

Business

Working day

with GILLIAN HOLDOM

5.55am I open my eyes and feel the bone-chilling breeze from the open window and enjoy that moment of reflection on the day ahead before the alarm goes off noisily at six. I have an early-morning gym session, so I dress in my gym kit, touch base with the rest of the household, feed Zulu our Burmese cat, collect my things for the day and drive off down the country lanes on my way into Cambridge. As I drive down the hill I get a beautiful view of the autumn landscape which recharges my batteries.

Arrive at Churchill College in time to say hello to the night manager at The Møller Centre who is just finishing his work. I then go straight into my gym session which is tough but invigorating. I go to the office to shower and change then have a quick cup of Earl Grey before catching up with my PA to review the diary, allocate priorities and prepare for the day and the weeks ahead. As usual, I wish the day was 34 hours long, but I keep this wish on hold while I get ready for the first task.

9.30am First up, a conference call with some of the 20 partners from the Møller Professional Services Firms Group Cambridge (PSFG) which we set up 18 months ago. The meeting is to review our performance and current clients and discuss the content of the programme for the client "taster day" in December – a chance to introduce prospective clients to the work of the partners, to share their insights and knowledge and also an opportunity to network with colleagues.

A short walk from my office down to the meeting rooms in the Study Centre gives me a chance to say good

morning to our clients and catch up with old friends. It is also an opportunity to say hello to the floor staff on duty running the centre, one of them has just come back from holiday and shares with me her experience and some new ideas she has.

10.45am Straight into the weekly senior management catch up meeting, we are trying something new today and stand in a circle for this meeting to ensure that the conversation is brief and focused. We review feedback from our residential and day events and ensure any appropriate response is already in place. Although we are on target, continual

improvement is our watch word. We use the opportunity to plan the big picture for the week ahead and make any key decisions. I get a chance to congratulate the team on a great first quarter performance and this week a special acknowledgment to one of the team who ran the 10-mile Bupa Great South run for Alzheimer's Society.

We end the meeting by finalising the plans for our management team away day when we will be revisiting our Belbin team roles, (how we behave, contribute to the team and interrelate with each other), and our Myers-Briggs Type Indicators, (our individual psychological preferences, how we perceive the world and make decisions). We are doing this to help us support each other to maximise our team performance for business success and to ensure that we manage our staff effectively. We are also working towards becoming one of *The Sunday Times* Top 100 "Best Companies to Work for".

Gillian Holdom is director of The Møller Centre, the residential conference and training centre in Cambridge. Here, she describes her day – which is packed with meetings and culminates in a gathering of senior executives from China.



11am While I am in the Study Centre, a short meeting with our sales and marketing manager and his marketing executive to finalise a key decision regarding our strategic marketing plan.

11.45am I leave the meeting and take a look at the new business centre we have recently installed and I am delighted to see our customers busily enjoying it. On the way back to the office I take the opportunity to take a look in one of the vacant bedrooms and briefly discuss the refurbishment programme with the general manager.

12.30pm Back to the office with a coffee to run through my preparations for the rest of the day, make a few calls and respond to the emails I have not been able to do from my iPhone.

1.30pm Executive education programme design meeting with the team, to analyse a specific training

request from a key client and make a first draft of the programme to discuss with our advisory panel the following week

2.30pm A quick bite to eat with the rest of the staff in the dining room, we try to focus on out of work news and resist the temptation to use the time to chase up on work issues.

3pm Touch base with my PA to update on the day and prepare for the next working day; she's done a great job on prioritising the incoming communications while I have been out of the office

4.30pm Over to Churchill College for a meeting with the Master, who is chairman of The Møller Centre Board, to go through the agenda for the board meeting the following week.

5.30pm Churchill College Governing Body meeting where I present the annual report to the shareholders. The Møller Centre was built following a donation from the A P Møller and Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller

Foundation to Churchill College; the college is the 100% shareholder. As a result, all profits go straight back to the college.

6.30pm Host a welcome reception for senior executives from China who have just arrived to take a tailor-made education programme designed by The Møller Centre for their company. Delegates come to the centre from all over the world.

7pm It's time to head off home to be with the family. I jump in the car (a good opportunity to catch up with my sister on the phone, (hands free of course) and then arrive ready to prepare a proper dinner for us all. I don't like to use convenience food so we usually end up eating some time after 8. We eat and reflect on the day while listening to whoever's iPod has won that day (this can result in variations from 80s' rock to gangster rap).

Clear up resumes, and we all prepare our bags for the next day and get a short chance to relax in front of a crackling log fire. Bed by 10.30pm at the latest.

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Art and antiques market attracting more investors

ART and antiques prices are continuing to rise, with more buyers turning to the market as an alternative investment, says the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

RICS latest Art and Antiques Survey shows more people attending auctions, with prices in the mid category, £1,000-£5,000, rising fastest.

Precious metals are doing particularly well, and the only area of decline is in contemporary art, although the fall is minimal.

RICS predicts demand will exceed supply over the coming year.

David Potter, RICS East operations director, said: "The UK art and antiques market is buoyant at the moment, as buyers continue to invest in material assets during uncertain economic times.

"However, surveyors are raising concerns over Droit de Suite (artists' and their heirs' rights to a fee when their work is resold), an initiative which could affect the UK art market and quality of lots available for sale.

"As art is mobile it tends to be sold where market conditions are most favourable, but the higher transaction charges and admin costs associated with Droit de Suite could drive buyers away from the UK market and towards growing markets like China."

■ Bonhams are to sell East Anglian paintings with American connections in their East Anglian View auction in Bury St Edmunds, December 2, including Yarmouth Early Morning, pictured left, by Campbell Archibald Mellon.