

The UK Association of European Management Assistants (EUMA)

Are you are thinking about becoming a EUMA member or want to know more about us? .

If so, then the following case studies written by EUMA members will tell you everything you need to know and how you too can benefit by becoming a member!

Dorothy Calderbank
PA to Deputy Head & SMT, Rossall School
EUMA North West Member

I have worked in an independent day/boarding school in North West Lancashire for 16 years and it is one of five local independent schools, although not all have a boarding capacity.

Sally Rogers, ex EUMA, formed a local PA network for the secretaries from the school and she was involved in EUMA and was a PA at a Manchester independent school. From my dealings with Sally, I was introduced to EUMA and took advantage of a couple of taster sessions. I also introduced one of my colleagues, Julie. My third session was to an event whereby we could bring our bosses and I decided to do this so that he could see what the organisation was about and, hopefully, think it beneficial for my professional development. Luckily, he did and therefore recommended that both Julie and I join, and furthermore he agreed that the school sponsor our membership fee. Julie was a member for a year but didn't renew her membership as she found the travelling to Manchester (100 mile round trip) very difficult. However, because I have lived and worked in Manchester for a number of years (albeit a long time ago), it doesn't bother me - it is just the time constraint proves taxing in trying to get to a meeting for 6.30 pm. I have been a member for approximately two years now.

"EUMA has also helped me with self-confidence and belief as before I joined I felt I was "plodding along" but I now realise that the area of expertise I have is quite extensive."

I am not a committee member although everyone seems to think my nomination, as NW Treasurer will be adopted at the summer meeting. This will be a new area for me but I am determined to take opportunities as and when they arise, provided I feel I can rise to the challenge. I am therefore looking forward to being able

to help and one of my main objectives will be to help the image of EUMA.

EUMA has helped me in my development and I have attended various training days. It is also helpful to hear what other PAs do within their job specifications and how the jobs within different organisations vary. EUMA has also helped me with self-confidence and belief as before I joined I felt I was "plodding along" but I now realise that the area of expertise I have is quite extensive and have therefore been able to be more proactive. I have watched one particular member grow so much in confidence and I feel that I am also growing. I am lucky in that my boss sees EUMA membership as part of my PDR and is supportive. The only downside is that I live outside the local area and have to travel but that is a small price to pay.

EUMA is a good networking tool because we can call on each other for help. I have made numerous contacts through attending the meetings.

Victoria Darragh
Executive Assistant to CEO
Employers' Forum on Disability
EUMA Regional Chairman South East

I have been working for the Employers' Forum on Disability which is a not for profit / charity as Executive Assistant to the CEO for just over 3 years now. I became a EUMA member in the summer of 2006 after a visit to KPMG to Madeleine Jones a current South East EUMA member whose boss has met with mine on several occasions. Madeleine dropped EUMA into conversation and I was fascinated.

After my meeting with Madeleine I then went onto bombard her with emails to find out more about the organisation and upon reading the website and the aims of the organisation I decided this was something I very much wanted to be a member of. I discussed this with my CEO who was and is still very supportive of my membership and found the whole European aspect of this very interesting since a lot of the work she does is on an international footing and I am dealing with PA's abroad all the time.

"Getting up and speaking at events to 30-60 PAs was nerve wracking to say the least but my confidence is getting stronger and I am becoming much more business like and professional. "

After 6 months of getting know the members of EUMA and learning more about the organisation I wanted to get more involved and with the support and advice from the National Committee and other members I went on to set up my first networking evening which was held in January this year. During this time I was also invited to take on the role of Regional Chairman of the South East. Although I was very happy to even be asked in the first place, I did step back and think I am 24 years old, how am I going to provide any sort of leadership in the South East and who is going to listen to me, half of the members have

been in the profession much longer than me, I couldn't of been more wrong!

The role of the SE Chairman has been absolutely fantastic so far, I have had so much support and encouragement from the members and it has been great personal and professional development for me. Getting up and speaking at events to 30-60 PA's was nerve wracking to say the least but my confidence is getting stronger and I am becoming much more business like and professional.

I have made lots of friends and contacts through EUMA; it has changed my life in so many ways already. With being in a small organisation and no other PA's to talk to at work it's wonderful to have the support and friendship EUMA offers. Mixing with your peers is the only way forward for anyone's career and networking is key to this and that is exactly what EUMA is all about. I am looking forward to rolling out the rest of the events programme for 2007, recruiting new members and continuing to promote EUMA.

Any PA's / Secretaries / Office Managers / Virtual Assistants should seriously consider joining this fantastic organisation!!

Sandra Collins
PA to the CEO and FD, Cory Environmental Ltd
EUMA South East Member

I joined European Association of Professional Secretaries (EAPS) in 1997. At that time Cory Environmental was owned by Ocean Group plc and one of the senior PAs within that company introduced me to EAPS with glowing recommendations.

I must admit I found the initial meetings rather intimidating, surrounded as I was by very senior PAs/secretaries whom I did not know. However everyone made me very welcome and I really enjoyed the interesting and stimulating meetings, which were arranged for the members.

I am a bit of a "committee junkie" and when I was asked in 1998 by Frances Eggo to join the South East meetings sub-committee I jumped at the chance. To cut a very long story short I took over from Frances as SE Meetings Officer in 1999 and continued in this position for the next two years. When I initially took on responsibility for the meetings I was very nervous about standing up in front of audiences, however it wasn't long before I gained confidence and I now have no trouble making presentations to large gatherings.

