

Your Manager's Wish List: Hard and Soft Skills

Do you know what hard and soft skills your manager would like you to have? We asked five managers to share their wish list for their administrative staff.

Janet Bucholdt is an associate at Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc. (Minneapolis). She manages 11 administrators.



Diane Klug is a Lead Facilities/Admin Manager at Parsons Brinckerhoff (St. Louis), and manages 16 administrators.



Jennifer Carlson is the PMAC Administrator/Facilities Manager at Hatch Mott MacDonald (Seattle), and manages four administrators.



Deborah Gill is the Controller at Clark Nexsen (Norfolk). She manages seven administrators.



Shannon Soady is a Senior Associate at DLR Group (Seattle), and manages six administrators.



SDA: What software programs should your administrators become more proficient in, and what would they be doing with that software?

Janet: There are two specific programs that would add value to our processes: Deltek Vision and Pocket Dictate for iPhone. In Deltek, they would be inputting project information, insurance certificates, master contract documents, contacts, vendors,

and clients. In Pocket Dictate, they would be downloading dictation from iPhones for transcription.

Diane: Advanced formatting in Microsoft Word. Administrative staff are typically asked to compile reports where information is prepared by multiple individuals in a variety of formats. More knowledge to increase the efficiency of preparing these types of reports helps keep the time required at a minimum. Also, Pivot tables in Excel. There are many project-related tasks that could utilize these skills. Pivot tables allow one master database to be filtered in multiple ways to create spreadsheet detail reports with efficiency.

Jennifer: Microsoft Access and Visio. We are discovering more and more

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Member Profile: Sarah Garvis



Sarah Garvis is the Administrative Lead at Wetherholt and Associates, Inc. She has been an SDA

member since 2008.

SDA: How long have you been with Wetherholt and Associates?

SG: I have worked at Wetherholt and Associates for over five years.

SDA: What motivated you to join SDA?

SG: I joined SDA to learn more about the industry, and

to get tips on how to be a more effective office administrator. I had also just moved from out of state, so I was hoping to meet new people.

SDA: What do you do at your firm?

SG: I do lots of different things at my job. I process proposals and contracts, set

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Mark Your Calendars!

AASHTO - WSDOT Contracting and Auditing Procedures
April 18, 2013
Best Western Executive Inn
Seattle

EDSymposium13
May 15-18, 2013
Williamsburg Lodge
Williamsburg, Virginia

SR 520 Project and Board of Directors' Installation
May 23, 2013
Best Western Executive Inn
Seattle

Seattle Chapter Planning Retreat
Summer 2013
Date and Location TBD

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President's Message



Spring is springing up all over the place! The daffodils in my yard are starting to bloom, the days are getting longer, and I actually had to mow my lawn last weekend. In addition to longer days and abundant greenery, spring brings excitement to SDA as well. We are looking forward to EdSymposium 13 in Williamsburg, VA, in May. I cannot stress enough the benefits of attending a national event. In addition

to having four days of intensive training tailored specifically to our industry, you have the opportunity to visit a different city, and to network with peers from around the country. I always come home with new knowledge, new professional contacts, and a renewed sense of enthusiasm for my profession.

Spring is also bringing excitement to the Chapter. We elected a nominating committee, which is now hard at work looking for members to serve on the board for the 2013-14 term. Please consider what board involvement could do for you. Yes, it means extra time and work; but, that's an investment in your growth, as

well as an investment in the Chapter. You renewed your membership, and we gained three new members, which means each of you sees value in your membership. Why not take it to the next level and increase the value by increasing the participation?

I'm thrilled with the chapter committee results this past year: A new website that looks great; an active Jobline that continues to give design firms the opportunity to have their jobs viewed by industry professionals; high-quality newsletters from our former editor and continuing with the new editor for this issue; and educational programs that earn you continuing education credits, in addition to a fun and informative workshop on

"creating your brand." We also have quality programs lined up for the rest of this board year.

Don't forget to note on your calendar that the May program has been rescheduled from the third Thursday to the fourth Thursday, so it doesn't conflict with EDSymposium. We will celebrate the installation of the new board of directors that evening. (Wouldn't it be awesome if you were in that group?!)

Enjoy the spring. Enjoy the longer and warmer days. Enjoy education. Enjoy SDA.

Stacy Rowland, CDFA



Technology Transfer: Blank Pages and Excel Formulas

Have you come across reports with the phrase "This page intentionally left blank" (or some variation thereof)? Dorothy Skans, Document Production Specialist at Parsons Brinckerhoff in Seattle, shares her philosophy on why you should avoid blank-page disclaimers.

