

# PA ENTERPRISE

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

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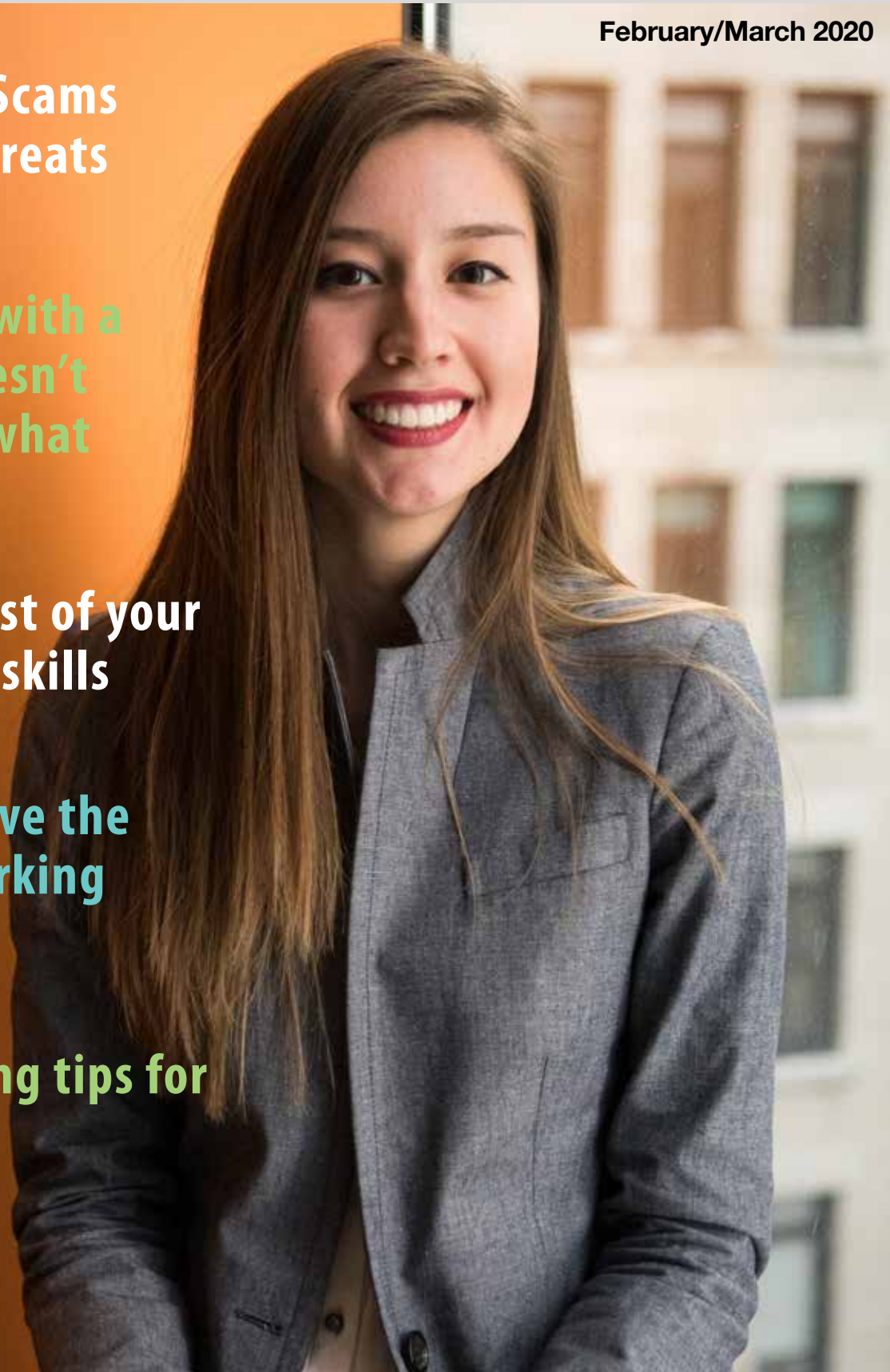
**The Biggest Scams  
and Fraud Threats  
of 2020**

