

**in this issue >>>**

*Empathy: A Critical Skill for  
Effective Leadership*

*Ten Tips for Leaving a Job*

*Ways to Rev Up Your Savings*



*A publication of Credit Professionals International*

**May 2016**



# THE CREDIT CONNECTION

**current topics >>>**

*Message from the President*

*Membership Recruitment*

*Government News*

*Death in CPI Family*

*Memorials*

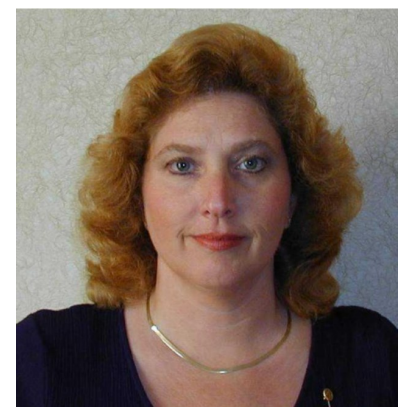
## Message from the President

Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE

President—Credit Professionals International 2015-2016

This has been a very busy year for me, starting in Atlanta, GA, at the International Conference last year. It hardly seems like a year has passed.

In July, just after the conference, I traveled to St Louis and met with Charlotte Rancilio. She and I were very busy for the next few months closing the office and transitioning it to a home office for her. Charlotte also cut her hours to also save CPI some money and give her more free time to enjoy her life.



In September, we found an intern to handle social media for CPI. Hannah Stuber, a junior at Indiana State University. She is a communications major.

In October, the Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM) was held in St Louis. We began the session with our new intern: Hannah, giving a “gotomeeting” presentation about

*“The members we have are  
very strong in support of  
CPI and our mission.”*

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*continued on page 2*

*continued from page 1*

marketing CPI. Hannah has established a Twitter presence for CPI. She has also offered to do any marketing for CPI on whatever level. If you have not taken her up on it, please do.

At the SPM, we also discussed ways to cut costs to keep CPI afloat. Of course we all agree that we really need to have More Members. We need all ideas on how to make that happen. We also talked about continuing to keep our costs under control. We explored the idea of going to an online magazine versus a paper magazine. There is split opinions on this idea, therefore, we have the referendum on the vote this year. We want to see what each member wants. Moving forward we will use this to determine the number of printed magazines.

I attended the District 7&9 conference in Hutchison, KS, in mid-April and was able to meet two of our newest members: Lacy Stauffacher and Alicia Marsh, both employed at Inter-Faith Housing. They suggested that CPI needs to do more leadership training. From my impression of the conference, they did a good amount of the work, planning and executing the conference. I think that Hutchison CPI is doing leadership training and a good job of it. It was a terrific conference!

A week later I went to the District 3&4 conference, in Charlotte, NC. It was a good conference as well. I was able to visit with more CPI members. I met Colleen Collette, who has been a CPI member since 1951. Many of the members there have been members for several years.

I really enjoyed the States Breakfast and the auction that was done to raise money for the walkathon. Each attendee was asked to bring a wrapped item worth at least \$10. I'm not sure of the exact number of attendees, but around 30. In about an hour or so, over \$1,800 was raised at the auction.

The following week District 8 held its conference. It was done through "gotomeeting". I was able to attend their meeting as well. Four members of CPI Alamo were in attendance. All four of these members will be attending the International Conference in Ann Arbor.

District 5's conference will be held in conjunction with the International Conference in Ann Arbor, MI, in June. Of course, I will attend that as well. I am looking forward to our conference in Ann Arbor.

There is still time for you to attend, even if you have not yet registered. You can get complete information about the conference on the website: [www.creditprofessionals.org](http://www.creditprofessionals.org)

**Please remember to vote!** Even though there is no competition for officers, it is good to have the support of the membership. Also there are by-laws and standing rule changes and a referendum about the magazine.

It has mostly been a good year, however. we have lost a few locals this year, most citing the reason of aging members. Our membership at this time is much smaller than we would like, but the members we have are very strong in support of CPI and our mission.

**Our Mission:** To support the members of Credit Professionals International by providing opportunities for networking, career development and community involvement.

