CPCU SOCIETY INSURING YOUR SUCCESS

Cutting Edge IT

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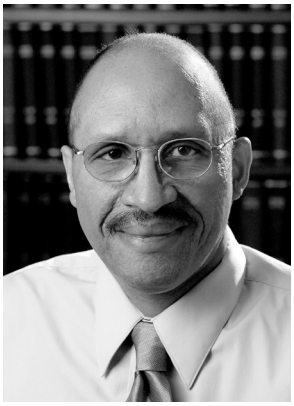
Editor's Letter: Are You a Good "IT"?

by Bruce D. Hicks, CPCU, CLU



■ **Bruce D. Hicks, CPCU, CLU,** is senior editor, Technical and Educational Products Division, for The Rough Notes Company, Inc. in Carmel, Indiana. He began his career in insurance in 1981, serving several regional and national companies in personal lines underwriting, product research and development, auditing, regulation, and compliance. Hicks has been the Research Committee chairman for the CPCU Society's Central Indiana Chapter and he currently serves on the Society's Information Technology Section and Diversity Committees.

Have you ever watched *The Wizard of Oz?* The movie has one scene where the main character, Dorothy, is asked an important question; "Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" The citizens of Munchkinland are eager for this information so they can act accordingly (celebrate or flee).

As an IT professional for your organization; your co-workers may want to know something similar from you. Are you a good IT or a bad IT? Being an IT expert gives you special knowledge that may seem like magic to others. Those you work with are aware that there are good and bad reasons for being known as your organization's IT expert.

The good reasons are, in my opinion, obvious. When the people you deal with benefit from your abilities, they are usually happy to acknowledge them. Also, it is tremendous when others can depend upon your knowledge to fix problems and to make progress to meet business objectives.

The bad reasons are trickier to identify and much harder to justify. One bad reason to be known as an expert is strictly because the title was merely assigned to you. Few people benefit when an unqualified person is responsible for tasks that are beyond them. Co-workers suffer when such a person fails to either get qualified help or acquire the expertise needed to do the job. Another bad reason is due to a qualified person choosing to be a mystery to all non-IT people. This often occurs when the expert hordes knowledge, preventing others from understanding what he or she does. Worse is the expert, IT saboteur. Such persons treat his or her area like a fiefdom, denying anyone from entering their domain while, simultaneously, expanding their influence. The latter is typically done by making "IT" the focus of every imaginable business issue

IT people are not, by nature, secretive, possessive, or uncooperative. However, because they often are privileged with having high-level, special skills; they are vulnerable to being perceived as such. So it is extremely important to make it a priority to eliminate any mystery about what and how we perform our jobs.

Being the right kind of expert takes a lot more effort. It requires an IT professional to put an emphasis on acting **professionally**.

As you live in your own "Oz," be sure you work your magic for the good of others. If you don't, you may face an ending similar to what happened to Oz's bad witches. ■

The Bad IT Expert	The Good IT Expert
relies heavily on special terminology to confuse others	minimizes use of special terms and acronyms to promote understanding
makes every issue an "IT" issue, obscuring how they should be handled	keeps "IT" matters in perspective, sticking to how their area may affect a given issue
troubleshoots business-side problems without expanding the knowledge base of non-IT personnel	troubleshoots while making opportunities to train and educate others so they can handle more IT situations
creates procedures that make the IT area a bottleneck	uses methods that makes the IT area one where work flows through

Peace of Mind

Keep Your Agency Resilient by Using Off-Site Data Storage

by Nancy Doucette

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the February 2007 issue of *Rough Notes* magazine. It is reprinted here with the permission of The Rough Notes Co., Inc.

Author's note: This is the second part of our discussion of off-site data storage. In the December 2006 issue, we spoke with the CIO of a Stockton, California-based agency about how they survived numerous server crashes without losing time or data. We also spoke with the president of a managed services company that provides the off-site data storage for that agency, and a former agent who now advises other agents on the subject of remote data protection and disaster planning.

What keeps you awake at night? If you're **David Bushey, CPCU, CIC,** president of Marcotte Insurance Agency, Inc., in Omaha, Nebraska, one of the things that concerned him was: What would be the best way to maintain the agency in the event of a manmade or natural disaster? In Bushey's ruminations, a "disaster" would restrict the staff's ability to access the agency data, or it would hamper access to the office itself, or it might make it impossible—or inadvisable—for staff to get to the office.

But rather than remaining sleepless in Omaha, Bushey joined with **Greg Paulsen, CPCU, ARM, AU,** and other members of the agency's management team to form the contingency and disaster planning committee. Paulsen, who is vice president of commercial underwriting for the agency, notes that his responsibilities also include assisting management with technology implementation and technology-related projects—such as working on disaster recovery and contingency planning.

Paulsen recalls that as the committee worked through the steps that would ultimately produce the agency's disaster recovery and business continuity plan, they investigated a number of solution providers that would help the agency respond to a disaster—whatever that disaster might be.

All of the solutions came highly recommended, he says, but the selection process involved more than just an organization's reputation based on working with other agencies or industries. One of the solutions that the committee considered would provide a satellite dish and a trailer stocked with PCs following a disaster that rendered the building uninhabitable. The pricing of the product was manageable. However, Paulsen says, "Our outside computer tech cautioned us that our tape and tape drive might not work well on the technology that this provider supplied. That gave us pause. The data that we rely on so heavily might not be accessible, due to the intricacies of tape backups and variations in tape drive manufacturers. We wanted to be sure we had all our data. It is our lifeblood."

While working through the numerous "what if" scenarios that go into creating a disaster plan, Marcotte's contingency and disaster planning committee attended a number of seminars on pandemic flu. "Under the solutions we'd considered to that point," Paulsen remembers, "we would be reliant on going to a physical facility. But if Avian Flu took over the country, our employees wouldn't want to go to a site where they'd be commingling with others.

"We needed a solution that would enable us to have a distributed computing environment—basically a virtual private network approach—that would allow our staff to access not only our server but also the online version of our agency management system (The Agency Manager™—TAM—rom Applied Systems). Most of our employees have high-speed Internet access and could work from home," he points out.

Given those concerns, the committee also examined off-site data storage solutions. Some of the solutions were too expensive—not just the monthly costs, but the set-up costs, Paulsen continues. In one instance, the vendor required that the agency increase its bandwidth. In another instance, the vendor required that the agency switch its Internet provider.

