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Conference Exceeds Expectations

By Jean Van Nus

I am honoured to have been chosen for the position of president of CSNM for the year 2013/2014. I have been a member of CSNM since the late 1970s and have always been interested in the society and the growth and changes that have occurred over the years.

This year promises to be full of exciting challenges for the incoming board. We have a mixture of newcomers and more experienced board members. In November, the board will meet face to face with a facilitator to develop the strategic plan that will set our path for the next three years. Each portfolio has been asked to develop goals that they would like to achieve. As a group, we will decide upon and prioritize to create the plan to follow.

An extremely successful joint conference was held in May with the Dietitians of Canada, Gerontology Network. We experienced a sold-out conference. Webcasts were broadcast so members who were unable to attend had the opportunity to hear the speakers. A committee is working on next year’s conference which will be held in Regina. Dates have not yet been determined.

In an effort to be more visible to the provincial chapters, the board has been sending members to provincial conferences. PSNM, ASNM, SSNM have had CSNM board members attend. Other board members will be attending the OSNM conference in the fall.

The website has been updated and I ask all members to check it out. It is more user friendly and has a new and fresh look.

I look forward to this year as a time for growth both professionally for myself and for CSNM as a Society.

Jean Van Nus
President, CSNM

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BURNED OUT, BOTTLENECKED and BORED

Mid-career employees work long hours with little engagement

By Tamara J. Erickson

Employees in the 35 to 50 age group are showing signs of “midllescense,” a sense of frustration, confusion and alienation, not dissimilar to the stresses of adolescence. Today, millions of mid-career men and women are working 50 or more hours per week but are no longer energized by their job. Many are looking for ways to balance job responsibilities, family and leisure while hoping to find new meaning in their work.

Mid-career employees make up more than half the workforce. One in four has managerial or supervisory responsibility. What can we do to retain these valuable employees and ensure no loss in productivity?

THE PROBLEMS

Middlescense seems to be hitting today’s mid-career workers, members of Generation X, harder than their predecessors. Increased longevity, delayed (and multiple) marriages and large numbers of two-career households have altered family patterns such that middlescents are often sandwiched at home between raising children and caring for aging parents precisely at the time when their job responsibilities are peaking.

Xers came of age in the 80s and 90s – times of economic uncertainty and domestic social change. Latin American economies were experiencing persistent financial crises and the economy in the U.S. and much of Europe was in the doldrums.

On the home front, many Xers lived through a significant shift in the social fabric. Divorce rates skyrocketed. Many mothers entered the workforce, and the Xers became the first generation to be labeled “latch key kids.”

Their teen years marked a significant change in the psychological contracts between employers and employees, as large scale lay-offs became a common corporate practice. The sense of unease and mistrust around corporate commitments is an almost universally shared view among Generation X and, as a result, they tend to be very wary of putting all their eggs in one corporate basket or even one area of career specialty.

This generation will benefit from increased longevity; the average 50-year old today could be looking forward to 30 years or more of healthy, active liv-
ing. While this can be a blessing, those without the financial resources to chart their own course face the prospect of having to work indefinitely at a job they don’t really enjoy.

Today, their sources of frustration often include:

• Career bottleneck. The baby boom generation is large, and too many people are competing for too few leadership positions in organizations that have been shedding layers of hierarchy. Next to job security, this is one of the biggest concerns of managers in their 40s and 50s.
• Work/life tension. Mid-career workers are sandwiched between commitments to children and parents, often at the same time that their work responsibilities are peaking.
• Lengthening horizon. Those who are not accumulating sufficient wealth for retirement face the prospect of having to work many more years.
• Skills obsolescence. Some struggle to adjust to new ways of working and managing in the information economy. Some hope that merely time or diligence will get them promoted into better-paying jobs when what they most need is upgraded skills.
• Disillusionment with employer. This includes insecurity and mistrust following waves of downsizing, as well as resentment over the enormous compensation gaps between topmost executives and other employees.
• Burnout. People who have been career driven for 20 or more years are stretched and stressed, find their work unexciting or repetitive and are running low on energy and the ability to cope.
• Career disappointment. The roles employees play and the impact of their work fail to measure up to their youthful ideals and ambitions.

Organizations stand to lose in several ways. Neglect their discontent, and you risk losing valued performers who seek exciting work elsewhere. This is a dangerous development considering the brain drain that will soon hit when the vanguard of baby boomers retires. In the years ahead, both tangible talent shortages and growing disengagement from work will present unprecedented challenges to business productivity and growth.

