

# PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

October/November 2019

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the pale-skinned,  
red-eyed office worker  
of the future**

**Use Positive Psychology  
to improve your mental  
well-being at work**

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**Fathers need  
more flexibility  
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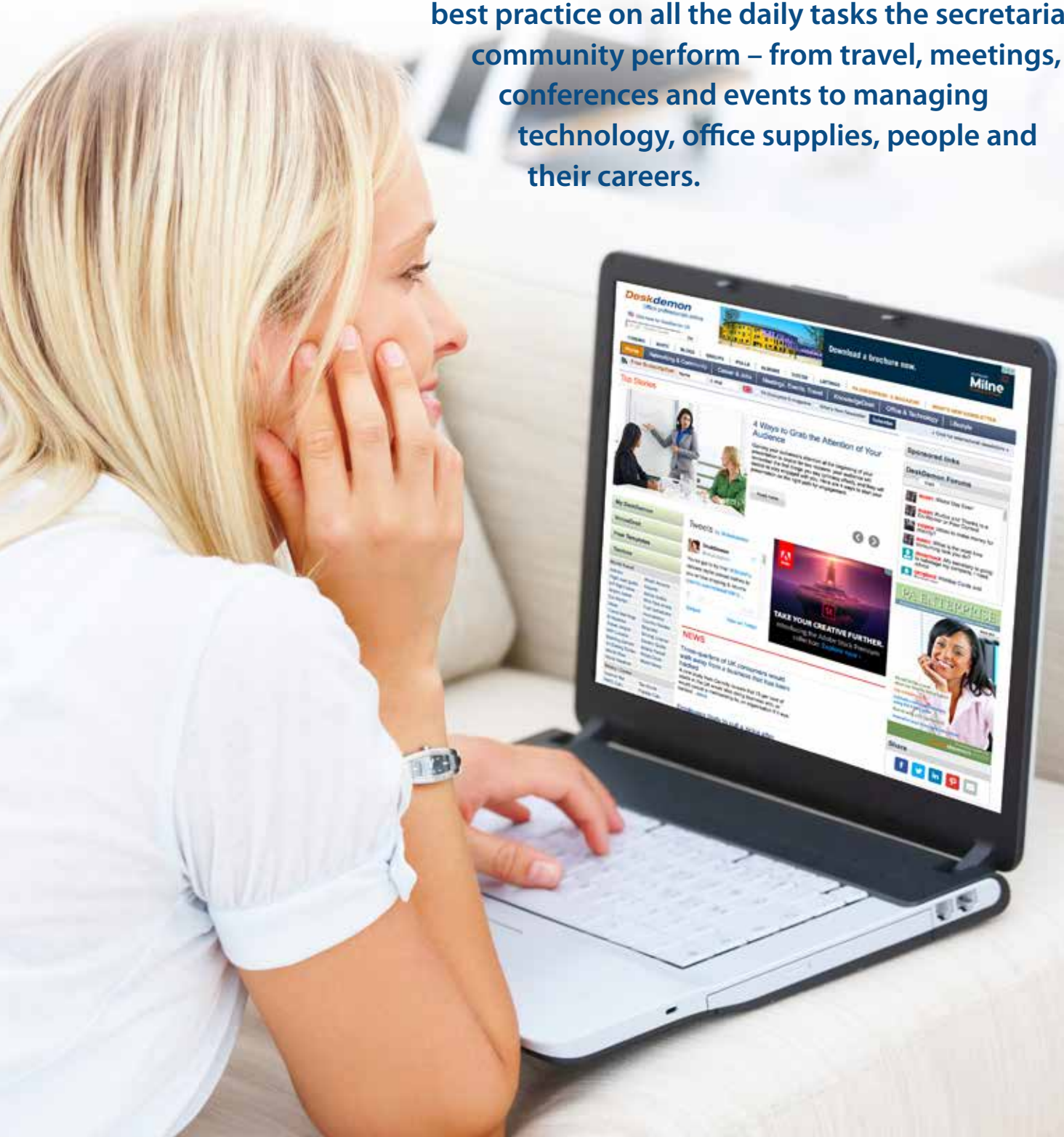
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# 75% of mothers now in work, figures reveal

*More than three-quarters of mothers are in work according to official figures, a record high for the UK.*

Rising steadily from 2009, the proportion of working mothers with dependent children jumped to 75% in June. It compared with 74% last year, the Office for National Statistics said.