"As Carol and I said, after our time as Chair and Deputy Chair we could have gone on to run ICI!"

Following my period as meetings officer, Carol Burnett who was the UK Chair, asked me in 2002 to join her on the National Committee as Deputy Chairman. Of course I said yes, as Carol was and is a good friend and I could see we would work well together. The next two years were a whirlwind of organisation and communication, both with UK members and with the National Committee in Europe.

Carol, Martina Tromsdorf (who was national treasurer) and I travelled to various European meetings. What fun we had, but what hard work also! But I wouldn't have missed it for the world. We learned so much, met fantastic people and the self-development was second to none.

I have always said that EUMA (formerly EAPS) and the gym have changed my life. Both have given me confidence, but EUMA especially as it has given me the chance to travel, meet my European colleagues and make very special friends both here and abroad. I have attended EUMA meetings/conferences/training days in many countries, have had the chance to visit Reykjavík, St Petersburg, Milan, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Budapest, to name but a few.

I cannot recommend membership of the Association highly enough. As Carol and I said, after our time as Chair and Deputy Chair we could have gone on to run ICI!

Fiona McKinnon

PA to Chief Executive, The Association of Corporate
Treasurers

EUMA South East Member

EUMA had such a major influence on my life that I will always recall my year of joining. In 1991 I was working for Hiram Walker-Allied Domecq in Wimbledon. Having always worked in the West End or City – I began to feel a little alienated from that world – and so went along (in those days I drove from the office to central London in my MG midget sports car – all long before the dreaded congestion charge was introduced) to a talk given by Janis Nowak of EUMA at the Barbican Secretary Club. She was so impressive and I knew instantly that EUMA was for me and was what I had been seeking to fill the void I had felt. So in July of the same year I became a fully-fledged member!

“My membership has always been supported... One boss used to particularly enjoy the then Annual boss/PA Dinners we held and would ensure it was firmly in the diary at the start of the year.”

I was invited to join the meetings committee and did so straight away – thoroughly enjoying the role and meeting lots of new people within EUMA and externally. After that I assisted another working group with the UK Conference we held in 1994 – which has always gone down in history as a major success – which it was! Inspired by that I attended the excellent 1995 Cyprus Conference, which instantly furthered the networking arena.

My membership has always been supported and met with much respect by all my employers. One boss used to particularly enjoy the then Annual boss/PA Dinners we held and would ensure it was firmly in the diary at the start of the year. Another boss undertook a couple of talks to us and became rather well known on the EUMA circuit.

I had assumed, when I joined, that any networking would be always in a strictly professional or formal related way – but in fact I have made many personal and life-long friendships where we have all been a form of support and fun for each other in all areas of life's journey. Long live EUMA!!!

Christine Andrew
PA to MD Rabobank
EUMA East of Scotland Member

I joined EUMA some 7 1/2 years ago now after starting a new job in Edinburgh as PA/Business Administrator with Rabobank International, a Dutch corporate international bank whose primary focus is in the food and agribusiness sectors.

My role is working for the Managing Director and 2 Relationship Managers in the Edinburgh office - which is actually the whole Edinburgh office!! The main Rabobank UK office with a workforce of around 600 is located in London, with another 80 offices worldwide.

My boss mentioned EuMA to me after I'd been in my job for about 6 months or so, as my predecessor had attended an initial meeting shortly before she returned to the Netherlands. Irene McPhee, who was the Membership Secretary at that time, made contact with me and I arranged to go along to my first meeting – the fact it was a visit to, coupled with a Health & Safety discussion with, Lothian Fire Brigade had absolutely nothing to do with it!!!! The rest, as they say, is history.

“being a member of EuMA... an invaluable experience from making friends to learning new skills, gaining confidence and developing both professionally and personally.”

Working in such a small environment with only 3 other immediate colleagues (who are regularly out of the office in one part of the world or another), EuMA has provided a great source of not just face-to-face contact with other PA's and Administrative staff on a regular basis, but also an invaluable source of training and development. Until joining EuMA, my regular contact with other staff in similar roles was by telephone with other Rabobank offices or on the occasion I was able to visit London for meetings or

training – which was really only about 4-5 times a year. Not quite the same as a regular monthly meeting and visual contact and networking!

After being a member of EuMA for about 2 years I was asked if I'd be interested in joining the Committee as Meetings Co-ordinator. Believing that successful organisations are only as good as the support they receive from members, I decided I would accept this role which I held for 2 years before going on to become Treasurer, the role I currently hold on the East of Scotland Committee. I've found my time on the Committee is a great way to really get to know other members and what EUMA's all about and I've certainly made a lot of friends through being more involved with EuMA.

Anyone who is employed in a smaller office environment (or not, as the case may be), would find being a member of EuMA an invaluable experience from making friends to learning new skills, gaining confidence and developing both professionally and personally. It's also a good way to find out about similar roles and how jobs in other organisations vary, not to mention it looks great on your CV! Networking is one of the best 'training tools' there is. Make EuMA yours.

To find out how you can join us, please visit www.euma.org/unitedkingdom

Or email our UK Chairman, **Lesley Watts** at lesleyawatts@hotmail.co.uk