

Vignettes of Blue Collar Mobile Work

Contribution to data collection on EPSRC Project:

***“Designing for mobile and distributed work: Technology use
in Remote Settings”***

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A DAY IN THE LIFE (ONE)

"Painters and decorators apply paint, wall coverings and other finishes to interior and exterior surfaces of buildings and other structures."

<http://www.apprenticesearch.com/fpTrades/Painter.asp>

A Day in the Life of Pete the Painter...

Pete Smith opens his eyes. He looks at his phone, which is precariously positioned on his bedside cabinet. His eyes focus on the time showing on the display 7.15 a.m. He picks up his flashing phone and disables the alarm, which is becoming increasingly louder and more annoying ever second. He pulls his duvet over his head and falls back to sleep again. Oblivion follows. Pete opens his eyes again. His mobile is ringing. The lighted LCD display reads 'Andy'. Andy and Pete go way back - at least ten years in the same firm. At the moment they even work together going out in the same van painting a wide variety of commercial and industrial premises for their bosses J Harper and Sons. Pete jumps out of bed and picks up the phone. "Hi mate", he says, pressing the accept call button. "No sorry. I slept in, forgot to set the alarm again! You will be here in ten minutes? Good. See you then... Oh yeah, sorry, meant to ask you, you gotta copy of last night's Daily Recorder? Can you bring that as well? I want to check what it said about Saturday's football game but I forgot to get a copy last night. Cheers. See you soon mate". Their phone conversation is deliberately short, both men are in a hurry, they are meant to be at their work's main depot in less than thirty minutes to pick up their day's instructions.

Ten minutes pass and Pete's phone beeps. It's a text message from Andy. "Hurry up mate! in street waiting!" Pete stares out of his flat's window. He sees Andy's van parked at the bottom of the street. Andy used to honk his car horn at him when he arrived, but the neighbour's complained. Texting was a better way anyway. Andy already had the same message stored in his machine. He just had to press send. Pete didn't bother responding to the text, just picked up his Nike bag with his tools and overalls in it and ran out to the van.

Getting into the van Pete spies a copy of the Daily Recorder, as requested, lying on the passenger side of the dashboard. Pete smiles. "Cheers mate". He puts his bag into the back of the van, which is in its usual chaotic jam-packed state. Some half-used tins of paint sit snugly next to some small step-ladders. Pete can also see some paint stripper and wood primer, a blow torch, some colour cards, dust sheets and a few brushes peeping out of Andy's large Adidas bag. Also visible among the montage of equipment is an old plastic bucket wrapped in some dust sheets and, of course, Pete's favourite piece of equipment - the stereo. The whole van smells of paint mixed with paint remover. But Andy and Pete don't notice the smell anymore. Andy drives off. He sticks the radio on and starts singing along to the record playing. Pete is engrossed in the paper's football commentary. *What a goal that was on Saturday. Awesome!* Andy's phone, lying on the front of the dashboard, beeps. "Mate" he says to Pete "Gonna check who that text is from". Pete takes Andy's phone off the dashboard. He accesses the text menu option and opens up the message. It's from Garry, one of their work colleagues. "@wk get cigs thanx". Pete reads the message out to Andy. Andy nods to Pete to acknowledge the request. This is a common text among the work-mates. Andy gets Pete to text Garry back with "OK C U L8TR ", using Andy's phone. Andy stops at the nearest garage and fills the car up with some diesel for the day ahead. He buys Garry the requested cigarettes.

They arrive at the company workshop at 8.20 a.m. They enter the building and head straight for the small company canteen, only 7 minutes until they get their day's instructions from their "gaffer" Brian - but a cup of tea first was all both men could think about....

Pete and Andy sit next to Garry in the Canteen. Andy hands him the cigarettes. Then Andy and Garry proceed to discuss last night's TV. Pete looks over at Paul, another workmate who is also sitting at the table *"What you up to now mate?"*, Pete inquires. *"I thought you were up in Aberdeen painting some supermarket fronts?"*. Paul shakes his head, *"Oh that was last week mate, finished that one early. Didn't you get that text I sent you? Must have sent it to the wrong number instead!...I will never get the hang of this stupid new phone Janice bought me"*. He picks up his 'ultra-flash' new phone, which is lying next to his coffee cup on the table. He flicks through his sent message inbox, but he can't find it. He searches in his pocket and pulls out his old phone. *"Maybe I sent it with this one?"*, he says. But after looking through that he can't find the text there either. Both men shrug their shoulders. In walks Brian, the work-mates line manager. He has some clipboards in hand.

