time/I'm just swamped."** Although you may be telling the truth, no one wants to hear about your backlog. You'll come across as someone who can't control his or her time. *Solution:* Consult your calendar and say, "Let me reserve a time to take care of that for you. I can complete it ..."

✓ **"I'm having one of those days/Things are crazy here/You've caught me at a bad time."** Those lines have practically lost their meaning. Other people are under pressure, too, and are

more concerned about what they need than the reasons why you can't deliver. *Solution:* Resist the urge to complain. And, again, offer a reasonable timeline for getting the work done.

✓ **"I put a call in to them/I'm waiting to hear back."** Bosses would like more from you than a wait-and-see approach. *Solution:* Try to avoid getting caught in a "reactive mode," where you can do nothing until calls are returned. Call until you establish contact or get the information your boss needs. Or if someone will not return your call, talk to his or her assistant or someone in the department.

✓ **"Don't quote me on that/You didn't hear this from me."** Such

(Continued on page 2)

Be more valuable to your boss

Planning your encounters with your boss can be a valuable career-advancement strategy. Here are some ways to do it right:

✓ **Tailor your style to your boss's mood.** If he or she seems preoccupied or upset, be serious. If the boss is in an upbeat mood, follow it. This simple mirroring establishes you as a sympathetic ally. It implies that you are already thinking what he or she is thinking and are tackling similar problems.

✓ **Stay a step ahead.** Become a great time manager for your boss. Keep a tickler file, for example, and remind your boss when it's time to start important projects. Make suggestions about ways to use time more effectively.

✓ **Ask to take over more of your**

boss's burden. When you see your boss laboring over some task that you could

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue

When a boss steals your ideas	2
What meeting pros know	2
Create your own SOP manual	3
Champion your way to the top	3
Approaching a defensive co-worker	4
Get paid what you deserve	4
8 best web sites	5
Googling tips	5
How does your salary compare?	6
Wow the higher-ups	6
Many bosses, one you	7
Use business jargon with confidence	8
Check your handshake	8

Your image

(Cont. from page 1)

statements imply that you are about to provide information that you should keep to yourself. That's hardly a professional image to present. *Solution:* Assume that anything you say will be attributed to you. And remember, people respect those who can keep confidences.

✓ **"We'll see how it goes/I'll try my best."** No matter how earnest you sound, those comments make it seem like you're leaving yourself an out. *Solution:* Commit to what you know you can deliver with a strong statement like, "I'll take care of it for you."

SNAPSHOT

Meeting pros know

How most professional planners schedule agendas for two- and three-day meetings:

What time do you start each day?

8:30 a.m. or earlier 89%

How many daily breaks do you schedule, not counting meals?

2 breaks 72%

3 breaks 14%

How long are breaks?

15 to 20 minutes 61%

25 to 30 minutes 18%

Do you arrange outings?

Always 17%

Sometimes 51%

Never 32%

Typical outings: golf, spa appointments and shopping.

Source: *Meetings & Conventions* magazine.

Our Readers Write

Dear *Administrative Professional Today*:
My boss steals my ideas! I know I'm supposed to be contributing my ideas in the interest of getting the job done better, but I feel cheated when he presents my ideas as though they were his own. Should I speak up in such meetings?

— H.H., Santa Fe, N.M.

A meeting probably is the worst place to bring the problem to your boss's attention—you will be making him look bad in front of his bosses. Depending on your relationship with your boss, try these approaches instead:

1. Speak with him in private and calmly explain that you feel you aren't being given credit for your contributions.

2. Start to submit ideas to your boss in memo form, not orally (this gives you a paper trail if you ever decide to document that you were the source for a new idea).

3. If your boss is a chronic idea filcher, offer your most important ideas only in the presence of others.

Dear *Administrative Professional Today*:
I'm tired of bosses who interrupt me during important conversations. They don't seem to get it: When they cut me off, they wind up drawing the wrong conclusion from what I'm saying. This wastes my time and theirs. What can I do?