**How to deal with a  
boss who doesn't  
understand what  
you do**

**Make the most of your  
transferable skills**

**How to achieve the  
optimum working  
environment**

**Healthy eating tips for  
the office**

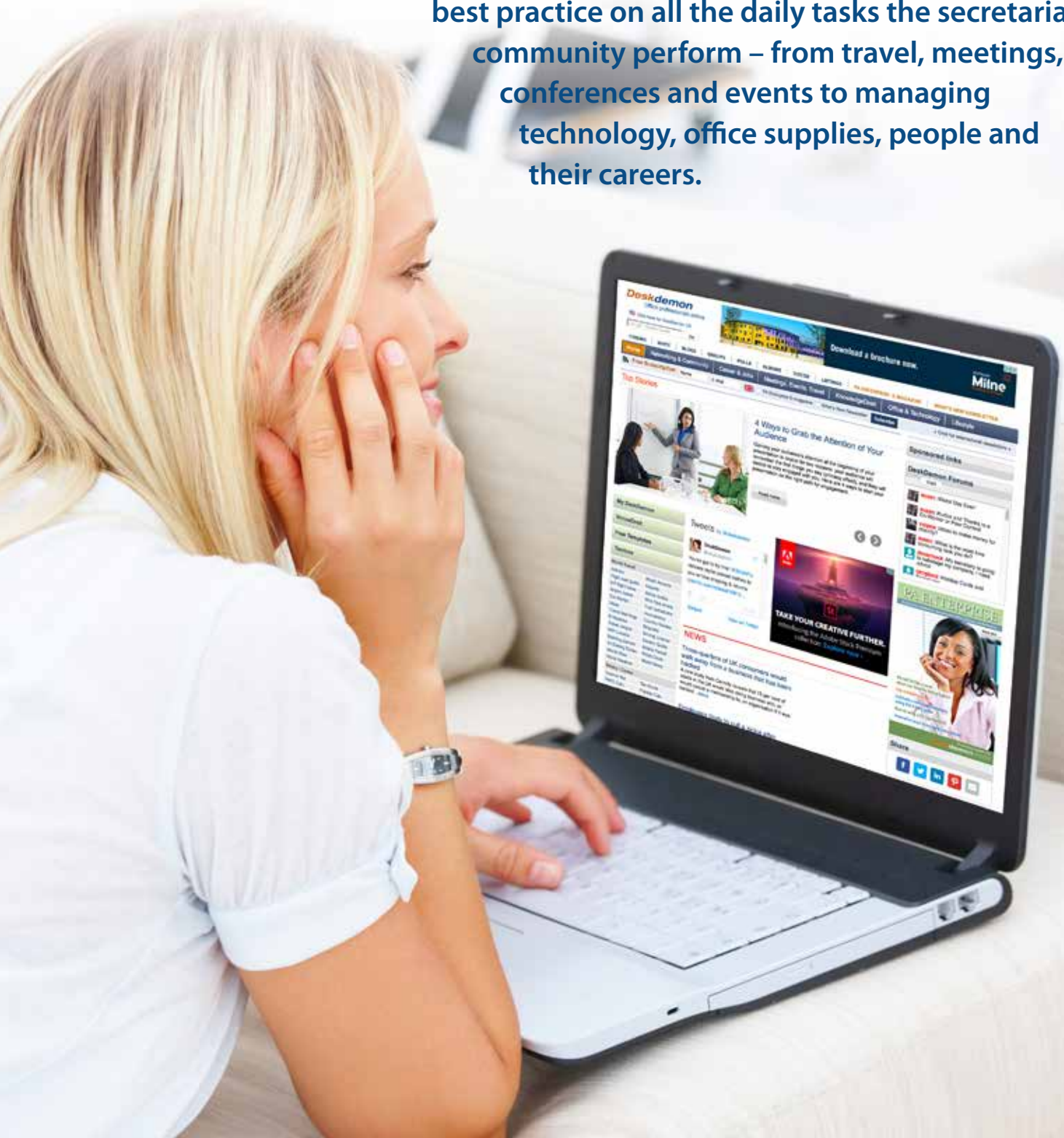


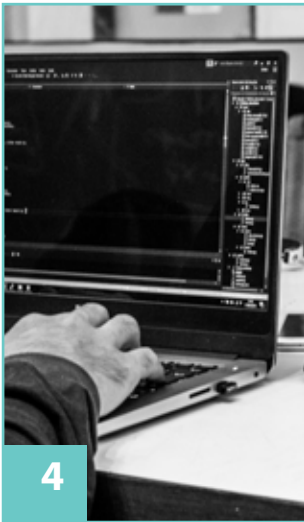
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## PA ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

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# The Biggest Scams and Fraud Threats of 2020

*Scammers are continuously adapting and developing their techniques in order to trick more and more people every day.*

## Authorised Push Payment (APP) Scams

Authorised push payment scams are one of the largest growing threats to consumers. According to trade body UK Finance, there were 57,549 reported cases of APP fraud in just the first half of 2019 – a rise of 69% year on year. Total monetary losses of reported cases reached £207.5 million.

An authorised push payment scam is when a criminal tricks you into transferring money into an account controlled by them by making you believe they are a genuine organisation such as a bank, a utilities company or even the police. This tactic is known as social engineering and criminals are continuously developing and adapting their techniques in order to trick consumers into handing over personal details or transferring money.

Although banks are starting to introduce various defences in order to try and prevent these types of scams from happening, there haven't been any signs yet to show them slowing down.

## Investment Scams

Investment scams involve criminals convincing you to move money into a fictitious fund to pay for an investment.

They will promise very high returns and ensure that your money is safe, although the investment is entirely fake. You may be cold called by the scammer, or they may entice you with an advert on social media.

Investment products offered are usually gold,

diamonds, expensive wine, property and, more recently, cryptocurrencies.

In the first half of 2019, losses that resulted from investment scams equalled £43.4 million, and this was an increase of 108% year on year.

With scammers adapting their techniques to lure in victims; now creating full websites, social media adverts and even sending out official looking paperwork, it looks like investment scams will be another big one for 2020.

## Windows 7 Hacking

There is now a security concern for people still using Windows 7 as it entered into its 'End of Life' phase at the beginning of this year. This means that Windows will no longer be offering updates or security fixes for the operating system.