**My theme: Connect, Participate & Inspire is my idea of our mission statement.**

I truly believe in CPI and our mission. I also believe that CPI can survive, but we need to hear our younger members and use their ideas to grow. We need to listen to all our members' ideas and put them into action to maintain CPI for future generations.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to be your president this past year. I look forward to seeing everyone in Ann Arbor for the 2016 International Conference!

Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE  
CPI President

# MEMBERSHIP

## You Can Make a World of Difference

**Linda Simbeck, CFE/MPCE**

**First Vice President and Membership Chairman**

I hope everyone is having a great 2016.

### **New Members**

This quarter I am glad to report that we have a returning member Maria Trevino. Maria was a member of CPI for many years until she got a new boss who didn't support CPI. Maria retired on January 15, 2016, and returned to Alamo CPI shortly thereafter. We are so excited Maria is back with us. Welcome back Maria!

### **How are You Growing CPI's Membership?**

In my last column I discussed some ideas and tactics to use to recruit new members.

Did you use any of the ideas? What were your results? Did you come up with other ideas and tactics of your own?

Please, share with me ([jsimbeck@satx.rr.com](mailto:jsimbeck@satx.rr.com)) any ideas you have for getting new members or retaining current members. I will be sure your voice is heard by the executive board.

Also, keep in mind that you can earn entries in this year's membership contest. You will earn:

1. One entry for every potential member: name and email/or snail mail address required.
2. One entry for any member bringing in a new member. If you get **five** new members you get double (10) entries.

3. One entry for any innovative membership promotion. i.e.: Make a CPI promotional video and put it online. Any implemented idea can be entered into the contest!

The winners of the contests will be announced at the International Conference in Ann Arbor in June.

### **2015-2016 NEW MEMBERS**

#### **Direct Member**

David Matts, Mill Creek, WA

#### **District 3&4**

Al Parker, Atlanta, GA

#### **District 5**

Hannah Stuber, Indianapolis, IN  
(student member)  
Savanah Weiman, Jackson, MI  
(student member)

#### **District 7&9**

Alicia Marsh, Hutchinson, KS  
Lacy Stauffer, Hutchinson, KS  
Marsha Thompson, PCE, Hutchinson, KS

#### **District 8**

Maria Trevino, MPCE, Alamo

## Government News

### U.S. Court of Appeals Rules in Favor of Collection Firm

In February 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruled against a couple's charge that a collections firm had violated the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), when it placed calls to their cell phones.

The couple argued that they had not given prior consent, as required under the TCPA, to Credit Adjustments, Inc. (CA) to contact them by phone in an effort to collect money they owed to CA's client, Consultant Anesthesiologists, which had provided each of them with anesthesiology services at Mount Carmel Hospital.

The court ruled against the couple because, as part of their admission for services to Mount Carmel Hospital, each had signed a Patient Consent and Authorization form covering "all medical and surgical care."

The form specifically reads, "I authorize Mt. Carmel to receive or release my health information, whether written, verbal, electronic including secured internet web sites or by facsimile to such employees, agents or third parties as are necessary for these purposes and to companies who provide billing services for physicians or other providers involved in my medical care."

The court determined, "Consumers may give "prior express consent" under the FCC's interpretations of the TCPA when they provide a cell phone number to one entity as part of a commercial transaction, which then provides the number to another related entity from which the consumer incurs a debt that is part and parcel of the reason they gave the number in the first place. More specifically, the provision of a cell phone number to a hospital that then provides that cell phone number to an affiliated physicians' group that provided medial services to a consumer arising out of the same occurrence can constitute "prior express consent" under the TCPA."



### CFPB Releases Guide on How to Navigate Pension Payout Options

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has released a guide to help consumers navigate their pension payout options and make the right decisions about their retirement income.

The guide gives near retirees the information they need to understand the trade-offs of taking their pension in a monthly payment or in a lump sum. It also provides tips and warnings for those who choose the lump sum option on how to protect and best manage their money.

Defined benefit plans are typically based on years of service and earnings and paid out in the form of lifetime monthly payments. Increasingly, however, employers are giving retirees eligible for these plans the option of a one-time payment for all or a portion of their pension (lump-sum payment).