Fathers with dependent children were still more prevalent in the workplace despite a small decline in the proportion with a job to 92%.

Encouraging more women into the workplace has been a goal of governments since the 1970s, with Britain, France and the Nordic countries recognised for providing the most comprehensive family-friendly policies over the last 20 years.

The ONS said that, in addition to childcare subsidies, statutory maternity leave and pay for mothers, shared parental leave came into effect in 2015 giving couples the option of splitting 50 weeks of leave entitlement and 37 weeks of pay, though take-up is thought to be as low as 2%.

Employers were also credited with adopting flexible working arrangements, with about six in 10 (62%) parents saying that it was possible to vary their working day to look after children.

However, women's groups questioned how much they benefited from taking on extra responsibilities when the pay they received remained lower than men and they were much more likely to take part-time roles with limited prospects for promotion.

The ONS said almost three in 10 mothers (28.5%) with a child aged 14 years and under said they had reduced their working hours to accommodate or limit the expense of childcare compared with just one in 20 fathers.

Criticising a work culture that she said continued to sideline many women in low-paid, insecure work, chief executive of the Young Women's Trust, Sophie Walker, said employers and benefit rules "punished family-friendly working" for millions of households. "For women to increase their hours is often impossible when childcare is so expensive that it costs more than the pay they receive."

She said benefit rules that meant young parents received less money via universal credit than those aged 25 or older should be reviewed, and childcare payments should be paid directly to providers, avoiding costly deposit payments.

Sam Smethers, chief executive of the women's campaign group the Fawcett Society, said it was welcome that there were more women in work, "but we need to ask what kind of work and whether they are in good jobs".

She said: "We need to recognise that the pay women receive, the hours they work and the job security they enjoy is much worse than it is for men. There is too much segregation in the workplace. There is occupational segregation

that means women are pushed into low-status jobs and there is segregation in the workplace, which prevents women from improving their position and getting promoted.”

A government equalities office spokeswoman said: “It’s great to see more women returning to work after having a child. The careers of talented women should not be held back because they take time out of their jobs to care for a loved one.

“That’s why we are investing in returners to work – giving them the opportunity to refresh and grow their skills. By acting on this issue we can grow the economy and achieve true equality in our workplaces.”

Walker said: “The government keeps saying there is a skills gap and yet it still overlooks a huge slice of the workforce, which is trapped in unpaid and low paid work for family and caring reasons and is not making full use of its skills.”



# Handshakes more than three seconds long might 'cause anxiety'

*Handshakes should last no longer than three seconds because they might trigger anxiety, a study has found.*



Long-lasting clasps favoured by the likes of Donald Trump could also have a negative impact on working and personal relationships, University of Dundee researchers said.

Participants at the university's school of social sciences were interviewed about their work and career prospects.

They were introduced researchers who would either shake their hand as "normal" (less than three seconds), "prolonged" (longer than three seconds), or not at all.

The team found participants showed less interactional enjoyment after the longer handshake, laughing less and showing increased anxiety.

Handshakes lasting less than three seconds resulted in less subsequent smiling, but did feel more natural to those who participated.

The findings come after President Trump's long handshakes with other world leaders - some lasting up to 13 seconds - drew attention from body language experts who said they were a display of power and domination.

Dr Emese Nagy, a reader in psychology who led the study, said: "Handshakes are a particularly important greeting and can have long-lasting consequences for the relationships that we form.

