

❖ Consultants in Minnesota ❖

November 1996

President's Letter

"Joan Barnes", INTERNET:jebarnes@igc.apc.org

So it's time for another letter from the prez, and I still hate to write, but this month I

have some good things to write about. With only a very marginal amount of arm twisting, we have a new newsletter editor and a complete slate of officers ready for next month's 'election'. Magne Hatlevik has agreed to be our new editor. This is not a board position, but it is, nevertheless, one of considerable influence and importance to the association. The slate for the elected positions is:

Prez: Ray Giske
Vice Prez: Jerry Stiff
Secretary: Ben Moyle
Treasurer: Sheridan Timms

Of course, anyone who is really interested in becoming an officer may challenge any of the people on the slate - or better still, volunteer for next year. It is probably inappropriate for me to campaign for anyone, but I do think it looks like a good board.

I was sorry to have to miss the national conference. We will get a synopsis at this month's meeting. I was also sorry to have to miss the consultant's toolkit presentation at our last month's chapter meeting. But I did glom a handout, and the word from the people who were there indicates that it was a good, informative presentation.

We have had some particularly good speakers this year, and I expect that this month's meeting will be yet another good one. One of the benefits of being prez is that I often have the opportunity to talk

with presenters before the meeting to discuss content, perspective, etc.

I met last week with Robert Kelsey, the speaker for this meeting's communication topic. This will not be a discussion of how all the ones and zeros get pushed through a wire - or airwaves - and which of the seven layers juggles them around and how, but rather a discussion of how different approaches to data transfer can affect an application system (I hope I said that right; read Robert's abstract elsewhere in this newsletter). I am really looking forward to this meeting. We might all learn something if we're not careful.

[ed.note]

Someone asked what an editor does or rather what this editor does. Mostly I collect the contributions of members and assemble them into a document you can use to find out what you need to know about ICCA Minnesota. The secretary sends me labels when he or she thinks the time is right.

When I started this job (about 10 years ago but I have not found hard evidence for a starting date) the chapter had a mixed history of monthly mailings and I had some new software (Byline from Aston-Tate). Over the years I have switched software (to MS Publisher) but tried to maintain an useful and informative content.

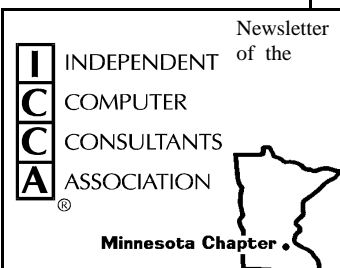
In the old days people sent me disks, now they send me e-mail and it mostly works. Although I took the job saying I did not want to write, occasionally something I wrote has been included.

I also need to recognize my mailers. My over 70 father-in-law applies all the labels and stamps. And I have used Westside Printing to reproduce all but a few issues. They use real ink and get it back to me the same day.

It's been an interesting job and I will not miss it! knh

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View From the Past

by Bill Buending

All of you folks who spent Oct. 25-27 raking leaves or preparing for the Vikings-Bears game missed a golden opportunity to grow your business. You bypassed an outstanding ICCA conference that was not that far away. Flying took 3.5 hrs, house to hotel. Driving took Bill Smale 10 hours. If I get a tenth of what I learned into action, I'll recover the conference costs at least five times over.

This was by far the best ICCA conference in a long time. Some really heavy hitters as presenters. Since we were celebrating 20 years of ICCA, Steve Epner (Mr ICCA) started us off Friday morning with a review of how we got started, followed by what consultants can expect over the next few years, based on what is happening right now. Steve told us that the work will be there for us, if we are prepared to take it on. And we can gain a lot more for ourselves advising people how to use technology than from setting it up for them. All we really need is the energy to make things happen.

Herman Holtz was next. You may have one or two of his books on your shelf right now. He told us that if we are not having fun, we are probably not being successful. If we wait for business to come to us, we'll get the dregs. Go after the business you want. Don't sell what you do, sell the value of what you do. And then give that value and a little more. Always look at what you do from the client's perspective. Keep looking for other client problems you can solve.