However, according to a government report, many employers are not providing their retiring employees with information about the long-term financial impact of choosing between a lump sum or an annuity pension payment. The CFPB's new consumer guide fills this void.

*continued on page 5*

Key factors for consumers to consider include:

**Length of time income is needed:** The monthly payment option offers a steady lifetime income, which substantially reduces a person's risk of running out of money later in life. This is especially important if the retiree or his/her spouse is in good health or if either of the two has a family history of longevity. A lump sum payment, however, might make sense if the retiree is terminally ill; in critically poor health; or already has sufficient income to cover basic living expenses.

**Money management skills:** When a retiree chooses a lump-sum pension payment, the responsibility for managing the money shifts from the employer to the employee. With a monthly payment option, consumers don't need to worry about their investment skills or how their financial management skills may change as they age. In contrast, a lump-sum payout can give a consumer the flexibility of choosing to pay off large debts; where to invest or save the money; and when and how much to withdraw.

**Insurance:** A consumer's pension is typically insured by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). In the event the consumer's company declares bankruptcy or cannot make its pension payments, the PBGC guarantees those payments up to a certain amount. Pension payments are also protected against certain creditor claims or debt collectors. With a lump-sum payout, consumers lose these protections.

The CFPB guide also provides tips for those who choose pension payouts. These include:

**Check for lump-sum calculation errors:** Many factors determine a lump-sum pension payout amount, including age, years of work, earnings history, taxes withheld, and the terms of the plan. Retirees can detect errors by taking a look at their most recent pension statement or can contact a pension counselor for assistance.

**Plan for tax consequences:** Retirees will pay taxes on a lump-sum payout. This money is generally treated as ordinary income for that year. For this reason, an employer is required to withhold 20 percent of the amount. Retirees can defer income taxes on their lump sum by rolling over the funds into a qualified retirement account.

**Consider future needs of surviving spouse:** Most pension plans provide monthly benefits to a surviving spouse or another beneficiary after the pension holder's death.

The guide for navigating pension payments can be download from the CPI website. Go to: <http://www.creditprofessionals.org/consumer-education/228.cfpb> (Members without internet access can contact the Corporate Office.)

## Stick with Paper Statements on Bills

Electronic bill statements can create more harm than good, says the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC). They create barriers for consumers to access vital information because it takes effort to remember the task, find the free time, go to the correct webpage, remember their password and download the document.

Paper statements are easy to access—just open the envelope; serve as a reminder to pay; provide a more permanent record (computers can crash or become outdated); and are a record-keeping tool.

The NCLC calls on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to prohibit banks and credit card lenders from making electronic statements the default choice; compelling consumers to consent to electronic statements by making it a condition of a product or condition of web access; or charging a fee for paper statements that are required by federal law.

A December 2015 CFPB study found that over half of consumers who opted for electronic credit card statements are not opening or reviewing the statements.

# Empathy: A Critical Skill for Effective Leadership

By Colleen Kettenhofen

*Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.*  
~Theodore Roosevelt

Empathy.

It's one of those vague terms you're fairly certain you know what it means, but you're not quite sure. You know empathy centers on other people's feelings, but it's often confused with its sister—sympathy. Let's take a look at empathy—what empathy is exactly, what traits do empathetic leaders have, and why is empathy such a critical skill for effective leadership.

## What is Empathy?

To discover what empathy is, let's first talk about what it is not. Empathy is not sympathy. It does not mean you have to agree with how someone is feeling, or even relate to their feelings. Instead, empathy is all about the awareness of other people's feelings—even when you can't sympathize with them!

Empathy means you are able to then apply that awareness of another's feelings, and understand how it affects their needs. When you're an empathetic leader, you are aware of how these feelings (whether you agree with them or can relate to them or not) impact the other person's perception. You can appreciate what another person is going through, when you display empathy.

## What are the Traits of an Empathetic, Effective Leader?

There are three key traits to empathetic, effective leaders:

1. Good listener
2. Nonjudgmental
3. Emotional intelligence

Empathetic leaders follow the "2 Ears—1 Mouth" rule. They spend more time listening than talking. Leaders who are



empathetic focus on the person who is speaking. Today, there are so many distractions around us, it can significantly impact the quality of our listening skills. Empathetic leaders put away their smartphones and close their e-mail inbox when listening, so all of their attention is on the speaker in front of them!

