

## **GLOBAL PA NETWORK PA CASE STUDY**

### **Marion Brown, PA to CEO of Teacher Support Network, 2009**

#### **Q.1 Describe your role and how many people you work for?**

The organisation is a 130 years old and was the former Teacher Benevolent Fund and they provide grants and loans to teachers in distress. A service called Linked Life was established which offers free counselling for teachers and advice on difficult situations in schools and financial advice through the Citizens Advice bureau. Linked Life also supply thousands of Fact Sheets on issues e.g. teaching unions etc.

Marion was recruited to the role of working for the CEO from the Arts Council in 1999 but is now being made redundant as a new CEO has been put in place. Her boss, the CEO has now moved to another role and Linked Life which her boss Patrick Nash started has been very successful and grown to a telephone counselling service. Patrick has been on tv, radio and presented at government conferences in London and abroad. He is a very driven and passionate man and Marion enjoyed working with him as he inspired her and she was his PA for 10 years. The new CEO is making many organisation changes and Marion's role for the CEO and COO is no longer required and she was informed on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009. She was offered another role in the organisation as a Junior Admin Assistant but declined and her Line Manager offered her no support with the change of conditions and the demotion being offered to her.

#### **Q.2. Describe your relationship with your boss?**

It worked very well with my boss of 10 years, Patrick Nash. He is very driven and exciting to work with and pushed me to do things I never envisaged I could do and asked me to be his Ambassador at the Black NUT Teachers Conference which I was thrilled with. I was asked to organise all the speakers and loved that area of the work and using my initiative and all Patrick's team grew in confidence with his input. I took on skills such as event management and HR duties and attended seminars to learn new skills. I was responsible for organising staff and stakeholders and attended PA events to upskill, such as Times Crème and Square Meal events. I was also given experience in dealing with people on the phone and developing my communication skills as teachers can be suicidal and Patrick showed me how to handle difficult phone calls. Other staff that worked with Patrick have now risen up the ladder in the organisation.

#### **Q.3 Typical day**

On arrival I would read all Patrick's e-mails. Patrick and I also agreed between us how we would work and our out of hours contact. I would always respond to Patrick's e-mails first and then deal with Leadership and Senior Management team meetings and the US office and organise teleconference calls and deal with the correspondence and the post. Patrick and I would meet for an hour to discuss actions following Board meetings and liaising with Board members. I was Secretary to the Advisory Panel and organised meetings, attended meetings, typed minutes, prepared the Agenda and distributed notes to the Advisory Panel. I would also liaise with the SMT as his contact person and if necessary text Patrick and he would respond over decisions on speaking to the media. When Patrick was in it was full on and I rarely took a lunch break. I had an assistant who left as she could not cope with the fast pace of the role and I had a long time without one. In the early years I also coordinated the PR and Comms before that Department was established. I now have an Assistant who I supervise and do her appraisal and it helps with the workload and she is a mature woman, which I feel works better.

#### **Q.4 Major challenges in the role**

A major challenge was the arrival of the Head of Marketing and it caused quite a de-stabilisation and affected my working relationship with my boss but was resolved successfully. I have completed a Counselling Course and wanted to do a Coaching Course and prepared a business case but it was rejected on financial grounds.

**Q.5. Opportunities for Promotion**

There are no opportunities for promotion.

**Q.6 How often do you attend external training courses?**

I attend the Times Crème Seminars and have done all the internal staff courses that I can but have not attended any external PA courses at all but have done the Computer Euro Driving Licence qualification remotely online. I found the Global PA Network Career Development Evening 2009 invaluable earlier this year and have completed the CIPD NLP course which the company paid for.