Peter Meyer took over about 9:15 and had our rapt attention for the rest of the day. This was a full day workshop based on Peter and Herman's Seven Step Sales Process, basically the same session that costs the public \$1,000. The Seven Step starts with Cold Calls, Referrals, and Leads, a process to identify who you want to have accept and sponsor your ideas. Always be ready to ask a potential client "What keeps you awake at night?" And always look for the RAIN person, the one with Resources (time, people, money), Authority, Influence, and Need.

Step 2 is the First Contact, making yourself different from the others, based on value. Start with your Unique Service Position. A USP is your business capability FOCUSED ON THE CLIENT, adaptable, but can always be stated in 10 or 20 words. Immediately move your focus back to the client. Listen and ask questions. Search for potential problems you can solve. When you find one, ask for support for a survey.

The Survey, Step 3, is a process of getting stakeholders to identify problems from their perspective that you will solve, along with how they would measure a successful solution. You earn the right to make suggestions only by listening and fully understanding what is wrong and how things would be better if it was right. Making suggestions before you know the problem and its impact is malpractice.

With problems and success criteria in hand, you are ready for the Design Session, Step 4. In this group process, with all stakeholders involved, you prioritize the problems and decide on the best mix of solutions. Offer a starting point solution that can be torn apart and rebuilt by the group so that it is their solution. The impact range is defined by putting dollar values on the solution's success and failure. You might not fit in the solution. If you can't add value to the client, walk away. They will respect you more for it.

A well done Design Session leads directly to the Proposal, Step 5. Document the success criteria and summarize the plan and total costs to meet those criteria. The Close, Step 6, should also be a given, based on a good design session. If it isn't, Step 4 is not complete. Step 7, Follow-up, is essential. Make certain the client is happy with the solution in place. Two things should happen while working on the project; (1) the client is already planning the next step and (2) you have a set of questions ready to help the client focus on a successful solution to that step.

The beauty of the Seven Step Process is that it is flexible. You cannot skip any step, but how you approach them can be molded to fit different clients and even different projects for the same client. When we finished late that night, we all felt that the conference benefits already exceeded our costs. And there were still two days to go.

Sam Silverstein and his Success Model started off the Saturday presentations. Our future success is based on the actions we take today. And the actions we take today are based on our vision of the future. Life is a self-fulfilled prophecy which, for those with a bad outlook, is not necessarily a good thing.

We first need the "internal desire" to succeed, focused on our primary desires. "Change," the second step, "is the essence of progress," according to Sam. Our comfort zone limits us, since "greatness does not occur in the comfort zone." If we don't change or adapt to the change around us, we will be left in the dust. Step 3 is "planning." A good plan requires research (60% of the effort), writing it down (30% of effort), and review/feedback (10% of effort).

A good plan is worthless unless we "implement" it, the fourth step. Good implementation requires (1) developing a good plan, (2) knowing and sticking to our objectives, and (3) evaluating progress and making plan corrections along the way. It all leads to the fifth step, "Success." Sam says, "Success is the positive results received from your daily achievements in pursuit of your primary desires."

Teresita Dabrieo was up next talking about leveraging our existing clients to double our referrals. She has built two computer consulting firms. Before she was 30, she was running a multi-million dollar business (\$1.2 million in consulting revenues) from her home office, a company less than 4 years old. That gives one pause.

Teresita told us that in order to be successful,

we need to be willing to change and to suspend our disbelief that change is possible. "You are successful when you are in control. Don't let your business manage you." She also told us, "If you want a steady stream of referrals, you need to do more than just a good job. You need to drive the process." By controlling and directing "word of mouth," it becomes a powerful tool.

Three easily implemented referral strategies are (1) a newsletter, (2) a client appreciation day, and (3) endorsed mailings. The newsletter needs to reflect our personal style. It builds a community among our clients. And we can also "advertise" problems we can solve by including case histories.

With client appreciation days, the objective is to get others/vendors to pay for it. Tie it to some charitable event. Do NO self-promotion. Clients get in by bringing a friend or a charitable donation. Again, it's building a sense of community so that people want to refer others to us.

Endorsed mailings are recommendations for us written on client letterhead, using our client's leverage with their circle of influence. We write the letter and pick up all mailing costs. The client supplies letterhead and the mailing list. Include a response card, but no self-promotional stuff, not even a business card.