Another provider was "oversubscribed" in the committee's opinion—too many clients and not enough resources. However, that vendor did offer a "cold backup" option meaning that Marcotte could store server equipment in one of their locations and the vendor would provide data streaming. The downside to that option was that someone from Marcotte would have to keep the server updated with the current version of TAM.

But, Paulsen says, the committee reasoned that if the agency were to switch to the online version of TAM following a disaster, it would automatically be on the current version of the management system. So the next step was to find an off-site data storage solution that integrated with TAMOnline. He says the solution that fulfilled the committee's requirements was ebackup Inc., located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

"All an agency needs in order to use ebackup is a computer network," explains Colin Graham, vice president of sales and marketing for ebackup. "Our software is installed at the agency site and the agency manages its own backups. ebackup doesn't go in and get the data. Our software gets the data every day and sends it to us. We store that data. Our process encrypts the data before it's uploaded to our storage facility. Only the agency knows that encryption code. We do not."

"Our software has been around since 1986," explains Rowland Perkins, founder and CEO of ebackup. "That's a long time in the digital media world. The bottom line of our business is protecting people's digital assets."

Paulsen says he's impressed by ebackup's data compression rate. "We were storing

about 87.6 gigabytes of raw information," he reports. "That was compressed down to about 10.2 gigabytes. That's a very good compression ratio."

"The quickest, most efficient and cost effective method of backing up information is to use a digital medium such as ebackup's Rapid Recovery product," Graham declares.

After the initial backup, ebackup tracks only changes. Each day Marcotte runs between 800 and 1,000 files—pieces of information within TAM that have been touched, Paulsen explains. "I receive two daily e-mail reports from ebackup that tell me the number of files that were backed up and the number of gigabytes that those files represent," he says. "So if there was a glitch in our Internet service, or on my PC where ebackup runs in the background, I'd know about it."

Paulsen adds that even with the ebackup solution in place, Marcotte still uses tape backups. "Our tape backups work," he says. "We haven't had any tape failures. We have a vendor that manages a lot of our IT that verifies that the backup is complete."

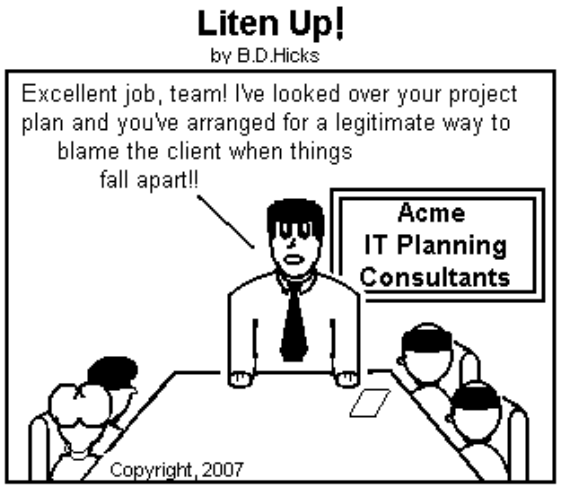
As with any plan, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," so Marcotte is going to have what Paulsen describes as a "tabletop disaster recovery" event to test the plan and the various components. Then about a month later, the agency will undergo a "hot disaster" involving some of the agency's larger customers. "You don't have to live on the Gulf Coast to experience a disaster," he says. "In our area we have some severe tornadoes. The winter weather can pose problems as well. Rain, followed by ice, then heavy snow brings down power lines. Suppose you have to go for a week or so with no electricity. How do you service your customers during this time when they really need you?" ■

How Secure is Your Data?

Let's suppose your agency is running the ASP version of your agency management system. The data that is input into that system is secure at the vendor's data center. So do you need an off-site data storage solution as well?

"Your agency management system doesn't keep track of everything in a business domain," explains Colin Graham, vice president of sales and marketing for ebackup Inc. "So even if you're using an ASP model, there's essential data in third-party programs that would cause a disruption if it were lost. For instance, your e-mails may not be stored in your agency management system; any Word documents that you save locally aren't stored at the vendor's data center; image files are typically local as well. And if you're running QuickBooks or some sort of accounting software that's separate from your management system, that needs to be considered too."

But if your agency is still using a tape backup as its primary means of data security, ebackup's founder and CEO Rowland Perkins recommends that you revisit that decision, especially if you're working on your agency's disaster recovery plan. "Agencies need to review what they're doing. If your agency is still using tape, you don't have a comprehensive disaster recovery plan," he emphasizes. "Disaster sounds like a big word, but it can be as small as a hard drive failure."



"Scrum" an Agile Way to Meet Business Partner Needs

by W. Thomas Mellor, CPCU, CLU, ChFC

W. Thomas Mellor, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, is a project manager with State Farm Insurance, where he teaches CPCU 540—Finance for Risk Management and Insurance Professionals, nationwide to State Farm employees. Mellor has taught the CPCU Society's National Leadership Institute (NLI) course in financial management since 2002, and has been instrumental in revising the course's content. While working as a claims representative and, later, manager in one of State Farm's Special Investigations Units, he worked closely with financial experts and other professionals in determining the veracity of various property and casualty claims. Mellor has been a CPCU Society member since 1991, and has served as a governor. He received his business administration degree with emphasis in finance and insurance from the University of Montana, and completed graduate work in the Walden University M.B.A. program.

What Is Scrum?

Scrum is a popular, agile development method founded by Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland in the early 1990s. Scrum enthusiasts seek to make technology better and more meaningful to the people who work in the field and to the customers who use technology. Ken Schwaber has said of Scrum: "Our purpose is to bring respect through building quality and confidence in our (software development) profession. We have all tired of being denigrated and chided for not delivering what customers expected and wanted. We seek to eliminate that scourge and to work effectively amongst ourselves and with our customers and business partners.

For more about Scrum, visit www.scrumalliance.com.

In November 2006, I attended the fifth Scrum Gathering in Minneapolis. Scrum Gatherings are two-day events held once or twice a year. Though exhausting, the gatherings tend to fill their participants with enthusiasm. I feel the experience is almost spiritual and I learn a great deal at every gathering. There are now more than 7,000 certified experts in the Scrum method (called ScrumMasters), which is a powerful indication that agile development is becoming widespread.