— J.C., Los Angeles

First, make sure you organize your thoughts before speaking. Then, maintain a steady pace in delivering them. If you're still convinced you're dealing with an impatient listener, try starting with a sentence that tells interrupters what to expect. *Example:* "There is a twofold answer to your question." If you're interrupted before you cover all your points, tactfully remind the person that you're not finished.

Be more valuable

(Cont. from page 1)

do just as effectively, say, "Can I take that off your hands?" This can increase your value over time.

✓ **Adopt a proactive mind-set.** Offer suggestions on saving time, getting the work done more efficiently, setting priorities and other topics. Even if your boss does not use all your suggestions, resist the temptation to keep your ideas to yourself.

✓ **Don't be afraid to offer some sympathy or comfort when appropriate.** If your boss's big project was just shot down by the CEO (or a big client just canceled his account with your organization, or your boss just had to

lay off four employees), don't be afraid to offer a few appropriate words of reassurance. Even something as simple as, "Is there anything I can do for you?" can send a clear signal.

✓ **Make the most of your front-line position.** If people in your department are frustrated about some new procedure or system and no one is letting your boss know, take the lead and tell him or her. (Similarly, if everyone is very pleased about some new development on the job, communicate that to your boss, too.) Bridge the gap between your boss and the office grapevine in a professional way, and you'll provide him or her with the feedback he or she needs to manage more effectively.

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Get organized! Creating SOP manual is easier than you think

If Angie Fuller hadn't discovered the Standard Operating Procedure manual her predecessor left, she wouldn't have known how to do her job.

"My predecessor left the day I started," says Fuller, who is the community outreach and development coordinator at the Allen Foundation. "It was like being thrown into the fire. I didn't know what my responsibilities were."

Once she'd settled into her new position, she began updating the SOP manual to accurately reflect her evolving role. That way, if she ever left her job—even for a weeklong vacation—someone else could easily take over.

Follow Fuller's tips to create an SOP manual for your role:

✓ **Use an existing format.** "Not having a format to start with is a barrier," she says. "A fear exists—'What if I do this wrong?'—so people don't start at

all. I was lucky: Some of the pages had already been done when I started."

Tip: Begin your project with Fuller's layout below. Tweak it to meet your needs.

✓ **Jot down tasks you do** during a typical day, week, month, quarter and year, as you think of them. "Then, just take one at a time and type out what you do to complete the task. When finished, start a new one," Fuller suggests.

Tip: If time is an issue, mark which tasks on your list are more important and do those first.

✓ **Create separate pages for each duty you perform,** listing how often to do it, what steps to take, who can answer questions and where to find any necessary documents.

✓ **Include even small tasks.** *Example:* Fuller says, "I think it's second nature to get the mail each day, but my

co-workers depend on me delivering and receiving the items from the mail room twice a day at certain times, so I included the times in my procedure manual."

✓ **Be more detailed** than you think you need to be. "It will benefit your replacement," she says. For example, in Fuller's manual, pages that cover fundraising procedures and data entry are extremely detailed.

"A tip that was given to me once was that if a 12-year-old could follow the instructions and do a task right, then it was detailed enough," she says.

Tip: For each task document you create, have a co-worker follow your instructions. If he can do the task flawlessly, you've done your job.

✓ **Use it to manage workload.** Fuller says the manual has "saved a ton of headaches for me. I know I can go on vacation, and the critical jobs will be done without me, and I won't have stacks of work when I return."

Editor's note: Download a copy of Fuller's SOP manual at www.BusinessManagementDaily.com/SOP.

Standard Operating Procedure

SUBJECT: Steps to Doing the Deposit		Standard Operating Procedure #2
Date: January 2002, last update on 12/13/05	PREPARED BY: Angie Fuller Outreach/Dev Cdtr	Allen Foundation Series
Page 1		APPROVED BY: John Doe Manager

PROCEDURE:

- Total up checks on calculator with tape.
- Take to the cashier for confirmation of total. She will give you a receipt.
- Do Daily Recap on email, send to Jane and print out for Foundation file. Be sure cashier receipt and deposit slips and daily recap balance each other.
- Fill out deposit slip – making sure the total matches your total on the receipt.
- Stamp/Endorse Checks
- Make copies:
 - 2 copies of the bank deposit slip
 - 1 copy of Daily Recap sheet
 - 1 copy of each check
- Send to Jane in Accounting
 - 1 copy of the bank deposit slip
- Keep for your records
 - Copy of Daily Recap sheet
 - 1 copy of the bank deposit slip
 - 1 copy of each check
- Attach receipt from cashier to the above listed in #8.
- Put \$ in the North Bank Bag or South Bank bag. (with green heart key chain)
- Take bank bag(s) to Distribution and have them sign for it in the notebook in the file drawer under North Bank Deposit. (Don't allow volunteer to sign for bag). Courier will deliver and bag will be returned to Foundation mail slot.

Champion your idea all the way to the top

We often hear stories about assistants who have accomplished something big and introduced a new idea or process within their business.

Usually, it took nurturing that idea all the way to the top of the ranks.

It's called "championing." When you're ready to put a big idea on the table, you'll need to be a defender, a supporter and a champion of the idea.

Classic example: Spence Silver's glue that wasn't so good at sticking. He championed his pet project, and Post-it notes became an office mainstay.

As Silver once said, "You have to be a zealot at times in order to keep interest alive, because it will die off."

If people find you relentless, impatient and passionate about your idea, you're probably a top-notch champion.

Get paid what you deserve

Are you being compensated for the work you really do? Do you make high-level decisions that seem to go beyond your rank or title?

Administrative Professional Today asked N. Elizabeth Fried, an expert on administrative professional compensation and president of N.E. Fried and Associates, for her insights.

Administrative Professional Today: How big is the trend toward ranking admins based on what they really do?

Fried: Not long ago, most organizations rated all assistants by the old “rung-ranking” system that tied assistants’ titles and compensation solely to their bosses’ ranks. Today, as many as 70% of organizations have discarded that approach. They’re tying rank and pay to the actual tasks.

Administrative Professional Today: So there’s a balance between job content and rank? What is that based on?

Fried: Usually, upper-level assistants handle confidential matters. A lower-level assistant may not have access to that kind of information. This would be a factor in determining compensation and rank. However, there may be lower-level assistants in the firm who do have access to sensitive information, so take that into account. Perhaps those assistants are underranked and underpaid.

Administrative Professional Today: Are there other differentiating factors?

Fried: Another delineator is in gathering information, doing an analysis and then making a recommendation. An assistant who performs all three can be put on par with an executive assistant who may have access to confidential information but who is not involved in making recommendations.

Administrative Professional Today: Say an assistant reads this article and thinks, “My responsibilities really do outweigh my rank!” How can that assistant better his or her position?

Fried: That assistant should treat the problem globally within the organization. Administrative professionals must act together to convince management to do a comprehensive analysis. Then, they must accept the results when the chips fall.

Your Office Coach

SOLVING YOUR REAL-LIFE WORKPLACE PROBLEMS



How to approach a defensive co-worker

by Marie G. McIntyre, Ph.D.

Question: “I recently started a new job and can see many ways to improve things. However, ‘Beth,’ my main co-worker, refuses to consider any of my ideas. She has been working here for 15 years, and she gets very defensive if I suggest ways that she could do her work more efficiently. How can I get her to listen to me?” — *Frustrated*

Marie’s Answer: If you consider Beth’s point of view, her reaction isn’t surprising. After 15 years of successful job performance, she’s suddenly informed that she’s doing it all wrong. Based on her own experience, the old way works just fine, so why should she listen to a newcomer? After all, she hardly knows you.

To turn the situation around, consider these suggestions:

- Your intentions are positive, but your approach is ineffective. If you want Beth to embrace your ideas, you need to start by developing a relationship with her.
- Show Beth that you respect her

years of experience. If you are willing to learn from her, she will be more open to learning from you. Ask her questions about the job, the customers or the history of the business.

- Talk about the work, not the person, to avoid sounding critical. Saying, “You could do that more efficiently” implies that Beth needs improvement. But saying, “I think we could streamline the billing process” keeps the focus task-oriented.