While it won't be an overnight security risk and your PC will continue to run as normal, the worry is that eventually hackers will be able to find vulnerabilities in the system and exploit them in order to steal peoples' personal data.

Another concern is that you could still be vulnerable to this even if you updated your own PC from Windows 7 years ago. Any company that you've trusted to give your data to, a doctor's surgery would be one example, could also be putting your information at risk if they are still running their systems on Windows 7 and they succumb to a data breach.

So, if your PC is still running on Windows 7, I would suggest updating to Windows 10 as



soon as possible to make sure you're not putting yourself at a higher risk of being defrauded.

### **SIM-swapping Scams**

The number of SIM-swap scams has been growing rapidly over recent years with little protection in place against this type of fraud.

SIM-swapping fraud is when a criminal manages to convince your mobile network provider, by impersonating you over the phone, that you want to switch your phone number to another company.

They are able to bypass security questions as they would have already collected a lot of your personal data before attempting the scam – this is usually through companies who have had a data breach, or by hacking into your email and/or social media accounts.

Once they have successfully pulled off the switch, they will be able to benefit from everything that having your phone number provides including making and receiving phone calls and sending and receiving SMS messages.

The criminal will also receive any two-factor

authentication or one-time passcode texts meaning they will be able to log-in to your personal accounts and perform online banking transactions without you being notified.

### **Remote Access Fraud**

This type of fraud occurs when a fraudster cold calls you and explains that they are from a tech support company and there is something wrong with your computer or internet connection. This scam is often targeted towards people who are likely to have less of an understanding of modern technology, for example, the elderly.

The scammer will usually ask you to download a piece of software that allows them remote access of your computer - 'Team Viewer' is often used as it's a well-known and trusted programme. Once you have downloaded it and connected to the scammer, they can see and control your computer screen.

They will then download (or tell you to download) a piece of software which they insist is needed to sort out the supposed problem. This piece of software is likely to spread viruses and malware onto your computer.

# How to deal with a boss who doesn't understand what you do



*Whether you're just starting out or have been in the working world for more years than you care to count, chances are you report to somebody. If you're lucky, that somebody has walked in your shoes, knows what you do, and gets what it takes to actually do the job. But what if that's not the case? What if you find yourself with a boss who doesn't understand what you do or, worse, doesn't care to find out?*

Article by Paolina Milana [themuse.com](https://themuse.com)

Before you panic, consider this: It's not necessarily the end of the world if your boss hasn't been in your specific role before. And in fact, the higher up you move in your career, the more likely you are to report to someone who hasn't done your exact job. Throughout my own marketing career, I often reported to higher ups who were financial wizards and masters in creating Excel pivot tables, but who didn't even have a personal Facebook page, let alone a clue about the nuances of crafting social media campaigns.

The bigger problem arises if your boss isn't even interested in understanding what you do, doesn't value what you do, doesn't trust you to evaluate what you need to do to succeed in your role, or doesn't realize what you contribute to company goals.

In the short run, you may be expected to do things without the time or resources you need. In the long run, the disconnect could make for a frustrating relationship with your boss and other colleagues and potentially even stall your career growth.

It's demoralizing, for sure. But remember that your boss might not have bad intentions. Maybe they're struggling because it's their first time in a managerial position and they need you to help them understand your role. You can turn this into a win-win situation—not by getting your boss to understand what you do on a micro level, but by getting them to rely on you and support you, your work, and your career.

Try these ideas to turn things around when you suspect your boss doesn't get it:

### 1. Be Sure

To start with, don't assume. Just because your boss may not have hands-on experience in the latest digital widgets or doesn't praise you for the mountain of work you do, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're clueless. Your boss isn't supposed to be in the weeds; rather, it's their job to see the bigger picture.

So take the time to figure out whether your boss really doesn't get what you do or how you fit in. Here are some ways to go about it:

- **Do your research. Google your boss. What's their background? They might have more hands-on experience than you realize in roles like yours. Or not. Either way, you can use this information to inform how you communicate.**
- **Ask colleagues. Others who've worked with your boss may offer up some insight. Tap into those resources. You can frame it as a request for advice: "Hey, from your experience, what's the best way to fill Marta in on what I'm working on and get her buy-in and support?"**
- **Go to the source! As a manager, it's so refreshing to have a direct report say to you: "Hey, I know you're frying bigger fish, so I don't want to waste your time with details you already know, so stop me if I'm getting in the weeds," or "Hey, I know you hired me to handle XYZ, and I'm hoping I can tap into your experience." And once you have their attention, start explaining what's involved in what you're working on.**

### 2. Ask for Help the Right Way

Remember, it's actually OK if your boss isn't fluent in the minute details of your role. What's more important is that they can help and support you—whether it's by giving you more resources, clearing other obligations off your plate to allow you to focus on top priorities, or just by listening and problem-solving with you. But you have to know how to ask.

Communication is critical. The key is to approach your boss when they are free and open to giving you their full attention. Schedule a time—15 minutes (30 at the most)—when you and your boss can meet one-on-one. Inviting them outside the office for coffee has always worked for me. In my experience, it serves to put your boss in a more receptive state, and with all they have

*Continued* ►



going on, your offer to give them a break can go a long way. It also helps to eliminate the possibility of other priorities interrupting your time together.

