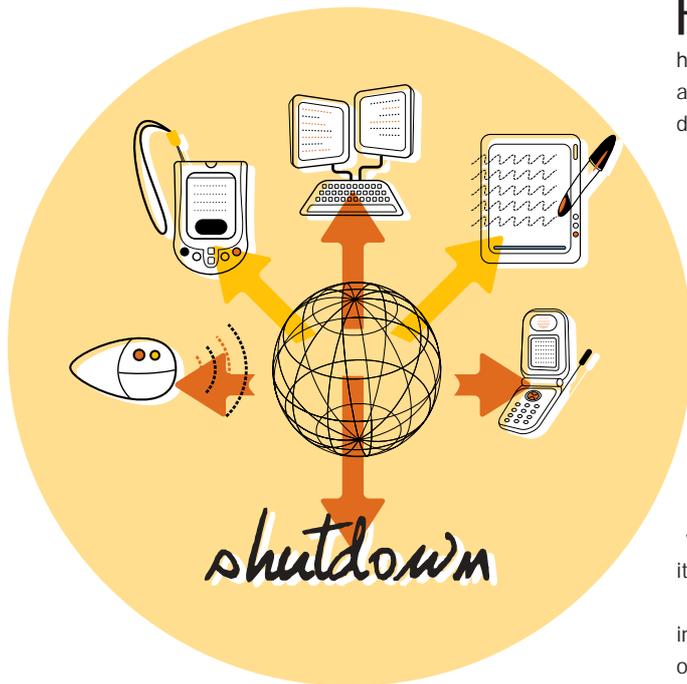


# Shifting to another gear

As top execs flee the city, seeking to swap their high-flying careers for the simpler life, Ursula Seymour suggests the introduction of a downshift day to counteract the effects of information overload



Remember in the power-suited 1980s when city types were offered the perk of dress-down Fridays? Well, with so many people in high-pressure careers burning out long before retirement age, why not add a noughties-style twist to the dress-down day, turning it into a downshift day.

Downshifting, for those not burdened by a £100,000-plus pay cheque, is when you decide that you're sick of commuting to the Square Mile and sleeping at your desk. So you sell up your London pad for a hugely inflated sum, move to the Outer Hebrides and try your luck at self-sufficiency or some similarly simple way of life.

But why, you may ask, would you forgo all that lovely cash to grub around in the mud for misshapen vegetables? The reason most often cited by society watchers is information overload. But it's not just the pinstripe brigade that finds it hard to cope with emails, phone calls and associated data that accumulates on a daily basis. Whereas before it was just the odd fax or handwritten memo, employees in all walks of life are now inundated with hundreds of messages a day – some days you cope; other days it can all get too much.

Even if you can't afford to ditch the day job, we suggest the introduction of a downshift day where we all return to the forgotten idyll of written communication. Phones should be switched off and PCs shut down. And the best part? No one will be able to get in touch with you, so you can concentrate on the important things in life such as that four-hour lunch break or your golf handicap. ■

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## next month

### features

#### Designer PCs

Forget ugly grey boxes, today's PCs are objects of beauty and desire. Here, we worship at the perfectly formed feet of the latest superslim models and eye up the assets of pumped-up PCs geared towards games and graphics.

#### Computing for all

Accessibility is the holy grail for website developers, which is great news for visually impaired surfers. But the PC has long been adaptable to suit both our physical needs and environment. *PC Advisor* looks at what our flexible friend has to offer.

### workshops

#### Make Windows work for you

You could spend your entire computing life tweaking and finetuning Windows so it works just the way you want it. Save yourself some time and read our one-stop guide to the edits and additions that will really make a difference to your OS.

#### CD burning guide

You might have a CD copying feature built into Windows, but it only gives you rudimentary control over how you burn discs. This guide looks at the more advanced recording and backup options offered by dedicated CD copying software.

### reviews

#### Top 10 charts

- **Graphics cards** Looks are everything so get geared up for top-notch gaming and video playback with our pick of the top cards.
- **Superbudget PCs** In the market for your first PC or simply don't need the heavy-hitting extras found on pricier systems? We rate and rank the latest sub-£700 offerings that pack plenty of punch.

#### Technofile: smartphones

Part-PDA and part-mobile, smartphones are the latest gadgets promising to transform our working lives. We find out whether they're more pain than gain.