Also bad for business are the many disaffected people who stay. Disaffected middlescents who stay because they need the money take an even worse toll – their lack of energy, innovation and focus erodes your firm’s productivity. Every day that an employee is less than fully engaged in his or her work, the company pays a price: loss of energy and enthusiasm.
and a lack of innovation and focus. We have become convinced that the problem of burned-out, turned-off employees who stay is even more threatening to corporate productivity than the problem of turnover.

How to avoid these losses? The best way to do so is to tap into their hunger for renewal and help them launch into new, more productive, more meaningful roles and careers. Millions of mid-career men and women would like nothing better than to convert their restlessness into fresh energy. They just need the occasion and, perhaps, a little assistance.

**SIX STRATEGIES TO REVITALIZE**

You may not be able to offer everybody more money or a prestigious title, but you can give just about anybody a fresh challenge or a new start. The most successful careers are the ones that stay in motion.

**Fresh Assignments** – A fresh assignment, often in a different geographical location or part of the organization, takes advantage of a person’s existing skills, experience and contacts while letting him or her develop new ones. The best assignments are often lateral moves that mix roughly equal parts of old and new responsibilities.

This approach is particularly valuable for members of Generation X. They don’t like to be pigeon-holed or pushed out on a limb of specialization with the inherent danger of a whimsical corporation sawing that limb off behind them during the next restructuring. It allows them to keep their options open and their skills diverse to be as self-reliant as possible.

**Career Changes** – Middlescents often dream of, and, in some cases, end up pursuing something fundamentally new. Yet jumping the corporate ship is risky, so an employer that can offer an attractive internal career change has a chance to retain valuable talent. An employee may develop a new specialty, assume an altogether different job, or sometimes return from a management track to an individual contributor role. Make such career shifts a natural part of corporate life.

**Mentoring Colleagues** – Putting experienced employees into mentoring, teaching and other knowledge-sharing roles has the dual benefit of re-engaging the mid-career worker and boosting the expertise and organizational know-how of less-experienced employees. For middlescents, serving as a mentor is a personally fulfilling way to share a lifetime of experience, give back to the organization and make a fresh set of social connections in the workplace.

Other effective approaches are to ask experienced and expert employees to develop and deliver training programs. They can also teach and guide colleagues through internal-consulting roles, participate in business performance reviews and lead business improvement projects.

**Fresh Training** – Most of today’s mid-career workers have a strong desire to learn. Gen-Xers know that increasing their skills will raise their chances for advancement.

Unfortunately, corporate training today is disproportionately aimed at the young (especially new employees who need to learn the basics) and at the high potentials. The tacit assumptions are that mid-career people have been trained already and what little additional training they might need can be learned on the job.

Too many organizations foster a silent conspiracy against education. They cut the training and development budget first in lean times. They stand silent when managers discourage employees from seeking training on the grounds that it will interfere with getting the work done. And they fail to require managers to set career development plans for all their employees. As a result, many mid-career workers are overdue for a serious infusion of training which can include refresher courses, in-depth education to develop new skills and brief introductions to new ideas or areas of business that expand their perspectives and trigger their interest in learning more.

**Sabbaticals** – One of the best ways to rejuvenate, personally and professionally, is simply to get away from the routine of the job for a significant amount of time. A common feature of academia, sabbaticals remain rare and underused in the business world.

Employers’ reluctance centres on cost and, for key employees, potential disruption to business operations. Their reluctance comes from fear that taking a leave will somehow mark them as less committed than those who don’t interrupt their work.

In fact, research shows that people tend to return from sabbaticals more committed than ever. They’ve had a chance to recharge, to do something different and they’re appreciative of their companies for giving them the opportunity. There are organizations that know that the cost of replacing a middlescent worker in need of a break may far outweigh the cost of the paid time off.

**Expanding Leadership Development** – Corporate restructuring and flattening organizations have eroded the old career paths, creating concern that people aren’t accumulating the needed set of leadership skills on the job. The situation is sadly ironic. Mid-career managers are frustrated by the lack of promotion opportunities, and corporate executives are concerned with a lack of candidates with the
right experience. The solution is to widen access to leadership development programs to both rejuvenate midcareer managers and refill the leadership pipeline. Participation in leadership development programs is a form of recognition of an employee’s value and potential, and workers graduate from them with a renewed commitment to the organization’s goals.

