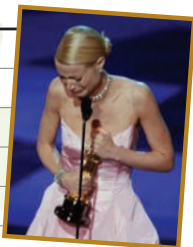


Backchat Insider's Market matrix



Glory supporters

Need proof of what an *Insurance Times* award can do for your career prospects? Almost as soon as he got back in his chair after receiving the Outstanding Insurer Individual of the Year in last week's IT Claims Awards, Allianz's Duncan Stagg had a tap on his shoulder. It was one of those cheeky folk from LV= with a business card.

ONE STEP FORWARD



Wipe-clean briefs?

Ever ahead of the curve, Biba has been leading the way in political lobbying circles with its latest innovation: laminated factsheets. The A4 briefing sheets on topics like the Financial Services Compensation Fund and the cost of regulation were the envy of other lobbying interests at a recent Treasury Select Committee event. Why? Because the plastic pages can't be dumped in the recycling bins like all the other lobbying literature, and have been hanging around on MPs desks ever since.

Au revoir not goodbye

Philippe Maso's the hottest ticket in town right now, with outlandish speculation lining him with all sorts of prominent positions. One motor bigwig claims to have started the rumour that electrified Biba – but others maintain it's true. There's further talk that Maso, who pocketed a hefty sum from AXA, could start up on his own. One thing's for sure: he'll be back, and soon.



Suits you, Stevens

Explaining the secrets to his success, Admiral chief operating officer David Stevens revealed that he and chief executive Henry Engelhardt turned up with their business plan to buy Admiral from its Bermudian owners in very odd attire, hoping to be original and attention grabbing. "Henry and I walked into the board meeting in DJs and Hawaiian shirts," recalled Stevens. Well, at least it wasn't Bermuda shorts.



Waxing lyrical

I enjoyed a lovely little trip to Madame Tussauds for an evening of fine wine at the launch of telematics underwriter Insure the Box. And it was good to see my old friend Naem Ali at the party, who looked like he was in his element. At one point I thought he was having a chat with pop star Christina Aguilera, until I realised it was a waxwork. Bad luck Naem.



TAXI!

CHEERS!

Embarrassment of riches

While a number of insurance bigwigs found themselves once again in the recent *Sunday Times* Rich List – Peter Cullum and Neil Utlej among them – others are more publicity shy. At a recent gathering of the great and good, a cluster of multi-millionaires was overheard discussing their determination never to enter the list. They don't want to attract unwelcome attention from kidhappers – not to mention the IRS!



Living the high life

Steve White had a mixed experience getting to and from Scotland last week as the northern half of the UK was engulfed by travel chaos. The Biba compliance guru made the last plane out of London's City Airport to Glasgow on Monday as high winds forced cancellations. But he had no such luck the following day when it was the Icelandic ash cloud's turn to close Scottish air space.



Moshing with Fosh

Had circumstances been different, Novae chief exec Matthew Fosh could have been part of UK pop group Red Box, who are currently topping the charts in Poland. I understand that while still at school, Mr Fosh, still a keen 12-string guitar player, was in a band with two of the members. Still, Red Box's loss is Novae's gain ...



TWO STEPS BACK

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