"Hi guys", Brian says scanning the canteen. *"Got some work for you all to do!"* Brian passes out the numbered clipboards to each of the van drivers present. Each clipboard has printed forms attached detailing the jobs the men have been allocated that day - although the order was fairly flexible unless the time stated on it was urgent. Brian deals with some minor issues as the men receive their clipboards. Some overtime is requested, which he takes a note off in his diary; someone hands him a sick-line that covers their two weeks off; someone else hands him some receipts for diesel. Two of them hand him some timesheets. He hands Andy his clipboard and then asks the men sitting around the table *"Any you guys heard from Graham this morning? Only his phone is switched off. He has the day off work today, but he left his blowtorch out at that job in Newfarms hotel in Bearsden yesterday and they want to know when he is going to come by and pick it up. So if you hear from him today, can you get him to give me a call?"* The painters all nod and Andy says *"Sure thing boss!"*

Andy shows Pete the first job on the clipboard. They quickly gulp down the last of their tea and get up from the table. The first job of the day is in Edinburgh. A large Department Store. Andy is not pleased - he won't be able to avoid rush hour. It will take them over an hour and a half to get there. Seeing their anxiety, Garry asks them where they are going in such a rush. Andy offers him a quick look at the first job on his clipboard and Garry scans the basic details of the job offering some helpful words of advice at the same time. *"Painted some changing rooms in the store myself a while back. There is staff parking round the back of the store so head straight for there. The security guard will be fine about you parking there and it beats paying those blasted meters on Princes Street."* The guys both thank him for the tip and head off.

....If there is one thing Pete hates about going from Glasgow to Edinburgh it's the motorway tailbacks. Andy asks Pete to contact the boss to let him know they may be late getting there just in case the Department Store starts phoning up asking after their whereabouts. The guys also figure they need some more undercoat paint, so Pete decides to ask Brian to fax the local suppliers in Edinburgh with an order. They can pick it up when they know what they need for the new job. Pete phones Brian on his office landline, but the secretary says he is out on a job. Undeterred, Pete decides to phone Brian directly on his mobile. He gets through and lets him know about the delay and requests the fax. Brian is happy to oblige about the fax, promising he'll do it when he gets back to the office. Brian asks once more about Graham, but Pete confirms he and Andy haven't heard anything from him as yet today. The traffic jam continues. Pete receives a joke text from his non-work friend Jamie. He reads it out to Andy. Andy laughs and asks him to forward it to his phone so he can send it to his girlfriend. Pete does that. The traffic gets a little lighter. Rush hour is over....

The reception entrance to Jenkins Department Store in Edinburgh is manned by two young women. Pete explains he is from Harper's and Sons and offers the girls a look at his clipboard with the job's order number on it. *"Oh we don't know anything about that,"* says the first girl. *"I will get the assistant manager down for you."* She picks up the telephone

and phones him. A few minutes later Pete and Andy are explaining their presence to him. He looks at the clipboard then leans over the reception desk to access the desk's computer terminal. He accesses the management record files and keys in the order number for the job, copying it from the clipboard's form. Everything matches up. *"Okay lads no problem"*. He explains the store manager had just gone on holiday a few days earlier and must have requested the job done before he left. He shows Andy and Pete to the room that needs painting in the basement of the store.

"Its actually just one wall that we want done. And only one bit of it really. It got damaged by dampness. But its been treated now. Do you think you will be able to match the paint?" Andy and Pete move away some office furniture to get a better look at the work that needs to be done. Pete assures the manager it wont be hard to match the colour. He pulls out his colour chart from his pocket. He spots the colour. *"Yeah. I will give the boss a call and arrange for this paint to be ordered..."*.

"Great" says the assistant manager. Pete explains it will take a few visits to get it all sorted - and the assistant manager leaves them to it. Pete picks up his mobile phone and phone's Brian. *"Hey boss could you add to that earlier order. Looks like it's paint colour..."*, he reads the order number from his chart. Brian says he will fax the additional order straight away, to let the men get started on it. Meanwhile the workmates clear away the rest of the office furniture from the wall to be painted. After helping Pete move the furniture in the room, Andy nips off in the van to Paint & co. to get the newly ordered supplies, while Pete gets the room ready. Dust sheets down, ladder up. Stereo plugged in. Bucket filled with water for the brushes, which the girls in the reception, Jane and Jill, kindly provide as well as a welcome cup of tea. Pete tests a patch of undercoat on the bit of wall to be done. He waits for it to dry and so texts Andy in the meantime. *"WER RU mate? Need U here!"* Andy texts him a response immediately *"back in 5"*. Pete sticks his cap on. The real work is about to begin...