**REKINDLE NOW**

We’re not talking about rescuing a few stragglers at the corporation’s fringe; we’re talking about tens of millions of capable mid-career employees who are frustrated in their desire to do something new and exciting, who are stymied in their wish to contribute to the organization’s success in different ways. What’s stopping companies from tapping into all that potential? Perhaps it’s the assumption that careers belong to employees – that people are ultimately responsible for developing their own skills, for marketing themselves and for charting their own paths.

While the responsibility for career moves belongs primarily to the individual, organizations can create the conditions under which career initiatives flourish or fade. It’s in the enlightened self-interest of the organization to remove the institutional barriers to individual fulfillment and ambition, to pay attention and devote the resources needed to keep new possibilities open and revitalize careers.

Recognize that many of your mid-career employees are in middlecence; they’re getting restless. Re-engage them by energizing their careers now.

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Tamara J. Erickson is an award-winning author and widely-respected expert on innovation and the changing workforce. She is the founder and CEO of Tammy Erickson Associates, a firm dedicated to helping clients build intelligent organizations.

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Is it any wonder that those in the healthcare industry who focus on the care and services for residents, spend time trying to ensure the dining experience is just right? Consider the following perspective. Our customers include the resident, family, staff and anyone who has an opportunity to enjoy a meal experience within the organization. All our customers need to have a sense of ownership and pride in their dining encounters. How do we achieve this when each customer may have a different perspective of how that dining encounter should feel and taste or a different range of abilities influencing their enjoyment of the dining encounter or a different opinion of how the meal should be served?

Hippocrates said: “The wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings. Let the food be your medicine.” Florence Nightingale dedicates an entire prose to the value of food in the healing process of the sick, commenting on the texture, timing and presentation style of the food as a potential barrier to engagement by the patient. Leap forward centuries to the present where technology and knowledge has bolstered not only our understanding of the complexity of the biology of food and wellness but the social intricacies needed to influence perception of the meal.

Quality begins with a great product, appealing in appearance and taste; great service; inviting and useful surroundings; knowledgeable and interested staff; and, ultimately, ownership and accountability to the entire dining experience. Consider how or when complaints are presented in relation to the meal. Ask yourself if the first responder, often a member of the nursing or care department, did their job as a good host/hostess. Were they even equipped to answer quality questions? Did they solve problems or create a new ones? Were residents more frustrated than they needed to be? Does your organization have a defined meal program such as “protected meal service” or “fine dining?” These are common industry meal programs with an expectation of interdisciplinary accountability to the quality of the meal. Have you included the following key points?

What does the prep of the food look like? Do those prepping take pride in the end product? This requires objective performance indicators that go beyond public health requirements and regulations of safe food handling. Is the appearance of the chefs important? What is the noise level in the kitchen? Is there an attitude of professionalism?

Do the staff respect the chef? Does the chef have the authority to lead the team? Quite often the prep area becomes informal in nature. Although it is important for a team to be comfortable with each other, the informality may unconsciously evolve to a level of disengagement that creates disassociation by some members of the team to the final product – the food. The dishwashers may not see their role in the success of the food and feel that food quality is
not their problem. The server or dietary aide may only perceive their value at the point of plating or serving. Ask yourself if this is a potential issue in your organization.

Addressing and resolving this requires some reflection on the definition of your meal program. Review the definition to confirm that the program begins with the attitude of the entire team at the point of prep. Reflect on role descriptions and ensure that each is clear about their responsibility to the food and not just the task. Ensure that key positions such as the chef have role descriptions that clearly outline their authority to lead the team in a supportive manner. This may be as simple as starting their shift with a menu review; brief overview of the food item ingredients; any texture or condiment/sauce choices for the final menu options; a reminder of the importance of cleanliness; and support by all.

**DINING ROOM SET UP**

The appearance of the physical space should be an easy indicator to address, yet is often one of the most problematic. Reflect on how many staff is responsible for this one physical space. Is the dining area or areas multi-purpose spaces? Have the different staff who clean and or use this space been trained in how to set up the dining room in preparation for dining? Does the staff even think about their accountability and responsibility for dining room prep? Is participation and attitude in dining part of everyone’s job description?

Not unlike staging a house for sale, committing to daily staging of the dining room is paramount to the resident wanting to engage in the experience. Are there designated parking spaces for equipment at the side of the entrance to the dining room? The entrance should allow for movement of people and mobility aides.

Is the process of seating easy or does the movement draw attention? Reflect on how often a resident who requires assistance to sit has a staff member move their table to allow transition into a seat and then moves the table to the resident or drags the chair with the resident seated to the appropriate position. Wheels placed on the front legs or back legs of the chair can allow for easy movement back and forth and side to side without drawing attention to the movement and ultimately the resident.

