



LADY LINKS

INITIATIVE[®]

INSPIRATION & SUPPORT FOR LIKE-MINDED LADIES

S P R I N G 2 0 1 1

KEEP ME
SHARE ME! I AM
THE MAG
for YOUR BAG!
mini  **MAG**

BUSINESS • CREATIVITY • LIFESTYLE



INITIATIVE

Welcome to our Spring 2011 issue in a mini-MAG format that's designed to be... THE mag for your bag!

Lady Links Initiative contains a wealth of bite-size features, case studies, tips and advice covering business, creativity and lifestyle to inspire and support like-minded ladies.

Visit www.ladylinks.co.uk to access useful downloads and training details, enter our free prize draw and discover lots more about what Lady Links has to offer.

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Cover Image: Martha Leebolt in Northern Ballet's Cleopatra. Photo by Jason Tozer.

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WE LOVE TO LISTEN...

- Do you know an inspirational lady?
- Would you like to share your views or personal experience with our readers?
- Do you have a new product or service you would like people to know about?

We'd love to hear from you!
www.ladylinks.co.uk



INITIATIVE

LADY LINKS INITIATIVE UPDATE

2011 is going to be a very exciting year for Lady Links.

We are reaching out to a rapidly-increasing number of readers and continuing to collaborate with multiple networks.

We are also hard at work developing a unique online resource portal www.ladylinks.co.uk

We are delighted to feature the world-famous Northern Ballet and their stunning new building in this issue. The range of other valued contributions has ensured Lady Links continues to provide a regular source of inspiration, support, practical guidance and pleasure.

Kath Wilkinson, Director, FLAIR Creative



"The Lady Links mini-MAG is a unique opportunity for like minded women to connect. It offers magazine style quality with information that is relevant, easy to find and portable!"

Sheila McFee, Director, Plum Feedback.
www.plumfeedback.co.uk

"Lady Links' mini-MAG is an innovative and exciting media that brings modern business women to the forefront of its ethos, providing information about areas of business that, like us, find women at its helm, the mini-MAG is always an interesting read, offering useful links, resources and exciting products."

Ophina Andrews, Co-Director, Seventh Wave Supplements.
www.seventhwavesupplements.com

miniMAG™

"A great little magazine, well received by all the networks I distributed it through, everyone loved the format and the handy size."

Jane Milton, Food Industry Expert. www.thefoodnetwork.co.uk

"Lots of useful information and so easy to read, it fits in the tiniest compartment of your bag too."

Zoe Brown, Business Advisor



Worried what others think?

Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to impress someone but, because you were worrying about whether you would or not, you stumbled over your words and faltered in your actions?

In the past 5 years I have worked with hundreds of women and no matter how educated they are, what background they come from or what their financial circumstances are, I have found they share the recurring and highly-destructive habit of worrying about what others think of them.

"I never speak out in meetings. What if I say something wrong? The rest of the team will think I'm stupid."

"I hate going out. What if I crack a joke and no-one laughs? What will they think of me?"

"I had to deliver a presentation and hated every minute of it.

I am sure that everyone thought it was boring!"

Such expressions of feelings may look odd written down, but read them out loud, hear yourself say them and be honest: how often do you say things like this in your head? Such thoughts have a negative impact on your career, social life and personal confidence.

I think that as women we need to take a leaf out of Cleopatra's book. We can learn important lessons from this amazing woman's story, the first of which is to believe in your own worth and not worry about what others think!

Due to her family history, beliefs and being a leader she had plenty of people around her who liked her and just as many who hated her, yet neither set of perceptions stopped this young woman focusing on what she wanted and going for it.

"We probably wouldn't worry about what people think of us if we could know how seldom they do" Olin Miller



What would you like to do in 2011 but until this moment have shied away from because you have also been worrying about what others might think?

Change career? Start up a new business? Get married?

Get divorced? Have children or not?

The list is endless and all choices can be influenced by destructive thoughts and feelings.

Habits are not easy to change, yet letting go of fears about what others think is liberating and can take your life on to a new level of freedom.

We spend so much time being paranoid when most of the time people are too caught up in their own stuff to even notice

– or, as I have experienced in countless situations when that question or comment is made in a group meeting, at least one other person in the room feels the same and is grateful that you made your thoughts known.

If when you think back over 2010 you recall things you would like to have changed but didn't – well you can't, the moment has passed, let the regret go and take action.

What you can change is your future: 2011 and beyond. How do you want that to be? Will you continue worrying about what others think of you, or consciously make a choice to focus on what you need and want to express and how you can best do that to be heard?



'3 steps to self coaching' FREE eBook available online at www.ladylinks.co.uk

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Connecting, promoting and supporting women in business

Enterprising Women (EW) is a thriving community of women in business, offering a huge range of support services to help female business-owners realise their enterprise potential.

The community was launched in 2006 in response to a recognised need to unlock and stimulate the economic potential of women's entrepreneurship. Membership is open to all women, from any background, location, and sector, whether just starting out, running an established business, or looking to accelerate growth and take business to the next level.

This all-encompassing approach has resulted in the creation of a large and vibrant community of almost 8000 entrepreneurial women across the UK, at all stages of the business journey, from pre-aspirational and multiply-disadvantaged to high-growth, across all sectors, from rural to inner city, from all educational and ethnic backgrounds.

Its founder, Bev Hurley, who was honoured on the 2010 Queen's Birthday Honours List with the Queens Award for Enterprise Promotion for her outstanding work in supporting entrepreneurship, commented:

"The ultimate goal of Enterprising Women is to help increase the numbers, sustainability and success of women in business. By achieving this aim we can not only help to produce a dynamic new wave of successful and inspiring businesswomen, but also generate real returns for local and regional economies, and for UK plc. It's all about making a measurable difference."

The Enterprising Women team has won the prestigious Prowess Flagship Award, a best-practice standard for excellence in women's enterprise development in 2007 and the award of Prowess Best Newcomer in 2009.

In 2009, Enterprising Women was

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selected by the government's Department of Business, Innovation and Skills as one of just three examples of national best-practice for supporting SMEs, and showcased at the European Charter for Small Enterprises Conference held in Stockholm – a very proud moment!

Bev's top tips for business success:

- Lead your business to success by emphasizing innovation and communicating your passion, energy and founding vision.
- Always validate the reality of potential markets, and distinguish yourself from competitors in ways that are meaningful to your prospects.
- Be totally focused on satisfying customers' needs and desires through delivering real value, and price your services appropriately.



Bev Hurley, Founder, EW

Enterprising Women places a strong emphasis on communication and interaction with its membership, both online, and in person. It actively promotes EW members on its award-winning website via a number of effective methods, including an interactive Google members' map, case histories, a dedicated members' news section, detailed members' business profiles, a Woman of the Week feature, and a busy online forum.