- Finally, don’t hog the credit. When you have an idea, include Beth in developing an implementation plan, and then make a joint presentation to your boss.

Because you’re the newbie, your manager will likely see you as the source of these new approaches. He will also be impressed by your collaborative spirit.

Marie G. McIntyre, Ph.D., is a nationally syndicated columnist, Lifetime TV workplace guru and YourOfficeCoach.com founder. Sign up for Marie’s free weekly e-letter at businessmanagementdaily.com/YOC.

Working Smarter

You can’t make more time—use it wisely

Randy Pausch, the Carnegie Mellon University professor who died of cancer in 2008 at age 47, earned a devout following after delivering his “last lecture” in 2007. He later gave another lecture, this one specifically about time management.

A few of his simple, yet powerful tips:

- 1. Stand while on the phone.** You’ll finish the call more quickly.
- 2. Avoid copying five people on an e-mail** when you want something done. Each will assume that one of the other four is going to do it.
- 3. Minimize interruptions.** Turn off

the “ping” alerting you to new e-mail, or better yet, shut down e-mail during your good working hours.

- 4. Do the “ugliest” thing first.** Everything else will seem easier.

- 5. Make time for the important things,** not just for time-sensitive matters. Otherwise, you will spend all your time fighting fires rather than coming up with creative, new ideas.

- 6. Recognize that the best reason to save time** in your work is to increase time with your family.

“You can always make more money later,” Pausch often said. “But you can’t make more time.”

8 best 'how to' web sites

When you need an answer to a burning question (How do I use this new software? How do I remove ink marks from a white shirt? Can my iPod be fixed?) turn to these eight how-to sites on the web, rated the best by *PC World*.

1. Yahoo Answers: The best of its type: Folks write in questions, and site users offer helpful answers. Then other users rate how useful the answers are.

2. HowStuffWorks.com: Explains in simple terms what things are and how they work.

3. Lynda.com: A better approach to learning software than sitting through training or reading the manual. For a subscription fee, you can tap into Lynda.com's online videos to learn how to use creative, design and development software.

4. FixYa: Your iPod just went dead.

Instead of tossing it, post a message at FixYa. A team of experts and a large group of users can address the breakdowns. You can get tech or gadget help by having a web chat with one of the experts.

5. Treehugger: Find actionable advice on being a wiser, greener consumer. The site covers everything from food to business to recreation to fashion.

6. Dictionary.com/Thesaurus.com: Bookmark these sites for everyday advice on language.

7. Instructables: Learn how to make anything from a corsage to a catapult. Users write in about what they do or have invented and how they did it.

8. Livemocha: A new approach to learning languages by setting up learning alliances with language buddies from around the world.

4 handy online tools

1. Learn how to do (almost) anything with WikiHow (www.wikihow.com). For example, you'll find workplace articles like "How to keep a career log." *Bonus:* Pen your own how-to.

2. Save money on (practically) anything with ShoppingNotes (www.shoppingnotes.com). How it works: You copy the URL of a product page into the site. Plug in your e-mail address and click Get Alerts. Now, as soon as the item goes on sale, you'll be notified.

3. Gather opinions quickly with QuestionPro (www.questionpro.com). The free online survey tool allows you to create two surveys per month, with 10 questions each and unlimited survey responses.

4. Stay current on business etiquette. You can find wording for business thank-you notes at <http://www.thank-you-note-samples.com/business-thank-you-note.html>.

BYTES

Are you a 'mouse potato'? Try add-ons

What makes the Internet useful is also what makes it so undeniably distracting: There's no end to what you can find online.

Luckily, a few browser add-ons that work with Firefox can help make web surfers more productive (all available at addons.mozilla.org):

1. E-mail Discipline: Blocks you from spending too much time on personal e-mail and social-networking sites like Facebook. You'll need to do productive work for two hours between "play" sessions. (You can always hit the "cheat" button to bypass the add-on's rules.)

2. ReminderFox: Puts a to-do list, with deadlines, on the side of your browser. You can set up reminders to pop up, as well.

3. Procrastato: An experimental Firefox add-on, this one works off a blacklist of sites that you deem "time wasters." If you visit one of the sites, it starts a timer in the background. After your allotted time, a pop-up message tells you to get back to work.