Greater acceptance of this method of developing IT projects is good news. Under older methods, projects begin with the customer telling the project team everything they desire (i.e. requirements). Next, the project team shakes hands with the customer and agrees to deliver a product with all requirements by a stipulated date and at a stipulated cost. Based upon this agreement, the team designs the product and then marches off to write the code. Note that the agreement is often in writing and includes the business partner's official "sign-off" on the matter. Further, the product design may take place, even when there is uncertainty over important facets. This process is then followed by a testing phase which, typically, is the customers' first complete viewing of the product. At this point the customers do acceptance testing to determine if the product really meets their needs.

Meeting customer needs is not synonymous with meeting requirements. *Meeting needs* means fulfilling the customer's expectations, while *meeting requirements* means that the product's functionality and performance can be traced to the prescribed and agreed upon specifications.

All too often customers concede that the product technically meets the original requirements, but not their current needs. So the delivered product is something that the customer neither needs nor wants. The development team responds that they followed the requirements and his or her partners then counters that requirements were misinterpreted or were rendered obsolete due to changing business environment and needs. In the end, both parties are unhappy.

Agile development methods seek to mitigate the risk of changing requirements and desires. The process uses persistent collaboration with the customer. It also requires the project team to provide the customer with periodic demonstrations of functionality as the product is developed. Customer-driven change is accommodated throughout product development.

In Scrum, requirements are managed with a *product backlog*—a prioritized list of product features desired by the customer (the *product owner*). The Scrum team

identifies the product backlog items they feel they can deliver in a "sprint." A sprint is a Scrum term that refers to, typically, a two- or four-week work cycle. At the end of the sprint, the functionality is demonstrated to the customer and other stakeholders for review and feedback. Afterwards, the product backlog is reviewed and the team agrees again to deliver a certain amount of functionality out of the product backlog. This process repeats until the product is "good enough." The goal is to complete an identified level of functionality at the end of each sprint. This process results in features being logically bundled into "release packages"—increments of the product that are actually shipped or put into production.

Agile development is subject to the project constraints of cost, time, and scope. However, since time and costs are typically fixed, agile development focuses on the scope. In traditional development, scope issues can cause great angst because the agreement to deliver "all" requirements is made prematurely. The agreements are in place without understanding the degree of uncertainty often encountered with software development. Dealing with such uncertainty justifies the use of agile methods.

Agile methods make the customer prioritize the feature list so that the most valuable functionality is delivered first and frequently. As the product begins to emerge, the feature list can be modified. As the project proceeds, the team can determine how much functionality they can typically deliver during a sprint, including the cost for doing so. The customer and the team(s) can then assess what amount of functionality can be delivered at a given budget and within a given time frame. The feature list is re-evaluated at the end of every sprint to accommodate updated requirements and priorities.

Agile methods are not a panacea for all software development challenges. There is a saying among Scrum practitioners: "Scrum is simple, Scrum is hard." Risks and issues become apparent very quickly in agile approaches and require immediate attention. Agile also quickly identifies when a project is a poor investment and should be killed off. Though painful, the process typically leads to a business making better decisions.

So, when are agile methods appropriate? They tend to work when:

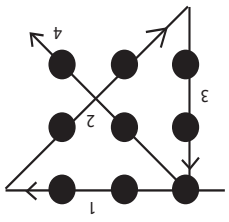
1. the customer wants a quick return on its product investment
2. the customer would benefit from frequently seeing and trying new features
3. the customer wants full control over product development
4. the customer want the most valuable features built and delivered first
5. charges in requirements are expected
6. there is strong desire minimize development costs by using autonomous, cross functional project team(s)

When asked what projects do not merit the agile process, Ken Schwaber (the method's co-founder) responded: "agile is not appropriate for any project where all requirements are certain and static, and where technological and other critical matters have (a) low degree of uncertainty." In other words, if the customer and the team are confident that, throughout the project, all requirements will remain unchanged and that its unlikely to experience technological impacts, then non-agile approaches are feasible.

Customers cannot be expected to be certain about what they want from a product whose concept is based upon vision and desire. Agile methods provide all project participants opportunities to envision, explore, and adapt throughout the creation of the product. In the end, there is a much better chance that the final product is what the customer wants. ■

Calling A Lateral—*Answers from page 9*

Four Lines Solution:



More Lateral Thinking Exercises—Answers

1. Smiles—there is a mile between the two S's.
2. 182
3. The dog couldn't run more than halfway into the woods, because after halfway he would be no longer be running into the woods, but out of them.
4. He is an executioner, and his brother had been sentenced to death.
5. Your breath.
6. They are both in the middle of water. (waTer)
7. The outside! (As opposed to the inside.)
8. Charcoal!
9. The parrot did repeat every word he heard—in the past. Now he was deaf.

MoSCoW Prioritization

by Phil Coley BSc, MBCS, CITP

■ **Phil Coley BSc, MBCS, CITP,** leads Coley Consulting. He has worked for more than 25 years in the IT industry in a variety of roles from developer to analyst to training manager for a major bank. He has worked on all types of systems from mainframes to web based systems.

Editor's note: The following is adapted from project consultant Phil Coley's web site. It discusses a component of the Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM). DSDM is an IT project management approach that is popular in the United Kingdom.

To be successful, projects need to be properly prioritized for both the requirements and the main project objectives and effective prioritization requires making hard choices. One mechanism is to use a number system, but this is flawed as it results in all elements being number one. A more useful method is to use a set of words that have meaning such as the MoSCoW method.

Prioritization of Requirements

An important factor for the success of any project is ensuring that the requirements are prioritized. In many cases this is not done and it often leads to sure project failure. Sometimes it is the customer's fault who want the entire system to be delivered now. Other times it is the project manager's fault because they do not discuss the project with the customer. In either case prayers for miracles are often required if the project is to have any chance of being successful. In my experience, miracles rarely happen on projects.

However, prioritizing is not an easy process, especially when done using a number system. The trouble with number systems is that it appears logical to assign features a priority of 1, 2, 3 etc. However, who wants a requirement to be a "2" or even a "3?" As a result, all requirements become a "1," which is useless. This can lead to having to resort to additional systems, such as giving "1*" and "1**" ratings to try to sort out what is really important. Even this is subject to upward prioritization drift.

Even more damaging with number systems is that features that are not developed within the current project are left off the list and are ultimately lost. This means that designers and developers are unaware of these future needs and therefore cannot select solutions which will make it easier to accommodate them at a later date.

So prioritization is important, but how can it be done if number systems are not effective?

MoSCoW

A more successful method is to prioritize requirements by using words that have meaning. Several schemes exist but a method popularized by the DSDM community is the acronym MoSCoW. This stands for:

M—Must have this (feature).