Jerry Weinberg, The Consultant's Consultant, was next. "The toughest thing to do as a consultant is to believe that you can and should do the things you want and need to do." He described his consulting toolkit that always includes his own marker pens, plus two-headed and two-tailed coins, just in case he needs to facilitate a decision.

Jerry gave a live consulting demonstration. We formed teams to work out the team's number one problem. Jerry then asked for a volunteer. John Genzano was volunteered by his team, but Jerry brought the whole team up front. During his session with John, Jerry took time-outs to expand on particular points. You cannot consult with someone who doesn't really want to be there. There is always an audience, in the next cube or in the room or just in the mind of the client. You need a physically and emotionally "safe" environment for everyone involved, and you have to work through any conflicts present.

Jerry's first question was, "How did you happen to be here?" Don't ask leading questions. Start by looking at the past, to see what's been going on. "How" questions are much better than "why?" The second question was, "How is it, now that you are here?" This gives the present, how things are going now. Jerry's third question was, "What would you like to have happen?" A nice ambiguous question to find out about the future, without a timescale and without any suggestions. Once the problem is known and a solution is apparent, quit. Continued questioning might move the client into thinking about future problems, preventing them from implementing the current problem's solution.

After lunch Saturday, Esther Roditti discussed

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Legal Issues Facing Independent Contractors (ICs). She addressed (1) acquiring and maintaining IC status, (2) work for hire rules and intellectual property, and (3) structuring contracts to protect IC rights. Legislation last Summer replaced the old 20 questions with a new set of 11 factors. There is also a new training guide for IRS agents, teaching them to belay some of their attack-dog exuberance and instructing them in the new ways that business is being conducted.

Esther briefly discussed the Microsoft case from last Summer. The reclassified people were software testers, production editors, proofreaders, formatters, and indexers. They had signed contracts claiming independent status, but were supervised by MS people, worked only on site, worked the same hours in the same place using the same supplies and equipment as MS employees. They did have different colored badges, had no overtime or benefits, and could not attend company parties. Not a tough call. No engineers, designers, or programmers were involved.

It's not so much what the paperwork says, as the "look and feel" of the situation. In making their decisions, the IRS posts the new 11 factors into either the Control column or the Autonomy column of their worksheet. Three factors are now neutral; full time work, on-site work, and hours of work. Long-term contracts are OK, but indefinite contracts are bad. Having your own equipment is good, while having your own office is bad. Badges are neutral. It's best to get a copy of the new 11 factors and apply an audit on your own business.

Regarding intellectual property, unless there's a written agreement, companies own an employee's work and ICs own what they do. If the client does a significant part, enough to merit copyright on its own, you probably have joint ownership. You should include contract clauses that spell out the intellectual property issues as clear as you can. Put warranty terms in the contract.

Teresita Dobrieo had the final afternoon session, covering non-traditional ways to bring in new clients. "There are three marketing keys that can increase your business growth by 63% over

the next 12 months," says Teresita. "These are (1) concentrating on 'what does my client want,' (2) using a target market strategy, and (3) crafting and promoting a true guarantee." She says that technologists more often focus on the technology, rather than on the client and what the client wants. For proof, we should look at our brochures, think about who talks most during our sales calls, and count the buzzwords in our conversations.

Target markets are unique; (1) a group of people with common and specific interests who (2) can easily share communication with each other and do so regularly and who (3) have a common set of problems that can be solved by you. They are not small and mid-sized business, government, etc. Be specific. Law firms and health care providers are target markets. User groups can provide target markets. Craft a USP for each one you go for.

In creating an effective guarantee for our businesses, keep three things in mind; (1) finding any kind of guarantee is rare, (2) only real quality stuff is guaranteed, and (3) you can charge more because of the piece of mind factor. Focus on the question, "If something is wrong, what do I do to make it right?" If the answer isn't "Whatever it takes!" the guarantee needs more work.

