Administrative Assistant's UPDATE

Is your workplace ready for Gen Z?

Generation Z, now comprising 13 to 23-year-olds, is about to hit the workforce. Employers who want to hire the cream of the crop need to think like these social media-savvy recruits, according to a Randstad Canada blog post.

Among the recommendations, employers should:

- adopt a mobile-friendly policy for employees;
- be socially conscious to demonstrate shared values with employees;
- design a workspace with well-lit and colourful surroundings and a relaxed dress code;
- embrace social media to communicate corporate values;
- provide a "stellar" candidate experience.

INSIDE

Mobilize colleagues: You are not alone
Neutralizing the bully

By Jennifer Lewington
AAU Associate Editor

Workplace bullies are no fun to be around, inflicting damage in various forms: snide remarks; intimidating behaviour; harassment; imposition of unachievable job demands; and, in the worst cases, unwanted sexual advances.

For admin professionals, typically influential but lacking formal power, co-existing with the workplace bully (who might also be the boss) can be an emotionally draining experience that erodes on-the-job productivity.

But workplace respect advocates say administrative and executive assistants don't have to suffer in silence – or fear.

"You are not powerless," says Paul Pelletier, a Vancouver-based consultant and author of newly published *The Workplace Bullying Handbook*. "You may feel it but you are not."

He encourages victims of workplace bullies to adopt strategies for success. First, find ways to work together, not alone. Take time to document the bad behaviour. Organize as a group to report the accumulated incidents to human resources (or appropriate managers) given their difficulty in responding to a single complaint about possibly hearsay incidents.

Credit: Ron and Joe (Shutterstock)

Paul Pelletier

"Hopelessness and vulnerability are what kill people," says Pelletier, who says the power imbalance between a bullying boss and the admin professional changes when a response plan is put in place. "Everything shifts. It is not: 'I have no power,'" he says. A collaborative approach, he adds, "changes your perspective and that can be game-changing just to manage and cope with stress."

Even with the global rise of the "Me Too" movement against sexual harassment and assault in recent years, fueled by high-profile scandals, workplace bullying remains an all-too-common phenomenon.

Last fall, a national poll of 1,875 adults over the age of 16 by Forum Research Inc., found that 55 per cent of respondents said they or a co-work-

Creating a positive work environment

Who is responsible for a positive workplace culture?

If it isn't valued nor supported day after day by the organization's leaders, it isn't going to happen.

That's clearly the view of Veronique James, CEO of The James Agency, which specializes in consumer advertising, public relations and digital marketing and has been honoured nationally in the U.S. for its workplace culture.

A lot is being asked of today's employees, she says, and as a wife and mother she is well aware of the personal and professional challenges

EDITOR'S NOTE
George Pearson

her employees face.

A positive work environment, she contends, enhances creativity, productivity and happiness while reducing stress levels, including the misery caused by bad behaviours (for example, see "Neutralizing the bully," page 1).

Below are seven tips she offers in an article that recently appeared in *Inc.com*. They were aimed at organization leaders, but they are applicable as well to administrative professionals who have influence within their own teams as well as with their execs.

1. **Begin with gratitude.** Give people "a vehicle to express appreciation for one another in a public forum," she advises, something her company does at the beginning of each week in a "15-minute all-hands team meeting where the first item on the agenda is team kudos."

2. **Create a safe environment.** Respect every idea, "whether it's from an intern or a tenured senior team member," she suggests. Find ways to neutralize or eliminate negative personalities and "lead with honesty, integrity and vulnerability to help your employees feel safe."

3. **Don't leave your dirty dishes in the sink.** Interpreted, this means don't leave a mess of any kind for others to have to clean up. Don't cost others time, because "time is our most valuable currency."

4. **There are only opportunities in business, not problems.** Sometimes even the smallest issues can be overblown. Respond, says James, by viewing the problem as "an opportunity to reflect, analyze and evaluate."

5. **Consistency is key.** Rather than trying on "the latest professional culture craze" or workplace perks, says James, her firm has found that consistency nurtures its cultural balance.

