

Feature Story:

# “The Neutrality of the Ombuds Office”

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**From the Editor**

With bright sunlit days and comforting balmy nights, orchestras of crickets entertain us with their delightful rhythmic symphonies!



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**Recent and  
Upcoming Events  
of Interest**

**Professional Education &  
Advance Knowledge  
(PEAK) Program**  
September 8–12, 2008

**ArtWorks  
Employee Arts Festival**  
September 17, 2008

**Convocation  
and Community Cookout**  
September 23, 2008

**Fall Employee Services Fair**  
October 28, 2008

**Benefits Open Enrollment**  
November 3–17, 2008

**Adult Skating  
Season Begins**

Ice skating is back! The new season of the Adult Skating

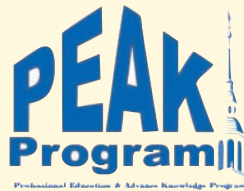
Club at Dartmouth started Sunday, September 7, with weekly ice times for adults to develop their skating skills.

Weekly group lessons included, for both figure skating and (new for this year) hockey skills. For more information go to [www.scadskaters.org](http://www.scadskaters.org) or contact Da-Shih Hu at 643-5060.

**MEAD Program Completing Second Term**

*Kerry Jones speaking at a MEAD session.*

After debuting in January and completing its successful first term in June, the Management Essentials at Dartmouth (MEAD) program will complete its second term in December. MEAD is an enhanced management development curriculum targeted for individuals who have managerial and supervisory accountabilities. Developed and overseen by Kerry Jones, Director of Workforce Planning and Organizational Effectiveness, the program has had nearly 80 participants since its inception. Another six-month offering will begin in January. Stay tuned for more details!

**PEAK Program Focuses on  
Opportunities for Administrative Professionals**

In early September, the Professional Education & Advance Knowledge (PEAK) program provided a variety of continual growth workshops in such areas as career development, wellness / worklife, core business skills, and technical skills.

Designed for administrative and support staff, the week-long series, which was held on September 8–12, featured keynote lectures, classroom sessions, “lunch and learns”, and E-Learning opportunities.

PEAK was coordinated by the Office of Human Resources and the Administrative Professionals Planning Committee. A closing lunch was donated by the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity.

**Going Green/Saving Green  
The 2008 Fall Employee Services Fair**

This year’s employee services fair will have a “Green” theme, focusing on recyclable products, energy conservation, and environmentally responsible activities. The popular event will be held on Tuesday, October 28, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in Collis Common Ground. Nearly 40 College departments and vendors will participate, with everything from tickets to utensils to signage made from recycled materials. Attendees will receive a special bag for re-use when shopping as well as for future fairs. We’ll see you there as we all share the benefits of *Going Green/Saving Green!*

# Catching Up

## With Dartmouth's Chief HR Officer

This fall, you'll be invited to attend the annual Employee Services Fair. The theme, *Going Green/Saving Green*, is timely given what our employees are experiencing in the



current economy. Fuel costs, housing, and healthcare costs take a toll and we all need access to programs and options to stretch the dollar. The College's revenue sources are also impacted by the economy as donor patterns and investment returns fluctuate. Our

employees are our most precious resource and we want to uncover every way to help them save. In turn, as administrators we can seek ways to be fiscally responsible so that we retain flexibility and stability over time.

Some exciting programs are being piloted around the College. Flex hours, van pools, car pools, and zip cars for those without a vehicle on campus are opportunities to decrease fuel costs. Taking care of logistics like showers makes it easier for some employees to bike from home or a park and ride lot. The College continues to invest in employee housing options that are more affordable than the local market. The Childcare Project continues to help home daycare providers become licensed, thereby giving our employees more reliable options during the work week. Employees can save money through pre-tax dollars by using flexible medical and dependent care accounts. Tuition reimbursement helps employees gain new skills that may prepare them for more responsible and higher-paying jobs inside and outside the College.