Empathetic leaders are also nonjudgmental, even when the feelings of others are in direct disagreement with their own feelings. They appreciate what the other person is feeling and understand how those feelings are affecting that person's perception, without passing judgment whether those feelings are right or wrong.

Lastly, empathetic leaders are emotionally intelligent. They are able to step back from their own and the other person's feelings and analyze those feelings in a subjective manner. Empathetic leaders don't let the feelings involved in the situation control the outcome.

## Why is Empathy Such a Critical Skill for Effective Leadership?

Empathy is a critical skill for effective leadership for one simple reason—trust.

*continued on page 9*

# Past International President Martha Philip Dies

Past International President Martha Philip, CCCE, died on April 27, 2016, after a brief illness.

Martha started her professional career in banking and spent more than 40 years at First National Bank of Chicago Heights, achieving the title of Vice President. She retired from Great Lakes Bank in Matteson, IL.

After retiring, she continued to work with the local Chamber of Commerce. She enjoyed retirement but found a job at Curves that enabled her to stay busy and meet people. She loved helping others and was at one time on the Crete Park District serving her community.

Martha joined the Credit Women's Breakfast Club of Chicago Heights in the late 1960's. She became president of the local organization in the early 1970's and started attending District 13 meetings (WI, IL, IN). Soon after, she ran for District Office. She held several offices at that level and was instrumental in merging District 5 and District 13 to form one District covering the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan and the Province of Ontario.

In the early 1980's, Martha ran for International office but was defeated. Nevertheless, she continued to serve Credit Professionals International as chairman of committees and successfully ran for International office again.

She was installed as CPI president in 1991. Her theme was "Rising Above the Rest" and she presented each attendee with a pin showing a hot air balloon soaring over the Chicago skyline. Her desire to ride in a hot air balloon finally happened at the 2008 International Conference in Albuquerque.

Past International President Mary Nebeker, CCCE/MPCE, recalls another



exciting experience Martha had at the 2008 International Conference.

As Walk-A-Thon Chairman, Mary held a piñata-a-thon to raise money for The Foundation. When it was Martha's turn to try and break open the piñata with a stick, she had everyone, including herself, laughing as she tried again and again. She even failed to do so when Mary put the piñata on the ground.

Martha served as President of the Credit Education Resources Foundation in 2006 and 2007. She also held a number of other offices and committee chairmanships within The Foundation.

"As a member of CPI, Martha was awarded Honorary Membership in 1995 and was presented with the Helen B. Sawyers Award in 2010. Her contributions to CPI included chairing committees; marketing our professional organization to everyone she met; and attending District and International Conferences, as well as the Strategic Planning Meetings for the past several years. She will surely be missed!" said Past International President Sue Heusing, MCE.

*continued on page 8*

Martha believed in celebrating life to the fullest, especially attending craft fairs, traveling, never missing a birthday celebration, and continuously making new friends wherever she went. She also prided herself on her weekly salon visits as well as her fashionable manicure and pedicures.

Despite never having children of her own, Martha took the great responsibility of helping to raise her only niece due to the loss of her sister. She took great pride in all of Cara's accomplishments. She really enjoyed her yearly trips to California where she always had fun with her nephew-in-law, great niece and nephew.

Martha is survived by her niece, Cara (Sean) Williams; a great niece and nephew, Kya and Kaleb Williams; her former brother-in-law, Raymond; and her cousin Diane.

A memorial service was held for Martha on May 2, 2016 in Crete, IL.



## Living Memorials

### In Memory Of:

**Danny Ray Slocum**  
(Son of Mona Slocum, MPCE)

**Ronnie Dingledine**  
(Husband of Anita Dingledine, MPCE))

**Janice Dressler**  
(mother of CPI Past International  
President Carol Neal, CCBE/MPCE)

**Martha Philip, CCCE**  
(CPI Past International President)

### Given by:

**Betty Nichols, MPCE**

**District 3&4**

**District 3&4**

**Barbara Chapin, CCCE/MPCE**  
**Sue Heusing, MCE**  
**CPI of Goshen, Indiana**



continued from page 6

If your employees don't trust you, you are not a leader; you are just a manager. A key component for building trust with others is empathy. When you show that you are aware of your employees feelings and appreciate those feelings, even when you don't agree with them, it builds trust. The employee has faith that you will at least take their feelings into consideration. You can then use this understanding of their feelings to then give your employees what they need to succeed, further strengthening your relationship, increasing collaboration and improving productivity.