S—Should have this (feature) if at all possible.

C—Could have this (feature) if it does not affect anything else.

W—Won't have this (feature) this time but would like in the future.

The two lower case "o" are there just to make the acronym work. The importance of this method is that when prioritizing, the words mean something and can be used to discuss what is important.

The "must" requirements are non-negotiable. If they are not delivered then the project is a failure; therefore, it is in everybody's interest to agree on what can be delivered and will be useful. Nice to have features are classified in the other categories of "should" and "could."

"Must" requirements must form a coherent set. They cannot just be "cherry picked" from all the others. If they are, all the other requirements automatically become "must," and the entire exercise is wasted.

Requirements marked as "won't" are potentially as important as the "must" category. It is not immediately obvious why this is so, but it is one of the characteristics that makes MoSCoW such a powerful technique. Classifying something as "won't" acknowledges that it is important, but can be left for a future release. In fact, a great deal of time might be spent in trying to produce a good "won't" list. This has three important effects:

1. Users do not have to fight to get something onto a requirements list.

2. Evaluating what will be required later, affects what is asked for now.

3. Designers' awareness of postponed features may help them produce solutions that can accommodate these requirements in a future release.

Prioritizing the Project Objectives

Once a set of requirements has been prioritized, it can be compared against the other planning aspects of the project—scope, quality, timescale, resources—and a risk statement produced.

There is a general wish among managers to be able to decide when a project will be delivered, how much it will cost, and what it will do. They then think that reality will conform with their assertions. Reality is not so accommodating, as they have left out two significant factors. The first is quality; it may be delivered on time but the quality is appalling. It does what the requirements say, but the system is not robust enough to be used by anybody, as one mistake will make it crash. The other factor is risk, which may be so sky high, that project failure is guaranteed before the project even starts.

One suggestion is to prioritize the four main factors of scope, quality, timescale, and resources, and thus prioritize the key

project objectives. Which of them "must" be delivered, which has the maximum flexibility and is defined as "could," with the other two factors between these as "should." This means that at least one factor can be allowed to slip, and provide flexibility for setting a proper risk plan to ensure the essential factor is met. This is not losing control, it is acknowledging that building a piece of software is a trip into the unknown, and that precautions need to be taken.

Implications of Prioritizing the Project

Any choice involving prioritization has tradeoffs. If nearly all the requirements are prioritized as "must," then there is not much flexibility in the scope of a project. By definition, the scope is the "must" factor in the project and decisions must be made about which requirements are more flexible, or which requirements must be classified as "coulds" and "shoulds."

Many studies have shown that it is better if a project is delivered on time, even if it has few features, than if a feature-ladened project is delivered late. This can be likened to saying when is the best time to deliver Christmas crackers to shops, before or after Christmas? Therefore timescale competes to be the most important factor.

If quality is sacrificed then faults will occur in the software. One way around this is to train the users in the use of a new system, so that they only use it in proper fashion, and know how to get around any bugs that are discovered. However, if it is an internet system intended to be used by customers, then this cannot be done. The risk is too great that an organization's reputation may be damaged by making a faulty system available.

Finally, all systems must be produced to a budget, and a business does not have unlimited resources to put into a project. Moreover, the business case normally assumes a rate of return, which will be considerably reduced if the resources are increased significantly on a project. Therefore resources have a strong case for being the most important factor.

Regardless, you cannot "have it all and have it now," and a balanced and planned prioritization of the factors must take place if a project is to have a chance of delivering business value. If it is not, then the fifth factor of risk goes sky-high, and ceases to be risk and become inevitable.

Conclusion

To deliver business value and be successful, a project requires prioritization of the requirements; and the main project objectives of scope, quality, timescale, and resources. To do this, a method with semantic value such as MoSCoW is the suggested course. ■

IT Quotes

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

–Arthur C. Clarke

"Information technology and business are becoming inextricably interwoven. I don't think anybody can talk meaningfully about one without the talking about the other."

–Bill Gates

"A computer lets you make more mistakes faster than any invention in human history—with the possible exceptions of handguns and tequila. "

–Mitch Ratcliffe

IT Events Calendar

FYI, you may want to mark your calendars for the following information technology related event:

June 18–19, 2007

ODTUG (Oracle Development Tools Users Group) Kaleidoscope 2007
Hilton Daytona Beach
Daytona Beach, Florida

This forum is a gathering of development tool experts, including database administrators. It is a networking and educational experience. For more information, visit http://odtugkaleidoscope.com/.

How You Can Use E-mail to Hold Back Your Career

by Marsha D. Egan, CPCU, ACC

■ **Marsha D. Egan, CPCU, ACC,** is CEO of the Egan Group, Inc., Reading PA, and past president of the CPCU Society. An ICF Certified Professional Coach, she is a leading authority on e-mail productivity. She works with forward-thinking organizations that want a profit-rich e-mail culture. Her recently released ebooks, *Help! I've Fallen into My Inbox and Can't Climb Out! Five Email Self Management Strategies that Will Add Hours to Your Week* and *Reclaim Your Workplace Email Productivity: Add BIG BUCKS to Your Bottom Line* can be found at http://eganemailsolutions.com.

E-mail is here to stay. It is very quickly becoming the primary communication tool in business. And if you want to hold back your career with poor e-mail practices, here are a few tips that can help you:

1. **Waste peoples' time.** The more you annoy people by creating extra work using bonehead maneuvers like sending unnecessary e-mails, forgetting attachments, and inserting **huge** graphics, the less they will think of your business communications skills.

2. **Send poorly written e-mails.** Use improper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Use run-on sentences. Make sure you avoid using spell check.

3. **Bury the point of your communication.** By making it very hard for people to know what it is you are trying to convey, you will be sure to make a name for yourself in business circles.

4. **Forward lengthy chain e-mails, saying "see below."** A great way to call attention to your lack of respect for the receiver is to forward an e-mail that has at least 10 previously forwarded e-mails contained in it. This forces the recipient to have to read through all 10 to try to figure out what is important.

5. **Copy as many people as you can.** This maneuver is more subtle. By adding many extra recipients, you might think you're communicating, but what you're really doing is adding more work to peoples' already full plates. They may not catch on to this one right away, but over time, you won't be able to hide.

6. **Gossip via e-mail.** Even though you think that your friend won't rat you out over the gossip you sent—hey, it is a permanent record, and that "friend" could be as tactless as you!