Healthcare is a rising cost both for employees and for the College. While the College takes great care in minimizing the cost increases to employees, the overall costs have been growing by nearly \$5 million a year. Taking good care of ourselves helps prevent more serious disease and the costly procedures and medicines associated with them. Employees have free phone access to nurses, disease management advice, health and sports activities, and tools like [howyourhealth.org](http://howyourhealth.org) for guidance on healthy habits. Prescriptions can be purchased in bulk, making the price of three refills by mail the same as one in the pharmacy. The College benefits program now offers free patches and other smoking cessation options. Our fitness reimbursement of \$200 per family makes memberships more affordable.

Mental health also suffers when the economy is tight. Marriages are strained, children may suffer, and caring for aging parents becomes more challenging. Circumstances like these are stressful, and it can be hard to stay healthy and get to work. The College offers free counseling and support through its Faculty/Employee Assistance Program. Employees should not hesitate to use this confidential service, even if for suggestions, referrals, or a place to talk.

Saving for the future continues to be a challenge for people all over the country. Dartmouth is fortunate to have faculty like Annamaria Lusardi, who is working on national efforts to improve financial literacy and offering tips on ways to get started with saving. Several of our own employees were interviewed as part of her research, and videos of their advice are available on the Web at [www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/benefits/saving\\_for\\_retirement.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/benefits/saving_for_retirement.html).

Finally, the ability to stay connected in our communities can make us feel supported through difficult times. The AfterHours program offers many low-cost or no-cost activities suitable for singles and families. An extensive discount program, DPerks, has been developed in collaboration with DHMC. Offering discounts from merchants in the Upper Valley, along with services and products by national vendors, the Dperks program also provides Dartmouth employees with ways to save on eyeglasses, insurance, and heating oil.

These savings options are available to employees throughout the year. Information can be found on our website, at our offices, or by contacting your HR consultant. And, again, please join us at the fall employee services fair and learn all about *Going Green/Saving Green*.

Traci K. Nordberg

## IDENTITY THEFT: The Fastest Growing Crime in Our Nation Today

**W**hat is Identity Theft? Identity theft occurs when an imposter takes your personal data – usually your name, Social Security number (SSN), driver's license number, address and/or birth date – and uses it for his or her own financial gain. This person may apply for telephone service, mortgages, credit cards or loans, buy merchandise, and/or lease cars or apartments. They might even use your identity to gain employment - working as you.

Human Resources would like to remind all employees that anyone can become a victim of identity theft.

### WHAT IS CONSIDERED SENSITIVE INFORMATION?

Social Security number (SSN), driver's license number (DLN), address, date of birth (DOB), mother's maiden name, bank account numbers, employee numbers.

Human Resources would like to remind all employees that anyone can become a victim of identity theft.

### Here are some common sense steps that you can take at work to lower your risk and our exposure to this crime:

1. Cross-shred all sensitive documents before throwing them away, especially those with personal identifying information.
2. Keep wallets and purses in locked cabinets while at work.
3. Make sure that conversations cannot be overheard when exchanging sensitive information.
4. Avoid providing sensitive information over the telephone or by email.
5. Password protect your computer. If you leave it unguarded even for a minute, close the file in which you were working.
6. Avoid placing personal mail with checks, SSN or account information in the unlocked outgoing mailbox (e.g., at the receptionist's desk).

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BECOME AN IDENTITY THEFT VICTIM OR BELIEVE I MIGHT BE?

1. Assess the damage: Call the three credit reporting agencies. Place a fraud alert on your Social Security number and have them send you copies of your reports. Look them over carefully for any fraudulent activity or inaccuracies. This preliminary fraud alert only lasts 90 days so renew it before it lapses! Victims are permitted a 7-year alert with a police report.
2. Take action: Call the police where you live. They need to take a report and give you a copy. Send a copy of this report with any affidavits (letters stating the account is fraudulent) you send to creditors. Also contact the FTC to report the crime.

3. Contact the companies who have reported fraudulent accounts. Send correspondence certified, return receipt requested. Tell them this is a case of ID theft. Request copies of all application and transaction account information. Federal law requires them to comply. Ask for letters of clearance.