Do your homework prior to sitting down at the meeting. Pick one thing you do—a specific and immediate task that’s clearly needed to deliver on your boss’s bigger picture goals—that you need help with in some way. Practice a 30-second pitch of the problem along with a clear ask: Are you unsure about which of two routes to take? Do you need some input from other team members? Do you need a day with no meetings to do deep work on something that requires focus? Whatever it is, make sure you can be specific.

Your boss will respond in one of two ways:

**1. They’ll ask you questions and demonstrate a desire to know more so that they can,**

**indeed, understand better and help guide you. They may offer suggestions. They may confess that they have no idea what you’re talking about, and that’s OK. This response is ideal for you to discuss what you do and elaborate on the details, always with an eye on why it matters to their goals. It’s your job to help them see you and your value.**

**2. They’ll get flustered or distracted and tell you to figure it out on your own—not because they want to provide you with a professional development opportunity, but because they don’t have the courage to admit they don’t know and don’t care enough to try to figure it out. When your boss won’t offer you anything in the way of advice or even curiosity, you can be pretty confident that you do, indeed, work for a boss who doesn’t get it—and doesn’t want to get it.**





### 3. Understand How Your Work Contributes to Company Goals

Your boss has their marching orders from the higher ups. They're doing their best to drive results. Good leaders prioritize, plan, and communicate. There's a purpose to what they do and how they go about doing it. Your job is to learn what matters to your boss, your boss's bosses, and to the overall mission of your organization and its stakeholders—and then make sure you ladder up to it. In other words, make sure you understand how what you're doing is contributing to larger goals.

Every company has an overarching mission. What do you and your department do to help realize it? So for example, if the mission is "to become the market leader in XYZ," your company might aim to increase sales 10% year-over-year. If you're an account executive, you might be responsible for a portion of that increase. If you're an engineer,

your team might contribute to the goal by coding and testing new features that the sales side can use to upsell old clients and entice new ones.

Keep working on breaking things down to get to clear, actionable, and attainable objectives that you can focus on.

### 4. And Then Be Your Own Cheerleader

It's not enough for you to know how what you're doing is important to the overall success of your team, department, and company. You have to make sure your boss knows it, too. So you can't be shy about your achievements, and you should try to frame them in terms of how they contribute to your boss's goals and those of the entire organization.

I know, I know: Self-promotion may not be your thing. And we all hope that others will just notice our good work without us having to "boast" about it. But the truth is that if you do a great job, but

nobody knows about it, it can't help you further your career.

If you and your boss aren't meeting on a regular basis, either weekly or bi-weekly, start doing so immediately. Get on their calendar—here's how to ask for regular check-ins.

If your company has stated revenue targets and departmental goals, use those facts to start off your one-on-one conversation: "I'm so glad you could meet with me, [Boss's Name]. I know that the company is looking to XYZ by the end of the year. As you know, our department is supporting that goal with ABC, and I've been working with cross-functional teams to deliver on [name a key driver]. I've put together some numbers for you and am excited about [whatever you're excited about]."

Don't just say it, write it down in a clear, concise document you share with your boss during your meeting or in an email you send as a follow up. List out the overall company goals, your team's contributions, and what you as an individual have done to help realize those goals. And don't just list off daily tasks you do. You need to frame them up as measurable accomplishments. How did your tasks contribute to the bottom line? How did you streamline processes? How have you helped shave spending or foster teamwork? Guide your boss to see the value in what you do and realize just how much you make them shine.

### 5. Ask Your Colleagues to Pass on Their Praise

If your boss isn't willing to hear from you directly, then your next step is to let others do the talking for you. Tap into the power of your internal network. Leverage the opinions of those at work who see firsthand all that you do.

Whenever you work on a project and a colleague compliments you, ask them to share their thoughts with your direct supervisor. Do the same with customers and external audiences you might serve. It's as simple as saying something like, "Hey, thank you. I love working with you and your team. Do you think you could send a quick note to my

boss about how well we've worked together and what we've accomplished? It'll go a long way coming from you."

Whether they do or don't give a testimonial on your behalf to your boss, make sure you collect all of these accolades and keep them handy. And don't wait until your annual performance review to share them with your manager. Make it a practice monthly to talk about how co-workers throughout the company value your efforts. If you can't get these updates into your regular one-on-one meetings (or you were unsuccessful setting those meetings up), a brief email update can deliver your news, too.

### 6. Be Realistic

What if, despite your best efforts, you still can't get your boss to understand, help, value, or even care about what you do?

The only one you can change is you. If you've done everything you can to help bring your boss up to speed, and you still can't get them to acknowledge, understand, or care about you and what you do, then it might be time to think about moving on from this role. You don't want to keep wasting your talents on people who don't deserve you.

Clueless bosses and rudderless companies are a reality. But they don't have to be your reality. Some people will never understand or appreciate what you have to offer. That's a hard truth to swallow, but it's OK because other people will appreciate you. It's hard having to start over and find another job, but it's even harder banging your head against the wall trying to get others to see what you're worth.

So take a deep breath, and start looking for your next gig. Just make sure you do your best to evaluate the company culture and your prospective boss's management style before you accept an offer. You'll thank yourself for moving on in the long run. And your new company and boss will be thanking their lucky stars for having found you.