Networking events, mentoring and coaching service, PR and promotion and being a one-stop shop for business information is central to EW's business support activities. The events calendar is constantly updated, and shows a range of activities across the UK, from Leeds to Norfolk to Cornwall. **Visit our website: www.enterprising-women.org or call us on freephone 0800 012 1365.**

Enterprising Women delivers unrivalled support for women who are growing businesses – at less than a pound a week, the membership fee will be the best investment you ever make!

When you work within a large organisation there is always somebody around to provide practical support, to solve a problem, to consult with, to explore ideas or provide an expert answer. When you are at the helm of your own business but also the chief cook and bottle-washer it's not so easy to find the support you need.



There are many times that you miss being part of a team and it's not just about overcoming isolation. To survive, every business owner needs to continue to collaborate, learn, refresh skills, solve problems, mull over ideas and do business with trusted colleagues. Networking is a great way to find this support, but I would offer some words to the wise: just as you would choose which colleagues would be most helpful in a given situation, you should carefully choose your network. Nothing is quite so disheartening, time-wasting and likely to put you off for life as finding yourself networking in a group which has no interest in what you are selling and no use for your skills.

The reason that WiRE networks are successful is that its members are like-minded: their businesses are largely rural, small but very professionally run; they care about their area and locality, have strong ethics and are looking to succeed. It doesn't matter what type the businesses are – whether professional, craft, artisan, or food. What does matter is that the members share underlying operating **principles and values.**

Scratch the surface of any of the 60 WiRE networks and you will find a rich and varied tapestry of businesses which you can think of as your own personal business board. They haven't just read about it, they have done it. There isn't a single business problem they haven't experienced and lived to tell the tale, so if you are stuck for somebody to provide a solution or offer an idea or need a highly-skilled and experienced consultant (for free), then start at your local WiRE network.

WiRE networks are not franchised, they are run by WiRE member volunteers who believe that the right sort of networking provides fantastic business support and opportunities.

All we ask is that you join WiRE (just £50 per year) and contribute generously and enthusiastically to your network (though you may have to buy a cup of tea as well). It's a marathon not a sprint. The more often you go and the more you put into your network, the more you will get out of it.

Great networking doesn't let distance and geography get in the way.

When you are part of a like-minded network (like WiRE) your capability to achieve, learn, sell and share face to face is hugely increased. The whole WiRE network comprises thousands of members running rural businesses, so it is a mine of information and experience. Over the years we have linked similar businesses from North, South, East and West to solve the hundreds of business problems; everything from tax to confidence plus more complicated questions such as: "Where can I find packaging to transport chocolates?" or "How do I analyse chicken breeding cycles?". Even if you can't make it to a meeting, you can still tap into the expertise, so throw your questions into the network - online, by email or via us at head office. Ask anything. Don't try to go it alone. Let the WiRE network be your team - your business support network.

- WiRE North Yorkshire Network** www.wireuk.org/north-yorkshire-network
- WiRE York Network** www.wireuk.org/york-network
- WiRE Huddersfield Network** www.wireuk.org/huddersfield-network
- WiRE Selby Network** www.wireuk.org/Selby-network
- WiRE Calderdale WiRE Network** www.wireuk.org/calderdale-network



Joyce Bullock WiRE Network Leader in Litchfield

WiRE is the only national UK organisation to support, develop and promote women running rural businesses, offering a package of realistic business services including networking.

For more information about WiRE and WiRE membership contact: T: 01952 815338 E: info@wireuk.org www.wireuk.org

THE FOOD NETWORK

Food Industry Communication & Connection Network

Jane Milton has spent the last 15 years running a food and drink consultancy which works with manufacturing and publishing businesses within the food industry, setting up project teams to resolve specific issues and embed the skills to deal with them in the client-organisations.

Twelve years ago she realised there was real value in connecting different businesses she worked with – as often one would need a skill another had already learned, or a client would wonder if they were sourcing ingredients or packaging competitively, or may have been looking for a recommendation for a lawyer, accountant or designer with specialist food knowledge. Jane set up an intranet that allowed clients and contacts to send emails to the whole group long before there were services like Yahoo groups to connect like-minded people.

As the network grew it became apparent that many questions were being raised regularly, so Jane created www.thefoodnetwork.co.uk, a website that brings together food-industry experts, businesses, organisations and professionals. The membership now includes ingredient -producers, manufacturers, designers, photographers, packaging experts, distributors, legal and accountancy specialists, retailers, and caterers - all of whom are connected by their shared interest in the food industry.



Jane Milton

The site offers members the same connection with each other via forums on specific issues such as food-packaging, staffing, ingredients and a more general forum for sharing information that may be helpful to the majority of members. It allows members access to a series of PDFs and MP3 downloads written by industry-experts to address frequently-asked questions. These are constantly added to as new issues, changing economic conditions and technical innovation all bring new opportunities and challenges for food businesses. The whole network benefits from Jane's connections within the industry, from advising on the Quality Food Awards and Free From Awards to her relationships with fellow food writers.

Both small start-ups and larger established companies subscribe to the services for a flat-rate fee of £120 a year per member. Small businesses often make use of the ability to network out-of-hours while larger businesses – who otherwise would remain very inward-looking – enjoy being able to sound things out with outsiders who may have a different perspective. The members are what make The Food Network so good. Although we are all in the same industry there is real generosity between businesses about sharing information and helping each other.

Here's how Nadia Howell L'Aquila, a member of The Food Network, summarised her views: *"The Food Network is a very good source of objective advice on business-related issues, both food and non-food. For example, we have had recommendations of food photographers, web-site designers, transport companies, accountants, and benefited from very useful PR/Marketing advice and guidance on technical issues relating to the food industry. There is a sense of comfort and solidarity knowing that there are others facing the same problems and experiences as you. Everybody seems open to help others."*

Could your business or someone you know benefit from this friendly network?

www.thefoodnetwork.co.uk

Tel: 020 8864 9052  @foodnetworking



Are you among the cream of Northern business women?

Forward Ladies is inviting outstanding business women from all walks of life in the North of England to enter this year's Women in Business Awards, which will be launched at two International Women's Day events in Sheffield and Manchester. For the first time there will be separate award ceremonies, one for the Yorkshire and Humber region and one for the North West.

The awards were created and launched as a result of demand from the 12,000 members of Forward Ladies – a women's business-support and networking community, which last year celebrated its tenth anniversary. Etta Cohen, the founder of Forward Ladies, said: "We had been asked several times by our members to run this kind of award, and we felt the time was right. We have an amazing pool of talented women in the North, either running their own businesses or working for companies which are at the cutting edge of innovation and technology.