7. **Put several names in the "To:" line.** The more names you put in the "to:" line, the less they will think they are responsible for the answer. That's a really good way to make sure you don't get results.

8. **Write long and rambling e-mails.** The longer the e-mail the less likely people will get your point. So take advantage of the convenient medium by sending confusing messages . . . no one you're writing really needs to know what is going on.

9. **Send e-mails between one and five a.m.** If you want others to think you're obsessing about your job, losing sleep over your career, or have some other psychiatric problem, send e-mails when everyone else is sleeping.

10. **Send e-mails without thinking about them.** Don't worry about whether things are spelled correctly or if the message makes sense. Just compose it on the fly and hit the send button. If you're lucky, you'll erroneously send it to the entire company or at least to someone you don't really want to read it.

These are just some of the ways that you can mess up your career with shoddy e-mail practices. If you'd like to share some others you've experienced, e-mail us at Marsha@EganE-mailSolutions.com. Or visit our web site for ideas on how you can actually advance your career with healthy e-mail habits at http://EganEmailSolutions.com. ■

Calling a Lateral

by Bruce D. Hicks, CPCU, CLU

Editor's note: Sources used for this article and for the riddles include:

- TIP(Theory Into Practice) psychology.org
- Lifepositive.com
- Debonogroup.com
- Increasebrainpower.com

We tend to spend a lot of time on various articles that discuss communication problems between an insurance organization's IT and business departments. We have examined such issues as how workflow, special terminology, and attitudes can create misunderstanding.

It may seem logical to assume that communication and other challenges are the result of different ways of thinking. Perhaps that is a new area to explore. It could be that we are, at times, thinking too much alike and running into the same obstacles.

Some theorists claim that most workers tend to think linearly. This straightforward manner is time-proven and traditional. It is so popular because, in most instances, it is very effective. However, the method can fall short of meeting objectives. When a serious problem is met, we tend to push our thinking along the same path to resolve things. An analogy might help. Consider Jessica who is driving a truck down a rural road and comes to a stop because the mother of all potholes is just ahead. She considers speeding up to jump the pothole or going extremely slow, but nothing else occurs to her. The answer may be to examine other alternatives, such as going around the pothole.

Thinking Laterally

It may be worthwhile to train ourselves to think in a different pattern. One method, popularized by psychologist Edward DeBono is called "Lateral Thinking." In essence, the method calls for a person to think in unorthodox ways to solve a problem. It suggests that we regularly seek ways to think more creatively.

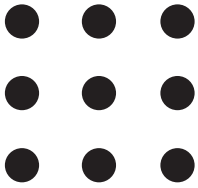
DeBono encourages problem-solving through various alternatives. One method he uses is "thinking hats." This method involves visioning oneself putting on different colored hats that make us assume roles. For instance, one color, say white, may require using a logical, scientific mode, while blue could suggest thinking about matters artistically. (Editor's note: these are not the colors or roles proposed by DeBono; they just illustrate the approach).

Some theorists claim that most workers tend to think linearly. This straightforward manner is time-proven and traditional.

DeBono (and other "think specialists") also suggest another, even fun way, to train yourself to think creatively. Lateral thinking can be developed by regularly solving all types of puzzles. A famous puzzle is the following.

Four Lines Puzzle

Using a pencil and without lifting the pencil from the paper, draw four straight lines through all of the dots below:



If you're familiar with the puzzle or if you are very creative, the answer will come quickly. If you aren't, you're going to get frustrated. The answer appears on page 5, but why not give it a try before you peek?

More Lateral Thinking Exercises

Since the path to creative thinking is to solve puzzles and riddles, why not take a look at the following situations? Again, the secret to solving them is to be creative. An answer box is printed on page 5. Have fun!

1. What is the longest word in the dictionary?
2. I am a three digit number. My second digit is four times more than my third digit. My first digit is seven less than my second digit. What number am I?
3. Every day the man saw his dog run into the woods. However, he noticed that the dog never ran more than halfway into the woods. Why?
4. A man kills his brother in plain sight of many people, and yet he will never be charged with murder or any other crime. Why not?
5. What can you hold without ever using your arms or hands?
6. An island and the letter "t" have something in common. What is it?
7. Which side of a cow has the most hair?
8. What is black when you buy it, red when you use it, and gray when you throw it away?
9. The owner of the pet shop guaranteed that the Guatemalan parrot repeated every word it heard. The customer found that the parrot wouldn't repeat a single word that he said. Nevertheless, what the pet shop owner said was true. How could this be? ■

(Answers on page 5.)

A History of Computers

by Bruce D. Hicks, CPCU, CLU

Considering that most of us spend a tremendous amount of our personal and work lives with computers and computing, it may be interesting to look at a brief history of this marvelous technology.

I found a table of historic computing events while browsing at About.com. The table was put together by Mary Bellis, a contributor to the About site, specializing in topics on inventors. On that site she indicates that she plans to add to the history (we'll keep an eye out for future developments).

Per Bellis, a host of inventors contributed to the development of computers which, as is still the case, are comprised of an array of complicated components. The table is not comprehensive, but it does include a number of milestones. Note that the event descriptions are minimal and, in places, redundant; but readers are invited to use the information to explore the web for more details.

A (Partial) History of Computers

Year	Inventor(s)	Event
1936	Konrad Zuse—Z1 Computer	First freely programmable computer.
1942	John Atanasoff and Clifford Berry—ABC Computer	Who was first in the computing biz is not always as easy as ABC.
1944	Howard Aiken and Grace Hopper—Harvard Mark 1 Computer	The Harvard Mark 1 computer.
1946	John Presper Eckert and John W. Mauchly—ENIAC 1 Computer	20,000 vacuum tubes later.
1948	Frederic Williams and Tom Kilburn—Manchester Baby Computer and The Williams Tube	Baby and the Williams Tube turn on the memories.
1947–48	John Bardeen, Walter Brattain, and Wiliam Shockley—The Transistor	No, a transistor is not a computer, but this invention greatly affected the history of computers.
1951	John Presper Eckert and John W. Mauchly—UNIVAC Computer	First commercial computer and able to pick presidential winners.
1953	International Business Machines—IBM 701 EDPM Computer	IBM enters into "The History of Computers."
1954	John Backus and IBM—FORTRAN Computer Programming Language	The first successful high-level programming language.
1955 (In Use 1959)	Stanford Research Institute, Bank of America, and General Electric—ERMA and MICR	The first bank industry computer—also MICR (Magnetic Ink Character Recognition) for reading checks.
1962	Steve Russell and MIT—Spacewar Computer Game	The first computer game invented.
1964	Douglas Engelbart —Computer Mouse and Windows	Nicknamed the mouse because the tail came out the end.
1969	ARPAnet	The original Internet.
1970	Intel 1103 Computer Memory	The world's first available dynamic RAM chip.
1971	Faggin, Hoff, and Mazor—Intel 4004 Computer Microprocessor	The first microprocessor.
1971	Alan Shugart and IBM—The "Floppy" Disk	Nicknamed the "Floppy" for its flexibility.
1973	Robert Metcalfe and Xerox—The Ethernet Computer Networking	Networking.
1974–75	Scelbi and Mark—8 Altair and IBM 5100 Computers	The first consumer computers.
1976–77	Apple I, II, and TRS—80 and Commodore Pet Computers	More consumer computers.
1978	Dan Bricklin and Bob Frankston—VisiCalc Spreadsheet Software	Any product that pays for itself in two weeks is a surefire winner.
1979	Seymour Rubenstein and Rob Barnaby—WordStar Software	Word Processors.