6. **Encourage positive thinking.** "Even when things seem to be spinning out of control or we didn't achieve the result we anticipated," says James, "positive thinking will eventually cultivate positive outcomes."

7. **Don't sacrifice the important for the urgent.** "It's easy to punt team one-on-ones for an urgent client call or meeting, but that connection with your team is crucial to maintaining a positive workplace culture," James emphasizes. When leaders aren't regularly connecting with the team, "the mission, vision and energy of the business can quickly dilute and degrade your cultural fibre."

Time on your hands?

Do you sometimes find yourself with dead time (canceled meetings, technical problems, for example)?

Don't dither, says the team at Mind Tools, which offers skills-building resources. Decide quickly what you're going to do.

Some suggestions: Audit your to-do list; recheck your work; develop a skill; mentor a colleague; help out a co-worker.

Step up to a governance role (Part 2)

EA skills are your foundation

By Shelagh Donnelly

If you were to survey the women and men who enjoy governance careers, you'd find that many of them took a circuitous route to the boardroom. You can, too.

Some, though by no means all, organizations require that candidates have an undergraduate credential. Beyond such prerequisites, how do you know if you and the role are right for one another?

If you're feeling a little daunted, I encourage you to shake that off. Right now. You say you don't understand governance or its nuances? They're crucial, but they may be learned and there are numerous resources. It helps if you have a curious mind and enjoy reading and learning.

In fact, if you've built a successful career as an executive assistant, you may already routinely deploy the skills needed to effectively support a board of directors.

Most administrative types I know tend to be highly organized, and it's important to be able to prioritize and effectively manage your time. If you're flexible, proactive and solution-focused, that will help you in dealing with the sometimes competing demands that can come your way.

As an effective EA, you likely also have strong communication skills. The capacity to articulate information clearly, diplomatically and succinctly, both verbally and in writing, is among the more important strengths an individual can bring to the governance career. Your ability to actively listen to what others are saying (or not saying) is equally important.

A good governance professional will have or will develop research skills. In addition to preparing agendas, cor-respondence and reports, you'll likely draft or interpret Terms of Reference (TOR), policies, by-laws and legislation or articles of incorporation.

Your attention to detail will help ensure that your board remains in compliance. You'll need strong recording skills, as a board's minutes represent institutional history and may be relied upon by multiple audiences.

Skills aside, you'll want to consider characteristics that will help you. As a governance professional, you're likely a key liaison between management and the board. You must be objective, and it certainly helps to be confident, collaborative, assertive and (of course) diplomatic.

You need to be flexible while maintaining a calm, professional approach. You'll be working alongside a hopefully diverse group of high achievers who are responsible for significant and sometimes challenging decisions. You may be privy to sensitive information, and your board will rely on you for discretion and unquestionable ethics.

The role is not (she laughed) without challenges. As a governance professional, you're neither fish nor fowl; you're likely not part of management and you're certainly not a board member.

You may have long hours. You will safeguard information of which your colleagues may be unaware. Since you may find the role isolating at times, you need to also safeguard your resilience.

Is the role demanding? Yes. It can also be rewarding. Your board's role is a strategic one, and so you have the opportunity to think strategically. The best governance professionals, like the best EAs, are positive and quietly influential.

Shelagh Donnelly

International speaker Shelagh Donnelly educates, inspires and challenges assistants on cybersecurity, governance, digital disruption and matters of longstanding relevance to the career. She has extensive C-suite experience and is past chair of the Board of Directors of Governance and President's Office Professionals (CICan:GPOP). Assistants from more than 100 countries turn to Shelagh's Exceptional EA website, https://exceptionalea.com*, for professional development.*

Admin forum in Toronto March 6-7

Administrative Assistant's Update contributor Rhonda Scharf will be among featured instructors in an Executive Leadership Support Forum March 6 and 7 at the Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto.