"This year we are delighted to be launching similar awards in the North West, and are hoping to get as good a response as we received last year. Forward Ladies embraces women from all sectors and at all stages of their professional life, and this is our way of recognising their valuable contribution to the success of the region. Many women are working, raising families, looking after elderly parents or have overcome tremendous difficulties to take control."

Last year in the Yorkshire and Humber awards, there were nine categories, and then an overall winner. That prize went to social entrepreneur Sarah Dunwell, of CREATE, who has launched a very successful catering and hospitality business, employing people who formerly were homeless or sleeping rough. That enterprise has helped to create jobs for people who would not normally find it easy to find employment.



You can enter either by self-nomination or by getting a friend or colleague to nominate you. Forward Ladies require a 500-word statement together with a 50-word biography, a high-quality photograph and supporting documentation.

Forward Ladies, founded by Etta Cohen with a handful of women who met to find mutually beneficial ways of working together, is now the North's largest women's business networking organisation, with a commitment to encouraging greater levels of female entrepreneurship in the regions.

The network runs approximately 300 events a year, offers mentoring support to members, and provides opportunities to inspire and encourage women in their professional life. This year Forward Ladies is due to welcome Cherie Blair, who will be speaking to Manchester business people about the Cherie Blair Foundation, which she set up to encourage women in business to become more entrepreneurial.

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Forward Ladies
inspiring women in professional life

Two International Women's Day events – in Sheffield and Manchester – will also see Forward Ladies welcome choreographer Arlene Phillips OBE, as the keynote speaker. Famously dropped by the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing judging panel, allegedly in favour of a younger woman, Arlene has since become the poster girl for mature working women who have the experience and energy to carry a successful career into mid-life. She will be joined on the stage at the Copthorne Hotel in Sheffield and at the Midland Hotel in Manchester, by Lady Catherine Meyer and Penny Mallory.



Further details of Forward Ladies and a nomination form for the awards can be found at: www.forwardladies.com/women-in-business-awards

Do you play to your strengths as a sales person?

Trust

Trust is fundamental to successful selling and most women value it highly. From an early age women readily share their innermost thoughts and secrets. In doing so we invite and expect trust from others. From an early age men are conditioned to mock weaknesses, so they are much less likely to expose any vulnerability to others. Consequently they find it more difficult to establish a high level of trust and rapport.

Empathy

The skill of building empathy is vital to successful selling and women are instinctively good at building relationships – we are natural networkers. Women are better at ‘tuning in’ to situations and are generally more emotionally aware than men. Authors of books such as “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” haven’t made millions for nothing.

We are Women

Because women relate readily to other women it’s often much more comfortable for women to sell to each other than to sell to men. However, we should ensure we do not restrict our opportunities by directing sales efforts predominantly at women because of this preference. Yes, we might come across the occasional male chauvinist because there are still some about, but more and more attitudes are changing. The secret is always to remain true to ourselves and our values, so reinforcing the positive role model.

What hinders women from being good sales people?

We don’t like to ‘Blow our own Trumpet’

Let’s face it, the majority of women just don’t have the ego of their male counterparts. Again men are used to their competitive world and are much better than us at telling people how good they are and what they have achieved.

We don’t like to be ‘pushy’

Our roles in society have always been focused around being polite and mannerly and behaving ‘lady-like’. Sometimes selling means we have to step outside our comfort zone and convince people that they need to take action to improve their situation. Belief in your product is essential as this gives you the confidence you need. Of course it is a fine balance – how many people do you know who actually like ‘the hard sell’?

So let’s be honest about our strengths and weaknesses in selling....

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QUIZ

Why not analyse yourself in our fun quiz?

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 on how true these statements are of you:

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel confident in selling-situations such as meetings and networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I don't mind telling people I am good at what I do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I don't mind telling people about my businesses products and what they can do for them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I am nervous of making the first contact with a new customer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I am good at asking questions and listening carefully to the answers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I quickly identify what is important to the customer and what they want from me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I find that I get on well with people and quickly build rapport.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

So which of the above statements indicate behaviours that are holding you back and what are you going to do to improve?

How are you going to use and build on your personal strengths and what strategies will you introduce to overcome your weaknesses as a sales-person?

If you don't measure it you can't control it

It is crucial to remember and apply this well-known business maxim to the various methods you choose to market your business on-line, which might include:

- Pay Per Click advertising
- Blogging
- Online PR
- Search Engine Optimisation
- Affiliate Marketing
- Social Media (using Facebook and Twitter for example)

The most important question to ask is "Which method - or combination of methods - works best for your business?" The answer unfortunately is not straight forward. This means you will need to spend some time and, unfortunately, some money finding out. The answer could be determined by your market, the time of year, the time of month, the time of week or even the time of day, depending on which of the methods you are using. For example, careful analysis of Pay Per Click results might show that you convert more sales at a specific time of day on a specific day of the week, than on other days.

As there is time and money involved in working out the best solution

for your business it is important to test each method prior to committing to it fully. Even once you have identified a particular method which works, it is unlikely it will be fully optimised first time. This means it will need refining as you learn more, and therefore measuring what you do is vital if you do not want to waste time and, more importantly, money.

The usual marketing approaches used by traditional 'bricks and mortar' businesses have often been difficult to measure accurately and marketing spend has often been something of an act of faith rather than certainty. On-line businesses have a distinct advantage when it comes to measuring marketing results.

With the use of analytical software, which is free of charge from Google, for example (there may be a small charge from your website company to add it to your site), you can tell exactly how people are finding your website. Not only will you be able to tell which website they came from (including if they came directly onto your site), but if applicable, which key word or phrase they used to find you. This is not only valuable information in terms of knowing where to advertise online, but the key-word data might also help you fine-tune your website copy and other marketing materials to reflect the most popular terms.

The right software will also tell you the approximate geographic location of visitors, how long they spend on your website, which pages they looked at and how many of the visitors have been on the site before.

With a little more work you can also set up "conversion funnels", which will show you where visitors are dropping out in your sales process. Of course it will not tell you why they are dropping out but you can then question the relevant areas and with some common-sense and further testing you will be more likely to improve the number of sales.

It is also important to remember that websites are never really finished. Just as shops constantly change their window-displays or the layout of the store in order to attract more customers and increase sales, so you should treat your website in exactly the same way. With an on-line business you have the perfect chance to see exactly what works, but only if you measure your performance. Neglect to do this and you could find yourself in danger of committing commercial suicide.

For more information about the contents of this article, portfolio samples, website design and SEO quotes... please email: fraser@netnurture.co.uk



Grayling team to conquer Mount Kilimanjaro

If celebrities can conquer Kilimanjaro for charity then why can't professionals?