The phrase came about when publications were being typeset on large sheets (usually 8, 16, or 32 pages per sheet). It was easy in those days to have a page "disappear" from the book through human or press error. Now most printing is done double-sided on single sheets of paper from pdfs,

printed on office or print shop printers.

When using chapter-page numbering, blank pages occur intentionally at the end of odd-paged chapters since the next chapter begins on a right-hand page. Today, the majority of readers recognize, either consciously or subconsciously, that a blank page probably will occur on a left-hand page prior to a new chapter since it is common practice in fiction and non-fiction books.

Inserting the phrase "this page intentionally left blank" at the end of a chapter generates multiple problems:

- As soon as the phrase is

added to a blank page, it is no longer blank (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_paradoxes).

- Adding the phrase to a blank page can be construed as an insult to the average reader's intelligence (especially true for readers raised in the digital age).
- In Microsoft Word, you have to manually add the statement when needed, and remember to manually remove it when not needed, which adds extra work and section-break complications. Word has "odd page" section breaks that should be used at the beginning of each chapter.

If the preceding chapter ends on an odd page, a totally blank page (no headers, footers, or page numbers) is added automatically when printing, since this is the standard protocol for the printing industry.

When printing one figure sized for an 11x17-inch sheet in the midst of an 8-1/2 x 11-inch document, it is convenient to have the back of the figure completely blank (no header, no footer; no blank page disclaimer). You cannot print an 8-1/2 x 11-inch (letter size) page on the back of an 11x17-inch (ledger size) sheet; printers are not set up for it, so

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Technology Transfer (from page 2)

there must be a ledger sheet in the document for the back side. Unfortunately, without special instructions, many printers will print the back of a ledger sheet upside-down in relation to the front. Therefore, it is less complicated if that back side is blank.

Since a technical document that has been edited correctly will have a figure reference in the text immediately preceding an 11x17-inch sheet, it should be clear to the average reader (both in the public as well as the A/E/C industry) that there is only the one 11x17-inch sheet and, therefore, the back of it will be blank. In addition, since the following letter-size page must start with an odd page number,

intelligence dictates that the blank page immediately preceding it is “understood” to be the even page number between the two. If there are two 11x17-inch figures, they would typically be printed double-sided.

For all of these reasons, the trend has been to move away from the practice of “labeling” a blank page.

If you'd like to respond to this school of thought, or if you have questions about it, feel free to contact Dorothy Skans at skans@pbworld.com.



Useful Excel Functions

To change capital letters to initial caps:

	<i>Insert this in cell B1: =PROPER(A1)</i>		
	A	B	C
1	ANNE RINKER	Anne Rinker	

To change lower case to upper case:

	<i>Insert this in cell B1: =UPPER(A3)</i>		
	A	B	C
1	anne rinker	ANNE RINKER	

To combine text in two cells (A1 and B1) into one cell (C1), with a space between:

	<i>Insert this in cell C1: =(A1&" "&B1)</i>		
	A	B	C
1	Anne	Rinker	Anne Rinker

GrammarWorks: Back to Basics

Attendees at the grammar program were treated to some interesting stories from Cherie Tucker of GrammarWorks. Cherie has been a back-by-popular-demand speaker for SDA at the local and national levels. It seems like each time she presents to SDA, she has a new story to tell. The first time Cherie presented to the chapter, we were amazed by this story: *Cherie was shopping at Nordstrom with her son and noticed the sign pointing the way to the “Childrens Shoes.” She spoke to a Nordstrom manager and told the manager that the store was teaching incorrect*

punctuation to children who should be learning to write correctly and not be influenced by signage that was written poorly. Well, Nordstrom not only listened to Cherie, they acted. If you go into the Seattle store today, you’ll notice that the shoe sign correctly shows “Children’s Shoes.”

In January, Cherie had another story to tell. “I noticed in the “Letters to the Editor” section of *The Seattle Times* that the paper was inserting information into the letters using parentheses instead of brackets (if you are going to insert anything into someone else’s writing, you have to

insert the text inside of brackets). I mentioned it to the editor and asked that if the letter writer had used parentheses later in the letter, how could the reader tell that the author had done so rather than the editors.” As with Cherie’s first story, the result was a positive action. Take a look at the editorial page in *The Seattle Times*. If you see brackets within a Letter to the Editor, you’ll know that a newspaper editor inserted that text.

Stories aside, here are some of the back to basic highlights from Cherie’s recent presentation.

There are basically only three reasons to use a semi-colon.