# Long work hours at the office linked to both regular and hidden high blood pressure

*Working long hours significantly increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes by raising your blood pressure. A new study finds working 49 hours a week increases risk of hypertension by up to 70%.*

People who put in long hours at the office are significantly more likely to have heart attacks, stroke and other forms of cardiovascular disease, a new study finds.

Researchers found that those who spend 49 or more hours a week at work have a much higher chance of developing high blood pressure, or hypertension, than people working 35 hours or less, as the cumulative stress of being in the office environment takes its toll.

They have a 66% higher risk of developing sustained hypertension, while the risk of masked hypertension, a type of high blood pressure that can often go undetected during a routine medical appointment, is 70% higher.

The results were similar for men and women.

“Both masked and sustained high blood pressure are linked to higher cardiovascular disease risk,” said lead author Xavier Trudel, of Laval University in Quebec, Canada.

“People should be aware that long work hours might affect their heart health. And if they’re working long hours, they should ask their doctors about checking their blood pressure over time with a wearable monitor,” he added.

## **Stressful combination**

Dr Trudel said many office jobs were a stressful combination of high work load and responsibility

with low levels of power. This becomes increasingly overwhelming the less time people have to recharge their batteries outside the office.

“The observed associations accounted for job strain, a work stressor defined as a combination of high work demands and low decision-making authority,” Dr Trudel said.

However, there may also be other factors at play and he is keen to research those next.

“Future research could examine whether family responsibilities - such as a worker’s number of children, household duties and childcare role - might interact with work circumstances to explain high blood pressure,” he said.

## **High blood pressure is a widespread problem**

The researchers also found that people who work between 41 and 48 hours each week have a 54% greater likelihood of developing masked hypertension and 42 per higher risk of sustained hypertension - again compared to those putting in 35 hours or less.

More than 14 million adults in the UK have high blood pressure – as many as five million of these are thought to be undiagnosed, as there are rarely any symptoms.

The study is published in the journal Hypertension.

# How to stay focused when working from home



*Working from home is a challenge for many reasons. You're away from your colleagues; which makes checking emails and correspondence becomes even more important. However, the most difficult aspect of remote working, is the unprecedented level of focus that's required throughout the day.*

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To help you avoid powerful distractions such as TV and housework, try using the tips below to stay focused when you're working remotely.

### **Set boundaries with the people you live with**

In order to stay on task, it's important to set boundaries with whoever you live with. Let them know what is and isn't acceptable, when you're working from home. That way, you'll be able to keep your focus and avoid distractions from other people in the house.

Be sure to communicate how important it is that you're able to concentrate when you're working from home. If you need to be left on your own during particularly busy periods of the day; or prefer to work in a quiet environment, then it's vital that you let your family members or flatmates know. After all, no-one is psychic, and they won't know what your work schedule looks like.

However, setting boundaries becomes difficult if you have children. In this case, we recommend booking childcare, rather than trying to juggle both work and kids.

### **Work in suitable conditions**

Another way to stay focused is to allocate a room or area in your house as a dedicated space for work. This will enable to separate your home life from your career, when working from home.

This will be most effective if you choose a room without distractions such as books or magazines. It'll also be beneficial if the space

is tidy and without clutter. The room you base yourself in should also be away from other people. The last thing you need is someone distracting you by walking in and out of the room all day.

If there's any music that will help you concentrate, try playing that, too. With that said, you can tailor your room to whatever keeps you focused. Just don't be tempted to lounge on the sofa all day!

### **Work on a company laptop with restricted access**

If you're easily distracted by social media or surfing the internet, you might want to ask your company to provide a laptop with restricted Internet access. We know it can be tough to avoid Netflix when you're working from home; and using a restricted access laptop will help keep you on track.

For instance, you could ask to only have access to work-related material. That way, you'll prolong your focus and avoid the bottomless pit of online distractions such as Facebook and YouTube. If there's anything specific that might knock your focus, ask your employer's IT department to block that, too.

This is another way to customise your workspace and keep you focused, whilst also showing your employer you're taking remote working seriously.

Article by Alistair Hendrie [cv-library.co.uk](http://cv-library.co.uk)

# What are transferable skills?

*Not sure you have the right skills for a role? You may be surprised... Transferable skills are a great way to show you're a great fit for the role, regardless of previous experience. And the best part? Everyone has them. If you're not sure how to make transferable skills work for you, here are a few things to remember.*

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## What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are a core set of skills and abilities, which can be applied to a wide range of different jobs and industries.

They're usually picked up over time, and can be gained from previous positions, charity or voluntary work, your hobbies, or even just at home.

## Why are transferable skills important?

Although slightly softer skills than those directly related to a position, transferable skills are incredibly valuable to employers.

Not only do they show that you'd be a good fit for the team, they can also demonstrate what a candidate can bring to a role, and how much they've learnt from previous positions or experiences.

So if you're currently lacking experience in the field you're looking for work in, transferable skills can be a great way to highlight why you're right for the role.