4. MeeTimer: Simply keeps tabs on how long you spend on each site, then breaks it up into percentages, so you can see where the bulk of your time goes.

5. LeechBlock: Lets you set up blocks of sites then identifies which blocks you may or may not use at what times of the day. Think of it as similar to the parental settings you have on your TV.

— Adapted from "PC knows best: Tools to nag, remind, and track productivity," Josh Lowensohn, CNET.

Tips for Googling with precision

Speed up any Google search and end up with the results you want:

✓ **Use the terms** you think the results pages will use. *Examples:* "meeting agenda template" instead of "format examples for an agenda"; "inexpensive preowned car," not "cheap used car."

✓ **Skip straight to a definition** by entering "define:" followed by a phrase (no space).

✓ **Phrase your question as an answer.** Instead of asking "What was the minimum wage in 1980?", type in "minimum wage in 1980."

✓ **Narrow a broad search** by using the tabs, such as "Images" and "News."

✓ **Let Google scan the page** for your search words. Click "cached."

✓ **Type "related:"** to search similar web sites: related: www.cnn.com.

Do you know what's 'wildly important'?

Feeling like you're pulled in too many directions because every assignment is "a priority"?

Solution: Find out which of your tasks are "wildly important" to the organization in meeting its goals, suggests Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Too many employees have too many goals set before them, Covey says, leaving them unclear on what they need to do to support those goals ... or even to buy into them.

Those polled recently by Franklin Covey estimated that they spend only about half their available work hours on their most important goals.

Talk with your boss about exactly what you need to do to help the organization reach its most important goals.

Administrative starting salaries, 2010

Position Title	Salary	% Change
Senior Executive Assistant	\$41,000-\$55,750	-3.0%
Senior Office/Facilities Manager	\$39,000-\$50,750	-3.2%
Executive Assistant	\$35,000-\$47,000	-1.2%
Specialized Assistant—Legal	\$34,000-\$42,250	-3.2%
HR Benefits Specialist	\$33,000-\$43,750	-1.9%
HR Recruiting Specialist	\$31,250-\$42,250	-4.2%
Senior Administrative Assistant	\$31,500-\$40,500	-1.4%
Medical Secretary/Admin	\$30,000-\$37,000	-3.6%
Human Resources Assistant	\$26,500-\$36,250	-4.9%
Marketing Assistant	\$26,750-\$34,750	-3.9%
Administrative Assistant	\$26,250-\$34,250	-3.2%
Customer Service/Call Center Rep	\$22,750-\$30,750	-0.5%
Data Entry Specialist	\$20,750-\$26,750	-4.5%

Source: OfficeTeam 2010 Salary Guide.

Slow down, clam up to sound smarter

If an executive stops and asks you a question, don't make the big mistake of spitting out your words in a harried rush, figuring that you have only a few seconds to impress the brass.

"Speed makes what you say seem unimportant, if you're heard at all," says executive coach Debra Benton. It's better to express your point calmly and clearly, then clam up. That way, you let the executive direct the conversation.

Also, don't assume that you must dump mounds of data on someone who merely seeks one fact. You'll test the patience of those who have no time.

To guarantee that your reply doesn't bury others in details, answer with a short phrase such as "Yes," "No" or "I'll find out." Then follow up your response.

Another tactic: Before volunteering details, ask the other person whether he or she wants to hear more. *Examples:* "I can elaborate on that if you'd like," or, "Would you like some examples?" That allows people to prod you. If they say "Yes," you can bet they'll be more attentive.

Low-risk ways to wow the higher-ups

A stroll down the hall with your boss's boss can be either a nerve-wracking experience or a career-boosting opportunity. It all depends on what you make of it.

"Your exposure to higher-level managers is usually limited, so you need to make a good impression when you have the opportunity," says career coach Marie G. McIntyre (www.yourofficecoach.com). "After all, the managers above your boss can affect your pay, promotions, assignments and even your job security."