Are residents pinned or trapped once they are seated? Observe whether the seating plan allows freedom of movement or prevents the resident, once seated, from moving or exiting, if required. This requires a great deal of brainstorming with the team.

Are there self-serve options available and, if so, are they options with minimal risk outcomes? Independence for the resident during the meal can be an important expression for the individual. Are self-serve cereal dispensers an option? What about condiment caddies or salt and pepper? What does the table setting say in its presentation? Is it welcoming and professional or a pile of utensils in the middle of the table waiting to be set? The latter is a common presentation in dining rooms for persons living with cognitive deficits. Often residents are not provided with utensils in these settings until they sit with staff for fear of infection control issues. If this is the case, have staff set the table at the point of service but provide something of interest for the resident while they are sitting at the table awaiting service. This may be as simple as colourful and interesting cloth napkins with textures or non-slip, colourful, rubberized placemats. If tray service is required, is the placement and presentation of the tray welcoming and accessible?

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

This begins the moment staff begin to talk about the meal (this might include the care or nursing staff). Reflect on the following: How are the residents invited to the meal? Are they greeted when they enter the din-
ing room and how are they greeted? Is greeting them considered part of the role of the staff setting tables? Do all staff in the dining room know the menu and the choices offered on it? Do all staff know their roles in inspecting and addressing the physical space; plated offerings; social offerings? Do all staff clear tables as empty plates present? Are all staff prepared to apologize to a resident if the resident is unhappy with the quality of the experience and/or the food? Do the staff attempt to maintain the ambiance of quality dining?

Customer service, or lack of it, impacts the resident’s perception of the meal experience. Most dietary staff are well aware of their responsibility and their commitment, but getting staff from other departments to embrace the responsibility is often a challenge. Consider whether orientation to the meal program is inclusive of all departments. Is review of the menu part of what is reported at shift change by care/nursing staff? Are other staff invited to dietary meetings? Are there “dining champions” from frontline staff gathered from all departments as part of your quality dining committee or is it simply driven by managers?

It is the responsibility of the staff to demonstrate an attitude of excitement and genuine service commitment to the meal. This includes avoiding the impulse to sniff food which is then offered to the customers, blowing on the food to cool it down or turning up their noses when providing foods they personally do not like. Such table etiquette breaches have no place in the dining room of our customers. Alternatively, table etiquette breaches by customers are allowed. Staff is there to accommodate and ensure dignity and ownership at every meal.

Enhanced dining in a healthcare setting has evolved to include a variety of menu options and service. In the past, quality was often defined by how controlled and predictable the experience was. Although we continue to maintain a safe and quality product, we must consider how we deliver that product in a variety of options as the ultimate definition of enhanced dining. These are not inclusive of one department and perhaps that is the solution in its simplest form.

As part of the hiring and orientation process, take time to teach all staff the effort required to provide a fine dining experience. This should be shared with all staff and not only the foodservice department. Create a dining experience for staff as part of the orientation and annual review. Have them imagine being in the residents’ position. Review and define your quality dining program inclusive of all departments and designate champions to bolster the definition. Review all job descriptions to ensure that there are clear performance indicators and expectations around their responsibility to the meals. This is especially important for care/nursing staff and housekeeping who may be part of physical and/or social support for the meal.

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Recently, Hospitality Management Netherlands (vHMN) celebrated its 30th anniversary. It is a small though active association in the field of hospitality in healthcare and beyond. The vHMN has about 100 members and has managed to establish relations with more than 70 companies that support the association financially and technically. Activities throughout the year consist of thematic meetings, workshops and (international) working visits. By programming current topics at the meetings, the vHMN has earned itself a firm position in the healthcare hospitality world and its opinions and views are highly appreciated by many agencies and companies.

ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS
In the many years I have been active in the hospitality world, I have constantly discovered new things. These things all matter, for hospitality is the work of man. The organizations we work in sometimes take a different view. Supporting activities in hospitals and healthcare institutions are generally hit first by cuts when the financial situation becomes precarious; this trend is noticeable everywhere. During my latest visit to Portugal (Covilha), I heard many stories about the huge challenges our Portuguese colleagues are facing – cuts, lay-offs, salary drops, etc. – all with enormous impact. Under such circumstances, it is hard to keep yourself and your employees motivated and enthusiastic, and to keep on providing your patients and residents with high-quality support and care.