It's two hours later. The two men are in their van eating their lunch in a lay-by between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Pete's phone rings on the dashboard. Andy is nearest - and with Pete having food in his mouth he picks it up. *"Hi Pete's phone. Hi boss. What's up? No I haven't heard from Graham yet. Hasn't he called in? His network coverage aint that good sometimes. I tell you what I will text him, shall I, let him know you are still looking for him?"* Brian explains the main reason why he has called, he wants them to help out on Garry's job in Greenock. Andy grabs a pen off the dashboard and writes the address and job number on the back of yesterday's Daily Recorder. Andy starts up the van *"this one is pretty urgent"*, Andy tells Pete - *"Garry and his new apprentice have slipped behind painting a new petrol station that is opening tomorrow so we have to go help them out."* Andy also asks Pete to text Graham for him using his phone. *"Say PHONE ME on it. Put it in capitals. That should get him to call. He hates using his phone to call the boss on his day off - that is probably why he aint called in yet..."*

It's an hour later and the guys arrive at Greenock. Pete texts Garry before they arrive. *"C U 10 mins."* Garry phone's Pete while they are still making there way to the petrol station. *"Hi. Thanks for the help lads. How tall is your ladder? We may need an extra large one. I may have to ask the van to come out with one? Let you take a look at the wall yourself...!"*

....Twenty minutes later and the guys are finally helping Garry and his apprentice out on the job. The apprentice is holding the ladder while Pete, taller than the other two, just manages to reach the top of the wall with his brush. Pete's phone goes. He just lets it ring. The ring tone was the one he set for his sister Karen and what ever she wants can wait until he is off the ladder. Andy and Garry are meanwhile doing the bottom and middle sections of the wall of the petrol station. Andy is on his knees. And Garry is stretching. They are talking about football. Who will win the league. Who will get demoted. Who will get promoted. Pete comes down the ladder. He listens to his voice mail. His sister wants him to drop by after work and pick up some catalogue stuff she just received for his

girlfriend Susie. Pete phones her to tell her he can't make it round tonight because of the football match being broadcast live on SKY Sports but offers to give Susie a call to see if she wants to pick up the order herself. He phones Susie's office but she is with a customer. He leaves a message and then decides to text her on her mobile, just in case she doesn't get the message. He phones back his sister to tell her about not being able to get in touch with Susie. As soon as he comes off the phone it rings again and this time it is Susie. He asks her to phone his sister. He figures they are better sorting it out between the two of them.

....It's nearing four thirty when the four men finally finish the garage wall. *"I better call the boss"*, says Garry *"let him know that we are finished. Can I borrow your phone Pete? I got no charge left in mine."* Pete obliges, handing him the phone. Garry stares at the phone. *"Can you dial it for me? Your phones different from mine"*. Pete does as requested, calling Brian's mobile number as he knows that the boss is usually out checking on a job somewhere in the afternoons. He hands the ringing phone to Garry. *"Hi boss...no its Garry here. Borrowing Pete's phone... yeah jobs finally finished..."*. After a couple of minutes of Garry talking to Brian, Andy comes over to him clutching the clipboard bearing the necessary customer signatures to say the job is complete. He notices that Garry is on the phone, he mouths *"is that the boss?"*. Garry nods his head and Andy motions to speak to him... *"Hi boss heard anything from Graham? Right well he phoned me about 10 minutes ago. Said he'd run out of credit on his phone and he just managed to put some more money in it. I told him about the blowtorch and he said he will go there first thing tomorrow and pick it up on his way out to that other job in Milngavie he's doing just now"*. Brian thanks him for his help...the guys start tidying up the last of their tools into the vans and head back into Glasgow - convoy style.

....Another thirty minutes later and the guys hit rush hour on their way back to Glasgow. Pete phones another work colleague Charlie from the van. *"Hi, Just checking you are still going down the pub tonight mate to watch the game on the big screen. Yep, we are finished for the day and Andy says he is up for it tonight as well - escaping from the wife for a change! Will I text Eddie and see what he is doing about the game? Oh, he's already phoned you? Great, see you both at 7.30 down Lauder's pub...!"*

A DAY IN THE LIFE (TWO)

"Office machine repairers usually work on machinery at the customer's workplace...Common malfunctions include paper mis-feeds, due to worn or dirty parts, and poor copy quality, due to problems with lamps, lenses, or mirrors." <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos186.htm>

A day in the life of Pauline the Fax, Photocopier and Printer Repair Engineer

Pauline kisses her two teenage children as she is heading out of the door. Her thirteen year old son squirms. *"Text me later on my mobile about the football and if I can I will pick you up"*, she tells him. Her daughter waves to her as Pauline makes her way down to the house's front gate. *"Don't forget your lunch money it's on the kitchen table"*, she shouts at them, as she gets into her large estate car. She makes a mental note to text them in 10 minutes so they don't forget. She puts her large heavy briefcase -come tool kit - on the back seat. Bulging out of the boot of her car is a wide assortment of tools and equipment she may need in her daily grind. Printer cartridges, toners, cleaning fluids and some heavy duty diagnostic equipment, like voltage meters, fight for boot space alongside a large cardboard box filled with fax, printer and photocopier manuals. Squashed underneath the manual's box is the kid's tent. She keeps forgetting to take it out of the boot! She drives to the local garage to fill up with petrol as she usually does at this time in the morning. So goes the start of her day.