Others include Julie Perrine, CEO and founder of All Things Admin; Vickie Sokol Evans, CEO and founder of the productivity training firm Red Cape Company; Monique Helstrom, Chief of Simon, Simon Sinek Inc.; and Nadia Hernandez, executive producer of the ELS Forum.

A similar event is scheduled for Vancouver July 24-25.

For more information visit *elsforum.com*.

Workplace bully

Continued from page 1

er had been bullied on the job. Even when bullying incidents were reported to management, human resources or others, only 35 per cent of employers took action.

But when employers responded to complaints, they dealt effectively with the bullying problem, according to the respondents.

Lower the reporting barriers

"There needs to be more awareness of how to report bullying in the workplace and more acceptance of [the filing of] those reports," says Forum president Lorne Bozinoff. "Not enough is being done to make people feel comfortable about reporting it. We have to look at lowering the barriers to reporting it [bullying]."

In November, speaking at Vancouver's Public Salon speaker series, Pelletier recounted his own experience, early in his career, with a boss who denigrated his staff with intimidating behaviour and threats to fire them. "I thought it would get better but it didn't; it got worse," he says.

Pelletier says he and his co-workers feared reporting the bully's behaviour, an omission that inspired him to switch careers and become a consultant to individuals and companies on how to combat workplace bullying.

Addressing the understandable fear of taking on a bully, he identifies several risk-free strategies.

One, he says, is "knowing what to do when," which could mean delaying a visit to human resources.

Deep documentation essential

If presented with one incident that may or may not be well documented, human resources officials could be understandably reluctant to trigger immediate action against an established senior manager seen as a major asset to the organization.

However, when presented with well-documented evidence from multiple sources about objectionable behaviour by a top official, the employer may have no choice but to address the problem.

He emphasizes that his strategy to wait and gather evidence does not apply if the admin is a victim of sexual harassment or assault that should be reported immediately to supervisors and legal authorities.

As a preventive measure, Pelletier encourages admins and others in an organization to step up as "workplace respect leaders" who promote company-wide rules and practices that foster a collegial work environment.

'We don't do that here'

"Anyone who ignores the rules is told 'we don't do that here,'" he says. "Bullies don't know what to do when they see a wall of consistent respectful behaviour."

That collegial approach can also be used when one individual becomes the target of a bully. Instead of being a bystander, Pelletier says, "we should support each other and act as a team."

Standing together, he says, reduces the fear factor.

Adjusting the power imbalance

By Jennifer Lewington
AAU Associate Editor

Power imbalances – such as those between a boss and support staff – are a reality of the workplace.

"The AA has to have resources that the boss needs and wants," says Tiziana Casciaro, professor of organizational behaviour at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. "But that's not enough; they have to be a unique source of those resources."

If the employer can outsource the work or hire a cheaper substitute, the currently employed admin has little power, says Casciaro. As well, the boss may have what the assistant needs – a well-paying job not easily replicated elsewhere – and thus holds more of the power in the relationship.

Tiziana Casciaro

As technology and outsourcing continue to disrupt the traditional role of the AA, the power dynamics have become more disadvantageous to admins.

But the picture is not all bleak.

Casciaro says admins have strategies at their disposal to regain some of their diminished power.

One approach is to identify tasks, such as social media management, that a boss either can't do well or can't easily delegate to someone else. "Imagine the EA who is well versed [in social media] – and if not well versed can learn – and able to offer that kind of competency as a value-added that a boss would appreciate," says Casciaro.

She urges admins to draw on their creativity and imagination to identify gaps that they can fill and add to the success of the boss and the organization.

Another strategy is to join forces with other admins,

Continued on next page

Promoting diversity is everyone's challenge

By Staff

Promoting diversity and inclusiveness within the workplace makes good business sense and it also makes for a rich and stimulating work environment.

The Hult International Business School, with campuses in San Francisco, Boston, London, Dubai, New York and Shanghai, operates on the basis that "success in business is as much about cultures and globalization as it is about understanding finance and marketing."