Move over Cheryl Cole and Chris Moyles! Twelve Grayling staff members have thrown down the gauntlet to fellow sector workers and PRCA members to join Grayling in climbing Kilimanjaro for Leonard Cheshire Disability.

Our fund-raising task is slightly more daunting than the trek: between us we have a target of £48,000 to raise for the wonderful charity that is Leonard Cheshire Disability.

We are undertaking all kinds of activities to raise funds, both individually and as 'Grayling Team Kili'. We are well on our way with £14,500 raised in under two months between us all so far.

Kerry Magee said: "Having scoliosis changed my life – it made me think about how we take the small things for granted. Climbing Mount Kili will be a great challenge for me and I cannot wait for the opportunity to conquer Africa's highest mountain. Doing this with work colleagues makes it even more special as I'm sure many bonds will be forged.

Supporting Leonard Cheshire Disability to help those who cannot help themselves makes all the difference. Leonard Cheshire Disability provides innovative and life changing support services to give disabled people the opportunity to live life their way. Whilst they are best known for their residential care homes, they also provide a wide variety of services across the UK and in over 52 countries around the world."

The Leonard Cheshire Disability/PRCA Climb Kilimanjaro Trek will take place between 16-27 March 2011.

Our team fundraising task is £20,000 and if you are able to show your support please sponsor Grayling at:
<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/GraylingClimbKili>

DOCUMENT CASE

What makes an outstanding finance director?

DIGITAL DOCUMENT

That was the question that The Directorbank Group set out to answer in 2010 through wide-ranging research, carried out in association with Grant Thornton. Nearly 350 Chairmen, Chief Executives and Executive Directors were asked to nominate outstanding Finance Directors they had worked with. Twenty five of these outstanding FDs were then interviewed and asked to offer advice to their peers on what best helps Finance Directors perform well in the current economic climate.



John Pearce, Executive Director at The Directorbank Group, said: "Today's outstanding Finance Directors emerge as much more rounded, commercial business leaders than their counterparts of ten or twenty years ago. They are forward-looking and make brave decisions. They are great communicators who can win the trust of colleagues across the business. They are partners to their Chief Executives – and, very often, they are CEOs-in-waiting."

John Pearce, Executive Director, The Directorbank Group

The report is packed with advice and tips from these nominated FDs and also examines their career paths to the top.

Scott Barnes, Chief Executive of Grant Thornton, said: "The key theme of the report is the need for commerciality and forward-thinking from FDs. Understanding the numbers is no longer enough to make a top flight FD; being able to 'stress test' their resilience to the business strategy and influence its development are just as important."

Closer to the customer than most would expect, they really understand what drives wealth-creation and where the money is made. They are the opposite of the time-honoured stereotype of the timid accountant in the famous Monty Python sketch, dreaming of becoming a lion-tamer. Perhaps they have actually learnt to tame lions!

One of the outstanding FDs, Barbara Richmond, Group FD at Redrow, said: *“You have to have a curious mind – really wanting to understand what’s behind the numbers. You have to make an effort to become commercial. The starting point is inside your business. Generally people are very willing to help you. When you’re sitting in a board meeting trying to make strategic decisions, you need to understand how the customer ticks.”*

Three-quarters of the directors surveyed had worked with an outstanding FD, but the same number had worked with an ineffective FD. While the ineffective FDs had mostly been sacked, directors were asked if with hindsight they should have done anything different. Of those answering this question, forty per cent said they should have acted sooner and a quarter said the FD stayed on but should have been sacked.

“To be effective you must have independence and not be afraid to challenge,” says Judith McKenna, CFO at Asda Stores and another outstanding FD. *“Be fair, but it’s not a popularity contest. I think the FDs who are less effective are those who aren’t prepared to stand up and be counted, don’t make decisions and don’t make the tough calls.”*

The directors said that the most important warning-sign of a poor-performing FD is a team losing confidence. Other strong warning-signs were more expected – poor and late financial reports, lack of attention to detail and poor forecasts.

The clear attributes that lift an average finance person into an outstanding FD are skills with people and in communication. One outstanding FD said, *“You have to be trusted and liked in the business. You want managers to share their problems with you, not cover them up or work around you. At the same time ‘it isn’t a popularity contest’ and ‘the tough decisions need to be taken’. FDs need to be decisive – usually with imperfect information.”*

Karen Bach, CFO at Kewill Plc said: *“Too often finance acts as the business-prevention arm, and it shouldn’t be. It should be sitting there with the sales guy, with the project- delivery, the manufacturer. For me, the failure of most finance teams is that they just say no.”*

What makes an outstanding finance director? KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

- 82% of directors surveyed said they had worked with an outstanding FD
- Four out of five directors (79%) sampled said they had worked with an ineffective FD and in most cases (79%), the ineffective FD left the business
- 60% of directors surveyed thought the drive for growth had not resulted in FDs taking too many risks
- Directors ranked ‘experience of having weathered storms’ above having an MBA, technical or sector experience
- 70% of directors surveyed said that having a stake in a private equity business drives different behaviours
- Outstanding FDs thought they should be an equal player on the management team and should therefore hold the same stake as the chief executive
- Surveyed directors mostly thought the FDs stake should be around 50-60% of the chief executive’s stake
- Around a third thought it should be 60% or more and 41% said the stake should be less than half of the chief executive’s.

Copies of the report are available to download free from www.directorbankgroup.com or by calling 0113 297 8000.

Northern Ballet building photos courtesy of Jonathan Taylor

ADVERTORIAL



You know that Leeds is a great city, but what you might not know is that it is quite possibly the best city for dance outside London - and we're not just talking about the kind of dancing you do with girlfriends on a night out! With the unveiling of a £12 million centre for dance on Quarry Hill, Leeds has proudly staked its claim to be recognised as a major powerhouse for dance.

The new centre is home to Northern Ballet, a world-renowned ballet company with an enviable international reputation. It is also home to Phoenix Dance Theatre, a contemporary dance company with an equally impressive portfolio. **It is a unique place.** There is nowhere else in the country that houses a major international ballet company and a contemporary dance company, as well as an associated classical ballet school in the Northern Ballet Academy. In addition, the Phoenix Youth Academy and students from Leeds Metropolitan University study dance here.

**northern
ballet**



Tobias Batley and Martha Leebot
in Northern Ballet's Cleopatra.
Photo by Jason Tozer.

Northern Ballet building photos courtesy of Jonathan Taylor

Photo courtesy of Martin Bell

Appropriately sited among major cultural organisations such as the BBC, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds College of Music and Yorkshire Dance, Northern Ballet is now in a prime position to herald a new era for this area of the city.