At 8.25 a.m. Pauline is parked around the corner from the garage. She uses her own mobile to text the kids about the lunch money - one more reminder wont kill them, she thinks. She then switches off her own mobile's ringer and sticks it into her handbag, where it will remain silently for the rest of the day. From now on the kids and her husband know to contact her on her work's mobile if they have urgent news to get through to her, otherwise, they will just text her regular phone - something she will occasionally check throughout the day. She leans over to her briefcase/toolbox and pulls out the company mobile in readiness for her daily ritual. As the clock in her car turns 8.30 a.m. she turns her company mobile on. All hell breaks loose on the machine. Five text messages loudly fanfare their immediate arrival on her phone. Without even looking at them she knows they are from the call centre attached to her present company, Centa & co. She is glad she deleted yesterday's lot of texts last night, otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to receive all of these at the same time! She reads each message in turn. All non-urgent stuff, she concludes, probably called in overnight. Pauline looks over them again, more slowly this time, to establish what the best order to tackle the jobs in would be. In her old company it was at moments like this that she would have used Microsoft messenger on her laptop/phone hybrid to speak to her colleagues - to see if there was any jobs they wanted to swap or any advice they had about a particular job. However, in this new job she was messenger-less! Resigned to the change in her resources she looks over her text messages again and starts filling in some call sheets for them. The call centre has sent texts detailing addresses, phone numbers, time called in, a code for the type of equipment and the problem called in, as well as an indication of urgency level, and job number. With all this information in one text Pauline needs to scroll her phone quite extensively to see all the information she needs to copy into the call sheet. After quickly glancing over the information she has now transferred into her call sheets, she decides to tackle Brown's the solicitors in the High Street. Their jamming photocopier would be her first stop of the day. It's a machine she knows well. In fact it broke down only last week.

She phones the call centre to confirm what she is going to do. Once she has supplied her work ID number the voice at the end of the line greets her warmly. It's Mona and she likes talking to her. She knows her job, thinks Pauline, so she asks for a little more information about the job and writes Mona's responses in her orange workbook that she

keeps in her car. "So what was the name of the person who called that one in. Does it say?". Mona looks up the information on the screen and tells her "it's a Miss Smith". Pauline recognises her as the secretary at Brown's. "Okay, Mona thanks for your help. I think I will give her a call and see if I can come fix it now. I remember they don't open until 9.30 a.m. but hopefully there is someone there just now." She phones the number the call centre has sent her on the text - it matches the number in the back of her workbook where she stores all her useful phone numbers. Miss Smith answers Pauline's phone call and is relieved that Pauline can come over and fix the machine before office hours start.

... Pauline grimaces. She pulls out the jammed photocopy paper from the machine. She tries to replicate the problem, just to see where it is sticking. She manually feeds the paper through and it jams. She checks the log-book in the machine once again. She reckons that too much time has been wasted on this particular problem over the last few months so she decides that the best thing to do is to replace the troubled part. She removes one of the paper feeders from the photocopier and writes down the part number in her orange workbook. It may take a day or so to get this ordered, she thinks, but a replacement should do the trick. She reinserts the troublesome part into the machine. "Its working now", she tells Miss Smith, getting her signature for the call out sheet, "but just don't try to feed anything manually. It needs a replacement part and when it comes through I will drop by in a few days and replace it". She hands the secretary the customer copy of the call out sheet and heads off.

Back on the road and heading to her next job of the day Pauline's phone rings. She glances down to the passenger seat and sees from the LCD display that it is Alan, a colleague of hers, calling. She pulls into the side of the road and takes the call. He seems relieved to hear her voice. "Hi. Whats up?", she asks. He explains he is trying to fix a photocopier at Benton's factory. "The log book says you replaced a part only two weeks ago. It seems to be making a helluva racket again but it's not the same part this time." He asks her if she remembers anything odd about the machine? Pauline scratches her head but can't remember anything off hand. She then checks in her orange workbook. Against the Benton Factory machine she has scrawled something. "Yes, I have made a note of it in my book, she tells him, the drum cartridge seemed a little loose on it's axle. Maybe that is the problem now? Can you try tightening it up a little?". Alan asks her to stay on the line while he tries it. He tries copying again and it works fine - the noise having disappeared now. Alan thanks her for her time. "Your welcome", she says "Are you coming to the meeting today with the techies?" Alan tells her he can't make it to the technical experts meeting - too much on that day, but wouldn't mind an update if they say anything relevant about the new canon printer on the market that everyone keeps having problems with. She agrees to let him know if anything interesting is said and ends the call.