## What are some examples of transferable skills?

Although this is by no means a comprehensive list, here are some great examples of transferable skills you can use in your CV:

## Leadership

This skill is extremely versatile, and whilst it's typically linked to management positions, being a good leader is essential in almost every job – even if only in some situations.

To reference it in your CV, refer to times where you've demonstrated great leadership – whether it's through motivating others in order to achieve a shared goal, leading a project, heading up training and development for a team, or even through your hobbies and interests (e.g. coaching a sports team).

## Time management

Time management is a vital skill for any role, that not only proves you can work to deadlines – but also that you're able to complete tasks in the most time-effective way, create to-do-lists, delegate, ask for help, and break up projects accordingly.

Whether it's that you've had experience stacking shelves within a set time in a retail store, you've completed projects within a deadline, or you've carried out construction work that met the time-sensitive needs of a client, you'll have at least one example of time management to reference in your CV.

## Prioritisation

Prioritising tasks effectively is essential if you



want to get anything done, on time, and to a high standard. That's why it's a key skill that the vast majority of employers value.

Prove you're able to assess your workload, adjust your schedule, and organise tasks in order of importance by giving tangible examples in your CV. For example, it could be that your ability to be ruthless and say no to certain tasks enabled you to complete others which had a higher level of importance, or you implemented time saving

techniques to get small tasks done faster (e.g. spreadsheets, templates).

### **Delegation**

Whilst delegation is primarily important for managers, supervisors, or anyone in a senior position, that doesn't mean those without a background in management aren't able to demonstrate this skill.

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For example, if you've ever mentored or tutored someone (whether it was at work or school), or trained another colleague in a particular system, procedure, or task, you'll be able to prove you could be a good delegator. It's all about how you frame your skills, the examples you give, and how you link back to the criteria specified in the job description.

## Listening

Let's face it, everyone is likely to have good listening skills, no matter where your experience lies. This means demonstrating them in your CV should be easy.

Think about times where your ability to listen well resulted in a positive outcome – whether it's that you're great at following instructions (which meant your work was done specifically to a client's requirements), you're able to absorb knowledge quickly when taught (whether it was in a meeting, at university, or anywhere else), or you delivered excellent customer service by listening carefully to a customer's needs.

## Communication

Although it's particularly important in customer facing industries, good communication is an extremely versatile skill that's an important part of every role – which contributes to the smooth running of any workplace.

Luckily, that means everyone has it. Examples of communication skills could range from instances where you communicated with a customer or client to fulfil their needs or resolve a problem, to times where you worked together with your colleagues to achieve a joint goal.

## Research & analysis

Many roles require some level of research and analysis ability – making it an important skill to make known to employers.

The examples you include may differ depending on the role and what's required (particularly if the vacancy calls for harder skills, e.g. knowledge of Google Analytics), but a basic level of research



and analysis skills can be shown in anything from university essays, to any form of gathering, organising, and evaluating information – whether it's sales figures, website visits, or technical reports.

## What transferable skills should I include in my CV?

If you're not sure which ones you should include for a particular role – check the job description. Employers will often explicitly state their criteria, and much of this is made up of soft skills.

Simply pick out the words which seem most relevant, and think of ways you may be able to display similar attributes – emphasising to how





they could benefit the employer you're applying for a job with.

And remember: always expand on any skills you mention with real-life examples (and, if possible, results).

### How do I demonstrate them on my CV?

OK, so everyone has some sort of transferable skills. But how do you show them to employers?

The most important thing to remember is to choose examples that you can practically demonstrate on your CV. Saying you're excellent at analytics is good, but you won't stand out from the crowd unless you can prove it.

So for each one, think of an example of how you've shown this skill. It could be in the workplace, or outside, as long as it effectively backs up your claim. For example:

**Don't say:** 'Great leadership skills'

**Do say:** 'Excellent leadership skills, demonstrated when I successfully managed a small team of individuals on a three day hike for a charity event'

### Just make sure that you can back it up.

Recruiters will quickly realise if you're not being truthful at the interview stage, so always steer clear of lying if you want to avoid embarrassing situations.

Article by Michael Cheary [reed.co.uk](http://reed.co.uk)

# 4 ways to achieve the optimum working environment

*The working environment has changed beyond all recognition in the last two decades. Long gone are the days when 'another day at the office' meant being stationary at a desk cubicle from 9-5.*

But even if that is still the case for you and your current job, there are steps you can take to improve your surroundings and ensure you feel inspired and motivated by your office or working space.

Here are four small but simple ways to get the most out of your working environment. These will help to improve your productivity and boost your morale levels.

## 1. Ensure there's some background noise

Research from an Australian university points to the benefits of stochastic resonance. This is commonly known as background noise; the hum of people's conversations, the clatter of colleagues typing on keyboards, or even the radio being on.

This noise, small enough to notice, but not to distract, is said to help improve people's perception and mood. It certainly explains why you often see people working on their laptop or notebook in coffee shops.

Of course, there are certain industries and roles where you have to keep noise levels at a minimum; and others where it's impossible to make yourself heard. Be conscious that this could damage your hearing in the long term. If this is true for your working environment, consult with your line manager about some practical solutions;

noise cancelling headsets or ear defenders can work well.