A (Partial) History of Computers (cont.)

Year	Inventor(s)	Event
1981	IBM—The IBM PC Home Computer	From an "Acorn" grows a personal computer revolution.
1981	Microsoft—MS-DOS Computer Operating System	From "Quick And Dirty" comes the operating system of the century.
1983	Apple Lisa Computer	The first home computer with a GUI, graphical user interface.
1984	Apple Macintosh Computer	The more affordable home computer with a GUI.
1985	Microsoft Windows	Microsoft begins the friendly war with Apple.

Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force Report Summary

by Kathleen J. Robison, CPCU, CPIW, ARM, AU

Kathleen J. Robison, CPCU, CPIW, ARM, AU, has more than 30 years of experience with leading claims organizations, and possesses a wide range of commercial and personal insurance coverage knowledge and applicability. K. Robi & Associates, LLC, which she founded in 2004, provides customized consultant services in the property and casualty insurance fields, including expert witness testimony, litigation management, claims and underwriting best practices reviews/audits, coverage analysis, and interim claims management.

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A Brief History

At the CPCU Society's 2005 Annual Meeting and Seminars, the Board of Governors created a Sections Strategic Task Force. The task force developed a strategic vision for sections. It was presented to the Board at the 2006 Annual Meeting and Seminars in Nashville, in September.

The Sections Strategic Task Force proposed the Sections' Strategy should be, "to position sections as a provider of readily available, high-quality, technical content to stakeholders." The level of content and delivery would vary based on the audience. To successfully accomplish the strategy the task force recommended a series of strategic initiatives aligned with four key perspectives: Organizational Structure (OS), Leadership Development (LD), Membership (M) and Value-Added Services (VA).

The Board of Governors accepted the report and referred it to the Executive Committee to develop detailed recommendations for consideration by the Board at the April 2007 Leadership Summit meeting. The Executive Committee created the Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force to develop the detailed recommendations.

Board Approved

The Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force outlined implementation steps for each of the Sections Strategic Task Force's categories of recommendations. On April 20, 2007, the CPCU Society's Board of Governors approved and accepted the Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force report.

The Board approved the formation of the Interest Group Resource and Governance (IGRC) Task Force to manage the implementation of the various tasks recommended except for OS4—Open Interest Groups to all Society members. The Board requested that the Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force remain in existence to undertake the necessary research on OS4 and present to the Board at the 2008 Leadership Summit meeting.

The Board decided it will announce at the 2007 Annual Meeting and Seminars in Hawaii the timetable for moving from the name sections to interests groups. Until that time the title will remain "sections."

Continued on page 12

Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force Report Summary

Continued from page 11

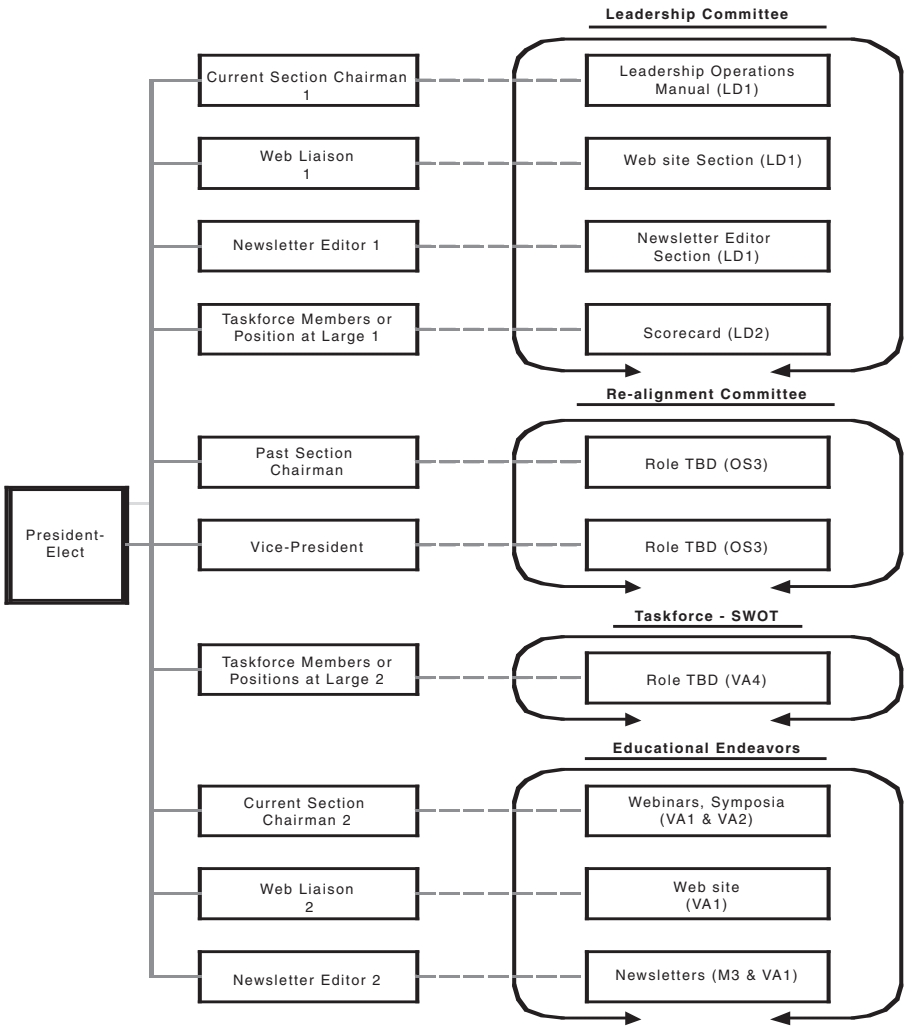
This article summarizes the Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force report and recommendations.