"There has been evidence to suggest that many behaviours, such as hugs, fall within a window of approximately three seconds and this study has confirmed that handshakes that occur in this time frame feel more natural to those who participate in the greeting.

"While shaking hands for longer may appear to be a warm gesture on the surface, we found that they negatively affected the behaviour of

the recipient, even after the handshake was finished.

“Politicians are particularly keen on prolonged handshakes, which are often used as an expression of warmth but also as a means of demonstrating authority.

“However, our findings suggest that while doing so might look impressive for the cameras, this behaviour could potentially jeopardise the quality of their working and personal relationships from the beginning, which could have repercussions for millions of people.”



# Meet Emma – the pale-skinned, red-eyed office worker of the future

*The office worker of the future could have a permanently hunched back, varicose veins and red eyes if changes to work environments are not made, health experts have warned.*

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Research commissioned by office supplies company Fellowes found that workers suffer from workplace health issues such as strained eyes, sore backs, and headaches.

The research, which analysed 3,003 people in France, Germany and Britain in June through an online survey, found that over a third of British office workers spend between seven and nine hours a day sitting at a desk.

Based on the study, a life-size model named “Emma” was created to illustrate how the set up of a workstation can lead to office workers physically and visually changing, to cope with a poor office environment.

The doll developed a permanently bent back caused by sitting for hours in a bad position, varicose veins from poor blood flow, a rotund stomach caused by a sedentary position, dry and red eyes from long hours staring at a computer screen, and other health conditions.

William Higham, behavioural futurist and author of the report, said: “The Work Colleague of the Future report shows that employers and workers really need to act now and address the problem of poor workplace health.

“Unless we make radical changes to our working lives, such as moving more, addressing our posture at our desks, taking regular walking breaks or considering improving our work station set up, our offices are going to make us very sick.”

Scientists have created Emma – a larger-than-life, off-putting dummy with a hunched back, swollen limbs, eczema and varicose veins.

After a couple of decades of sitting at an ergonomically-unfriendly desk, experts warn you could look just like her.

Office equipment firm Fellowes commissioned the research, in which Behavioural Futurist William Higham and a team of experts from ergonomics, occupational health and professional well-being examined the effects office workplaces are having on employee health.

Following more than 3,000 interviews with employees from the UK, France and Germany regarding health concerns, the report dubbed The Work Colleague Of The Future is advising workplaces to make urgent changes to help prevent people turning out like poor old Emma.

Emma was developed after the researchers teamed up with model specialists Helix 3D Ltd,



looking for a way to viscerally illustrate the potentially detrimental impact of office life on people.

Higham said: "The Work Colleague of the Future report shows that employers and workers really need to act now and address the problem of poor workplace health.

Unless we make radical changes to our working lives, such as moving more, addressing our posture at our desks, taking regular walking breaks or considering improving our workstation setup, our offices are going to make us very sick. As a result, workers in the future could suffer health problems as bad as those we thought we'd left behind in the Industrial Revolution."

Emma's condition is the by-product of an everyday office lifestyle: her back is bent from sitting for hours on end at a desk, she's got varicose veins due to poor blood flow, a rotund stomach from being seated all the time, and dry and red eyes from staring at a computer screen all day.

More than 90% of those surveyed reported being concerned they were spending too much time sitting at their desk, with 98% saying they were worried it'd lead to future health problems.

In the UK, 90% of those survey reported health issues that affect their productivity, while almost



half suffered from eye strain, sore backs and headaches caused by their workspace.

Work-related sick days reportedly cost the economy £77 billion every year, with seven out of 10 workers allegedly taking medication to tackle their issues and concerns.

# Use Positive Psychology to improve your mental well-being at work

*The UK is facing a mental health crisis in the workplace. Around 4.6m working people suffer from either depression or anxiety. In total, 25% of all EU citizens will report a mental health disorder at some point in their lives.*

People who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, or show symptoms of one, and remain in work are known as “presentees”. These individuals may have trouble concentrating, memory problems, find it difficult to make decisions, and have a loss of interest in their work. Medication and/or talking therapies – like

cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) – have been shown to be highly effective in treating common mental health disorders. But these interventions are aimed at those who are already signed off sick due to a mental health diagnosis (“absentees”).