Without empathy, your employees will always have their guards up. They will always feel like they have to look out for their own emotional interest. While with an empathetic leader, the employee knows that their feelings will never be simply overlooked or ignored.

## About Colleen Kettenhofen, Leadership Expert

**CREDENTIALS:** *Colleen Kettenhofen is an international workplace and employee management expert, award-winning corporate trainer, and conference keynote speaker. A media veteran, she has appeared on numerous radio shows around the country and has written more than 40 popular articles on diverse workplace issues. Colleen has delivered more than 1,100 entertaining programs in 48 states and five countries. She is the author of ten published audio programs and two books including SECRETS YOUR BOSS ISN'T TELLING YOU.*

*Colleen Kettenhofen is available for keynotes, breakout sessions, and seminars by calling (971) 212-0479.*

## 10 tips for leaving a job

by Colette Carlson, M.A.

Most of us, sooner or later, will leave a job to take a position elsewhere. Even if the company downsized or you were let go, you want to maintain your professionalism throughout the transition. After all, burning bridges is never wise. How you behave during your final days with the company will long be remembered and reveals your character.

**1. Give notice.** Write a letter of resignation that includes the final date of your employment, and then deliver it in person to your boss. No emailed resignations, please! And make sure you tell your boss first, before co-workers.

**2. Provide guidance.** Offer to train your replacement. If time doesn't permit that, at least leave detailed instructions for your replacement, including the status of projects. Share any tips, shortcuts or other helpful info that can make the transition smoother for the new person coming in.

**3. Clean up.** Clear personal files and emails from the company computer, and be sure to collect all your belongings.

**4. Don't slack.** Put in a full-day's work, even on your last day.

**5. Keep it cordial.** If there's an exit interview, remain positive or at least neutral. If there's some bad feelings, try a simple, "Thank you for the opportunity," or "I learned a lot working here."

**6. Be discreet.** No need to brag about the awesome new position you're moving into and all the amazing perks you'll be receiving.

**7. Ask for references.** A letter of reference can be invaluable, even more so if you don't have another job lined up. Consider asking several colleagues for testimonials.

**8. Direct connect.** Make sure your former co-workers know how to reach you.

**9. Enroll in training.** If the company let you go, make an honest assessment of your skills and consider taking a course or two to make yourself more marketable.

**10. Create closure.** Take some time to reflect on your tenure with the company—connections made, projects undertaken, and skills learned. Then set some goals for yourself moving forward.

# Student Member Corner

## Simple Ways to Rev Up Your Savings

Many people starting out in their careers find themselves burdened with lots of debt (perhaps from student loans, credit cards and car loans) and very little savings for future needs. But there are simple strategies for gradually building small savings or investments into large sums, even during your school years, and often with the help of automated services that make it easy. Here are key examples.

**Save for specific goals.** You should have a savings plan for large future expenses that you anticipate—perhaps education costs, a home or car purchase, starting a small business, or preparing for retirement (even though that may be many years away). And, young adults just starting to be responsible for their own expenses should build up an “emergency” fund that would cover at least six months of living expenses to help get through a difficult time, such as a job loss, major car repairs or unexpected medical expenses not covered by insurance.

**Commit to saving money regularly.** This is important for everyone, but especially if you are supporting yourself financially.

“Even if you don’t make a big salary or have a steady source of income, the combination of consistently adding to savings and the compounding of interest can bring dramatic results over time,” said Luke W. Reynolds, Acting Associate Director of the FDIC’s Division of Depositor and Consumer Protection.

Aim to save a minimum of 10 percent of any money you earn or otherwise receive. Putting aside a designated amount is known as “paying yourself first,” because you are saving before you’re tempted to spend.