To make the most of your encounters with higher-ups:

✓ **Show that you see the big picture.** "Executives appreciate employees who think about issues beyond their own narrow job description," says McIntyre.

Example: "Our latest acquisition really puts us in the perfect position to build our customer base. I'm excited about the potential, as I know you must be."

✓ **Ask intelligent questions.** Try to have a well-thought-out question ready. Execs usually love to share their perspective.

Example: "I read in today's paper

that XYZ Inc. is opening a branch close by. How do you think that will affect our business?"

✓ **Propose solutions.** Managers constantly hear about problems, so they value people who focus on solving them.

Example: "I've been hearing a lot about payroll problems lately, and I've thought of a solution that might work."

✓ **Reveal your money smarts.** Demonstrate a concern for increasing sales, reducing costs or ensuring overall profitability.

Example: "I found a way to cut our department's printing costs by 15%. Maybe other departments would benefit from the idea, too. If you're interested, I'd love to tell you about it."

✓ **Share news about employees, customers or projects.** "Executives know little about the everyday details of most functions," says McIntyre, "and they are usually quite interested in hearing more about what's going on."

Example: "I thought you might want to know that Fred just received an achievement award from a professional association he belongs to. It was such an honor for him, and it certainly reflects favorably on our office."



TACTFULLY SPEAKING

BY COLETTE CARLSON

Many bosses, only one you

Do you support multiple bosses with demanding priorities and often ask yourself, “Whose work gets done first?” Do you feel like a restaurant server faced with deciding who receives their hot food first when three table orders come up at once? Who gets priority?

Sometimes, it’s a tough call. Too often, administrative professionals fall into one of three common traps:

1. My top boss always receives my attention first. This may appear to be the smart approach, but two concerns come to light. First, the top boss will become conditioned to receiving top priority. Also, relationships with others who you support will erode as their requests move lower in the pile.

Second, you may end up neglecting work submitted from a lower level that has a greater impact on the company’s bottom line or reputation.

2. First come, first served. Just because someone is efficient and proactive in getting work to you doesn’t ensure his requests reflect the greatest risk and highest value to the company. This approach is best when assignments hold equal weight (similar to individuals taking a number to order at a deli).

If you don’t know what your managers’ and company’s goals/

risks are, ask! After receiving clarity, approach each day as if you’re going on vacation for three weeks. Ask yourself, “What assignments have the biggest impact on either reducing costs or increasing income?”

3. Squeakiest wheel gets the oil. Every day you teach people how to treat you. By giving priority to the loudest, most demanding person you support, you will receive more of the same. Instead, stand firm in those moments and calmly say, “As soon as I wrap up my current priorities, which consist of A, B and C, I’ll begin this assignment.” If pushed, say, “I’m tackling assignments in order of highest value, risk and priority to each of the individuals I support. I will let you know the second I begin and keep you apprised of its progress.”

Similarly, if the server consistently attends to the most obnoxious customer to keep the peace, others will notice. This preferential treatment can leave a bad taste in everyone’s mouth. Earn the respect you deserve by prioritizing orders based on the validity of outcomes: That’s a recipe for success!

A former admin, Colette Carlson is an expert on assertive communication and is president of Colette Carlson Communications (www.SpeakYourTruth.com). Have a workplace-communication problem? E-mail Colette at AdminEditor@NIBM.net.

Grammar Repair Shop

Who is it?

Problem: Christine Davis, an administrator from Washington, D.C., asked about the proper way to answer the telephone. When someone asks, “May I speak to Mary?” should Mary answer, “This is she” or “This is her”?

Lesson: In this situation, the pronoun is a predicate nominative. It follows a linking verb (is), and it identifies or renames the subject of this sentence.

Therefore, the pronoun should be in the nominative case (I, he or she).

Correct: “This is she.”

Tip: For some people, this sounds awkward even though it is correct. You can be creative. *Example:* “This is Mary.”

Peeved by a common error? Puzzled by perplexing grammar rules? Send an e-mail to AdminEditor@NIBM.net with the subject line “Grammar.” Or call us at (703) 905-4575.