Stress and pressure in work is not the same as at home, so those with mental health issues who



are still in work need a different kind of help. In the workplace, employees can be subject to tight deadlines and heavy workloads, and may potentially be in an environment where there is a stigma against talking about mental health.

### Reframing mental health

So what can be done for those working people who have depression or anxiety? Research has found that simply treating a person before they are signed off sick will not only protect their mental health, but can actually result in increased workplace productivity and well-being. For example, when a group of Australian researchers introduced CBT sessions into a British insurance company, they found it greatly improved workplace mental health.

In the study, seven three-hour sessions of traditional CBT were offered to all staff in the company. The sessions focused on thinking errors, goal-setting, and time management techniques. At follow up appointments the participants showed significant improvements in things like job satisfaction, self-esteem, and productivity.

However, there have been concerns that using the types of treatment typically given to people outside work may be distracting to an employee. The worry is that they don't directly contribute to company targets, instead offering more indirect benefits that can't be as easily measured.

But there is an alternative that doesn't take up too much company time and can still have a huge impact on employees' mental health: positive psychology.

### Three good things

In the last 15 years, psychological study has moved away from the traditional disease model, which looks at treating dysfunction or mental ill-health, towards the study of strengths that enable people to thrive. This research focuses on helping people to identify and utilise their own strengths, and encourages their ability to flourish.

Positive psychology concentrates on the development of "light-touch" methods – that take no longer than ten to 15 minutes a day – to encourage people to stop, reflect and reinterpret their day.

Something as easy as writing down three good things that have happened to a person in one day is proven to have a significant impact on happiness levels. In addition, previous research has also found that learning how to identify and use one's own strengths, or express gratitude for even the littlest things, can also reduce depression and increase happiness too.

When a positive work-reflection diary system was put in place at a Swiss organisation, researchers found that it had a significant impact on employee well-being. Writing in diaries decreased employees' depressive moods at bedtime, which had an effect on their mood the next morning. The staff members were going to work happier, simply by thinking positively about how their shift had gone the day before.

When another group of researchers asked employees of an outpatient family clinic to spend ten minutes every day completing an online survey, stress levels, mental and physical complaints all significantly decreased. The questionnaire asked the participants to reflect on their day, and write about large or small, personal or work-related events that had gone well and explain why they had occurred – similar to the three good things diary. The staff members reported events like a nice coffee with a co-worker, a positive meeting, or just the fact that it was Friday. It showed that even small events can have a huge impact on happiness.

The simple practice of positive reflection creates a real shift in what people think about, and can change how they perceive their work lives. And, as an added benefit, if people share positive events with others, it can boost social bonds and friendships, further reducing workplace stress.

[theconversation.com](http://theconversation.com)

# Gatwick trial cuts plane boarding time by 10%

*The frustration of waiting for someone to put their bag in an overhead locker may soon be over if a trial to get people on planes quicker is successful.*

Gatwick says it is working with EasyJet to try out new ways to board passengers at the London airport.

They include boarding people in window seats first, starting at the back, followed by middle then aisle seats.

Gatwick said different boarding methods could reduce the journey from airport gate to seat by about 10%.

The airport operator says that the window-to-aisle seat pattern of boarding is best suited for individuals and business passengers.

Groups of people who want to sit together such as families will be seated by row, again starting at the back of the plane.

Gatwick said it was experimenting with flexible boarding patterns, "depending on the passenger make up on any individual flight - number of families, individual travellers etc".

The two-month trial has already begun and Gatwick said an airline managed to board 158 passengers on one plane in 14 minutes. "This is typically 2-3 minutes better than the usual time," said a spokesman.

