

DIARY OF A TRAINING CONSULTANT

The kindness of strangers

Karen Roem locks horns with airport security, falls for a Trojan horse program and is rescued by a stranger at King's Cross station

Wednesday 24 August

Hand luggage allowance with Ryanair is a whopping 10 kilos! (22 lbs for those of you who don't speak metric.) Great stuff if you are carrying a laptop, 25 handouts, clothes and toiletries for three days, but want to get off the aircraft and to the office as quickly as possible as your class is due to start 55 minutes after landing. When the bag came out of the X-ray machine a clearly annoyed security man grabbed (and almost dropped) it. 'Flying Ryanair?' he said, not expecting an answer. He then unpacked everything (and I mean EVERYTHING), swiped all electronics for explosives, placed them in a plastic tray and put them back through the machine. Luckily enough I had plenty of time as all flights across the UK were suspended. I couldn't suppress a little laugh as I heard the reason of the air disruption... computer failure of the air traffic control system, run by the client I was heading to.



'Turns out the attachment is a Trojan horse program, tricking gullible people like me into believing they found fame'

Saturday 1 October

Fame at last? Yesterday I received an email with the eye-catching subject 'photo approval needed'. It had a zipped file attached, indicating it contained a photo and an article. The sender was linked to a useful site dedicated to and written by IT professionals. Thinking they must have found something useful in my virtual press room, I made a note to look into this today. But when I have another peek this morning, the site has been taken offline and I start sniffing a rat. OK, we all know not to respond to fake banking emails asking politely to send your bank details and password. But this one surely looked legit! Turns out the email attachment is a known Trojan horse program, tricking gullible people like me into believing they found fame. How depressing.

Friday 7 October

Gave myself a bit of a fright when somebody points out a typo in my recent email campaign. Well, guess what. There really is such a word as manciple. It's an old-fashioned term for one of the most important chappies in the College... the one responsible for food!

Thursday 20 October

Yikes! Gotta snatch in my seminar. During the Why Are You Here round, somebody reveals herself as an HR undercover of a local chip design giant, 'here to find out whether this programme can be of use to our staff'. Perhaps the double rainbow I spotted on my way back

home from checking out the seminar room last night has a meaning after all? (Pot of gold and all that.)

Tuesday 1 November

Had to take the car in for a repair. As my garage is an hour's drive away (don't ask) I decide to hang around. Excellent time to prepare for tomorrow's training session, innit? Well, not really. Terry Wogan's Radio 2 show is pretty distracting. So is the Happy-to-Hoover-brigade. But worst emotional disturbance of all is the latest model of my automobile in the car park. Before I know it I take it for a spin. You know, there's nothing a girl likes more than a spontaneous purchase. (Don't even think about it, Roem.)

Tuesday 8 November

Silly me. I forgot my purse. Oh no! My train/tube ticket is in my purse! By the time

I realise this, I've almost arrived in London and am about to head for the Underground. I might have got away with it on the train), but I cannot jump the barriers, can I? And with no money or credit cards on me to buy a ticket, I'm toast. What now? OK, I love life without a script, but this is pushing it! I look around the sea of commuters, purposefully hurrying along the platform and hope I'll recognise somebody. Hang on, there's that guy who always says hello at the station in Cambridge. I walk up to him. 'Hello!' he says. Deep breath now. 'Er, I have a really embarrassing problem,' I begin, hoping not too many people overhear what I'm saying. I explain that I cannot get to my client if I cannot borrow some money. 'How much do you need?' he asks. He gets four quid out of his pockets, which is enough to buy a new ticket for the tube. So here's to the kindness of strangers. Thanks, Rudi! (Yep, we're on first-name terms now.) You'll get your money back Thursday week, when I'll be on the 7.12 to King's Cross.

Wednesday 16 November

My tummy is making weird noises. I know it's simply the sound of my lunch passing through my digestive system, but it's rather embarrassing when you're in the middle of a consultancy session. 'Sorry!' my client says. He then realises he is overcome by one of those inexplicable fits of English embarrassment. He is apologizing for my bodily noises! Which makes him apologize for apologizing. STOP!

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