How to keep services up to the best possible standard despite the prevalent crisis? Logistics are one of the most important issues in modern foodservice. More and more healthcare food production units are being outsourced. Buying ready-to-use meals for patients requires new logistic solutions. A decreasing number of staff leads to decreasing service quality levels. Nevertheless, we want to continue to provide the quality care despite the mounting pressure of legislation and regulations.

These issues require creative solutions. Innovation and its necessity were subjects of the vHMN and HCI congress in the Netherlands in May of this year. It is evermore important and necessary to use innovation to respond to the increasing pressure of providing higher quality and better results with less means.

In the past few years, the vHMN has greatly benefited from its HCI membership. The professional network has extended by more than 20,000 colleagues worldwide. Whether it is in southern or northern Europe, Canada or Australia, we are all facing the same issues and challenges. Gathering knowledge and providing knowledge is what we consider important in the Netherlands.

THE POWER OF GLOBAL INFORMING AND LEARNING
Globalization offers excellent opportunities with some limitations. Language and distance make it almost impossible to meet annually, but we all have access to the Internet. Therefore, HCI will optimize and modernize its website in the next few months. HCI wants to develop more activities in the next few years like The Annapurna Exchange programme – doing work placement at very low costs with colleagues in the HCI member states.

Sustainability was the theme of our spring congress. International companies explained their views on sustainability, why it is so important, and what it means for healthcare. In the Netherlands, social sustainability is gaining importance. We are aware that we have to work together on making a better world for future generations.

I have used the word hospitality several times. The vHMN has made it a spearhead for the next few years. However, with healthcare regulations continuously changing, methods and procedures often need to be adjusted. In the Netherlands, the number of people having a meal in institutional restaurants is steadily decreasing, which renders tendering difficult, for instance, and therefore makes it difficult to achieve good business results for both the supplier and the institution. Hospitality becomes harder to define as financial results become more important.

Let us not waste our efforts on re-inventing our own wheels. Knowledge that is available everywhere should be used in an international context. Let us continue to visit each other and learn from each other so that we can make the hospitality world a little bit better.

Bob Mulder is manager of the Services Department (Facility Management) at Franciscus Hospital in Roosendaal (NL), responsible for all non-medical and non para-medic services. He is vice-president of HCI and vice-president and secretary of vHMN.
OSNM

THE OSNM BOARD AND VOLUNTEERS HAVE DEVELOPED and launched a member survey in Ontario, the results of which will guide the board in some key decision-making factors in the next year, namely the Long Term Care Committee.

A new committee has been struck – marketing and membership – to explore ways to increase membership in OSNM. There will be some changes to the website plus an increase in OSNM’s social media presence. If you are interested in lending your online skills to this committee, please contact either Judy Phillips or Judy Stricharuk.

Thunder Bay and area are investigating the option of starting a local chapter of the OSNM. Please contact Judy Stricharuk for further information and details.

All OSNM and OSNM members are invited to attend the OSNM Conference, in Burlington, at the Holiday Inn from September 25 to 27. Register early, as recent OSNM events have sold out.

PSNM

WITH THE HELP OF DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS AND LOYAL vendor supporters, PSNM held a very successful Spring Conference and AGM with Gordon Food Service as the host. Priti Suri, RD, chief consulting dietitian at Registered Dietitians, gave an informative presentation on the various vegetarian diets. Hugh Pelmore facilitated an interactive workshop of bullying and violence prevention in the workplace. Hugh is recognized as one of the most knowledgeable and experienced safety and violence prevention experts in the country.

PSNM members met at International Herbs in Surrey for a tour in June. International Herbs produces specialty vegetables and herbs. Members were shown all the areas from fields, greenhouses, holding, cooling to sorting and packaging.

Members have decided that they would like an education day in the fall, and to move our main conference to September/October in the future. Also, PSNM has moved to two year terms for board positions.

SSNM

THE SSNM HELD ITS ANNUAL EDUCATION DAY IN SASKATOON on April 26 with members from across Saskatchewan. It was a great turnout with more than 20 students in attendance – an action-packed day focused on the Body, Mind and Spirit. Dena Webb-Listwin and Cindy Placatka showed simple yoga techniques that can be done at home or even at the grocery store! Al Scholz spoke about the role of agriculture in food production from home gardens to large commercial farms. The day ended with Dr. Anita Chakravarti sharing ways to combat stress and anxiety at work and home. A raffle ticket sale was held with funds raised going towards the France Gates Scholarship.