Other companies are experimenting with plane seating - most notably Japan Airlines which has introduced a new booking system which helps passengers avoid sitting next to young children, thereby potentially avoiding a noisy flight.

## 'Bingo boarding'

Gatwick is also experimenting with better ways of telling passengers when they need to queue up at the boarding gate.

Instead of the often inaudible tannoy announcement informing which rows of passengers to line up, flyers will now learn which seat numbers are ready to board via a digital screen.





A spokesman for Gatwick said: "One challenge in any controlled boarding process is our ability to communicate the pattern to passengers and the willingness of passengers to comply. It is almost impossible to do that effectively through audio announcements."

He said that so far passengers "get it intuitively and comply with it".

"Passengers can be seated until their seat number comes up on the large screen and then board the aircraft without queuing.

"Some even appear to enjoy it and are calling it

'bingo boarding'."

The company said the trial was being run with EasyJet from just one gate at present, but other airlines are expected to become involved.

It said: "This is about improving the experience for passengers - not just in terms of making the boarding process more relaxing - but also helping to reduce delays."

Passengers who have booked priority boarding, or those who require special assistance or are travelling with young families, will still board first during the trial.

# A Smart Home Guide for Dummies

*Smart home buyer and expert, Andrew Georgiou, answers ten common questions, to make the smart home era less confused and more clued up.*

While the words 'smart home' provoked little more than bewilderment from the average layman a decade or so ago, it's now very much mainstream. Our flatmates, friends or children start talking to Google in the middle of conversations, or ask it to turn their lights off when they're in bed – heck, they even ask Alexa for advice.

These smart home devices are edging seamlessly into our lives and becoming items that increasing numbers of us use day in, day out, without even a second thought.

So fast is the uptake of these intelligent products, the smart home market value in the UK is forecast to be worth a whopping £5.63 billion – up from £1.89 billion in 2014. And when it comes to how many homes feature these devices, this is forecast to increase from 24.9% in 2019 to 43.5 by 2023.

Yet despite the creeping ubiquity of smart home technology, there are still plenty of us who feel like we've been left in the dark ages of the humble manual radio. Even – dare we say it – operating the lights with a switch.

If you'd place yourself in the not-so-tech-savvy category, fear not: along with their extensive



range, leading high street retailer Robert Dyas has some handy advice for you. Their smart home buyer and expert, Andrew Georgiou, has answered ten common questions, so you can live in the smart home era less confused and more clued up.

## 1. What is meant by a 'smart home'? Why is it such a fast-growing area?

A smart home is a property that features one or more smart devices which can be monitored and controlled remotely via your smartphone or other smart device. You make commands on your smart device either manually or via voice control (think Google Assistant). For example, you could ask your Google speaker (£49 - £299) to turn the



lights on, or see and talk to visitors at your door instantly with the Ring Video Doorbell 2 (£179).

It's a fast-growing area for two reasons: It's highly convenient as it can make everyday life so much easier and, as technology is advancing, it's becoming more accessible.

## 2. What are the benefits?

There are many benefits to smart technology, depending on the product you choose to purchase. The main ones are:

- **Convenience**

You can control your lighting, heating and other elements of your home right from your smartphone.

- **Security**

You can be confident that your family and property are safe as you can see what's going on live at any time and be alerted if something happens.

- **Money and energy-saving**

Smart products can save you money on bills by helping you reduce the amount of energy you use. Some examples are Hive heating devices which let you control your thermostat remotely,



Philips Hue smart bulbs with which you can control your lighting, and the TP-Link Energy Monitoring Smart Plug (£19.99, reduced from £29.99) that lets you keep an eye on how much energy you're using.

## 3. Where should I start? Do I need to start with a voice-activated personal assistant system?

Most people will start with something small like a smart plug or a smart light bulb, both available from TP-Link and TCP.

This helps them understand the benefits of smart products, and more devices can be added and connected up from there.