How to engender and make the most of a diverse culture is a challenge that takes the combined will and creativity of management and employees alike. A Hult graduate and Hult blogger, Katie Reynolds, has suggested five strategies individuals and organizations can deploy to advance that effort:

(1) Commit to boosting your own cultural competency. When interacting with people from a culture other than your own, which is increasingly likely in today's business environment, make a point of learning as much as possible about their tradi-

tions and approaches to work, as well as opening yourself to global events and political developments affecting their homeland.

(2) Actively seek out new perspectives and ideas. Ask your colleagues for their suggestions and opinions related to a current issue or project. Keep in mind, says Reynolds, that people of different backgrounds and cultures may approach business differently from you – and may add real value to the discussion.

(3) Treat others how *they* want to be treated. It may not be the way *you* may wish to be treated (bowing? a handshake? respect for personal space? maintaining eye contact?) so you need to become aware of and respectful of cultural or personal boundaries.

(4) Observe diverse traditions, celebrations, and holidays from other cultures. Sharing their holidays and celebrations can be a team-building event. Your developing awareness of their cultural or religious practices can guide your scheduling of lunch meetings, for example, that don't conflict.

Credit: Photographee.eu (Shutterstock)

(5) Contribute to the cultural diversity of your own workplace. Don't overlook your own culture and how you might share it with a particular food or treat or a piece of apparel.

"Getting to know your colleagues on a personal level, regardless of their culture and background," says James, "will help you to find common ground, deepen your appreciation of differences, and promote an inclusive and welcoming work environment."

Continued from previous page

she says, establishing coalitions of interest. In some workplaces, admins already are members of a union, which can offer support on pay and workplace issues, including bullying.

But in the absence of a union, admins can find work together to develop training and other professional development through events held by organizations such as the Association of Administrative Professionals.

"There is potential for informal coalitions when the formal version [such as a union] is hard to come by," says Casciaro.

She concedes that "a lot of the work of the AA is being outsourced and there is no stopping that." But

she says admins can make themselves "more useful and relevant by acquiring new skills," including social media and project management.

Casciaro cites the true story of black female mathematicians at NASA who in the early 1960s were in danger of being replaced by computers. As recounted in the movie, *Hidden Figures*, the women learned the coding language of computers and became instrumental in successful efforts to put American astronaut John Glenn into orbit.

"Increase the value of the skills you provide in light of changed circumstances, so you are seen as a more precious resource," says Casciaro.

Create documentation or application support tickets with Microsoft Recorder

By Arnold Villeneuve

Have you ever needed to create documentation that shows someone else how to use an application or website within your organization? Or, have you tried to explain to a technical support person within your organization a problem you are running into with an application or website?

Microsoft Recorder can help you create very detailed explanation documents in both cases that can include screenshots with step-by-step instructions or details about the problem you are facing.

You can use the Microsoft "Problem Steps Recorder" to automatically capture the steps you take on a computer, including a text description of where you clicked and a picture of the screen during each click (called a screenshot).

Once you capture these steps, you can save them to a file that can be used by a support professional or someone else helping you with a computer problem.

To start the "Problem Steps Recorder" click on the Windows Start button and then type in "recorder." You should see a menu option for "Problem Steps Recorder."
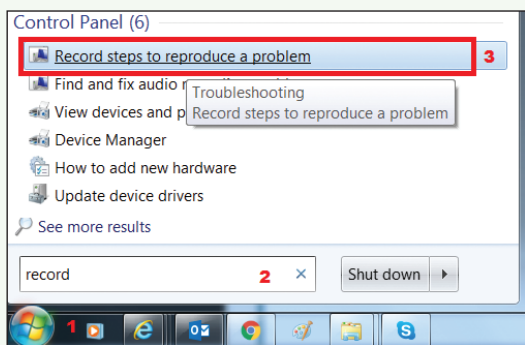
Microsoft Recorder Windows Start Button Menu

Documentation and problem recording

Do not let the name fool you. The Microsoft Problem Steps Recorder is also very good for creating documentation about an application that you use in your organization within your administrative capacity.