Atlantic Canada

NUTRITION MANAGERS CONGRATULATE THE NEW GRADUATES of the Food Nutrition Program at College of the North Atlantic. All of this year’s class are student members of CSNM. A wine and cheese social was held at the college in June. All enjoyed a relaxing evening of catching up and discussing ongoing issues and projects faced by managers. Cavell Knee-Greene also led a tour of the college’s newly renovated downstairs kitchen.
Have you ever attended an in-person meeting where participants were multi-tasking? If this is how we act face-to-face, what do you think is happening at a virtual meeting?

Virtual meetings can be a challenge. Often there is a large group physically at one site with others online and at a distance. Sometimes, the large group can become focused on those in the room and ignore those who are online/off-site, and the discussions continue without providing opportunity for input from the entire group.

Virtual or not, poor manners are expensive. In this example, the team lost the voices of the off-site members. How willing will they be to share their ideas or volunteer for the next project? We all know how expensive and time-consuming it is to replace staff. We need to take extra care in a virtual setting to engage and involve all participants so that we acknowledge the value of their input and the importance of their work.

When Alberta Health Services was created, nutrition and food services operations at more than 100 sites brought together 5,000 staff. The meetings included every variation of food service professionals, from the front-line workers to the executive directors at sites across the province. We needed help in setting communication ground rules, but we didn’t find much on which to build.

With the assistance of student volunteers and reviewers, we developed a Netiquette Manual for the nutrition and foodservice department. It includes specific guidelines and tips for the use of e-mail, instant messaging (IM), audio (telephone and teleconference), and video-audio systems (Microsoft LyncTM, Telehealth).

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Virtual meetings require top-notch communication skills. In a live meeting, we unconsciously read body language and understand if the participants are engaged. In a virtual meeting, without any or few visual cues, we need to include engaging questions and techniques.

The chair needs to keep all meeting participants tuned in. That can mean roll calling every participant for their opinion to ensure that all have the opportunity to share. This roll call means that the meeting will take longer.

Tool: develop a grid listing all meeting participants with check boxes to the right. Use the columns to mark when you’ve heard from them. You can change the order in which people are called.

Tool: depending on your software, you may have some built-in tools to gather comments. For example, Alberta Health Services uses MS LyncTM. There is a poll option allowing participants to vote on a question that can be answered with one button, e.g. Yes, No or Maybe.

Virtual meetings can be highly efficient without building rapport. Tool: social conversation and ice breakers can build the personal connections that lead to strong teams. These are particularly important when a team is at the forming stage.
Meetings with a video component can also build rapport, but this technology isn’t always available for all participants.

**Tool:** in our department, we’ve developed face maps displaying names and photos of those on each committee. These are useful cues when only voices are heard. As well, they are an excellent introduction to the team for new staff members.

A pre-circulated agenda is even more essential in virtual meetings as some participants will be on the road, without access to a printer or email.

Minute-taking is always essential, but on a virtual meeting the click-a-click of a keyboard may be distracting (“What IS she typing anyway?”) Another tool to look for in your software is a whiteboard. The one in MS LyncTM allows everyone to contribute – even simultaneously. Minutes can be developed by cutting and pasting the content into a Word file.

Don’t forget bio-breaks! For a longer meeting (60 minutes), giving people a chance to take a break will reduce discomfort and multitasking.

Virtual meetings are also challenging if there is background noise – participants need to make use of the mute button. If you are able to use the speaker in your computer rather than the phone, to connect to your meeting, your office mates may know everything that’s going on. Invest in a headset and they will appreciate it.

Location, location, location! Eye contact is difficult with virtual meetings with video cameras. But you need to understand where the camera IS. With some tools, the camera is on one side of the screen, but the picture of the others is on the other side. So by making eye contact with the photo, you turn from your real audience. If broadcasting from a large room, the chair needs to sit facing the camera, but at the far end of the table, to be able to both face the virtual and in-person meeting participants.

Our Netiquette Manual is housed on our internal website. We purposefully share it with our new staff, including our students, and the techniques are reinforced in our actions and in our meetings.

Mary Anne Yurkiw, MSc, RD, is senior advisor, Dedicated Corporate Learning – NFS, with Alberta Health Services, in Edmonton. In this role, she works with internal communications (including Netiquette) and organizing educational events for all NFS staff such as the Food Matters conference each spring.

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Clean Sweep

Technology and customer service make Ecolab a dominant force in safety and sanitation

By Jamie Parcells

In 1923, Ecolab began with a single product, a single employee and a single-minded dedication to being the leader in cleaning and sanitation. Today, the Ecolab family is a $12 billion global enterprise with 44,000 associates, serving industrial, institutional and hospitality customers in more than 170 countries around the world.