A great way to start would be to get a smart speaker, such as a Google speaker (from £49), as then you can follow it up with products that are compatible. (Some devices may only be compatible with Amazon Alexa for example. Often they're compatible with multiple systems.)

## 4. How do I know if a smart home product is compatible with Google or Amazon Alexa?

Sometimes it's on the box of the product you're about to buy; if it isn't, you'll need to go to either

*Continued* ►

a good retailer's website or the website of the brand that created the product. Compatibility is key and Robert Dyas makes it easy for homeowners to find the devices that suit their needs.

## 5. What are the key areas that the smart home serves?

There are four main areas:

### • Lighting

With smart lighting you can turn your lights on and off remotely, dim them and even change the colour to create atmosphere if you have a colour-changing bulb. A range of brands offer different technologies and prices.

### • Security

This includes smart cameras, doorbells, security lights, CCTV and alarms, and locks. With cameras and CCTV you can monitor your home while you're away; smart doorbells allow you to talk to and see who's at your door from your smart device; smart lights enable you to turn them on/off when you're out to make your home look occupied; and with smart locks you can open your door via your smartphone and let in visitors without having to give them a key.

### • Power

Smart plugs and sockets make up this area. You never need to worry again about leaving your straighteners or other appliances on as you can control them via your smart device. You can also schedule your appliances to turn on and off. With Lightwave you can even lock your sockets for family safety.

### • Energy

This area consists of thermostats and plugs. With these you can control the temperature of your thermostat and see how much energy a device that's connected to a smart plug is using, and control it accordingly.

## 6. How can I save money on my heating bills?

You can turn the heating on and off when you need to from wherever you are, which means you're never heating an empty home. You can also reduce the temperature via the app at any time.

## 7. How can my security benefit from a smart home device?

You can monitor your home when you're not there, answer the door or set off a siren. The Ring Doorbell, floodlights and cameras can work together to watch over and light up your house to ensure intruders are kept away. Alternatively, you can use a smart CCTV, alarm or lock systems like the ones we sell from Yale.

## 8. Do you have to be a geek to get things to work?

Not at all, the best smart products are the easiest to use.

## 9. My home has a very weak internet service. Could this be a problem?

This can be a problem for some products that require a good signal, but you can use signal boosters or WiFi extenders – such as the BT 11ac 1200 Wi-Fi Extender (£39.99, reduced from £49.99) or BT WHole Home Wi-Fi System (£169.99, online only) – to reduce the impact. Alternatively, you could move to a better provider.

## 10. Is it very expensive to set up?

It can seem expensive but when heating systems can reduce bills by switching off when you don't need them on, and smart plugs monitor your energy consumption to help you save money, they can definitely be worth the initial investment. Other devices may not offer the same long-term savings but when you can better protect your family and enjoy greater convenience and peace of mind, what you spend upfront may save you in multiple other ways.



# 3 effective ways to market your business

When it comes to running a successful business, marketing what you do and who you are to potential customers is vital. This not only lets people know you are there but also helps explain how you can help them and why they should choose you over competitors. If you are not a marketing expert though, it may seem hard to know which methods to try out first.

If you need a helping hand on the best ways to market your business, the below should come in handy.

## Social media

One of the best marketing methods to use in the modern business world is social media. This needs little explanation now as pretty much everyone knows how platforms like Twitter or Instagram work from using them socially. This is not all they are good for though! Social media is a great way to reach many more potential customers, expand your business into new territories and let people know you exist. Easy to use and free to sign-up with, it also gives you an organic way to engage with people and show them what your brand is about.

There are a range of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, LinkedIn, Google Plus and Snapchat. Each of these social media platforms are unique in their own right and require unique ways of engagement.

## Print marketing

Successful modern businesses know that a multi-channel approach works best. This means that you should combine online and offline methods



to get the best results. A really good offline marketing tip is to use print marketing such as flyers or brochures. When handed out in the local area, they are a great way to connect with people personally and can help persuade them to use your services.