**Report all identity theft cases to:**  
**Safety and Security**  
**(603) 646-4000**  
**[Safety.and.Security@Dartmouth.EDU](mailto:Safety.and.Security@Dartmouth.EDU)**

### WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT IDENTITY THEFT:

Human Resources is concerned about the financial and physical well-being of its employees. If your wallet has been stolen while at work or you believe you have been a victim of identity theft, either on the job or through another way, we want to know about it.

We understand that you may need some work schedule flexibility to make phone calls and repair the damage caused by the criminal. Workplace identity theft is unavoidable but may be controlled through immediate action. Your quick notification to our resources will help us assess who is putting others at risk. All reports will be treated confidentially.

### IMPORTANT VICTIM/CONSUMER RESOURCES AND INTERNET LINKS

Identity Theft Resource Center - <http://www.idtheft-center.org/> ITRC is a 501(c)3 Non-profit organization specializing in identity theft and victim assistance. (858) 693-7935 or [itrc@idtheftcenter.org](mailto:itrc@idtheftcenter.org)

Federal Trade Commission - [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft) or 877-IDTHEFT

Credit Reporting Agency - victim contact information (reports are free)

TransUnion: 800-680-7289  
Experian: 888-397-3742  
Equifax: 800-525-6285

In addition: Everyone is entitled to one free annual credit report from each agency. ITRC recommends you request your reports in a staggered fashion so as to receive one every 4 months. To order your reports, call: 877-322-8228.

# Cabana Fever

by  
Jim Platt

**Y**ou've been with the family for days now.

The cool water playfully nipping at your toes has been cognitively overwritten by a screaming ballad of "I'm bored we never do anything I want to do!" You gaze out over the horizon...there—oh be still my heart. A mundane but totally manageable Oasis Chart string. Please forgive anything I ever said about you. Please make me have to search for the numbers. Give me phone calls. Give me institutional gridlock. If I hear Uncle Orville describing his squirrel jelly recipe one more time, I'll scream. I need a vacation from this vacation!

The fantasy of the perfect vacation rarely comes true. You plan, you save, you micromanage all the little details as you white knuckle it to the day of departure. And that's the first day of expectation deflation.

- \*What you mean you're sick?
- \*Will you just take Mr. Knife & Fork out of the suitcase so the security guard will let us board?
- \*You don't have your inhaler—do you? Ok okay-okay. Relax. Calm down.
- \*I don't see bugs in hotel towels. There are no bugs. Ok it's a cute little scorpion. You're a Scorpio—can't you just make this an existential symbolic moment?

Our expectation of vacation is a time to unwind: a decompression from all of the issues we could not control, or didn't know how to master. Nobody has any needs, nothing is pending, and away we go. We will be in perfect synchronization—just because...because we are on vacation. No need to get angry because the hotel has no record of your reservation. Carp no more about the obscene increase in fuel costs incurred for the thrill of traveling to your sibling's beach house. You know the sibling that mom always liked best. Relax. The beach is comforting. Alright—so you have to stay inside because of the red tide.

## Tips to Consider:

- \*Perfect vacations begin with agreeing to not have perfect vacations
- \*You can't make people change but you may be able to influence them by modeling the behavior you seek from others
- \*You and your immediate family may be wonderful human beings—but everyone needs a little space to regain perspective and to "air out" one's mind
- \*Leave time for decompression prior to returning to work. Expect delays in travel and savor extra time that you've built into the plan
- \*Just because you are on vacation doesn't mean you can dispense with effective communication tools. Respect never takes a holiday.
- \*Did you make a complete jerk out of yourself because you drank too much at the clambake? OK you're remorseful—now what?
- \*If you haven't already, work on building alliances with some of the usual cast of characters at these events. Do some research ahead of time. "Hey cousin Fred, I just read in an old playbill that you once played the Barber of Fleet Street. Would you like to make some sausage?"
- \*And for goodness sake, don't wait until the last minute to realize the prescriptions need a doctor's renewal—he or she is probably on vacation. And the beeper is turned off.
- \*Last but not least: it's about capturing moments, not weeks.