1. If the sentence has a number of items that already contain commas, then insert a semi-colon between the items. For example: *I went to Westport, Washington; Los Angeles, California; Northern Lights, Alaska; and Seattle, Washington.*
2. If you don’t want to use a conjunction (such as *for* and *but*) and you want to show some correlation. For example: *Hank is still*

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Manager's Wish List (from page 1)

needs for databases rather than spreadsheets. Having the ability to store all information in one location and generate a variety of reports out of that location, versus keeping separate spreadsheet lists, is increasing our efficiency and accuracy. In our office, Visio is regularly used to maintain organization charts, but the program has a lot more capabilities than we currently know how to use, so our progress is slowed significantly.

Deborah: Three programs: Deltek Vision, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. Running better, more concise reports in Deltek requires less manual work if they learned more advanced concepts of filtering, subtotaling, and organizing data. Pivot tables would be especially helpful to report more efficiently on large amounts of raw data. In Word, they would be doing mail merge functions, and adding graphics, charts, and formatting to make reports more understandable.

Shannon: InDesign for schematic design narratives and reports, MS Project for project schedules, and PowerPoint for more creative expertise in creating slideshow presentations.

SDA: If you could provide soft-skill training for your administrative team, what class would they attend?

Jennifer: Conflict resolution.

Conflict often leads to high emotion among the admin staff, and having the tools to better alleviate conflict without elevating the associated emotions would benefit the entire team.

Diane: There are several: time management – focusing on increasing their productivity (less perfection); leadership – no matter the level, all employees can lead a team or a task; and mentoring – everyone benefits from a mentoring relationship.

Deborah: Communicating more effectively with other employees. Accounting staff has to deliver bad news often; employees need to be more sympathetic to their clients (the other employee's position, circumstances, and needs). Educating is part of communicating, and they need to learn to educate.

Shannon: Learning to say “no” appropriately, and thinking about and understanding the long-term consequences of actions. Sometimes, in our deadline-driven, short-staffed world, we don't take the time to stop, step back, and assess whether we truly need to do something, and do it now, or after a bit of reflection, if perhaps there's a better way of doing something. It's easier and ultimately faster to take a deep breath to assess how to best handle a situation than to mop up the after-effects of a poor judgment call later. And delegating a

task may not only make your schedule simpler, but it can also give a colleague an opportunity to improve their skillset. Cross-training is a good thing! Other valuable soft skills are consistency and organization. You are not the only one who will ever work on or look at a particular project, so consistently applying company standards with respect to the organization of how/where project records are stored and saved is important. And communicating anything that is unusual, perhaps with a memo to look in XYZ folder for the information that isn't where it normally is found. It will save a lot of time and frustration for others down the line.

Janet: Communication and presentation skills, in order to speak well in front of groups. Each administrator is responsible for leading one of our bi-weekly meetings, and sometimes they are asked to give presentations at our all-office meetings. Overcoming the fear of public speaking would certainly have a positive impact.

SDA: It's interesting to note that your wish lists align with OfficeTeam's 2013 admin job outlook, in that employers also want candidates who are technically savvy and have polished communication skills.

Thank you for sharing your hard- and soft-skill wish list.

WHAT DO MANAGERS WANT?

Increased proficiency in hard skills:

- Microsoft Word
- Access
- Visio
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Deltek Vision
- Pocket Dictate
- MS Project
- InDesign

Improvement in soft skills:

- Conflict resolution
- Communications
- Presentations
- Time management
- Consistency
- The art of saying “no”

GrammarWorks (from page 3)

working toward his civil engineering degree; Helen already has hers.

3. If two independent clauses are linked by a transitional phrase (such as *however* and *namely*). For example: *Hank is still working toward his civil engineering degree; however, he only has one more semester to go.*

I or Me

“For more information, please call Sally and I.” “For more information, please call Sally and me.” Which one is correct?

To determine the proper way to write a sentence using *I* or *me*, test each one separately. Say out loud: “For more information, please call I.” Now say “For more information, please call me.” See the difference? So, written properly, it is: “For more information, please call Sally and me.”

Bulleted Lists

- The list must be parallel. That is, if one bulleted item starts with a verb, they must all start with a verb.
- The list cannot just have one item. There has to be at

least two items to create a bulleted list.

- The bulleted text must start with a capital letter.

Comprise Versus Compose

The trick is to remember to keep the “o” words (*composed of*) together. And also remember “the parts comprise the whole,” and “the whole is composed of the parts.” For example: *Three five-year olds (the parts) comprise the kindergarten class (the whole). The kindergarten class (the whole) was composed of three five-year olds (the parts).*

Fanboys

Fanboys is an acronym for the conjunctions—**f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et, **s**o. You should insert a comma before the Fanboy (not necessarily always, but usually).

