

Backchat

Insider's Market matrix

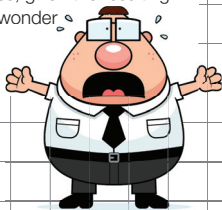


Holding the fort

The summer holidays probably can't come soon enough for Biba technical services manager Steve Foulsham. With head of technical services Peter Staddon departing at the end of this week and head of corporate affairs Graeme Trudgill having spent much of the last couple of weeks off on paternity leave, Foulsham has been doing the work of three men.

People in glass houses ...

If you are an accountant, you don't often get to call other people 'boring'. But there's always someone worse off than you, and it seems the whipping boy of choice for bean-counters is the actuary. I was in a lift with some accounting types the other day when one of them piped up: 'So few actuaries become accountants because they would find it too exciting' – which I assume passes for a joke in those circles, given the resulting chortles from others. I wonder who actuaries take the mickey out of?



All mouth, no trousers

Former Sex Pistols front man Johnny 'Rotten' Lydon's west London house burnt to the ground over the weekend after a dryer containing his underwear was left running. Lydon did not have insurance on the property, but perhaps that was because no insurer was able to calculate the exact risk on the notoriously dirty musician washing his pants for the first time since 1977...



ONE STEP FORWARD

London calling

Despite his hasty departure from the top job at AXA last year, it seems my old pal Philippe Maso just can't get enough of Blighty. I'm told Maso is predominantly based in London, despite his role as chief executive of Aviva France. To use a well-known expression, I wonder if Philippe is 'going native'. I hope Aviva France is prepared for some hefty travel expenses.



Just married. Must dash!

Congratulations to Ataraxia chief executive Stuart Randall, who recently got married. Mr and Mrs Randall set off on a Scandinavian cruise for their honeymoon last week. I'm sure the industry will join me in wishing all the best to the moustachioed insurance stalwart and his better half.



The camera loves you, darling

Since his firm was taken over by Hanover Insurance Group, Chaucer chief Bob Stuchbery has been dabbling in the world of video conferencing technology to keep in touch with his new masters over the pond. Despite expectations to the contrary, Bob reports that this mode of communication has gone swimmingly so far. Yet, as those of us who have ever seen video links die spectacularly will testify, this is surely beginner's luck.



Gimme a gimmick

It's interesting to hear that MMA have set aside £20m to fund a marketing campaign for its planned aggregator launch. I wonder what marketing gimmick the French insurer will cook up to compete with the opera singers, meerkats and Iggy Pops of this world? Answers on a postcard please.



Animal instincts

Environment secretary of state Caroline Spelman put a few noses out of joint at last week's flood summit organised by her department. She turned up at the event but then had to rush away after just a few minutes. Apparently, she had more pressing matters to attend to – badger culls. "A few thousand animals versus the homes and livelihoods of millions of UK citizens – it's interesting to see where this government's priorities lie," the man sitting next to me muttered.



TAXI!

CHEERS!



TWO STEPS BACK