On approach you cannot help but be impressed by the glass-fronted façade of this six-storey building. Once inside, you will find extensive facilities including Europe's largest dance studio and six other dance studios, wardrobe facilities, a health suite and inviting and flexible spaces for conferences, meetings and events, comprising a Board Room with adjoining terrace area, meeting rooms and a cafe/bar. The centre provides all modern conveniences including free Wi-Fi throughout. The top floors of the building offer exceptional views of the Leeds cityscape by day or night.

Whatever the occasion, Northern Ballet offers your colleagues, staff and guests a unique and inspiring experience. No-where else can you get close to the work of two major dance companies and you could even add some dance to your day! Northern Ballet is experienced at running 'energiser sessions' – which are great for ice-breaking or post-lunch motivation. You could watch Company class or rehearsals or have talks from the artistic or technical teams giving you an insight into all the hard work that goes into making the ballet look so effortless.

On any one day if you stop by for a coffee at Northern Ballet you might find dancers rehearsing in one of the large ground-floor studios, the Northern Ballet Sinfonia rehearsing in the other studio, or you might rub shoulders with dancers from both Northern Ballet and Phoenix Dance Theatre. With glass windows which allow you to glimpse the activity taking place in each ground floor studios, it might just be one of the best coffee experiences you've ever had.

For the more adventurous there is plenty to get involved in, from classes for tiny tots to jazz and ballet for adults. Northern Ballet's physiotherapist will be opening appointments to the public. There will be a programme of live performance by Northern Ballet and by other dance and theatre companies, comedy nights and other events in the Studio Theatre.

The centre is not only a stunning building, a great addition to the conference circuit and the perfect venue for business events, formal dinners or for coffee or lunch in the light cafe. It is a truly inspiring space which will change the life of Northern Ballet and Phoenix Dance Theatre and the lives of the young people they work with and it will be a source of inspiration and pride for the city as a whole.

cleopatra

Tobias Batley and Martha Leebolt
in Northern Ballet's Cleopatra.
Photo by Jason Tozer.

Northern Ballet on tour

Northern Ballet is a celebrated British dance company with a string of accolades to its name. It is renowned for creating new ballets and touring these widely throughout the UK and overseas taking ballet to places that wouldn't otherwise have access to high quality dance. Northern Ballet's productions mix classical dance and theatre, take inspiration from literature and opera, embrace popular culture and give unique interpretations of popular classical ballets.



TOUR STARTS 26TH FEBRUARY 2011, LEEDS

In February, the world premiere of Northern Ballet's new production, Cleopatra, takes place at the Leeds Grand Theatre. The first ballet to be created in Northern Ballet's new home, Cleopatra brings together the creative mastery of the Company's Artistic Director David Nixon OBE and Claude-Michel Schönberg, legendary composer of Les Misérables and Miss Saigon.

The ballet tells the story of Cleopatra – an enduring icon of the ancient world and the ultimate modern woman.

David Nixon explains: "I've been interested in Cleopatra and that period for a long time. Two-thousand years after her time the legend and the mystery of the woman grows rather than lessens.



READ ON... 

“I’m portraying Cleopatra as a woman, a queen, a mother, a lover. I want the audience to understand her as a human as much as someone going to lead a country. She possessed a quality that could engage men and hold them, and I’m hoping to create that kind of charisma, and at the same time let the audience know this was a woman who had children, who was trying to protect them. This was a woman who thought several times in her life that she had achieved her goal only to be left running for her life. There’s an incredible woman in there.”

Cleopatra opens on 26 February at Leeds Grand Theatre

before touring to Edinburgh, Hull, Sheffield, Cardiff, Milton Keynes, Belfast and London. To celebrate the world premiere of Cleopatra, Lady Links is holding a night at the theatre with Northern Ballet for all Leeds ladies. It will be an entertaining evening, a great event to network with other Lady Link ladies and to experience some of the highest quality dance by one of the UK’s great British treasures. Find out more online at www.ladylinks.co.uk

In May 2011 Northern Ballet will perform Giselle at Leeds Grand Theatre. In September the Company will present Hamlet at West Yorkshire Playhouse and work is underway on a new family ballet for Christmas.

Find out more about Northern Ballet by visiting www.northernballet.com



Martha Leebolt in Northern Ballet's Cleopatra.
Photo by Jason Tozer.





Established in 2004, VR3 Media Ltd is an award-winning 3D-design and multi-media company. We specialise in creating bespoke interactive design and digital marketing solutions that will deliver measurable results for your business or organisation.

Can you tell...

We believe that no matter how innovative, how beautifully executed or how right it is for the brand, digital media and marketing should never just be for show: it should deliver increased traffic, increased interest and increased sales.

When you pay for our services, our services will pay for themselves.

Please take a quick look at pictures a) b) c) d) e) f). 3 of them are real, 3 are CGI's (computer generated images). Can you tell which 3 are which?

Answers at the bottom of the page at the end of this article.

We offer a wide range of 3D CGI Graphics, Animation and Interactive Services. We only use cutting-edge 3D-design software and rendering techniques at our studio in central Leeds. With these tools and our expertise we can create anything from still images to photorealistic architectural walk-throughs and interactive environments.

CREATIVITY



A Real Computer generated



B Real Computer generated

which are real?



C Real Computer generated



D Real Computer generated



E Real Computer generated



F Real Computer generated

Architectural Visualisation

Using the most up-to-date 3D modelling, lighting and rendering techniques VR3 Media can convert existing 2D and 3D CAD or REVIT files into photo-realistic visuals. The 3D visuals can be presented as an animated architectural walk-through or super-imposed into a still photograph to show any new development in context.

Client: NG Bailey. Animation of Northwest Service Spine building solution at Birmingham New Street Station. This made up part of the tender helping the client to explain their solution in more detail. As a result the client was awarded a multi-million-pound contract.

Product Visualisation

VR3 can take your designs and turn them into photo-realistic 3D models. The 3D model can then be used for further product-development or creating marketing and advertising visuals. Showing your products in-situ using a CGI is much more cost-effective than building a physical model, hiring a studio and paying for a photographer.

From kitchen and bathroom showrooms to event layouts and product prototypes, 3D will add value to your business whilst saving you on other costs.

Client: PQS Survey. Product animation which made up part of the branding for their Ecommerce website solution.
www.pqs-survey.co.uk



Logo and Character Animation

Rather than using FLASH animation, which is not as versatile and can cause accessibility issues, we bring the logos and characters in your marketing to life.

Client: Mercury Marketing. This logo has been animated to act as a mercury lava lamp with the mercury molecules merging together. This was done to help Mercury to emphasise the power of their brand.

Camera Tracking

What is Camera Tracking?

Our most recent development, "Camera-tracking" or "3D-Tracking" is the process of analysing a video-clip or film-shot to determine where in 3D the camera went, what its field of view was, and where parts of the set were. The 3D-path of a large moving object can be determined as well.