Following basic grammar rules such as these allows the writer to express what he/she has to say, with more emphasis on how the writer wants it stated. As Cheri likes to say, “*The reader should never be allowed to control what you meant to say.*”



Visit www.grammarworks.com.

Member Profile (from page 1)

up new jobs, make travel arrangements for the owner and principals, organize staff meetings and strategic planning meetings, prepare delicious breakfast for Friday morning meetings, water the plants; you name it.

SDA: What challenges you with respect to work/life balance?

SG: My work/life balance is pretty great. I ride my bike to work in the warm months, which makes things fun. The four-mile roundtrip takes me about 45 minutes to an hour. I am able to do my job and go home at night, knowing that I put forth my best effort.

SDA: If there was one class (or seminar or workshop) that you could take that would allow you to perform your job more effectively, what class would that be and why?

SG: I would love to see some software training webinars/seminars, particularly in Excel, Word, Access, and Publisher. It is always good to learn more about programs I use every day at work. For example, I use Access to compile our giant Christmas card list each year, which makes my life much easier and more organized.

SDA: What activities or

hobbies do you enjoy in your spare time?

SG: In my spare time, I love to garden, go camping, and hang out with my wonderful husband and two miniature schnauzers. When we camp in the Northwest, we stay at “typical” campgrounds. My favorite camping though, is in Southern Utah, and we “rough” it there. Often our camping is part of a Colorado River trip.

SDA: What are some of your goals with respect to SDA?

SG: Attend more meetings and events, and get to know everyone in the Seattle

chapter. Perhaps one day go to an EDSymposium.



“I joined SDA to learn more about the industry, and to get tips on how to be a more effective office administrator.”

(Sarah Garvis)

Sound Bites



Maximize efficiencies. Stay current on new trends. Improve the bottom line. (Deborah Gill, CDFA, CPA)
Success depends largely on the initiative of the people involved. (Shannon Soady, CDFA)
Be yourself. Everyone else is taken. (Oscar Wilde)

**Seattle Chapter
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About SDA

For over 50 years, the Society for Design Administration (SDA) has promoted education and best practices in management and professional standards of design firm administration. SDA membership stretches across the United States and Canada, and is composed of personnel working in the design industry for architectural, engineering, construction, and related industry firms.

Look, click, learn.

Seattle Chapter SDA:

www.sda-seattle.org



National SDA:

www.sdadmin.org

Portico is published quarterly. Please send comments, suggestions, announcements and articles to the Editor, Judy Beebe, at beebe@pbworld.com.

Educational Programs and Networking Opportunities

You won't want to miss these!

**APR
18**

AASHTO - WSDOT CONTRACTING AND AUDITING PROCEDURES

**MAY
15-18**

EDSYMPOSIUM13

**MAY
23**

THE SR 520 PROJECT, AND THE CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS' INSTALLATION

**SUMMER
TBD**

CHAPTER PLANNING RETREAT (all members are welcome to attend)

Check our website for more details (www.sda-seattle.org). Seattle Chapter events are also published in the *Puget Sound Business Journal*, *AIA eNews*, *Seattle P-I*, and the *Daily Journal of Commerce*. For questions about any of the chapter programs, or if you have suggestions for SDA programs, please contact Cathy Comstock at cathycomstock@gmail.com.

EDSymposium13: Learn. Lead. Network. Succeed.

It's not too late to sign up for SDA's national EDSymposium. This year's location is the Williamsburg Lodge, in Williamsburg, Virginia.



Why should you attend EDSymposium13? It's an all-inclusive venue to earn over 18 hours of continuing education credits, in addition to other professional opportunities:

- Taking away knowledge covering A/E/C trends and best practices, provided by

industry subject matter experts on a multitude of topics including Microsoft Excel for project management, and Excel power tools; HR tools for success; building profitable relationships in professional services firms; keys to successful, sustainable contracting; and plate-spinning in Outlook.

- Learning to lead more effectively, from the signature *Leading through Influence* training day.
- Growing your networking circle by making connections with other administrators working in the same industry.
- Attending the society's Annual Meeting; listening to the candidate's speeches; participating in business discussions or debates; and

getting updates on the newest organizational changes and financial status.

- Celebrating with chapter award winners at the Awards Luncheon.
- Cheering for the *Lifetime Achievement Award* member at the Saturday night banquet.
- Touring the locale to learn about its architectural and engineering history.



Ready to go? [Click here](#) to register for EDSymposium13. [Click here](#) if you want to take a look around Williamsburg.