....Its now 11 O'clock and Pauline is parked in a side street looking at her next job on the call sheets. Rolandor's carpet outlet. Fax machine. She looks at the address mentioned but it doesn't seem familiar. She gets her A-Z out and can't find it anywhere on the local map. She wonders if it's in a new industrial estate that has just been set up? She tries ringing the number on her call out sheet but the phone is busy. So she phones the call-centre who say they will keep phoning the customer until they get through. She decides to give them ten minutes to get some directions for her and takes the time to fill in her spare parts order form for the Brown's solicitor job, copying the necessary information over from her orange workbook. The phone goes as she is in the middle of doing this and it's the call centre again. They have managed to get through to the customer and give her some directions. As she suspected they are based in a new industrial estate. When she gets there she shows her credentials at the door. She speaks to the receptionist of the outlet who explains the Fax machine has been 'playing-up' for a few days now. Pauline has a good look at the machine. She switches it on and by the sound of it and the flashing light response it seems fine. She makes a photocopy with it and it works no problem. So she asks the receptionist for the fax's manual. Which doesn't tell her anything she hasn't already tried. She phones the fax company's test fax request line and requests a fax to be sent out. They oblige, but it doesn't come through. She decides to phone the help-line

number for the fax but after a brief chat with the guy on the other end of the line she decides she has tried all the proper diagnostic tests. She then opts for the final resort, to phone up BT's customer helpline. After 15 minutes of being on hold she finally gets through. She explains that she thinks there may be a line fault on the fax's number and asks them to check the line for her. A few minutes later they phone her mobile back. Hunch proved correct, that indeed there was a line fault with the fax's dedicated line, she tells the secretary and explains that BT are going to fix it.

... 12.30 pm and its lunchtime, thinks Pauline. She decides to pull into a little café she knows. Sitting waiting for her food she checks her own mobile phone in her bag. Her son has sent her a text. *"Football end 5 pm ok?"* She texts him back *"No. worries c u there!"* She also notices a text from her daughter. It's a joke. She laughs. She texts her back *"ha,ha ha!"* she carries on eating her lunch and decides to text her husband. Being a long distance lorry driver he should be just arriving back in Britain from France soon. She writes *"back yet call me?"* She finishes her lunch and heads to the main company offices. Her sector is having its monthly meeting with the company's technical experts this afternoon. She wants to ask them about the new canon printer that everyone is having trouble with out on the job.

....The meeting starts off very formally. Her boss's boss takes the opportunity to run down performance targets etc. for the month. Then the meeting descends into more obvious chit-chat about what people are doing and what problems they have run into. Pauline's main aim is to corner her "techie" friend John to find out if he has managed to read up about Canon's latest printer - the one she, and a few of the other's, were having trouble with last week. They chat. He gives her some advice. Apparently he had emailed someone in the company for a more detailed explanation about a few of the teething problems their new printer was having. He gives her their phone number just in case she wants to ask them anything specific....

Half an hour later, and with the meeting over, she uses some spare time to visit her workshop - re-soldering the part for a photocopier that had 'died' on her yesterday. She is relieved that John has agreed to come out with her to help fit the re-soldered part, as she is still worried the machine will be hard to bring back to life.

... 2.30 pm and her and John are trying to resuscitate the dead photocopier. They run through normal procedures and then John runs some more sophisticated diagnostic tests with the equipment he has bought with him from the workshop. Pauline takes a back seat watching John's expertise help him to first find, then resolve, the remaining technical problems with the machine. Finally, he says, *"I think that should do the trick"*. One satisfied customer's signature later, Pauline is ready to head off to the rest of her day's call outs. She checks the jobs she still has to do from her phone. Two more routine jobs left....

At the first routine job she finds a printer paper jam. The clerical worker next to the printer tells her she wasn't around when the problem happened, so Pauline asks to speak to the person who was using the printer when it went wrong. She talks to the guy involved and establishes he didn't fan the paper out before inserting. Not an unusual problem by any means and she re-assures them there is nothing really wrong with the machine and explains a little about proper handling techniques for the machine....