What can I do with it?

The camera-tracking information lets you add 3D-animated effects into live-action footage, such as:

- **Animated 3D character insertion** (mascots, beasts, flying pixies, you name it). A favourite for commercials.
- **Vehicle insertion.** Aircraft, boats, cars, trucks, spacecraft, things you wish you could get live, but couldn't afford or don't exist.
- **Virtual set extensions**
- **Virtual product placement** (does the Queen really drink Guinness out of the can...)
- **Crash reconstructions**
- **Matte paintings** (show what sunset on Saturn would look like)

These are just a small number of the camera-tracking applications that can give your project the edge over others.

Please contact David Frazier at VR3 Media for more details about this or any of our 3D solutions.

Tel: 0113 305 3944
Email: dave@vrthree.co.uk
Web: www.vrthree.co.uk

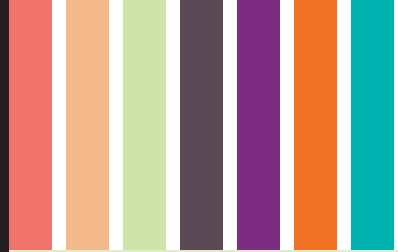
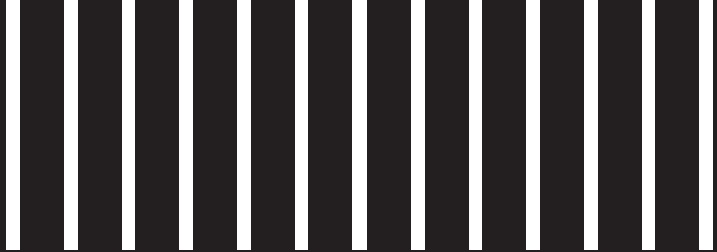
See these animations online...



www.tweetshire.co.uk



www.ladylinks.co.uk



Stuck in the 'safety net' of black?

Wearing colour conveys confidence, imagination and your personal sense of style.

“Can I wear black?” is a common cry at the Looking Good, Feeling Great workshops and presentations delivered by Balance and Communication Coach, Jane Bytheway.

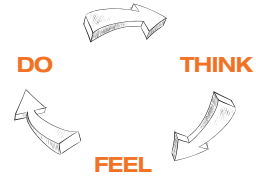
“One of the tools people learn in my colour consultations is how to wear black more effectively,” says Jane, “but actually, around two-thirds of them would look more vibrant and effective in a different colour choice – so we work on that, too!” Advice on fabric texture, the cut of the clothing and the strategic use of colour combinations are just some of the tricks of the trade she employs. “I have nothing against black, but I think we are missing a trick when it becomes a ‘uniform’ for work. Who comes across as more confident and memorable at a networking event: another woman in black, or the one who has chosen to wear colour?”

Jane Bytheway
Balance and Communication Coach



“When you get dressed in the morning, you are setting yourself up for the day ahead. Psychologists have established that your state of mind is affected by what you DO, what you THINK and what you FEEL – and these are linked in a continuous loop.

So when you get dressed (DO) there’s an immediate impact on the way you THINK and FEEL. Anybody who has a ‘killer outfit’ in their wardrobe to wear for important meetings or interviews is putting this into practice: as the ‘killer outfit’ goes on, you are setting yourself up for success... you feel confident and your thinking becomes clearer because you feel more effective.



I’d love everyone to have a wardrobe that creates that positive way of thinking and feeling – every day! That’s why I trained with Colour Me Beautiful and include this in my coaching on communication.

We know from research it takes just 30 seconds to create a first impression – why not harness the tools available to ensure that impression works in your favour?”

READ ON... ➔

*“The badly-dressed woman,
people remember the clothes.”*

Colour is a form of communication, which impacts on both the wearer and the people around them, so it is a good idea to consider the day ahead when you are getting dressed. For example, red, the colour of dynamism and success is a great option for boosting your energy if you are flagging, and is associated with confidence. It's also great when you want to catch the eye of someone chairing a meeting, as it is hard to ignore! However, if you are chairing a discussion where you want the group to relax and open up, the colours of neutrality (grey), balance (green) or reflection (blue) may be more appropriate.

Greys, especially charcoal to medium-depth, are a useful alternative to black and provide an effective backdrop for most colours. In fact, greys really need colour to be worn with them, unless you really want to fade into the background! If you are feeling unwell, top-to-toe grey will do nothing to boost your spirits, or your appearance. Pink gives a flattering lift to the complexion and green, the colour of the natural world, is another appropriate option. We usually feel refreshed and restored after a walk in the park, or out in the country, which is why green is associated with a sense of balance.

*“With a well-dressed woman,
they remember the woman.”*

COCO CHANEL

In business, another practical alternative to black or grey is blue, which is associated with logic, reason and trust. The darker the blue, the more authoritative and efficient the wearer appears to be – hence the proliferation of navy uniforms for police officers, firefighters and airline pilots, etc. The trick is to ensure that the shade of navy is the best version for your colouring, so it enhances rather than overpowers your look. Like black, it can convey a rather aloof attitude, which suits some, but not all, situations.

“When getting dressed every day, ask yourself what is appropriate for the activities you have planned, and what is most flattering and effective for you. My goal is to enable you to look and feel confident and effective, whatever the day brings your way.”

**FREE
GUIDE
ONLINE**

**Download your FREE GUIDE,
The Psychology of Colour:
Wearing Colour for Impact
at www.ladylinks.co.uk**

For further information or to book a complimentary telephone coaching consultation* contact: Jane Bytheway: Tel: 07977 732 186
Email: connect@janebytheway.co.uk www.janebytheway.co.uk

* 45 minute telephone consultation.
Subject to availability.

LADY LINKS
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Feeling Great Naked

Let's be honest, if time and money were no object, what part of your body would you change first?

This is a common question that comes up when working with women on releasing their body woes in relation to their weight and wellbeing.

I'm sure you can imagine some of the answers that come out, many of which may not be dissimilar to your own.

Body confidence, however, is not about being an ideal shape or being somebody else's idea of a perfect size. True body confidence can only be achieved once we have learned to accept ourselves exactly as we are and – dare I say it – love our wobbles, lumps and bumps!!

Imagine the scenario... you have worked hard to watch what you eat, have been exercising furiously but still you're left with a body that you find hard to love! This is a common issue amongst dieters because many have failed to grasp that weight loss and body confidence are emotional issues not physical ones.