For example, you could document how to use the Word Templates for doing executive correspondence. Or how to use the employee performance review application that everyone has to eventually use.

There are many great ways you can use the Microsoft Problem Steps Recorder to capture screenshots of an application or online process and then add detailed comments to the document in order to provide step by step instruction or provide details about when a particular software application problem arises so that you can better explain it to the technical support people.

Once you click on the "Record steps to reproduce a problem" menu item you will see a small floating window
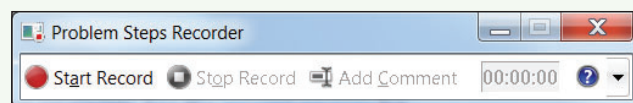
Microsoft Recorder Initial Screen

dow appear on your desktop.

One thing to note is that when you record steps on your computer the words you type in from the keyboard will not be recorded in the final output; that you will need to add later including possibly adding them into the print screenshots.

You can, however, use the comment feature described below to highlight where the problem is occurring or the application feature you want to highlight. Some programs that use full-screen high-resolution graphics like games might not be captured accurately or might not provide useful details to a support professional or quality images for your documentation.

To record and save steps on your computer

1. Click to open Problem Steps Recorder.
2. Click Start Record. On your computer, go through the steps to reproduce the problem. You can pause the recording at any time, and then resume it later.
3. Click Stop Record.
4. In the Save as dialog box, type a name for the file, and then click Save (the file is saved with the .zip file name extension).

Sit? Stand? Time to get moving

By Staff

Sitting or standing at work? Which is better for you?

The chance of getting Type 2 diabetes is twice as high for people who sit for very long periods of time, according to research conducted by scientists at the Institute for Work and Health.

IWH scientists also found that workers who stand throughout the day have twice the risk of heart disease as people who sit on the job.

And IWH researchers, after looking at 47 studies, concluded that people who sit more than 8 hours a day experience a higher risk of certain types of cancer, heart disease and diabetes, and have a higher chance of dying from these diseases.

When it comes to physical activity level, the opposite of prolonged sitting is not prolonged standing, say the scientists. The opposite of sitting is *moving*.

So what do they suggest? People who sit on the job should get up at regular intervals to minimize the risk of sitting too long, and people in standing jobs should sit down whenever they need to.

Final advice from the IWH scientists: "Sit when you need to, stand when you want to, and walk or move when you can."

Microsoft Recorder – *Continued from page 6*

Overview of the Recording Process

Essentially, once you have started the "Problem Steps Recorder" application, click on Start Record and then switch to your software application or website and start clicking on the areas where you want to document the process and steps for using it. Keep walking through the process you are trying to record for demonstration. Each time you click, a print screenshot will be recorded and stored in a file.

To view the record of the steps you recorded, open the .zip file you just saved, and then double-click the file. The document will open in your browser.
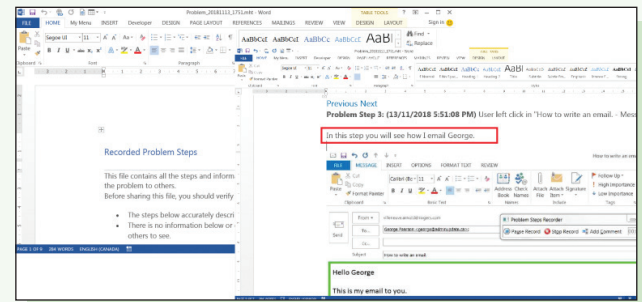

Problem Step Recorder Recording ZIP File

Problem Step Recorder Recording ZIP File MHTML

Copy the MHTML file out of the folder to another location and then open in Microsoft Word. When you open up the MHTML recording file in Microsoft Word you will be able to edit it and add steps and details about the information you want to convey to the audience. You can even add more screenshots if you like.

Email Recording ZIP File MHTML editing in Microsoft Word

So now you know how to use a very simple Microsoft tool to create step-by-step documentation, instructions, or software problem ticket files that really convey the message you want to get across to the reader.