Alongside this, some people enjoy listening to music or even a podcast when working their way through certain tasks. If your employer allows you to do this, make sure you go for nice, upbeat and light listening; it can also help to lift your spirits.

## 2. Make sure you're comfy (but take breaks when necessary)

As human beings, it's important to understand our limits. That way, we know how best to respond to them and ensure our level of comfort in our work environment.

The first step is to ensure you're comfy in your working environment. Your chair should give good back support and you might want to consider a wrist rest for your keyboard and mouse mat.

At the same time, it's important to note that we can't stay absolutely focussed in one place for hours on end. Furthermore, studies from Queen's University show that being stationary for too long in the day increases the chance of health risks; that includes heart disease, cancer and Type 2 diabetes.

For this reason, you should also try to take comfort breaks; even if that's looking away from your screen every 10 minutes or so. If you take



most of your work calls on a mobile, use this as an opportunity to walk whilst doing so; even if it's just round your breakout area.

### 3. Add some greenery to your desk

More employers are now exploring different ways to utilise their office space. A recent article by The Wall Street Journal cites that companies like Walmart and Expedia are experimenting with a design concept known as biophilia; this brings workers in closer contact to the outdoors.

It's a positive step for the working environment; particularly when it comes to reducing carbon emissions, as plants or green spaces are good absorbers of CO<sub>2</sub>. But whilst a roof terrace garden is still a dream for many workers, there are small changes you can make to your desk to bring a bit of natural life to it.

Consider bringing in a small plant; hardy, low maintenance ones are best as they don't require much watering and can cope with changes in light exposure. For example, a potted cacti or a succulent like Aloe Vera. Plus, it'll make for something interesting to focus on when you need a minute to gather your thoughts or look away from your screen.

### 4. Shake up your routine

Many employers are cottoning onto the benefits of a good work-life balance to keep their employees motivated. Which is why a lot of companies now offer flexible. If you can, make the most of this as it brings freshness to your working routine.

This might involve working from home once or twice a week, or even shaking up your working hours so you start earlier and finish later. Small changes to your routine can help you gain a better understanding of the tasks you perform better at in certain environments or at certain times of day.

### Build the right working environment

If the opportunity is there to make these small and manageable changes, make use of them. Over time, the differences will be noticeable enough that you'll get the most out of your working life; plus, you'll actually relish the prospect of Monday morning. And that's got to be a huge bonus!

Article by Alex Macgregor [cv-library.co.uk](http://cv-library.co.uk)

# 7 healthy eating tips for the office

*Improve your mood and productivity at work with these tips, from smart snacks and hydration to forward planning and mindful eating.*

There was a time when most people worked the land. Today, more and more of us sit at desks. Sedentary lifestyles are compounded by the labour-saving electronic devices and vehicles in our personal lives. Add to this the expansive range of food options often found in and around offices and that aren't in keeping with the latest nutritional science study results, and it's a recipe for poor health.

But poor nutrition doesn't just impact our health, it can affect our performance at work by negatively impacting concentration and energy levels, and cause irritability, frustration and impatience. One study found that employees who participated in a wellness program that included nutritional programs resulted in higher

productivity — “approximately equal to an additional productive work day per month for the average worker.”

We all know we should ‘eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise’, but it's easier said than done when you have nine-hour days, no time for a lunch break, a two-hour commute and a home life to fit into 16 waking hours.

As The Harvard Business Review stated in its article *What You Eat Affects Your Productivity*: “It's not awareness we need, it's an action plan that makes healthy eating easier to accomplish.”

This article contains lots of practical advice on how to improve your diet at work including small but meaningful changes in habits and an



introduction to ‘mindful eating’. It will help you understand good and balanced nutrition and offer advice on how to optimise your diet at work so you can benefit from its affects:

### Improved

- Cognitive function
- Immune system
- Energy levels
- Mental health

### Reduced

- Chance of lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease
- Stress

By adopting the strategies and tactics below you will be on the path to improved work performance as well as overall health and well-being.

## 1. Educate yourself

The first and most important thing to do is learn about the nutritional value and impact of foods and drinks — and reading this is a part of that. Most of us will know what’s healthy and what’s not, but nutrition is more complex than good vs bad. There are also lots of myths about various foods, for example, sushi and granola bars both contain more sugar than many assume.

By educating yourself, you will be able to make simple and easy changes to your diet for healthier outcomes and better work performance. For example, eggs on toast makes a better breakfast than jam on toast by switching sugar for protein, zinc, iron, vitamin D and the brain-boosting chemical choline. It is also a myth that eggs contribute to high cholesterol.

## 2. Building a routine

Part of the reason we fall into bad habits is because we don’t plan and build a healthy routine, or we just let our plan be ‘whatever is easiest’ (and this usually means unhealthy). By



building a routine, you’re prepared for meals and choices with healthier options whether that’s a homemade meal or saying no to cake. And, importantly, you’re making your eating decisions before you get hungry.

Key to this is simplicity: make a simple dish that you can take into work. This might also include routinely buy healthy snacks (carrot sticks, nuts and seeds) on your way to work so you don’t end up buying crisps/potato chips and sweets or candy from the vending machine.

The globally mobile among us who travel — and especially fly — frequently should read *Eating healthy while travelling for business*.