## Email

It seems a little strange to say but email marketing can often be something that is forgotten about now. This is a shame as it actually offers arguably the best ROI to businesses.

An email marketing campaign is not only low-cost but does not use up lots of precious working time to implement. This is especially true if you use a service like Mailchimp that automates the process for you. As pretty much everyone has an email account which they check regularly each day, it is an effective way of marketing to people.

# Fathers need more flexibility at work

*Men feel frustrated in their jobs and discriminated against at work. They want a better balance between work and family life, and they are willing to walk out of employment to get it.*

Results of the annual survey by workingdads.co.uk and workingmums.co.uk show men coming up against the same issues that have dogged women's careers for years. And the evidence suggests men's mental health is suffering as a result.

One in four dads said they'd had time off work due to mental illness, with a third of those citing the stress of work and home.

Around half of working dads said their career had stalled since they became a father. Almost 70% admitted they feel stuck in their current role because they fear they wouldn't be able to find another job with the amount of flexibility they need.

That's hardly surprising given the survey found two in five that applied for a flexible working arrangement were turned down and a quarter felt their line manager did not understand the pressures of juggling work with family life. One in 10 said they'd quit their job after having a flexible working request turned down.

One in five of those with a flexible working arrangement felt discriminated against by managers and co-workers.

The survey of nearly 3000 parents from across the UK showed most fathers are working dads. 46% of respondents work full time and a further 36% said they work full time with some flexibility built in.

For mums the most common pattern was working part time.

However men want more flex. Around half said they don't have enough flexibility in their current role.

42% cited more flexibility in their workplace as the single thing that would boost their career development, 16% want more mentoring for dads.

A four day week was seen as a potential game changer. Nine out of 10 dads said a four day week would help them balance work and family life better. The same proportion of mums agreed. That suggests last month's announcement by the Labour party that they would go into the next general election pledging to introduce a 32 hour working week could be a big hit at the ballot box.

The results of the survey also showed younger parents taking more interest in what employers offer families before they apply for or take a job. Around a third said they researched flexible working before applying for their current job and similar proportion said they'd done the same before accepting their current role. 27% asked about flexible working at interview. Remarkably those figures almost exactly match the figures for mums doing the same.

However there are still variations in the sexes experience at work. 60% of mums felt their careers had not progressed since becoming a parent. Far more mothers work part time compared to dads - 43% of mums compared to just four per cent of dads. 80% of mothers felt 'stuck' because they were unsure they'd be able to



work as flexibly elsewhere, 69% of fathers agreed with the same sentiment.

While one in 10 men said they'd changed job because an employer had refused flexible working for women the figure was much higher at 45%.

And parental leave remains a big point of differential. While most mums took between 7-10 months of leave after having a baby, nearly a quarter of men didn't even take the two weeks off they're entitled to by law.

James Millar, editor of [workingdads.co.uk](http://workingdads.co.uk) and author of the book *Dads Don't Babysit*, said: "These results show thousands of dads are suffering and frustrated at work. Yet the answer seems very simple. If more employers embrace flexible working it would improve the lives of all parents by giving the option to find the right balance between work and life.

"More parents are researching what family support is available at the application stage when looking for work. And a growing proportion will change job in search of the right working conditions. Employers who want to attract and retain the best talent must offer flexible working if they want to thrive in the workplace of the future."

Gillian Nissim, founder of [workingmums.co.uk](http://workingmums.co.uk) and [workingdads.co.uk](http://workingdads.co.uk), said: "Our survey shows how significant flexible working is becoming in job searches. The employers we work with recognise this and have been looking at ways to challenge existing working patterns in order to attract and retain the best talent. As skills shortages become larger in many sectors, employers should take note of the demand for flexible working and the push for greater flexibility, taking into account all the many forms it can come in."

