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Europe's smallest state?

Karen Roem gets invited to an EU summit, creates a reward system for herself and faces a battle of wills with her 19-year-old cat

Monday 13 June

Wanted: Good home for Samsung ML-1650 toner cartridge. Printed 200 pages (max) of its potential 8000. RRP: £110.41. (No, that is not a misprint.)
Why is it that my laser printer waited to pack up until I had carefully pulled the sealing tape out of the brand new cartridge? Apparently, if 'error', 'manual', 'paper' and 'data' all flash at the same time, you have a 'system error' and need to contact the service representative, who probably is more expensive than a new laser printer. Smash forehead on keyboard to continue.

'Why is it that my laser printer waited to pack up until I had pulled the sealing tape out of the brand new cartridge?'

Tuesday 21 June

Some time ago I was offered the opportunity to do a two-minute pitch at a networking event. With D-day approaching, hubby must be bored to tears and I decide to stop interrupting the cleaning lady to get her to listen to it. But practice makes perfect (or so they say), so I dig out the old dictaphone and hear myself as others hear me. (Like, yuck.) The egg timer varies between 2 minutes, 10 seconds and 2 minutes, 30 seconds. Enough already. Delete that last recording and get back practising your new vocabulary around Records Management. Cognisant. Spoliation. Disposition... (Zzzzzzzzzzzzz!)

Thursday 30 June

Just before I got off to do the final leg of a global rollout last month, I met a woman running her own business, wearing the most beautiful pieces of jewellery. Treats whenever she finished an assignment. Inspired, I bought myself some bling in Kuala Lumpur. Only to get it stolen from my hotel room in Houston a week later. Or rather, 'missing', as the security manager wished to refer to it. 'We never experience theft in our hotel.' Right, of course. And there was me thinking that if you don't report a crime it might distort that figure?! Anyway, just found a cheque in the post as a settlement for my travel claim. Off to the shops.

Tuesday 12 July

Man, what happened to summer? No, I'm not talking about the weather. (As a matter of fact, the sun is out.) I'm talking komkommertijd. You know… (I doubt it somehow, unless you're one of my Dutch friends who keep on top of my life by reading my blog) … the time of year when things slow down. Right! Cucumber time! A period I had set aside for grand ideas. (Such as to see whether I can find a publisher for my tips. Wooha!) Instead, I'm turning down clients left, right and centre. Time to expand? (Don't think so.)

Thursday 14 July

Busy day… FrontPage training in Aberdeen. Followed by an upgrade demo in Mumbai. Followed by a meeting in The Hague. And still time to go to my early evening step class. I love virtual working!

Tuesday 26 July

Found an invitation in my inbox to attend an EU summit. Or rather, I'm cordially invited to nominate delegates on behalf of my country. So who else is on the list? The Embassy of Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Poland... Wait a minute, it's one those many emails I get that should have been addressed to roemb.co.uk. You know, those messages I politely send back every time I get them. So let me tell you once more. R-O-E-M-B is the domain name of the Embassy of Romania, a country located in the south east of central Europe, north of the Balkan Peninsula, in the Lower Danube basin, bordering the Black Sea and not ... oh forget it! Perhaps I should just turn up and eat the Ferrero Rochers.

Saturday 6 August

Got a letter from the Inland Revenue informing me they have credited £250 to my PAYE payment record. A little thank you for filing my employer's annual return online. Wow! A refund from the taxman! (The euphoria lasted until I realised it was my money to start with.)

Sunday 21 August

Working from home is a dream for many people. OK, it sure beats being stuck in an air-conditioned office with goose bumps and blue noses. But working at home also brings its own set of challenges. The toughest one being that you have to educate your family! Take, for example Zakko, who turns into the office cat when he wants to catch up with me after a business trip. Well, apparently he doesn't agree with me working on a Sunday afternoon either... while on the phone with my PR guru he stands in front of the converted garage, screaming his head off. How can a guilt-ridden working 'mum' concentrate on getting more bums on seats for the next Hands Off seminar when her 19-year-old wailing cat is around?

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