The next job she finds herself at is also a routine one. It's one that she has seen countless times before. As soon as she turns on the photocopier she sees the problem - someone has put in a repair call out without calling the swipe card technician down first to take a look at the problem. *"It's looks like your swipe card reader is actually the problem"*, she tells the assistant manager of the DIY store. They both staring at the swipe card reader which is flashing. The assistant manager calls down the store's swipe card technician who arrives after a few minutes. Pauline explains to him that she thinks it's the swipe card reader that is causing the problem with the machine and after he checks this out he confirms that she is right. She makes a note of the problem in her orange book. From now on this firm

would always get a phone call from her before she made a call out - just to check they had let the swipe card technician have a look at the problem before getting her involved...

....It's 4 o'clock now and only one more job left to do on Pauline's list. As she drives to her final day's job, her phone rings again and she parks at the side of the road. It's one of her bosses, Tony, ringing. He asks her for the call out number for the earlier job she did at Brown's. He needs it before he can process her order for the new part. Call out sheet found and information exchanged, she gets back on the road and reaches her last job of the day. This time the printer she is looking at is working fine but the sound of it...! She phones up Simon one of the older men in her division. He was last out at that machine the girls at the front desk tell her. She explains the problem to him, "*Simon can you listen to this for a minute*". He listens. "*Yeah it sounds like the electrics are finally going. I think you need to replace them now, before sparks fly!*". "*Thanks*", she says. "*I thought as much!*". She carries the printer to her car. Another job for her to do tomorrow. She switches her work mobile phone off for the day and switches on her own mobile. She knows that she really isn't free from her work as everyone at the call centre has a note of her non-company mobile number, but she also knows they would only phone that if there was an emergency on....

....Travelling back to pick up her son from football Pauline's phone goes. It's her husband. He briefly tells her how everything is going and that he will be home at around 8.30 that evening. She has to make the conversation short as she needs to make the school in time to pick up their son. While they are talking the phone beeps to acknowledge the arrival of a text message. "*Scored goal. C U in 10 min, B4N?*" It reads. She texts her son back "*Okay on my way! What does B4N mean?*". Ten minutes later and her son and one of his school friends get into the back of her car. "*B4N means 'bye for now' mum. He tells her.*" "*I thought you at least knew that one!*". She laughs, "*oh yeah you did tell me that before!*". The boys start discussing their football match and Pauline's thoughts turn to other more pressing matters like deciding what they were all going to have for their evening meal that night...

A DAY IN THE LIFE (THREE)

"Plumbers install, replace and maintain water and sewage systems in residential, commercial and industrial buildings. They may also be licensed as gas fitters. "

<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/P/succeed/education/appship/p.html#plumber>

A day in the life of Phil the plumber...

The mobile rings. At first Phil doesn't register it ringing. Then his sleepy brain clicks into action. He reaches over to the bedside cabinet and picks up the ringing flashing device, while briefly glancing at the time on his adjacent alarm clock. *"Hello?"*, he says switching on his bedside light, *"White's Plumbing. How can I help? No. this is Phil White not Sean White - I'm dealing with all call outs tonight. An emergency? What's happened?... Right. Okay. Give me your address...I will get round there pronto."* Phil searches madly for his a notepad to take the customer's details down, and finds it under his wife's *Hello* magazines. He quickly writes down the customer's details, including contact telephone number. He also advises the harassed caller about what steps to take until he arrives. Phone call over, Phil gets out of bed and starts to get dressed, meanwhile, silently cursing the fact that it is his turn to handle the night emergencies in the family plumbing business. Things, thankfully, had been quiet up until now, well, that was until Mr William Docherty's bathroom had decided to flood at 5.45 in the morning! Phil's wife opens her eyes and sits up in bed staring at him as he searches for his left shoe...*"Are you going out? Isn't it still night?"*. Phil assures her that it is, but that he has a job to do. *"Don't worry"*, he says apologetically, *"it wont take too long"*. Finding his left shoe, he heads out of the door.

.....A few minutes later and Phil is sitting in his van just outside his house. He decides to text his brother Tom. He is well aware that his brother won't read the text until later, but it serves as an excuse why Phil might be late arriving at the family shop later that morning. He decides also to send the text on to his brother Sean, since Phil reckons he would also want to know about the call out - since it came from one of Sean's regular customers and the phone call itself had been diverted from Sean's mobile phone to Phil's. Thinking about the family business, Phil had to admit that the three brothers ran the business pretty equally, even though Tom, the eldest of the three, was the official manager of the business and dealt with all the paperwork and the running of the family shop. Phil goes on to reflect that at times like this he misses his apprentice, Ray, who normally occupies the passenger seat on a call out. But, he thinks, it would have been unfair to expect the lad to get out of his bed at this time in the morning! As an after thought, he opts also to send Ray a copy of the call-out text - to stop the lad wondering why he is late getting to the shop tomorrow. Texting done, Phil drives his car away from the kerb and onto the road. The road is slippery. He thinks about how much he hates the thawing out of the winter frost this time of year - although he knows how much Tom likes it, as it brings with it plenty of new customers.

