I once worked for an international organisation dedicated to the generation of happiness, a task it tackled in several languages. Our boss made it clear that we should dress smartly so as to blend in with the delegates. This caused us to rush out and buy suits and ties and generally enhance our sartorial profile; mine may have sagged in recent years but I still strive for perfection.

There is more to looking at home in the corridors of international organisations. Not only do you have to power dress (or dress down when plying your trade with certain NGOs), but you must also look as if you belong and that you are on important and pressing business, rather than waiting for coffee or the newspaper shop to open.

The secret is to carry a piece of paper. It really is that simple and I share this information based on years of close observation of the way things are done in these august organisations.

Generally we travel the world loaded with suitcases, briefcases, backpacks, bum bags, money belts, hats and umbrellas. But once we arrive at our place of work we tend to jettison the load and go into unencumbered mode (aka jetsetter lite). It is important that once you've got rid of the various bits and pieces that you still look busy. There are good reasons of self-preservation for this because chief interpreters can suddenly loom around the corner on the look out for available microphone fodder for a meeting on sequential management that has been called at the last minute. Walk past him or her with an important piece of paper and a determined look and you might just get away with it.

Generally the organisation's staff can point the way. Watch them and hone your technique.

Find a piece of paper covered with printed words. Something with a logo will really give you corridor cred. Clutch the piece of paper as if it were vital to the organisation's mission; glance at it studiously every so often as if lost in profound and significant thought. When entering a lift ignore the people around you and gaze diligently at the document, taking care to shield it from wandering eyes in case people see that it's simply the transport arrangements for a forthcoming meeting. Huff and puff to indicate that the lift is not moving fast enough for a person involved in such significant work. Leave the lift with alacrity and head for your destination, bearing in mind that you must take a document to lunch with you - only lightweights read whodunits.

You may think I'm inventing all of this, but my suggestions are based on close observation of the working environment; it was the same at school that whenever a teacher asked you to do something
you told them that you were already up to your eyes for another teacher who'd set you on emptying all the pencil sharpeners.

Now that I've let you in on the secret I look forward to hearing from you all on how you've avoided the chief interpreter's beady eye.

*Phil Smith* is a UK-based freelance who's looked busy since he was eight.

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**Recommended citation format:**