True transformation happens on the inside long before it is displayed on the outside! Therefore, it is just as important to work out the emotions as it is to work out. Here are some tips to help you get in touch with your own Inner Diva and not someone else's:

The Breakthru'
Diva

1. Get in Touch with Yourself – literally! Many of us tend to hide away from mirrors and ignore those hateful parts of our body that are only there to remind us of how imperfect we are! It's a lie – the truth is we are absolutely perfect in our imperfection. Challenge yourself to look in a full length mirror daily for one week. Each time, touch the area(s) of your body that currently cause you the most concern. Feel exactly how the contours of your body truly feel, see the reality that is standing in front of you and give yourself a compliment about that area.

2. Happiness is the journey, not the destination – therefore, do not wait until you are your ideal size before you start living. Do something now that pushes your boundaries and boosts your confidence. Ladies who attend my Spa Therapy workshop are often resistant to having their 'boudoir photos' taken, but by the end of the day they are squealing with delight at the results!

3. Remember you get what you focus on so you may as well focus on the good stuff! Look at the great things about you and about your body... really notice them, remember the compliments that others pay you, practise saying "Thank you. That's a lovely thing to say!" Our default when we are paid a compliment is to say something along the lines of "No...this old thing, etc, etc". Imagine truly loving yourself – what would that feel like, what are you seeing when you truly love yourself, what are you now saying to yourself?

Remember, feeling great naked is about allowing your inner diva to have a say... let her talk!

The Breakthru' Diva's next Spa
Therapy workshop is in March 2011
visit breakthrudiva.com for full details!

LADY LINKS
INITIATIVE mini MAG



ST. JAMES'S PLACE
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

LIFESTYLE

ADVERTISING FEATURE



IS IT TIME TO TAKE CONTROL . . .

Sarah Siddons

is an Associate Partner of the St. James's Place Partnership, (the advisory channel for St. James's Place Wealth Management), which has brought together some of the most experienced, able and highly-regarded professionals in the financial services industry. With over £24 billion funds under management, the St. James's Place Wealth Management Group is well-established as one of the UK's leading wealth management organisations.

The new year has been and gone, and a new tax year is round the corner. Once again, many of us will have started 2011 with the best of intentions, but how many of us actually follow through on the resolution to take control of our finances? Not many of us in truth!

But it needn't be hard to do if you follow this simple guide.

Firstly, do a one-page income & expenditure analysis. Work out your essential monthly outgoings by listing everything you have to spend money on each month (including petrol & food bills) as this will be invaluable in identifying what you need to spend rather than what you actually spend each month.

OF YOUR FINANCES?

Once you know what your essential expenditure is you can start to work out how to allocate the remainder of your income, rather than just spending it all every month and having little to show for it.

If you have any unsecured debt such as credit or store cards, make repaying this debt your number one financial priority.

If you already have savings, earmark some as an 'emergency fund' to take care of life's unforeseen events. The ideal is to have at least 3 months' essential expenditure in an accessible savings account. If you don't have this much saved already, set up a regular direct

debit to your savings account to start building this fund.

Next, work with a financial adviser to review any plans you already have in place. Pensions and investments should be reviewed at least once a year to ensure that they are still appropriate and to monitor fund performance. You don't have to stick with what was originally advised as fund performance changes and it needn't cost you anything to review or change things. You may not have the time or know the right questions to ask, so why not let a professional do this job for you?

READ ON...



If you haven't thought about retirement, now is the time to start. Rather than bury your head in the sand or bank on winning the lottery, start building some capital for your future. Earmark some of your monthly income towards this goal and start a pension or use your annual ISA allowances. Whatever you decide to do, take advantage of the tax breaks available and if you're not sure what to do seek some advice. Just don't do nothing!

Finally, make sure you have some protection against the unexpected. None of us likes to think of things going wrong in life but we all know someone who has lost a relative unexpectedly or suffered a serious illness such as cancer. It's not a comfortable subject but such an event is easier to cope with if it doesn't also involve financial hardship for you or your loved ones.



ST. JAMES'S PLACE
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

LIFESTYLE

Financial Checklist:



- Establish where your money goes – do an income & expenditure analysis
- If you have unsecured debt, make repaying it your number one priority
- Build an emergency fund of at least 3 times your monthly expenditure
- Review any plans you already have in place, such as pensions & investments
- Don't bury your head in the sand: start planning for retirement
- Protect yourself and your family against death or serious illness.

CONTACT SARAH SIDDON'S FOR MORE INFORMATION

01943 865819 or 07740 070409

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Caroline Peach

In 1976 I trained as a barber, honing my cutting-skills at various boarding schools. Although this was wonderful practice and great fun I soon became more interested in the creative side of the industry, so I trained in Ladies' hair and began doing show-work and session-work. As this was the late 70s and early 80s any **creativity was only limited by a lack of imagination!**

After a spell travelling I moved to Leeds and retrained. I also taught at a school attached to the salon and learnt a new skill. The 80's were a wonderful time to be involved in the fashion industry, although I am not discounting that my age may have had something to do with my enthusiasm. It was during these years that I began entering competitions, trained to do hair-extensions and opened my first salon.



PROUD AWARD WINNERS...
 Caroline Peach (right) and Ruth Madden (left) from Moo Hair, Harrogate, Yorkshire

Caroline's tip for starting in business:

- Know your strengths
-
- Be positive and confident
-
- Listen to advice
-
- Use all the marketing tools at your disposal
 (There are a lot out there now!)

READ ON...

Knowing what I know now, I am shocked and amazed that the salon was the success that it was! Being only 25 at the time helped as at that age you really don't take any notice of what your elders say to you; you are invincible and they know absolutely nothing! Actually it was incredibly hard work as not only did we have the hair salon (JAZ for anyone who remembers!), we also sourced art from local artists and clothes from local designers. The salon was huge so we had to fill it somehow. Its success came from its individuality as there really was nothing quite like it in the North. It was full of young people having fun and the formula worked.

As fashions change so do attitudes and eventually life-changing events – well, babies actually – forced me to take stock and take time out. I sold my share in the salon and rented a chair in a friend's salon, working part-time. Working for myself, I was able to do this. There are not many industries that allow women to be this flexible.

After several years of part-time work I was itching to have my own salon again. MOO opened in early 2001. **Older and wiser, I surrounded myself with talented stylists, all of us self employed but working as a team.** I moved to the present premises in 2008, just as the recession hit.

The recession made me reflect on where I was going with the business. It became apparent that to succeed you now had to offer something totally unique, be good at it and be able to sell it! We now specialise in Great Lengths hair-extensions, wedding-hair, cutting and colouring. I help source wigs and fit them for ladies suffering hair-loss and as well as putting diamond extensions in hair I can arrange for your hair to be made into a diamond!

I have joined networking groups to help promote MOO HAIR and have recently won a national award for the Marketing of MOO.

I have never regretted my career choice.

It has to be one of the most sociable industries and also one of the most creative.