...A short drive later and Phil arrives at the emergency call out. He sticks his phone in his jeans pocket and chaps on the front door. Entering the house he is happy to find that everything is now under control, as Mr Docherty has done exactly what he asked him to do on the phone - and switched the water supply off at the outside mains control . *"Sorry I can't make you a cup of tea or coffee"*, apologises a very distressed looking Mrs Docherty trying to mop up the water in the flooded bathroom, while still wearing her night-clothes. Phil tells her that it isn't a problem and assures her that he will get to the bottom of the flood quickly. He sets about diagnostically trying to locate where the flood is coming from. His journey takes him to the attic and by crawling about on his hands and knees, lit only by his trusty torch, he soon locates the problem. As he had suspected it is a burst pipe. He takes his measuring tape out and measures the pipe. He writes the figure down in his small notepad...

Explaining the problem to the exhausted house owners, Phil asks if they want him to go ahead and replace the pipe. Although Mrs Docherty is happy for him to go ahead with the repairs, Mr Docherty requests an estimate before "*okaying*" the work. Phil obliges, trying to calculate everything in his head - the emergency call out fee, the cost of the work he'd have to do and the cost of the replacement pipe. He pulls out his small notepad, out of his overalls pocket, and writes down the individual costs of each component of the work, plus an estimated total cost. "*This is just a rough estimate*", he cautions them, showing them the notepad figures, "*but it should be about this*". The Docherty's agree to the total figure - Mr Docherty copying it down onto the back of a used envelope for future reference. Phil arranges to come back later that day to do the work. Leaving the house Phil glances at his watch. Its 7.20 am now. Getting into his car he texts Tom to let him know he will need to come back to the job later to finish it off and that it was a burst pipe. Phil decides to nip home for an hour or so and get some breakfast before heading to the shop...

....Arriving at the family-run business at 8.50 am, Phil feels like he has been up for hours! He finds the others in the business sitting around having a cup of tea and a chat in the back of the shop preparing for the day ahead. His apprentice Ray is sat forward in his chair texting his girlfriend a 'good morning' text. "*I see you had to get out of your bed early*", says Sean handing Phil a cup of tea. Phil nods his head, "*Well, I guess someone has to do it; and last night it had to be me!*". Phil looks around for his other brother Tom, who is on his mobile phone taking a call from a delivery van driver. He is giving him directions to the shop, as the guy is lost. Phone call finished, Phil walks over to him and pulls out his notepad, flicks to the relevant page and hands it to Tom explaining that the figures on it are the estimate for the emergency job he sent him a text about. His brother takes the notepad and writes down the information on his message pad next to his landline phone. As usual Tom would transfer the estimate figures later on to the business's computer, but for now he was too busy to do that. Tom hands Sean a clipboard with some jobs he wants him and Ray to do that day, with a hand-written note on the top about the emergency job. He also reminds Phil that the job he will be doing in Hamilton Street needs him to drop by the radiator suppliers and pick up the new radiators this morning. He hands him the receipt for the order. Phil nods his head and puts the receipt in his pocket. "*I haven't been to that suppliers before*", he admits to Tom. "*Can you give me their number incase I can't find the place?*" Tom, looks up the number in his mobile phone and reads it out to Phil, who puts it into his mobile phone, as entry number 77. A call comes through on the business landline and Tom answers it. Phil steps into the back of the shop and asks Raymond to help him carry a couple of copper pipes from the storeroom into the van, he reckons he will need them for the day's jobs...

....9.50 a.m. finds Phil and Ray in their van on their way back to the first job of the morning. Phil's phone rings. "*Get that lad will you?*", says Phil to Ray, who eagerly grabs the phone off the dashboard. The call is from Tom passing on a message from the customer at Hamilton Street. Tom offers Ray her mobile phone number. Ray searches for a scrap of paper to write the number down. Finding the receipt for some old bathroom suites in the glove compartment he writes on that. "*Okay. Say that again. 0798...can't hear you it's a bad line?*", Ray moans to Tom. "*Okay. got the number now. Thanks. I will pass that info onto Phil.*" He sticks the number on the dashboard near phil. "*That's that customer's mobile number from Hamilton Street -she is unlikely to be in before 3 pm today and just in case she's not back from the dentist when we arrive, she said to Tom that we could phone her up and she would get her next door neighbour to let us in.*". Phil glances at the number and then back at the road "*Fine*" says Phil. "*Stick the number in the glove compartment so we don't lose it.*" Phil tries to re-order mentally the jobs they have to do today to fit in with this new information. "*Let's do the water tank fitting in Carlton Street after this emergency job then.*" He finally informs ray.

