

PCGPlus: Mining the Ashridge jewels



Ashridge @ a click

Since the launch of PCGPlus last December, over 1,500 PCG members have taken up the premium level of membership. In addition to the standard membership benefits, PCGPlus includes PAYE Audit Cover, the Creditsafe Fee Recovery Service, access to the 24-7 business information portal, and access to the Ashridge Virtual Learning Resource Centre (VLRC).

The VLRC provides PCGPlus members with valuable access to the online library and resource centre of one of the UK's leading business schools. Ashridge is widely recognised as a leading provider of executive education and development to individuals and organisations across the public and private sectors. The VLRC itself is used by over 100 leading organisations including British American Tobacco, British Broadcasting Corporation, Guardian Newspapers, Lloyds TSB, Whitbread and Xerox Europe.

This element of the PCGPlus package was introduced after nearly one third of respondents to PCG's annual membership survey in 2004 expressed major and serious concerns about continually updating their skills and capabilities; sometimes this is a reflection on time available or accessibility of quality information.

Surveys have shown that PCG members use a wide range of learning styles, and the VLRC will particularly appeal to those who want to learn independently, in their own time and at a pace to suit their individual circumstances. It will also complement other forms of personal development. Most importantly, it offers an ideal way to stay informed of the very latest in leading management thinking.

Through the VLRC, PCGPlus members can access top quality Ashridge learning materials

and valuable information, as well as carefully selected external resources including over 50 innovative learning guides.

Approximately 30 pages long each, these learning guides provide a wealth of information that includes established theory and models, the practical Ashridge approach, and details of resources recommended by tutors. Each has a variety of practical development activities, self-assessment questionnaires, case studies and exercises. They are ideal for personal development, research before a meeting or to gain in-depth understanding of a current issue.

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Topics covered by the learning guides include, for example:

- ◆ Benchmarking
- ◆ Competitor analysis
- ◆ Customer relationship management
- ◆ Facilitation skills
- ◆ Interpersonal skills
- ◆ Investment appraisal
- ◆ Marketing strategy and planning
- ◆ Meeting skills
- ◆ Negotiating skills
- ◆ Presentation skills
- ◆ Strategic awareness
- ◆ Team building/ team working
- ◆ Writing a business plan

Through Ashridge's partnership with Pocketmanager.com, the VLRC also provides users with access to over 50 titles from the popular and well-established Management Pocketbooks series. These are just a few of the titles that may be of particular interest to PCG members:

The *Decision-making Pocketbook* explains how to make balanced choices that address needs and the real issues, choices that minimise risks and add value. It covers everything you need to know on the subject, from understanding the key components of a decision to a framework for decision-making with methodologies and case studies. It also looks at the differences between individual decision-

making and reaching consensus within a team. Techniques to help you analyse the risks, identify possible outcomes and make informed choices are described. One reader remarked: "A pragmatic approach, showing how to ensure management by design rather than chance."

Anyone you might want to contact in the world is only five or six people contacts away from you, maintains Jon Warner in *The Networking Pocketbook*. He sees networking as a major social and life skill that can benefit both our working and personal life. The *Networking Pocketbook* details the four basic steps that lead to effective networking relationships, the so-called LINK: Learning (about needs, ours and other people's); Investing (making strong contacts); Nurturing (achieving a deeper relationship); and Keeping (maintaining the momentum).

As the author leads readers through these four basic steps, he progressively describes the seven key competencies needed for effective networking. These competencies relate to temperament/disposition, strategic planning, organisation, nurturing, communications, socialising and persistence. "Encouraging advice for those short on networking confidence," says *Management Today* journal.

According to the *Personal Success Pocketbook*, the definition of success is different for each person. No matter how you define it, there are ways to help you achieve more of what you want from life. Author Paul Hayden, who has also written the popular *Learner's Pocketbook*, stresses the need to identify your personal motivators and drivers, and establish what your priorities are. Then you can plan your goals, and the necessary actions. The book is built around a 'Plan, Act, Review' structure, and contains questionnaires and activities to get you thinking.

The *Managing Cashflow Pocketbook* stresses the importance of proper cash management and how this impacts on running a business. Reconciling profit to cash, improving cashflow and managing working capital are central issues.

In addition to these valuable resources, which will enable PCGPlus members to enhance their own skills, the VLRC also offers specific industry trends, ideal if you want to quickly refresh your knowledge or gain a quick insight into a new industry.

The VLRC is available to valid PCGPlus members via the website at www.pcg.org.uk/membership/pcgplus/access/

