

January 2012

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## President's Message

You may remember that back in September I spoke of four key themes: communication; demonstrable activities; responding to needs; and delivering value. Although these were discussed in the larger context of chapter priorities, when it comes to the idea of delivering value, I think that there are many parallels which can be drawn with your personal career success.

How does your organization measure success? How is your individual performance (or contribution) measured and rated? Do you work in a learning organization that embraces diversity, or are you stuck in a toxic atmosphere dominated by a “good old boy network” of baby boomers just coasting toward retirement? If you can answer these questions, then you probably have a good idea of both how you are viewed within the organization, and what types of rewards or recognition you will receive. For many people however, not all answers are easy to come by. Most of us work within organizations where there remains some unanswered questions, whether it is due to the structure of the organization (corporate bureaucracy, matrix style reporting, or continual realignments in the hierarchy), the management style (more secretive, with a policy of non-disclosure regarding key details) or just a lack of objective metrics that can be referred to (perhaps replaced by vague group or team goals).

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## President's Message (continued)

Regardless of the business circumstance you find yourself in, there are two ways in which you can help to promote yourself in the workplace and show that you are delivering value within the organization. The first way is to respond to the needs of your customers, whether that is the actual end-user customer external to your organization, or for most of us, the internal customers we are serving. Many of you reading this are most likely in staff positions, working in support of line functions (those who actually provide the good or service to end-user customers). When this is the case, make sure your communication with internal customers is robust and precise – whether the context is a regular standing meeting, email, or a casual phone conversation.

The second way to promote yourself is by demonstrable activities. If you work in a learning organization, then taking additional classes outside of work may fit the bill. However, if education is not a priority where you work, then perhaps you should consider joining a special team that is assigned to a high priority or high profile project. When it comes to annual reviews, perception is reality. Even when a review is (theoretically) covering the previous twelve months or calendar year, there are many times when that unwritten review can still be shaded and affected by the actions you take during the first quarter of 2012. Why is this so important? There are many reasons why, but most important I would want each and every one of you to enjoy career success as we begin the new year. When you are on top of your game and doing a good job, it is easier to work through temporary setbacks (such as a lower than expected performance review). Situations will change throughout 2012 and each one of us should position ourselves to take advantage of any opportunities that may come our way (or that we can create for ourselves).

The choices are yours and your success is in your hands. Remember that you are not alone – the Western Mass chapter is here to help. Join the board, take a class, or attend a meeting – do whatever needs to be done. I cannot speak for the other members of the Board, but nothing would give me more professional satisfaction and pleasure than to write a letter of recommendation on behalf of one of our members to their employer (or prospective new employer) detailing your skills and accomplishments. Take control and make the beginning of 2012 a new start.

Sincerely,

Tom Cantin

**Western Massachusetts APICS Programs 2011-2012****PROGRAMS CALENDAR 2011 - 2012****September 20: Plant tour DFF Corporation: Agawam**

Very sophisticated and state-of-the-art manufacturing operation, DFF provides design assistance, electro/mechanical assembly & test and contract manufacturing services to varied industries, including aerospace, defense, medical, and electronics.

**October 18: Top Management Night**

**Paul Soderburg, Vice President of International Operations at Gerber Scientific Inc.**

Mr. Soderburg is an engaging speaker that has spent considerable time in China and will discuss issues involved in outsourcing in Asia. This is an evening for you to invite top managers from your corporation.

**November 15: Written Business Communication**

**Holly Lawrence, Isenberg School of Management UMass**

Whether we are writing an email, letter or proposal, it is important to get our point across effectively. Dr. Lawrence will provide tips and methods to help us improve our writing.

**January 17: Joint Purchasing Meeting, Improving Decision-Making and Leadership for Supply Chain Managers**

**David Liddell, Skye Business Solutions**

Extend your network by meeting with our purchasing colleagues. David Liddell presented at New England Supply Chain Conference and participants were excited about what he had to say.

**February 15 (Wednesday) Excel Pivot Tables**

**Jodi Welsh, CPIM, Yankee Candle**

Last year, Ms Welsh conducted a very well received talk on pivot tables. This seminar will be hands-on with participants asked to bring a laptop.

**March 20: Improving On-Time Delivery (Afternoon seminar)**

**Tom Cantin, CPIM**

Last year Mr. Cantin spoke to APICS on this topic. This seminar is in response to our member request for more in-depth treatment of this important subject.