"Protecting people and vital resources is core to our purpose at Ecolab. We deliver results that make the world cleaner, safer and healthier," says Doug Baker, Ecolab chairman and CEO. "As the global leader in water, hygiene and energy technologies and services, we help our customers meet their operational and sustainability goals at more than 1 million customer locations around the world."

True, the company has come a long way from its modest beginnings when company founder Merritt J. Osborn came up with the idea to develop Absorbit – a product designed to clean carpets in hotel rooms – saving both time and cost for hotel owners who would traditionally have to send their carpets out for cleaning. Success was also achieved with the development of the company's second product – Soilax, a chemical cleaner perfect for use in mechanical dishwashers, a growing technology.

Today, almost 25,000 Ecolab associates serve customers throughout the world. With more than 11,000 premium products, Ecolab is the leader in nearly every market it serves and the company maintains its singular mission: to be the leading global innovator, developer and provider of cleaning, sanitation and maintenance products, systems and services.

In long-term care facilities (LTCs), delivering resident satisfaction in a safe, efficient manner requires a team approach. Ecolab's impact extends beyond chemistry to help measure, improve and maintain areas critical to the success of long-term care operations.

Ecolab plays an integral role in helping LTCs provide the best quality care for their residents. Regular service and training support from Ecolab's knowledgeable and dependable service specialists can help assure procedures are in place to maximize food safety for the protection of residents, including clean and sanitized dishware, glassware and cutlery, and the cleaning and sanitizing of food and non-food contact surfaces.

Ecolab has a number of different services for different areas of the kitchen – including ware washing, food safety assessments, food service preparations and procedures, floor care and water solutions.

"Our company started with the development of innovative solutions and that continues to be the focus for us and our growth today," says Roman Blahoski, Ecolab’s director of global communications. "We look at how we can best meet the challenges our customers face, right from the beginning. Both Absorbit and Soilax truly met a need, were effective and they saved our customers time and money in terms of reduced labour costs – that has always been the focus of the company. We take pride in innovation, having superior industry leading products and service teams," he continues. Ecolab sales and service associates visit customer locations monthly to ensure their products are delivering results.

Ecolab’s strong service philosophy is a crucial ingredient to the company’s success. Frequent calls, checkups and maintenance visits keep Ecolab associates close to their customers. Ecolab reviews and evaluates customers’ needs to help associates retain clients, build more business and help customers maintain an optimal level of sanitation in full compliance with safety and health regulations.

The company’s “Circle the Customer” concept reflects Ecolab’s ability to forge strong and successful partnerships with even the largest organizations. More than 1,500 Ecolab employees from Institutional, Food & Beverage, Research, Marketing and Finance serve one foodservice and food processing conglomerate account.

Ecolab lives its service commitment. Each month, the Ecolab sales force drives more than eight million miles, the equivalent of circling the globe 10 times per day. Each year, cleaning products sold in North America alone stretch 3,460 kilometres, the length of the Great Wall of China. The company dispatches more than 18,000 service vehicles to deliver products to customers in 170 countries.

Ecolab also employs approximately 1,600 scientists around
the globe as members of its R&D team to work with customers on a daily basis to develop solutions that best meet their needs.

Ecolab customers can also benefit from ongoing staff training, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and procedural training. At all levels in the organization, Ecolab provides extensive technical support, troubleshooting and proactive issue resolution.

The company is committed to minimizing its impact on the environment. This is achieved through solutions that reduce consumption of energy, water, resources and packaging. “We have key initiatives aimed at improving operational efficiency and maximizing sustainability for long-term care facilities,” says Mike Brown, senior marketing manager, Ecolab Canada.

Water and energy use have become a key area of focus for LTCs, and compliance with ministry budgeting requires working with suppliers such as Ecolab to help reduce the total cost of dishwashing, laundry, water filtration, housekeeping, pool and spa solutions, and public area cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing.

TIME FOR TECHNOLOGY
Economics Laboratory, as it was then known, first demonstrated its technological expertise in 1928, when it patented the first Soilax dispenser for mechanical dishwashers.

In 1946, the company introduced the first electronic dishwashing dispenser. This major advance in technology allowed the dish machine to sense the concentration of detergent, like a thermostat. In 1948, the company developed the first rinse additive.

By the early 1950s, Economics Laboratory products were in demand outside the United States and, in 1955, there was enough business in Canada to form a sales territory.