Welcome back!

# Ask Mr. Grammar

## Combination Explanation

I do tend to run on, don't I? It's caused more than one run-in with grammarians, I can assure you. Sometimes, my decision making leads them to question my decision-making abilities. I may follow up by apologizing for any foul-up; I figure that a follow-through response is the responsible thing to do. To correct any errors, I may go on line to do more research, or I may decide that there aren't any adequate on-line (or online) sources. In the end, I guess that I'm just a trouble-making troublemaker whose days are filled with trouble making.

Usually, but not always (are you seeing a pattern when it comes to grammar?), the rules for combination word forms work this way:

- For the verb form, use two separate words, with a space (e.g., "team building").

—*They spent the afternoon team building.*

- For the noun and adjective forms, put a hyphen between the two words (e.g., "team-building").

- Eventually, through usage, the noun/adjective forms lose the hyphen (e.g., "teambuilding").

Two oddities gum up the works:

- Often, but not always (grrr!), words with "double" or "second" follow the rules in reverse.

— *I double-checked, and, sure enough, he double-crossed me. I second-guessed every thing he did after that.*

— *After a double check of the record, I found out that I was the victim of a double cross.*

- Adjectives following a verb are not hyphenated.

— *The well-known scholar gave a lecture each week.*

— *The scholar's weekly lectures are well known.*

—EXCERPTED FROM "A GRAMMAR PRIMER (OF SORTS)"

Have a grammar question? E-mail Mr. Grammar c/o [james.burger@dartmouth.edu](mailto:james.burger@dartmouth.edu).

Clip 'n Save



| VERB<br>COMBINATION FORM                             | NOUN<br>COMBINATION FORM                        | ADJECTIVE<br>COMBINATION FORM                                     |
|--|---|---|
| As a student, he spent three summers window washing. | One of his summer jobs included window-washing. | For three summers, he had a window-washing job during the summer. |

# The Neutrality of the Ombuds Office

by  
Mary Childers, Dartmouth College Ombudsperson

Ombuds Offices are expected to adhere to four basic principles: confidentiality, independence, informality, and neutrality. After a year and a half serving as the Ombudsperson at Dartmouth, I've come to realize that the principle of neutrality is the one that confuses the most people. I've been asked "If you're neutral and impartial, how can you help me?" and "If a policy is being violated, wouldn't it be wrong for you to stay neutral?" These are such excellent questions, I'm happy to have an opportunity to answer them, however partially, for a larger audience.

Neutrality is a stance and a posture that allows me to help people make sure they have thought through a number of possibilities before they commit to an action or an interpretation of someone else's conduct. If someone is angry, upset, fearful, etc. and tells me about a cruel statement or an unfair action, I don't mirror or echo their emotions. By neither challenging them nor criticizing anyone else, I give them a chance to assess if their reactions are proportionate to what has actually happened. I often try to make it easier for people to be inquisitive about something they were irritated or even crushed by in the workplace. If I ask the right questions, they are more likely to hear the argument going on in their own heads and acknowledge when there are other reasonable perspectives. On many occasions, I've seen people realize that they jumped to a conclusion or have exaggerated the degree of jeopardy they are in.

**Few people actually want to be a thorn in the side of their colleagues.**

Some visitors to the Ombuds Office have said that getting used to a neutral stance has made it easier to approach difficult conversations about policies that don't suit them or with other people who are bothering them. If they show curiosity and give others a chance to explain, they often can overcome negative feelings that interfere with their work. A posture of neutrality - despite all the complex emotions people may feel just below the surface - allows us to follow one of the basic precepts of conflict resolution: focus on identifying the shared problem rather than the person you blame for difficulties. It's a relief to realize how few people actually want to be a thorn in the side of their colleagues.