**April 24: Building and Sustaining Transformational Supply Chain Capabilities**

**Edna Conway, Cisco**

Brilliant and Funny. She has an uncanny knack of being able to take high level strategic concepts and explain them with concrete examples.

**May:** Plant Tour, please let Mary Jo know of any leads you have.

APICS is your organization. Please contact Mary Jo Maffei , Programming Chair, with your ideas [mjmaf@aol.com](mailto:mjmaf@aol.com) or 413-259-1263

## What Will It Take?

One of the hardest and most important tasks for any organization to accomplish is member feedback. Without feedback, it is impossible to know if things are going good, bad or somewhere in between. Your Western Mass chapter of APICS is no different. From programming to speakers, newsletters to surveys, emails to phone calls – and everything else you can imagine – we need to know what you think. However, like a dentist pulling teeth, many times that feedback can be elusive and hard to come by. That is why, this month, you will see that the position of Member Advocate is being created to lend a voice to members who may be feeling disconnected from the current processes.

The only request that I will make is this: talk to us. Let the Board members know what you need, what you like, and most importantly – what needs to change. Change is part of the natural evolutionary process, so there is nothing to be afraid of. There have been many discussions at Board meeting about finding out what members want, but it is impossible for any of us to guess at the desires of members who never participate or respond. If you want to be a member in name only, we will certainly respect that. If there is something that you would like to see changed regarding meeting dates and times, let us know that too. Is there a class that you need (for yourself or your company) – just let us know?

Communicating with us is the only way that we can change the way that you want us to. Chances are, there may be other members who feel the same way that you do, but no one has spoken up yet. Call Tom Cantin at (413)534-5325 or send an email to [thomascantin@charter.net](mailto:thomascantin@charter.net).

## Member Advocate

We all need a little help sometimes – both in our personal and professional lives. As we enter 2012, we must once again refresh ourselves (as a local, service organization) and put ourselves in a position to respond to the needs of members. Not every individual is comfortable filling out a survey or responding to an email message. There are times when encouragement is needed. Remember, this is your chapter, and to aid in communication (and more importantly, to ensure that your needs are met) I am looking for an individual to serve as Member Advocate.

If you are a good listener and enjoy helping others then this might be a great way to serve others and build your own professional credentials as well. As a Member Advocate you will have the ability to interact with many different members on a variety of topics. Best of all, by voicing the needs of the members at the Board of Directors meeting you will ensure that members' needs are recognized and met. Now is the time to get involved and make a difference.

Remember, decision are made by those who show up – advocate for those who need some help and begin to shape the future of our chapter.

Call Tom Cantin at (413)534-5325 or send an email to [thomascantin@charter.net](mailto:thomascantin@charter.net).

## Practical Advice on Business Communications

At our professional development meeting on November 15, Dr. Holly Lawrence provided an entertaining and informative presentation on how we can all become more effective in our business communications. Her focus was on everyday business communications, particularly how busy professionals can get more out of email communications. Part overview and lecture, part interactive workshop, her presentation was designed to give participants helpful tips to take away for communicating at work as well as an immediate, on-the-spot opportunity to practice their communications.

Dr. Lawrence is the Director of the Business Communication Program in the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her Program is responsible for teaching hundreds of Isenberg undergraduates each semester as well as working with MBA students to help them improve their communications at work. She earned her PhD in composition from the University of Massachusetts' Writing Program and her BA in English from George Mason University. Dr. Lawrence's specialization includes Plain Language communications, intercultural communication, and leadership communication for professionals.

Chapter 19 members who attended this evening presentation enjoyed a great dinner and received practical education they could immediately use the next day at work.

## Improved PDM Agenda!

In October, the Board of Directors conducted a quick, email-based survey on whether to adjust our Dinner Meeting agenda. We received many thoughtful responses and insightful comments from the membership. As previously announced, starting with our January meeting, we will start and end the monthly dinner meetings earlier.

Our revised agenda will follow this new timing:

Networking	5:00 – 6:00 PM
Speaker	6:00 – 7:00 PM
Business Meeting	7:00 – 7:15 PM
Dinner	7:15 PM

Please plan to attend in January and try out this new format.

## Certification Workshops Announced

Western Mass Chapter 19 will present two different classes this Winter conducted at two locations:

The CPIM Master Planning of Resources class is scheduled to start on Monday January 23, 2012 at 6:00 PM at Savage Arms in Westfield, MA.

Also starting on Monday January 23, 2012, the CPIM Detailed Scheduling and Planning class will run from 4:30 to 6:30 PM at United Plastics in Chicopee, MA.