Use these 3 R’s to work smarter

When you are tackling a big project or critical deadline, stop every hour or two to:

1. Review what you’ve done. Is it ready to go or does it still need polish? Are you on, ahead of or behind schedule?

2. Re-evaluate your plan, if necessary. Do you need more resources? Do you need to involve a co-worker or ask for a deadline extension?

3. Recharge your batteries with a stretch, a beverage and a breath of fresh air. Spending too much time hunched over a keyboard or a stack of papers stresses mind and body.

4 rules for weeding your files

Organization expert Harriet Schechter offers these guidelines on file weeding:

1. Stay focused. Remember, it’s “weeding,” not “reading.”

2. Keep moving forward. No going back in the trash to rescue anything, with the exception of accidentally discarded money or legal documents.

3. Use a ticking timer, and set it in 15-minute increments to create a

sense of urgency.

4. If you’re stuck and can’t decide whether to keep, toss or refile a piece of paper, ask yourself:

- Did you remember that you had this?
- If you tossed it, could you obtain it again, and would it be worth the trouble?
- If you keep it, will you know where to find it?

Skills Check

Brush up your business vocabulary

Every field has its jargon, but here are a few standard business and accounting terms to test your vocabulary. Match these words with the definitions below.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Accounts payable | 11. Cost accounting |
| 2. Accounts receivable | 12. De minimis benefits |
| 3. Accrual accounting | 13. Depreciation |
| 4. Amortization | 14. Fiscal year |
| 5. Benchmarking | 15. Income statement |
| 6. Capital | 16. Journal |
| 7. Capital gains | 17. Ledger |
| 8. Cash accounting | 18. Pro forma statement |
| 9. Cash-flow statement | 19. Return on investment |
| 10. Charge off | 20. Zero-base budgeting |

- a) The annual period that an organization selects to report on its operations. This may coincide with the calendar year.
- b) A general term describing a group of ratios that measure an organization's profitability.
- c) Money, equipment or property used in business.
- d) The increase in value between the amount paid for an asset and its later selling price.
- e) A loan written off as bad debt because it isn't expected to be repaid.
- f) A summary of revenues and expenses for an accounting period.
- g) Money that customers owe an organization.
- h) Fringe benefits whose value is so minimal that accounting for them would be impractical.
- i) The loss in value of goods over time, which may be deducted from income.
- j) Using a standard to measure value or quality.
- k) A process requiring managers to justify all expense plans and rank them based on their overall contribution to the organization.
- l) A projected or budgeted financial statement.
- m) A record of financial transactions kept in chronological order.
- n) A presentation of cash receipts and payments over a given period.
- o) A record of financial transactions as they affect each account.
- p) Amassing information for reporting the costs of producing products or services.
- q) Money an organization owes to vendors and suppliers.
- r) Recognizes revenue and expense transactions when they occur, rather than when cash is received or paid out. *Example:* An annual payment would be divided up, with 1/12 of the amount appearing each month.
- s) Records transactions when cash is received or paid out.
- t) Paying off debt or depreciating the value of an asset over time.

Answers: 1q, 2g, 3r, 4f, 5j, 6c, 7d, 8s, 9n, 10e, 11p, 12h, 13i, 14a, 15f, 16m, 17o, 18l, 19b, 20k

P.S. Postscript

Good impressions are at hand.

Don't discount the importance of a solid handshake. Research from the University of Alabama backs up the conventional wisdom that people with firm handshakes make a better first impression. *Contrast:* Women with a solid grip and men with a gentler handshake were considered more open.

Overcome the boss's indecision.

If you can't get your boss to move on a decision or other action, spell out the consequences. *Example:* The deal that would save \$50 on that new printer expires next week.

Create your support team. If your office doesn't have a formal system of cross-training workers, find your own buddy. Work with a colleague to share responsibilities when needed.

Write your own FAQ. Maintaining a list of frequently asked questions and the correct responses will make it easier for those who cover for you when you're gone.

Make then-and-now statements to prove your talents. "Two years ago, it took three of us a week to turn around the sales report; now it only takes two of us two days." The facts speak for themselves—a worthwhile thing to remember, especially if you are reluctant to toot your own horn.

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