Raymond takes the clipboard and re-orders the job sheets on it to reflect Phil's newly

decided order. "Oh and Ray", says Phil, *"can you give Tom a quick call back and ask him to let the customer at Carlton Street know that we are going to be there about 1 o'clock instead of 4ish if that's alright with them?"*. Ray takes out his phone from his denim jacket pocket *"No. Sweat"*. says Ray. The phone call is quickly made....

After repairing and fitting the pipe for the Docherty's, Phil and Ray find themselves just around the corner from that job fitting a new water tank in Carlton Street. The house owners had purchased the water tank themselves and Phil isn't used to the non-standard fittings of the tank. He asks Ray to phone up the help-line for the tank, which Ray finds in the model's manual. Making sure he has the serial number and the model number to hand, Ray spends 10 minutes trying to get through to the help-line but after several *"your call will be processed as soon as an operator becomes available"* announcements he hangs up. In desperation, Phil asks Ray to call Tom and explain the problem, and pass on the details of the tank to him. He knows it will be cheaper for Tom to get through to the help-line on his landline and get the required information than it would be for him or Ray on their mobiles. Half an hour later and Tom phones back having finally got through to a help-line operator. Phil soon gets the tank operational following Tom's instructions on the phone.

.....It's lunch-time by the time the job is finally over and the guys decide to head back to the shop to eat lunch there. Phil phones Sean to see if he is also heading back to the shop for lunch, but Sean's apprentice, John, explains that they are on their way to an urgent job and won't make it back in time for lunch. Phil parks outside the local bakery on his way to the shop and, after phoning Tom to see if he wants anything, Ray runs in and gets them all some warm sausage rolls for lunch. As he is waiting for Ray to return, Phil's phone rings. It is his wife on the phone. She tells him excitedly that the flat they had wanted to buy two months ago is once again on the market. She tells him the estate agent has been on again explaining that the price has been dropped now - since the sellers couldn't find a buyer at the higher price. She asks Phil what he thinks and he agrees it is worth putting in another offer slightly higher than the first one they had originally put in. He assures her he will phone the solicitor straight away to get them to fax over their new offer to the sellers. He gets his wife to tell him the solicitor's new number - as he doesn't have it listed in his phone's address book - and he punches the number straight into his phone. Once she is off the phone he rings the new number. The receptionist at the solicitor's answers, but tells him the solicitor is busy - offering to put him on hold. *"Can she phone me back?"*, he asks. *"I'm on a mobile."* The secretary agrees and a minute later the phone rings. It's Phil's solicitor. They talk and he explains the situation. She agrees to put the wheels in motion again for buying the flat. After he comes off the phone to her, he phones up his wife to let her know the latest...

...Lunchtime over and Phil finds himself up his ladder fixing the guttering at no. 28 Wilton Street. Ray is at the bottom holding it steady and chatting to one of the builders who are also working on the renovations to the property. Phil's phone rings. He carefully takes it out of his pocket and holds it to his ear, while still holding a hammer in the other hand. *"Hi Tom"*. He says, *"Yeah. Were getting on okay, but I don't think we are going to get round to getting to that last job at Maypole Drive to fix that blocked sink. Can you give Sean a call and see if he can do it? Call us back if it's okay. Gotta go now on top of a ladder!"*

.....4.30 p.m. finds Phil and Ray in the middle of the job in Hamilton Street installing the customer's two new radiators. Although the customer hadn't been home when they had arrived at the job, a quick call to her mobile had assured them access to her premises thanks to the kindness of her next door neighbour. Ray is hammering down some of the floorboards they had just pulled up to put the necessary piping down. Phil's phone goes. He picks up the mobile, which is lying next to his hammer and reads the display. It's his wife so he quickly answers it. She tells him their good news - as she has just heard from their solicitors that the new offer they put on the flat was accepted this time. Phil is understandably delighted and turns to give a big thumbs up to Ray. After she is off the

phone he phones up the shop and speaks to Tom to let him know the good news and to pass on the information to Sean and the rest of the lads. Phil invites Tom and his wife round for a celebration drink later that evening, which Tom is happy to accept. Phil then gets back to work.

....5.30 p.m. and Phil and Ray gather up the last of their tools and head back to their van. Driving back to the shop, Phil gets Ray to fill in some timesheets for the last couple of days that Tom has been nagging him about. Dropping Ray off at the Shop - timesheets in hand - Phil heads home for a good meal. He phones the wife just to let her know he is on his way and that he has invited Tom and his wife round for a celebration drink that evening. He also asks her to put the kettle on as he is dying for a cup of tea...