Jim Lanford started off Sunday morning with The Future of The Internet. He didn't do a demo, because "The Net seldom cooperates with demos." The difference between the Internet and the Intranet is that the Internet is public and open while the Intranet is private and protected. Otherwise, they are basically the same. Benefits of the Net are e-mail, publish to the world, and research. To be in business today, you need phone, fax, e-mail, and Net access.

In Jim's view, 95% of the Web "sucks," while 31% of the Web is making money. Have two providers on separate channels to avoid Netclogs and outages. Don't bother to optimize our Web site for a specific browser, because we will throw away that part of our market using other browsers. If we want to run both Netscape and Explorer, install Netscape last.

He said we should learn stuff like networks (TCP/IP, multiple stacks, routing, installation),

servers, telcom, WAN hardware, modems, net troubleshooting, software (Java, ActiveX, Perl, DB connectivity), search and find (Yahoo, Alta Vista), and another OS (Unix/Linux, OS/2, NT). Learning Unix can help you understand the Net. (If I knew all that, I wouldn't be writing this.) He also told to learn information discrimination, developing an internal calibrated BS meter of some sort. He also talked of web crawlers and web-weeks (units of time on the web).

The final presentation was on Building the Intranet, given by Mario Torres. Mario is a Microsoft consultant. He read his presentation, finding it difficult to remain objective when Microsoft had a competing product. It was an extremely long hour.

During lunch, Prof. Duncan McLeod gave us a fine, very entertaining talk on the cultural differences between the US and Scotland. One nugget I took away was, "Life is 10% about what happens to us, and 90% about how we react to it."

Our annual membership meeting followed lunch. Finances are looking good, membership is down just a tab, and the administrative structure has been simplified. We've joined CSIA, added a number of member benefits, and established the ICCA Web page. The NBoD is working on the office software (probably through an outsider in order to prevent having 9 different versions of stuff running). Next year's conference will be in Stamford, CT, June 20-21, timed to let us attend PC Expo as well.

Following the Annual Meeting, door prizes were given out, requiring a lot of scrambling to find a place for just one more thing in our baggage. As I said up front, this was an outstanding conference. If you missed it, you are poorer for it, even if you did save a few bucks by not going. [ed. note: Bill Buending is a past president of ICCA Minnesota if you are wondering about the title.]

Meeting Reservations: Members may phone your reservation to Joan Barnes' office at 257-2570, by 3:00 PM, Monday, November 18. Non-members should mail this form to ICCA Minnesota, c/o Sheridan Timms, 6940 Tartan Curve, Eden Prairie, MN 55346.

Name: _____ Company: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Phone: () _____

Italian Bufett Member \$23 non-member \$28 x _____ = _____

November Meeting

What is the future?

Looking at CICS and UNIX in a cooperative environment.

by Captain [Rod] Pickard, INTERNET:stpinc@earthlink.net

At the November meeting, our featured speaker, Robert Kelsey, an ICCA member since January of this year, will endeavor to shed some light on this paradoxical question. Robert has extensive expertise with CICS and UNIX and will cover the following topics during his presentation.

- History of CICS and UNIX
- History of Personal Computers
- Comparisons and Contrasts
- SNA vs. TCP/IP
- Hardware and Software differences
- Why things (CICS/UNIX) are the way they are

Here is a little background information on our mysterious colleague.

Robert was born in Minot North Dakota and was dragged kicking and screaming to Minnesota at the

tender age of two. Since then, he has raised two children of his own (David and Carolyn), and is one very proud grandparent to Nikolas and Tyler. After graduating from Augsburg College in 1964 with a degree in physics, Robert landed his first real job working for Doughboy Industries in New Richmond Wisconsin. His current hobbies include computer programming, tickling the ivory, and exploring philosophy from an Objectivist viewpoint.

Be honest Robert, is that really a word?

The November meeting of ICCA Minnesota will be Tuesday, October 15, at the Italian Deli by Lido on Snelling Avenue North of Rosedale. Networking at 5:30, dinner at 6:30 and program at 7:15.



Next Meeting

UNIX and CICS

Wednesday, November 20

Italian Deli by Lido

Roseville

FUTURE MEETINGS

Dec ?	Holiday Fun
Jan 21	Vendor Fair
Feb 19	
Mar 20	



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