Task Force Members and Structure

W. Thomas Mellor, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, chaired the task force. Members of the task force were: **Karl M. Brondell, CPCU; Nancy S. Cahill, CPCU; Robert Michael Cass, J.D., CPCU; Donald William Cook, CPCU; Todd G. Popham, CPCU, CLU; Kathleen J. Robison, CPCU, CPIW, ARM, AU; Brian P. Savko, CPCU, CLU, ChFC;** and **John J. Kelly, CPCU,** as CPCU Society liaison. Tom Mellor, CPCU; Nancy Cahill, CPCU; and Kathleen Robison, CPCU, served on or consulted to the previous Sections Strategic Task Force.

The original Strategic Sections Task force distributed its recommendations into four categories: Organization Structure, Leadership Development, Membership, and Value Added Services. The current task force agreed on a division of work and organization structured around these four categories and divided themselves into four teams. Each team identified steps to be undertaken in order to implement the recommendations.

Table 1
Proposed Interest Group Resource and Governance (IGRG) Task Force and Sub-Task Forces



Special Note: *The task force understands that the actualization of its recommended implementation process will not be accomplished quickly. It will require the contributions, deliberations, and efforts of a large number of society volunteers. It will also take time. The task force believes a two to three year timetable is realistic.*

Organizational Structure

OS1—Re-brand Sections as Society Interest Groups

1. Authorize and implement new interest group names specifically using the words *Interest Group* in the title (e.g. *Claims Interest Group*) and formally identify interest groups collectively as *CPCU Society Interest Groups*.

2. Determine appropriate interest groups that should exist by aligning the groups with current industry functions or by roles (such as leadership or project management.)

3. Institute changes in verbiage from *Section* to *Interest Group* in all formal Society communications and materials (current sections publications, Society web site, stationery, etc.) to be effective on a specified date.

4. Communicate the changes to Society members, including impacts and rationale, via print and electronic media. This should be done in advance of the change date and also after the change date.

Special Note: *The re-branding of sections as Society Interest Groups will be announced at the 2007 Annual Meeting and Seminars in Hawaii. A timetable will then be established for items 3 and 4.*

OS2—Create CPCU Society Interest Group Resource and Governance (IGRG) Task Force

To manage and direct all of the changes recommended, the Task Force proposes the formation of the Interest Group Resources and Governance Task Force (IGRG). The IGRG's leadership and

direction will provide continuity, consistency, and quality to this crucial transformational project.

The CPCU Society's president-elect will chair the IGRG. Each of the other members will be responsible for chairing a specific sub-committee dedicated to the implementation of a recommended group of tasks. (See Table 1.)

The recommended composition and responsibilities of the IGRG members are as follows:

- Society president-elect—chairman.
- Society vice-president—assistant to the committee chairman/re-alignment.
- Two current section chairmen—leadership operations manual/educational webinar and symposia.
- One past section chairman—re-alignment.
- Two current or past web liaisons—leadership operations manual and web liaison section/educational endeavors (web site).
- Two current or past newsletter editors—leadership operations manual and newsletter edition section/educational endeavors (newsletter).
- Two task force members from the 2006–2007 task force or from the 2005–2006 task force. Immediate responsibilities to include Scorecards/SWOT Analysis.

Special Note: *These recommendations encompass both the breadth and depth of sections' organization, products, services, and membership. The Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force quickly realized the enormity and complexity of the undertaking. It requires a large number of section and Society volunteers. If the reader is interested in servicing on this task force please let the Society know by e-mailing your name and e-mail address to Mary Drager at mdrager@cpcusociety.org.*

OS3—Assess Current Sections and Align them with Major Industry Functions

1. Form a representative group of section members to determine the best alignment, including the possibility of combining, broadening, or eliminating current sections, and/or fostering the creation of new groups based upon industry findings. This group should undertake a research effort that focuses on aligning groups with current industry functions. (See Table 1).

OS4—Open Interest Groups to All Society Members

1. Determine the reaction and position of companies and members to this proposed change—especially if section membership dues are incorporated into general membership dues.

2. Determine a dues policy for members who wish to belong to more than one interest group (i.e. should they be surcharged for this?)

3. Determine a dues policy for lifetime retired members who wish to belong to one or more interest groups.

4. Determine the expense impact to the Society that would probably result from a significant increase in the interest groups' collective population.

5. Determine the impact to Society administration from an organizational, staffing need, and technological perspectives that could result from a significant increase in the interest groups' collective population.

6. Examine any potential negative consequences (e.g. possible dilution of perceived value in belonging to an interest group) that might result from including interest group membership within general membership.

Special Note: *The Board requested that the Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force remain in existence to undertake the necessary research on OS4 and present to the Board at the 2008 Leadership Summit meeting. The IGRG will not be responsible for OS4.*

Leadership Development

LD1—Formalize Standard Section Leader Training and Orientation for the Chairman, Newsletter Editor, and Web Liaison. This Training will Include an Operations Manual and an Updated List of Best Practices.

1. Form a task force to develop an operations manual on leadership requirements for interest group chairmen, web liaisons, and newsletter editors. The task force should establish a formal process for continuously updating the best practices. This should be a how-to manual on how to lead a section. The operations manual should include an overall section on the section leadership responsibilities. Within the operations manual there should be specific sections devoted to the responsibilities, tasks, checklists, timelines, etc. for the chairman, web liaison, and the newsletter editor.

2. Provide leadership training for incoming section chairmen, web liaisons, and newsletter editors. This training should occur before the person assumes his or her section leadership position. This training should occur at Leadership Summit, mid-year meetings, or chapter sponsored Society/NLI courses. Variations in leadership experience among interest group leaders should be taken into consideration when developing the leadership training. Outgoing interest group chairmen should continue to be a resource to the incoming leaders.

   Leadership training for incoming section leadership should consider that those who have no leadership experience will require both basic management training (organizing, planning, controlling, decision

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Sections Strategic Implementation Task Force Report Summary

Continued from page 13

making, motivations, and leadership), as well as training in "virtual leading" and/or leading volunteers. Those who have prior on-the-job leadership experience may require leadership techniques for motivating volunteers and/or leading "virtual teams."