All the best on the documentation trail!

Arnold Villeneuve has over 25 years in the computer technology and services industry working with standalone and networked microcomputers, minicomputers, and mainframe systems. He has been an author and instructor with Learning Tree International since 1993, where he has developed seven courses for instructor-led, computer-based training, and e-learning initiatives.

Learning Tree offers practical, real-world training in today's most in-demand skills, including Microsoft Office, SharePoint, project management, leadership and professional development.

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Seminars and webinars

Canadian Management Centre | www.cmcoutperform.com | (877) 262-2519
- *Project Management for Administrative Professionals* ($2,195) – Toronto, Jan. 14-16
- *Influencing Skills Workshop* ($1,195) – Ottawa, Jan. 21
- *Effective Presentation Skills* ($2,395) – Toronto, Jan. 21-23
- *Effective Business Writing* ($1,995) – Markham, Jan. 23-24
- *Grammar for Professionals* ($1,095) – Markham, Jan. 25
- *Assertiveness Skills for Women in Business* ($2,295) – Mississauga, Jan. 28-30

Job Design Concepts Inc. | www.jobdesignconcepts.com | (416) 447-8832
- *Supervise, Motivate & Lead Others* ($399) – Toronto, Jan. 10
- *Dealing With Difficult People* ($399) – Toronto, Jan. 17
- *Emotional Intelligence* ($399) – Toronto, Jan. 23
- *Time Management* ($399) – Toronto, Jan. 24
- *Communication Skills* ($399) – Toronto, Jan. 29
- *Business Writing* ($399) – Toronto, Feb. 14

On-The-Right-Track Training and Consulting | www.on-the-right-track.com | (877) 213-8608
- *Introduction to Minute Taking* ($149) – Jan. 10 (webinar)
- *Powered Productivity: Tech Tools You Need to Get Stuff Done* ($149) – Jan. 17 (webinar)
- *Stress Strategies & Solutions* ($149) – Jan. 22 (webinar)
- *Having Difficult Conversations* ($149) – Jan. 30 (webinar)
- *Beat The Bully* ($149) – Feb 7 (webinar)

Professional meetings and activities

Association of Administrative Professionals

Edmonton branch meeting
Monday, January 7 – "Generations: An HR Perspective,"
Heather Morrison, CHRP
Chateau Louis Hotel and Conference Centre, 11727
Kingsway Avenue NW
5:30 networking; 6:00 dinner; 7:00 guest speaker
aap.edmonton.publicrelations@gmail.com

Calgary branch meeting
Monday, January 21 – "Dope(a)me"—Marin McCue
Green Bean Restaurant - 102, 550 6 Ave. SW
5:00 p.m. networking, 6:00 dinner, 7:00 speaker
aap.calgary.program@gmail.com

Toronto Charter branch meeting
Wednesday, January 23 – "Resumes vs. LinkedIn Profiles:
What You Should Know" – Lisa Trudel, Career Specialist,
Employment Services Centre for Education & Training
Toronto General Hospital, 200 Elizabeth St., Astellas

Room 190, 11th floor
6:00 p.m. registration; 6:30 p.m. guest speaker
aap.toronto.vicepresident@gmail.com

Barrie-Simcoe County branch meeting
Thursday, January 17 – FREE webinar: "Business Writing
Update" – Ronda Scharf, On-The-Right- Track Training
7:00-8:00 p.m. (from your home)
aapbarrieevents@gmail.com

Moncton branch meeting (Rita Gauvin checking on details)
Wednesday, January 16 – webinar (details needed)
St. James' Gate – Fox Creek Dieppe
5:30 networking; 6:00 dinner
aap.moncton.programs@gmail.com

Hamilton branch meeting
Thursday, January 17 – FREE webinar: "Business Writing
Update" – Ronda Scharf, On-The-Right-Track Training
7:00-8:00 p.m. (from your home)
aap.hamilton.program@gmail.com