These classes are available to APICS members for the deeply discounted cost of only \$150.00 each, a tremendous bargain for this valuable educational experience.

To register, contact Ed Kantor, CPIM at 413 592-6895 or email [edkan@juno.com](mailto:edkan@juno.com).

Ed Kantor, CPIM

## CBAR Achievement

*Excellence in Chapter Management is an integral component to enhancing the member experience. Successful APICS chapters provide their members with opportunities for stellar education, career development, and networking.*

*The APICS Chapter Benchmarking and Recognition (CBAR) program recognizes chapters that have exceeded minimum standards and exemplify excellence in overall chapter management. We are proud to announce the APICS Western Massachusetts Chapter received the 2011 CBAR Silver Award designation, an admirable accomplishment for an APICS chapter.*

*As a member of an APICS Silver Award Winning Chapter, the CBAR designation signifies your chapter's commitment to providing an exceptional membership experience.*



## *Excellence through Education*

### **A Short Story for Engineers** (submitted by Bob Abair, CPIM)

A toothpaste factory had a problem: they sometimes shipped empty boxes, without the tube inside. This was due to the way the production line was set up, and people with experience in designing production lines will tell you how difficult it is to have everything happen with timings so precise that every single unit coming out of it is perfect 100% of the time. Small variations in the environment (which can't be controlled in a cost-effective fashion) mean you must have quality assurance checks smartly distributed across the line so that customers all the way down to the supermarket don't get pissed off and buy another product instead.

Understanding how important that was, the CEO of the toothpaste factory got the top people in the company together and they decided to start a new project, in which they would hire an external engineering company to solve their empty boxes problem, as their engineering department was already too stretched to take on any extra effort.

The project followed the usual process: budget and project sponsor allocated, RFP, third-parties selected, and six months (and \$8 million) later they had a fantastic solution - on time, on budget, high quality and everyone in the project had a great time. They solved the problem by using high-tech precision scales that would sound a bell and flash lights whenever a toothpaste box would weigh less than it should. The line would stop, and someone had to walk over and yank the defective box out of it, pressing another button when done to re-start the line.

A while later, the CEO decides to have a look at the ROI of the project: amazing results! No empty boxes ever shipped out of the factory after the scales were put in place. Very few customer complaints and they were gaining market share. "That's some money well spent!" - he says, before looking closely at the other statistics in the report.

It turns out, the number of defects picked up by the scales was 0 after three weeks of production use. It should've been picking up at least a dozen a day, so maybe there was something wrong with the report. He filed a bug against it, and after some investigation, the engineers come back saying the report was actually correct. The scales really weren't picking up any defects, because all boxes that got to that point in the conveyor belt were good.

Puzzled, the CEO travels down to the factory, and walks up to the part of the line where the precision scales were installed. A few feet before the scale, there was a \$20 desk fan, blowing the empty boxes out of the belt and into a bin.

"Oh, that," says one of the workers - "one of the guys put it there 'cause he was tired of walking over "every time the bell rang". **(No doubt someone at that company brought home useful insights from their Seminar 1 Educational Experience!)**



*Excellence through Education*  
**Supply Chain Conference**  
**April 19-20, 2012**  
ANTUN'S of Westchester

**ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW READY**

Celebrating Thirty Five Years of Education Excellence for New England, New York & New Jersey  
Please visit [www.Seminar1.org](http://www.Seminar1.org) for conference information and registration

**Mike Walsh**

## Events Calendar

### 2011

- November 1 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- November 11-12 APICS District 1 Meeting, Albany, NY
- November 15 PDM – Business Communications, Yankee Pedlar
- December No BOD Meeting or PDM - Happy Holidays!

### 2012

- January 3 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- January 17 PDM – Joint Meeting with Purchasing Group, Yankee Pedlar
- February 7 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- February 15 PDM – Excel Pivot Tables, Yankee Pedlar
- February 24-25, 2012 APICS District 1 Meeting, Albany, NY
- March 6 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- March 20 PDM – Improving On-time Delivery, Yankee Pedlar
- April 3 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- April 19-20, 2012 Seminar 1, Elmsford, NY
- April 24 PDM – Building Supply Chain Capabilities, Yankee Pedlar
- May 1 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- May 11-12, 2012 APICS District 1 Meeting, Hartford, CT
- May 15 PDM – Plant Tour
- June 5 Board of Directors' Meeting, Delany House
- August 24-25, 2012 APICS District 1 Meeting, Nashua, NH