## 3. Don’t skip meals

Aetna International Senior Medical Director, Dr Stella George, says, “When you eat and how often you eat are just as important as eating well and getting the right nutrients in your diet. It’s important not to skip meals or leave it too long between eating healthy snacks as your glucose will drop, making it harder to concentrate and you’re more likely to overeat or eat the wrong things at your next meal.”

*Continued* ►



Skipping meals has a number of negative effects:

- You're more likely to overeat at other times
- You're more likely to gain weight
- Mood is negatively impacted
- Concentration suffers as blood sugar and energy declines

Importantly, don't skip breakfast. To do so makes you more susceptible to weight gain and at an increased risk of atherosclerosis, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and high cholesterol. Eating the first meal of the day can encourage your body to burn more calories throughout the day and help contain rising cortisol (the primary 'stress hormone') levels which are high in the early morning. High levels of cortisol can make you feel anxious or jittery.

### Breakfast advice

- Load up on protein at breakfast to kickstart your metabolism, stay full for longer and aren't tempted to snack
- Avoid sugary foods as you'll be chasing that sugar rush all day

## 4. Stay hydrated

Dehydration at work can lead to poor productivity, reduced cognitive abilities, slower reaction times and even morale. As such, it is important to stay hydrated but you should try to do so by drinking water and not sugary or caffeinated drinks as they can have adverse side-effects such as dehydration, hyperglycaemia and sleep disruption.

Alcohol or excessive caffeine consumption dehydrates the body and energy drinks (including those containing taurine) have been banned in some workplaces due to their hyper-caffeinated content, lack of nutritional value and detrimental health effects.

After-work drinking can aid team building and boost moral but excessive alcohol can impact the following day by disrupting sleep and dehydrating you — and no one ever did their best work hungover!



## 5. Smart lunching

Healthy lunching during a busy day is not only the most important thing to get right but can also be the most challenging.

An ideal lunch will contain the right balance of protein, sugars, fat, fibre, carbohydrates and other nutrients.



Dr Stella explains, "A high carb meal, such pasta, bread and cereals release glucose quickly which gives you a burst of energy followed by a slump, draining our motivation and attention. Meanwhile, a high-fat meal provide more sustained energy, but require our digestive system to work harder, reducing oxygen levels in the brain and making us groggy."

One study found that the more fruits and vegetables people consumed (up to 7 portions), the happier, more engaged, and more creative they tended to be. This is because fruits and vegetables contain vital nutrients that encourage the production of dopamine which plays a role in the experience of curiosity, motivation, and engagement. They also contain antioxidants that improve memory and enhance mood.

A good way to ensure you eat a healthy lunch is to plan ahead (see Building A Routine, above), and shop with work lunches in mind. For example, you can shop for the elements of a big salad that will really fill you up: not just cucumber and lettuce but also cabbage, peppers and carrots.

### Lunch advice

- Take time to take your lunch
- Prepare your lunch at home
- Find a lunch buddy and/or start a lunch club
- Keep food at work (dressing, condiment etc.)
- Don't eat at your desk - it's much easier to overeat if you're distracted
- Find the healthy eating options near your office
- Exercise portion control
- Avoid processed/packaged foods

### 6. Sensible snacking

While many people try to cut out snacking, grazing on the right things can help maintain energy levels throughout the day. Hunger can be a distraction at work and many of us fall prey to the vending machine with all its salty, sugary, fatty badness. But there are healthy ways to snack that will also boost your mood and productivity.

*Continued* ►



So, what's a good snack for work? Eat nuts and seeds, fruits and vegetables — for example, carrots, peppers, celery and even green beans make great snacks. If hunger is a particular distraction, try some of these high-protein snacks: hard-boiled eggs, beef jerky (buy sugar-free varieties), Greek yoghurt, cheese (non-processed), edamame.

As with many parts of this list, the key is preparation. Prepare a bag or box of snacks at home to avoid using vending machines.

## 7. Mindful eating

"What we eat has a direct influence on our energy levels, focus and power of concentration. It's difficult to be 100% committed to a healthy diet 100% of the time. By paying attention to what we're eating and when, and enjoying the experience, we can allow ourselves to relax and have the occasional treat. Try to apply the 80/20 rule — make the best choices you can most of the time and the treats become just that; a delicious treat rather than the norm. Your concentration, energy levels and mood will all benefit," says Dr Stella.

Mindfulness means focusing on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Mindful eating means being fully

attentive to your food — as you buy, prepare, serve, and consume it. For example:

- Consider the health value of every item you add to your shopping list
- Don't eat based on your hunger as you may be tempted to eat more than you need
- Start with small portions, wait and eat more if you need to
- Appreciate your food
- Think about the colour, texture, aroma and even the sounds of your food as you prepare and eat it
- Eat slowly by taking small bites and chewing chew thoroughly. Pause between mouthfuls
- You don't have to eat everything on your plate
- Exercise the right to say no
  - Part of mindful eating is making conscious decisions about what you put into your body, and not sleepwalking into unhealthy eating.
  - As with exercise, there are no cheats. You have to do the work. And lots of healthy eating comes down to will power and this can mean saying no. Consider saying no or moderating your intake of cake, office treats and food in meetings such as biscuits and pastries.