**Put your savings on auto-pilot.** Make saving money quick and easy by having your employer direct-deposit part of your paycheck into a federally insured savings account. Your employer or your financial institution may be able to set this up for you. If you don’t yet have



a steady job, you can still set up regular transfers into a savings account.

**Make use of tax-advantaged retirement accounts and matching funds.** Look into all your retirement savings options at work, which may come with matching contributions from your employer. “Chances are your retirement savings will hardly reduce your take-home pay because of what you’ll save in income taxes, and the sooner you start in your career, the more you can take advantage of compound growth,” Reynolds said.

If you’ve contributed the maximum at work or if your employer doesn’t have a retirement savings program, consider establishing your own IRA (Individual Retirement Account) with a financial institution or investment firm and make regular transfers into it. Remember that you can set up an automatic transfer from a checking account into savings or investments for retirement or any purpose.

**Decide where to keep the money intended for certain purposes.** For example: Consider keeping emergency savings in a separate federally insured savings account instead of a

*continued on page 11*

continued from page 10

checking account so that you can better resist the urge to raid the funds for everyday expenses. Be sure to develop a plan to replenish any withdrawals from your emergency fund.

For large purchases you hope to make years from now, consider certificates of deposit and U.S. Savings Bonds, which generally earn more in interest than a basic savings account because you agree to keep the funds untouched for a minimum period of time.

For other long-term savings, including retirement savings, young adults may want to consider supplementing their insured deposits with low-fee, diversified mutual funds (a professionally managed mix of stocks, bonds and so on) or similar investments that are not deposits and are not insured against loss by the FDIC. With non-deposit investments, you assume the risk of loss for the opportunity to have a higher rate of return over many years.

For future college expenses, look into “529 plans,” which provide an easy way to save for college expenses and may offer tax benefits.

For healthcare, find out whether you are eligible for a “health savings account,” a tax-advantaged way for people enrolled in high-deductible health insurance plans to save for medical expenses.

**Think about ways to cut your expenses and add more to savings.** For your financial services, research lower-cost checking accounts at your bank and some competitors. And if you are paying interest on credit cards or fees for spending more money than you have available in your checking account, develop a plan to stop. More broadly, look at your monthly expenses for everything from food to phones and think about ways to save.

For more money-saving tips, start at [www.mymoney.gov](http://www.mymoney.gov).

## CREDIT PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

### 2016 International Conference

June 23-26, 2016



Ann Arbor, Michigan

Hosted by CPI of Ann Arbor

# International Walk-A-Thon

Ann Arbor MI

June 23, 2016

We Walk For the Children

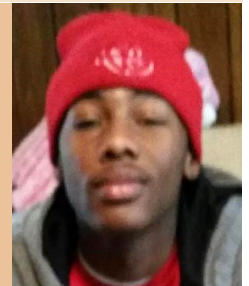


**Sponsored by: Credit Professionals International  
Credit Education Resources Foundation  
National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**



**Madeline St. Charles:** Female. **DOB** 5/20/1998. Missing 6/20/2015 from Miami, FL. Race: Black. Black hair. Brown eyes. Ht. 5' 3" Wt.: 180 lbs. Mateline is an endangered runaway. She may travel to Georgia. Contact: Miami-Dade Police Department (Florida) 1-305-476-5423

**Timothy Fannin:** Male. **DOB:** 11/19/1996. Missing: 5/30/2015 from Lithonia, GA. Race: Black. Brown hair. Brown eyes. Ht. 5'7" Wt. 145 lbs. Timothy is an endangered runaway. He was last seen on May 30, 2015. He may travel to Atlanta, GA. He may go by the nickname Tim. Contact: De Kalb County Police Department (Georgia). 1-678-937-2852



## **Maria de las Angeles Avendano Ramas**

Female. **DOB:** 10/11/1997. Missing: 6/12/2015 from Petersburg, VA. Race: Hispanic. Brown hair. Black eyes. Ht. 5'1". Wt: 136 lbs. Maria was last seen on June 12, 2015. Contact Petersburg, VA, Police Department. 1-804-732-4222.

**ANY ONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT:  
The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE LOST)**

**Child Find Canada—1-800-513-3463**