

Please do as I say, not as I do

Karen Roem learns a beautiful house can be treacherous, is paid with a bottle of champers and vows to steer clear of baby yoga

Thursday 19 October

Did a one-to-one training session this morning with a person who was recommended by somebody I know. So when the deal was made last Tuesday, I sent an email to the kind so-and-so to thank him for the referral. Although he seemed to have some problem placing the name of the client, he happily accepted my invitation for lunch. But when I asked the participant this morning how he knew my contact, all became clear... I'd thanked the wrong chap.

Monday 23 October

Back to do some more one-to-one training in a stunning Arts and Crafts house. In case you didn't know (like myself) this movement's architects were appalled by the ugliness of the mass-produced houses you and I live in. So they reintroduced stuff like the wrought-iron medieval-style window fastenings and exposed beams, stating that they were – and I'm quoting now – creating a more humane alternative. Well, when my course participant opens the door I cannot help but spot the bandage on his head. He had cracked open his skull on one of those beautiful oak beams. Remember the humane bit? Look up the word and it means 'marked or motivated by concern with the alleviation of suffering'.

Tuesday 31 October

Been working on a really exciting new time-management seminar I'll be co-facilitating in February. My contribution will be to help people discover how to use Microsoft Office as it was meant to be used... as a problem-solver, a time-saver, a streamlined means to an impressive end. So, last week, determined to spend less time in the office myself, I changed the settings of my daily back-up – during which I tend to avoid working because of the slow speed of my computer – from 2200 to 1900 hours. But, sod's law, I'm running a little short of time. So I cancel tonight's meeting – and change the back-up settings back to late at night. Do as I say, not as I do.

Monday 13 November

One of my neighbours is a writer who – over the years – has asked me for help with his Word manuscripts. Having been quoted an exorbitant price for the typesetting of his latest book, he spotted me working from home, so picked a bit more of my brain. Today he paid me... with a nice bubbly. 'I know you like a bottle or two,' he said, pointing to the spot where every other Wednesday our recycling box is waiting on the kerb-side to be collected. How embarrassing.



'The moment my course participant opens the door, I cannot help but spot the bandage on his head'

Friday 17 November

Went to check out a venue for one of my next seminars. This beautiful 17th-century, carefully restored building was once the home of King Charles II when pursuing his love of horse racing. Besides the attractive yet practical rooms in which to run training sessions, they also cater for – prepare yourselves – baby yoga. So here I am, trying to decide between the King's Bedroom and the Rothchild's Dining Room when I'm greeted by the sound of screaming kids. Being allergic to children, I gotta make sure not to book the seminar on a Friday.

Friday 24 November

It seems to be one of those mornings that the business equivalent of double-glazing salesmen keep pestering me. But as some of my clients somehow hold back their telephone number, I cannot simply ignore calls that show 'withheld' in the display, so I pick up the phone. 'Can I speak to your credit department, please?' a voice on the other end of the line says. I inform her she must have dialled the wrong number

and – hardened by years of dealing with pushy sales techniques – I hang up. But before I know it the phone rings again. 'Withheld' it reads on the display. Must be the same lady adamant to flog some kind of credit management software. So I wait for the answering machine to kick in. Much to my surprise I notice she has left a message. Turns out she was ringing on behalf of a client I've been chasing because they hadn't paid my invoice on time. Oops!

Monday 4 December

Just got back from making thank-you-for-your-business deliveries in the Cambridge area – a Dutch tradition during the feast of Sinterklaas and a great opportunity to catch up with my clients. Or so I thought. Instead, I got stuck on the notorious A14. Almost hit a cyclist who fell off his bike when his chain broke. Drove all the way up to a client, only to find they had moved premises. Was unable to find offices that carried names rather than numbers. Was blocked in by a car with only two minutes left on my parking meter. Oh, and when I did manage to get there, I didn't get past the receptionist. Should have left all of the packages with these nice ladies at the Royal Mail district office who helped lick the four non-adhesive stamps for each of the 30-odd other parcels. So I made one extra trip to bring them their own goodie-bags.

Karen Roem is the founder of software training and support firm Roem Limited. Diary of a training consultant is an extract from Karen's Blog: www.roem.co.uk/blog.html