When I facilitate a conversation between or among people who are facing difficulties, neutrality makes it easier for everyone to speak what is on their minds with some confidence of a fair hearing. Because I am not advocating for a particular solution, I can ask questions that bring out the most cogent arguments all sides have available and be more useful to the involved parties who are going to have to live with solutions they come up with. A facilitator's neutrality allows more truth to surface at a table and sets a tone for emotional control.

If someone tells me something that seems like a violation of a College policy, I remain neutral in the sense that I don't presume I know the whole story. But I let people know that if they are reporting accurately, it is in their interests and the interests of the College to do something. If they have identified a serious issue, I sometimes go so far as to urge people to take action, or to give me permission to intervene, or to work with another office. What they do depends on their preferences as much as any advice I give.

Rather than joining visitors in expressing outrage or sadness, I explain their options because understanding where they have recourse empowers people. Ultimately I am not a decision-maker about policies, compliance or solutions. But my consistent experience has been that appropriate changes have been made by individuals with authority in those rare instances where a potential violation has been identified. My neutrality certainly helps me prepare people to have more credibility than they would if what I offered them was premature advocacy or advocacy based on only one side of a story.

To learn more about the Ombuds Office, go to [www.dartmouth.edu/~ombuds](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ombuds).

## “What Is Your Greatest Obstacle to Working Productively?”

by Cristin Lind

“What is Your Greatest Obstacle to Working Productively?” I ask my clients, class participants, and even myself this question all the time. I am fascinated by how the answers vary widely—from needless meetings, unfocused bosses and failing technology to office politics and unrealistic client expectations. Yet despite the variety, all of the answers stem from two basic points of view:

1. My greatest obstacle is something I am doing or not doing.
2. My greatest obstacle is something someone else is doing or not doing.

Two people can even share basically the same challenge but see it completely differently depending on which of these two views they hold. For example, let’s imagine that Sue and Mary are both busy office workers in demanding, service-oriented industries. They are both inundated with unnecessary interruptions in person and by phone and e-mail.

### Sue

When asked what her greatest obstacle to working productively was, Sue answered: “Other people keep interrupting me all the time, and I can’t get my work done. I wish they’d stop.” I sympathize with Sue. Heck, I’ve been Sue. She is constantly interrupted, and surely she can’t beat herself up about that—her staff, co-workers and clients are interrupting her, and that’s not her fault. Right? But there aren’t many possibilities—beyond “take it or leave it”—and change seems unlikely for Sue. Sue probably spends a lot of time and energy wishing things would be different, venting to a close friend or being resentful toward the person creating the interruption. So on she works, wasting time and being frustrated.

### Mary

When asked what her greatest obstacle to working productively was, Mary answered: “Unnecessary interruptions are taking up a lot of my time. I’d like to become more skilled at controlling them.” Mary then spent some time brainstorming and creating a list of ways in which she might be able to minimize unnecessary interruptions. By approaching her challenge with a willingness to change and take responsibility, Mary retained her power over the situation and was able to use her own creativity to develop a few great ideas that will work for her.

### Try it yourself

Have you been faced with a recurring challenge that doesn’t seem to change? Try approaching the problem differently to see if you get new ideas or energy:

1. Start by stating the problem as clearly as possible.
2. Create a statement that expresses your intent to take ownership for solving that problem. “[Your problem] is [negative repercussion, like wasting time or money, causing stress], and I’d like to become more skilled at handling this issue.”
3. Brainstorm by yourself or with others on creative things you can do to lessen the problem’s impact.
4. Pick one or two ideas and try them out.

I will admit that there are times when there really isn’t anything you can do to change the situation. Bridging the mismatch gap between your organization or your manager and yourself would sacrifice too much of your energy and joy. Your choice then is to “love it or leave it.” But if you want to exhaust your options before you get there, try this approach.

*Cristin Lind is a productivity consultant and certified GO System trainer. This article is reprinted with her permission. To read Mary’s list, visit Cristin’s Web site at <[www.clearwaterproductivity.com/](http://www.clearwaterproductivity.com/)>.*