# London restaurant chain becomes first in the UK and Europe to hire a Robotic Waitress

*The robot has been named Theresa in nod to the nickname “The Maybot” given by the UK media to the former Prime Minister Theresa May*

A British chain of restaurants and tea rooms based in London has become the first in the UK and Europe to introduce a robotic waitress to serve its customers, in what it says will be a pilot for the introduction of more robots in its work force in the future in the face of rising labour costs.

Ehab Shouly, Managing Director of The Tea Terrace, which owns and operates four restaurants and tea rooms in Cobham, Central London and Guildford, has announced the launch of Theresa the robotic waitress at The Tea Terrace’s newest branch on Oakdene Parade in Cobham, Surrey.

“We’ve christened the robot Theresa in a nod to the media’s nickname for former Prime Minister Theresa May. But our robot is far more intelligent than the vast majority of our British politicians, and she would easily juggle her job as a waitress at our restaurant and running the country,” Shouly joked.

The Tea Terrace, which was recently in the news after it became the first restaurant to introduce the Selfieccino – a cappuccino with your selfie printed on it using edible food colouring – is the first restaurant in Europe and the UK to introduce the highly-advanced robot which can communicate with customers.

Shouly said: “Theresa represents the 6th Generation of robotic waitresses which were first launched in Japan a few years ago. The robot comes with autonomous navigation; automatic obstacle avoidance, voice conversation, and automatic dish delivery. It integrates core

technologies in automatic control, multi-sensor perceptual collision avoidance and route planning.

Theresa comes with a double-tray which greatly reduces waiters’ repeat work such as food and drink delivery and carrying heavy trays of drinks such as teapots. “We don’t plan to replace our staff with robots entirely. But the idea is to help them and to make their job easier,” said Shouly, the founder and co-owner of The Tea Terrace.

He said that the idea came from his wife, Rowena, who suggested that there must be an easier way for the staff to deliver the heavy one-litre teapots and teacups to the tables, after she noticed new staff having to make several trips to the tables to serve these.

“Rowena reminded me of the robot we saw in Tokyo a few years ago. Immediately I thought it would be a brilliant idea for the UK where costs for restaurants are spiralling out of control due to onerous business rates and taxes,” he said.

Staff don’t have to do any of the heavy lifting any more because Theresa will take the food and drinks to the tables and the waiters and waitresses simply take it from Theresa and serve it to the customer.

The robot not only delivers the dish or the drink to the table, but also speaks to the customers and tells them what she is serving. She then asks them to tap its arms so that she can go back to her base to serve other customers.



"If Theresa senses a person in its route, it will stop and then frown and ask the person to move out of its way before she continues on her way. This is part of the safety mechanism we developed for her with the robotics laboratory that manufactured Theresa for us in Japan," Shouly said, adding that Theresa uses laser-guided trackless navigation and ultra-sonic obstacle avoidance.

The robot's face comes with LED Dot Matrix which allows it to show diverse facial expressions by flashing its eyes and either smiling or frowning. "When someone is in its way, her eyes narrow and she frowns and asks them to move out of the way. When she is singing happy birthday, she is smiling and her eyes are happy," Shouly noted.

Theresa the robot runs 365 days a year and its battery requires charging over-night every other day. "This is one staff member who we know will never call in sick, will never complain, never request a holiday, and always show up to work on time. It really is the ideal employee," Shouly said.

Asked whether his staff were worried about the introduction of the GBP 18,000 robot and concerned that Theresa and other new robots will take over their jobs, Shouly said there were some concerns expressed as jokes by the waiting staff at The Tea Terrace in Cobham.

"They were joking about losing their jobs to robots, but we reassured them that all robots who join the team are there to assist and not replace the staff. The human interaction and customer service has been key to our success since we launched The Tea Terrace 10 years ago. This will never change," he stressed.

Theresa has been a hit with customers who are surprised to see a robot working as a waiter. "It's a great conversation starter, especially that we put a Theresa May wig on her for fun. And we programmed her to say "Breakfast Means Breakfast" to poke fun at the former Prime Minister's repeated Brexit Means Brexit statement," Shouly said.