I have never tired of the buzz you get when someone loves what you have created for them and I don't think I ever will!



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Caroline's top hair tip

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* See www.ladylinks.co.uk for terms and conditions.



Briony Pete

Regional Coordinator (Yorkshire & Humber)

Love Food Hate Waste Campaign

For the past nine months I have been employed by Waste Watch, co-ordinating the Love Food Hate Waste campaign for Yorkshire and the Humber. I attract media attention, organise community-engagement activities, manage events and deliver training. Taking on the role has not only been the perfect career-move for me, it has taught me a lot about my life and how I want to live it.

My degree course was Communication Studies, a choice which I always felt might cause difficulties when I came to settle on a career path because its scope is so broad. However, on leaving University I was lucky to land on my feet working in a support role for IT and Marketing for a great little company called Added Value Solutions. When your first real job is in an organisation whose leaders have a clear moral purpose it's difficult to accept working in any other ethos,

so when the time came to move on I felt the not-for-profit sector would be right for me. Having acquired a wealth of experience in just a few years and having been encouraged to be innovative and just roll with ideas, I was really excited by the opportunities presented by Waste Watch.

The campaign draws people's attention to the enormous amount of food households throw out daily and demonstrates the benefits of changing habits to reduce waste: being more creative in the kitchen, getting the family more involved in the cooking, saving money and time, eating more nutritiously, eating fewer artificial ingredients, saving money and time, reducing CO2 emissions...

There is a wide target-audience – anyone who buys or cooks food, or influences decisions at either stage.

The Y&H project has put on many events over the Summer, ensuring philosophy is put into practice. At food and drink festivals renowned chefs have created gastronomic masterpieces from typical daily wastage. At the University of Hull we served 1000 portions of sausage and bacon pasta and vegetable curry with rice to appreciative students.

We explained that the meals used the same amount of food that a single UK household typically wastes in a year, at a cost of £480 per couple or £680 per family. It was very rewarding to see how keen the students were to learn about the issue, and to take away tips to start making changes in their own habits.

We're not preachy in our approach to our work. We find our events naturally prompt people to reflect on the extent to which society has been sucked into a highly-commercialised world: a world where we expect everything to be available 24/7 without thinking of the repercussions, and without consideration for the energy involved in the production, transportation and refrigeration of food,



and the time and effort of all the different people involved at every step of the way.

More importantly, though, people who attend our events really engage with the campaign. They walk away wanting to make changes and start to think about the bigger picture and the hundreds of pounds-worth of food we are throwing away every year because we have not got round to using it or because we have over-catered.

The project is not limited to reducing waste: it links in with the broad issues of healthy-eating, the sustainable production of food and proactive positive change.

Discover more online at...
www.lovefoodhatewaste.com
www.wastewatch.org.uk

GARDENING TIPS



The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening.

Anyone with an interest in gardening can enjoy the benefits of RHS Membership and help us to secure a healthy future for gardening.

For more information call 0845 130 4646, or visit www.rhs.org.uk

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 **LADY LINKS INITIATIVE** 



FEBRUARY

Spring is in sight

This month there are signs of the approaching spring, with bulbs appearing and birds and wildlife waking up as light levels and temperatures increase. There's plenty to do indoors this month, all in preparation for the season ahead. Outdoors, the garden is coming to life again, and its time to prune shrubs, such as Wisteria.

Top 10 Jobs this month

1. Prepare vegetable seed beds, and sow some vegetables under cover
2. Chit potato tubers
3. Protect blossom on apricots, nectarines and peaches
4. Net fruit and vegetable crops to keep the birds off
5. Prune winter-flowering shrubs that have finished flowering
6. Divide bulbs such as snowdrops, and plant those that need planting 'in the green'
7. Prune Wisteria
8. Prune hardy evergreen hedges and renovate overgrown deciduous hedges
9. Prune conservatory climbers
10. Cut back deciduous grasses left uncut over the winter



MARCH

Spring arrives

Spring usually arrives by mid-March and the frequent sunny days provide the opportunity for an increasing range of gardening tasks. It's time to get busy preparing seed beds, sowing seed, cutting back winter shrubs and generally tidying up around the garden.

Top 10 Jobs this month

1. Plant shallots, onion sets and early potatoes
2. Protect new spring shoots from slugs
3. Plant summer-flowering bulbs
4. Lift and divide overgrown clumps of perennials
5. Top dress containers with fresh compost
6. Mow the lawn on dry days
7. Cut back Cornus (dogwood) and Salix (willow) grown for colourful winter stems
8. Weeds come back into growth - deal with them before they get out of hand
9. Start feeding fish and using the pond fountain; remove pond heaters
10. Open the greenhouse or conservatory doors and vents on warm days



APRIL

Sunshine & showers

Spring should now be in evidence, with daffodils in flower and blossom adorning trees. Expect the inevitable 'April showers' but the frequent sunny days and rising temperatures make it perfect gardening weather. It's an exciting month, with indoor-sown seeds well into growth, and it's also time to start sowing outdoors. Just watch out for frosts.

Top 10 Jobs this month

1. Keep weeds under control
2. Protect fruit blossom from late frosts
3. Tie-in climbing and rambling roses
4. Sow hardy annuals and herb seeds
5. Start to feed citrus plants
6. Increase the water given to houseplants
7. Feed hungry shrubs and roses
8. Sow new lawns or repair bare patches
9. Prune fig trees
10. Divide bamboos and waterlilies

More gardening tips and advice from the Royal Horticultural Society can be found on www.rhs.org.uk



MAY

Summer is on its way

With the bulbs fading and the herbaceous border growing in leaps and bounds, it is now clear that summer is approaching. Sowing and planting-out bedding can begin in some areas of the UK, depending on regional weather variations. It's also time to get back into the lawn-mowing regime, as the lawn will be loving the warmer temperatures this month brings.

Top 10 Jobs this month

1. Watch out for late frosts. Protect tender plants
2. Earth up potatoes, and promptly plant any still remaining
3. Plant out summer bedding at the end of the month (except in cold areas)
4. Collect rainwater and investigate ways to recycle water for irrigation
5. Regularly hoe off weeds
6. Open greenhouse vents and doors on warm days
7. Mow lawns weekly
8. Check for nesting birds before clipping hedges
9. Lift and divide overcrowded clumps of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs
10. Watch out for viburnum beetle and lily beetle grubs



INITIATIVE

The Lady Links' 'Initiative' mini-MAG is a 'must-have' accessory for every lady's handbag! It's packed with bite-sized features from three areas of common interest: Business, Creativity and Lifestyle.

BUSINESS

Benefit from inspirational features, top tips, recommended services, useful resources and products.

Find the latest news on emerging networks.

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