3. In addition to leadership training, specific training for incoming web liaison and newsletter editors should be established. Two taskforces should be formed, one for the web liaison position and one for newsletter editors. The taskforces should develop the training curriculums for both positions. Training could be done by Society staff in Malvern or as an online course. The outgoing web liaisons and newsletter editors should continue to be a resource to the person coming into the positions.

LD2—Create a Developmental Scorecard for Section Volunteers and Society Members. *(This is something that section members and volunteers can present to their employer evidencing the technical and developmental value of membership)*

1. A task force should be formed to develop a "tactical scorecard" that can be used by section leadership to measure the section's progress toward strategic goals and related tasks. The scorecard criteria should be developed based on the results of the section SWOT analysis, as proposed under section VA4—Conduct SWOT analysis for each section. Each criterion should have a set of tasks, which are required to achieve the goal.

2. A task force should be formed to develop a "value scorecard" which can be used by section members to evidence the technical and developmental value of membership. Consideration can be given to expanding this scorecard to the value of membership in the Society, not just interest group membership. Development of the "value scorecard" should consider:

   a. The value to the member and the member's employer of involvement in particular activities.

   b. The role of the individual during the particular activities, i.e. leader, committee member, etc.

   c. The skills and experience obtained as a result of involvement and role in particular activities.

Membership

M1—Create Value Statements and other Communications Tools to Promote Interest Groups

1. Collect the value statements and other communications currently used by the existing sections. Assess the current state of the value statements and communications against the new interest group branding strategy.

2. Assess and incorporate branding strategy for interest groups.

3. Solicit feedback from interest groups on gaps between current state and future state (focus groups, surveys, etc.)

4. Draft language for new value statements and communications, targeting the increased value (technical content, reduced cost, etc.) to existing members and incorporate new value statement and communications messages into society publications.

M2—Establish Affiliations between Interest Groups and other Industry Organizations (e.g., PLRB, The "Big I," and RIMS)

1. Identify key organizations to focus our research by soliciting feedback from sections and the CPCU Society.

2. Assess the current collaboration between interest groups and key industry organizations (focus groups, surveys, etc.)

3. Assess the current collaboration activity against new opportunities with joint sessions with interest groups and key industry organizations.

4. Draft and validate an action plan to build collaboration.

5. Confirm plan with interest groups and industry organizations.

6. Publicize new direction in CPCU Society publications.

M3—Refresh the Interest Group Newsletters

1. Examine alternative publication options to current newsletters, including the potential use of a magazine-styled compilation of comprehensive interest section information and articles in a journal-style publication.

M4—Designate Liaison(s) to Promote Interest Group Benefits to Chapters, Major Employers, and the Insurance Services Community

1. Identify the key major employers and insurance services community organizations.

2. Assess the current outreach underway between interest groups and local chapters, major employers, and the insurance services community (focus groups, surveys, etc.) and identify gaps.

3. Identify responsibilities of a liaison and prepare training conducted for liaisons by the Society.

4. Identify liaison volunteers, establish a process for selecting them and introduce and promote them through various industry publications.

M5—Strengthen Connection between CPCU Society and Accredited Risk Management and Insurance Degree Programs

1. Identify the key major insurance degree programs to focus our research by soliciting feedback from sections and CPCU Society.

2. Assess current outreach underway between sections and key insurance programs (focus groups, surveys, etc.)

3. Identify new collaboration opportunities with joint sessions between interest groups and industry organizations and develop and implement an action plan to institute collaboration between interest groups and insurance degree providers.

4. Publicize new direction in CPCU Society publications.

Value Added Services

VA 1—Develop Consistent Format and Content Standards for Core Interest Group Offerings (Newsletter, Web, Symposia)

1. Create a committee for each—newsletter (this dovetails with M3 and might best be accomplished there), web, symposia. Each committee should be composed of section members responsible for the format. Each committee chairman would be a member of the Interest Group Resource and Governance Committee.

2. The committee establishes guidelines and templates for each; newsletter, web, symposia.

3. The committee is responsible for coaching and mentoring the sections on the guidelines and templates.

VA2—Expand Delivery Methods of Technical Content

1. Establish a vehicle, guidelines, and templates for webinars. The webinars would focus on pertinent and timely topics that are delivered in one hour or less. The structure should be such that it will easily facilitate the rapid development and presentation of a topic.

2. Establish guidelines, templates, and vehicles for teleconferences and videoconferences.

3. Expand delivery of technical content by partnering with other insurance organizations and presenting at their meetings.

4. Each committee outlined in VA1 would also be charged with the responsibility of identifying avenues to expand the delivery methods of technical content.

VA3—Encourage Interest Groups to Convert Highest Rated Annual Meeting Technical Seminars into Symposia

1. Within 30 days of the Annual Meeting and Seminars the Interest Group Resource and Governance Committee selects three to five technical seminars. The selection is based upon the rating feedback sheets, number of persons attending the seminars, and the pertinence of the information content.

2. The Society and the Section Seminar Liaisons will format and package the seminars making them available to the chapters and as regional meetings as in VA3.

3. The top three to five seminars would be packaged into a day of training, knowledge transfer, and held four to six months after the Annual Meeting and Seminars at three different strategic sites around the country.

VA4—Conduct SWOT Analysis for Each Interest Group; Implement Findings

1. Introduce the SWOT concept to the section chairmen during the sections leadership meeting with reference material with at Leadership Summit in Orlando.

2. At the 2007 Leadership Summit, the section chairmen would identify a committee member responsible for the SWOT analysis as a "point person" for contact.

3. Designate a SWOT coordinator to liaison and assist the section SWOT "point persons" in conducting the SWOT within each section. The SWOT coordinator would be a member of the section task force and ideally would transition to serve on the initial Interest Group Resource and Governance Committee. This group will develop a SWOT template to be used by all sections. In addition, they would develop and conduct a SWOT training program.

4. Before the 2007 Annual Meeting and Seminars, a SWOT training program for section chairmen and all other interested section committee members would be conducted through an appropriate medium.

5. At the 2007 Annual Meeting and Seminars the section chairmen would conduct the SWOT analysis with his or her committee and complete the SWOT templates.

6. Society Interest Group Resource and Governance Committee would review, coordinate, encourage, and challenge each interest group to then create interest group goals based upon the SWOT. ■

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