In the 1980s, the company pioneered warewashing solids technology. “You could actually put a solid compound in a dispenser, mix it with water and provide the right amount of solution. This reduced the potential for spill and, because it is a solid, it also reduced handling and packaging because you are not using plastic containers for a liquid anymore. Transportation costs were also reduced,” says Blahoski.

Ecolab has set the pace in the industries it serves by developing products, services and equipment that perform better, faster, cleaner, safer and more cost effectively. The company’s 1997 annual report summed up its approach with the cover theme: “You see a world. We see a world of opportunity.” By aggressively pursuing these opportunities for innovation, 35 percent of Ecolab’s total North American sales come from products and services introduced or modified within the last five years.

In 2007, Ecolab Canada introduced Apex, the industry’s most advanced commercial warewash program. Apex measures operational efficiency to help customers save water, energy, and labour costs. Apex packaging reduces waste by 95 per cent. Today, the company has 2,500 registered trademarks and more than 5,300 active patents. The company receives about 20 new U.S. patents each year and has 30 in the works at any given time.

GROWTH BY ACQUISITION
In 1994, Ecolab added a broad new dimension to its “Circle the Customer” strategy. It acquired Kay Chemical Company, the leading cleaning product supplier to the quick service (fast-food) market. The transaction with Kay gave Ecolab a long-sought position in the fast-food cleaning and sanitizing market. Ecolab recently completed two major acquisitions: Nalco – a global leader in water technology, and Champion Technologies, an energy services company.

Also instrumental to the company’s continued success is a strong corporate culture. “We empower our 44,000 associates around the world to take a leadership position to solve customer challenges, and they do so with pride,” says Blahoski. “Our institutional sales and service associates wear white Ecolab coats. It exemplifies a true focus on cleaning and sanitizing and in delivering solutions for our customers.”

Jamie Parcells is the publisher of Food Service & Nutrition Canadian Society of Nutrition Management News.

• jparcells@cccommunications.ca
**BURNED OUT, BOTTLENECKED AND BORED**

**Competency 6.0  Human Resources Management**

1. What is Middlescense?
   - A - A sense of frustration, confusion, and alienation occurring at mid-career
   - B - A sense of euphoria that occurs when you reach the mid-point of a project
   - C - A layer of middle management
   - D - A fragrance reminiscent of spices popular in the Middle East

2. Why do many members of Generation X tend to mistrust corporations?
   - A - They are slackers and don’t like to work hard
   - B - Most lack the education needed to do their jobs well
   - C - Most have already made plenty of money and don’t need the pressure of work anymore
   - D - During their formative years, they watched corporations lay people off and concluded that they had better be prepared to take care of themselves

3. Why do fresh assignments appeal to today’s mid-career workers?
   - A - They remove the responsibility for choosing the path of one’s career
   - B - They provide new and interesting challenges, as well as a broader set of skills
   - C - Most people, as they age, have limited attention spans and find it hard to focus on any one task
   - D - Fresh assignments don’t appeal to mid-career workers; most like to hunker down where they are

4. What training strategy should you use for employees past the age of 40?
   - A - Only invest in a few chosen high-potential employees
   - B - Minimize all investments in people over 40; if they haven’t learned what they need to learn by now, they likely never will
   - C - Invest broadly in over-40 employees; training will pay off in engagement, motivation and new skills
   - D - Provide a limited amount of skill-specific training

**SUCCESSFUL DINING**

**Competency 8.0  Marketing & Promotion**

1. In the absence of table setting for dining rooms supporting persons with cognitive limitations, which of the following is recommended?
   - A - Keep the setting bare until it is time to support the resident
   - B - Set the table as usual
   - C - Offer other distractions that can be interesting such as non-slip placemats and colourful napkins
   - D - Do not seat residents until food is plated and ready to serve

2. Dining programs should include the following, with the exception of (choose the one that does not belong)
   - A - Customer service
   - B - Dietary staff specific
   - C - Prep process
   - D - Dining room set up

3. Which is a common barrier to successful meal service?
   - A - Menu choices
   - B - Tardiness
   - C - Lack of table settings
   - D - Poor customer service

4. What is considered a fundamental starting point for successful dining programs?
   - A - Inclusion of all staff designations to dining programs through orientation, training and performance outcomes
   - B - Mandatory daily audits
   - C - Transitional equipment, i.e. tables that raise and lower
   - D - Self-help meal options

**COMPLETE THIS QUIZ ONLINE!**

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