

Credit
Professionals
International



2003-2004
Education Manual

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COME GROW WITH US



Carol, your articles for the 2003-2004 Education Manual will provide a "growing" experience for our members. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to planting the seeds for our CPI garden to grow.

A big thank you, also, to our authors. We are confident their employers see the growth their employees demonstrate by their involvement in Credit Professionals.

Just as the leaf on the tree cannot survive without the twig and the branch, and the entire tree is necessary to pull the moisture from the ground using its roots to hold it firmly and its trunk to keep it upright, our association needs every member doing their part to make CPI a strong association.

So, nurture yourselves and use this manual to help you and your local association to "Come Grow With Us".

*Marlene Wilcox, CCCE
International President
2003-2004*

THE 2003-2004 EDUCATION MANUAL



All of the articles in this year's manual have been written by CPI members or experts who had spoken at local meetings, and the results are truly top-notch. I hope the authors all found this to be a "growing" experience. It has certainly been one for me, and I can now fully appreciate the effort that goes into preparing and editing the manual each year. Many, many thanks to all of the authors and to Charlotte Rancilio at the Corporate Office for her help with the final layout.

The first 13 articles cover a wide range of useful topics with interesting, timely, and valuable information. I am confident that with such a diverse selection you will be able to create programs that appeal to all of your members, regardless of where they are in the industry or their careers, and that you will be proud to show this manual to your employers and prospective members. The last article gives you suggestions for presenting the material with or without an outside speaker.

Use this manual as a tool for your personal and professional growth and the growth of this association. Remember, plant the seeds, nurture the sprouts, and we will all be able to cherish the results.

*Carol D. Neal, CCBE/MPCE
First Vice President*

EVERY BUSINESS IS SUBJECT TO FRAUD



by Pam Manor

When your company has been a victim of fraud, your first reaction is to go after an individual or company charging fraud in the credit application. This first reaction may sound good because it will get the debtor's quick attention to settle up a claim without delay and because the fraud legal claim allows for punitive damages in addition to actual damages.

The first problem is proving fraud. Fraud occurs when all of the following elements exist:

FIRST: An individual or an organization intentionally makes an untrue representation about an important fact or event; not a promise or expectation. For example, your fully completed, and signed, credit application would represent the facts on which you base your credit decision.

SECOND: A false fact. An example would be any information provided in the credit application that you later determined was not true and you believed the facts to be true.

THIRD: Knowledge of the falsity. Proving that the applicant knowingly lied and provided you with false information.

FOURTH: Intent to deceive. Can you prove in a court of law that the applicant is guilty of intentional deceit? The burden of proof is on you, the creditor.

FINALLY: You rely upon and act upon the untrue representation and as a result you suffer loss of money or property. In other words, you based your credit decision upon the information provided by the client that you thought was truthful, honest, and accurate.

It is the creditor's responsibility to verify the information and prove that you relied on this information in your credit decision. It is not enough for the intentional false fact to be made. Credit decision makers must exercise extreme professional judgment in the credit investigation, which will show actual reliance on the information provided, and will help prove the other elements of fraud. The standard of proof is "clear and convincing evidence." This is similar to a criminal case where the standard of proof is "beyond a reasonable doubt."

The second problem is whether lawsuits of this kind fit in the handling of collection claims on a contingency fee basis. A fraud suit is an attack on the character of the debtor. The debtor could face punitive damages and legal action from other creditors if found liable for fraud. In addition, the fraud finding prevents the debt from being discharged in bankruptcy. Creditors will have to employ larger law firms to defend, discovery is extensive, and then a jury trial will be necessary. All this work is beyond the scope of the work done in collections on a contingency basis.

While remedy does exist, the required proof is substantial, the legal action is sure to be hotly contested, and the legal services are normally not subject to usual contingency arrangements.

With that said.... All businesses find it necessary to grant credit; therefore, every business can be susceptible to fraud. There are always corrupt individuals who want to make quick money by cheating your business and getting something for nothing.

When you make too many exceptions to your credit policy, your internal controls system will not work. Time and dedicated staff are required to do all the necessary work involved in evaluating risk and checking credit. You need to follow your credit and collection policy and resist extending credit to a new customer without a complete credit investigation. Besides thoroughly investigating new customers, you should also monitor existing customers or vendors for changing or deteriorating conditions that could suddenly affect your cash flow.

Criminals in the business of fraud know that a credit professional will likely check on the ownership of a company and its principals before extending credit, so they make it hard for you to find out with which you will be doing business. The credit application can contain unknown or misleading references.

Some situations to look out for are:

- 1) **A very young owner or principal:** A "front man" often conceals the true ownership of a company by individuals with questionable backgrounds. One of the con artist's favorite fronts is a very young person, because that young person will not have to invent a long business background.
- 2) **The older, retired principal:** Older individuals also make good "fronts" if they retired with clear business records and are willing to be used to offer respectability on a dishonest operation.
- 3) **Hard to confirm employment records:** The business backgrounds of a company's management should be specific and easy for you to check. Be careful if a principal claims long periods of time working in an unknown company in a foreign country, or for several companies now out of business, or as a consultant, particularly if the principal will not provide references or specific business locations from that prior employment.

- 4) **Confusing, complex organizational structure, especially in a relatively new business:** Dishonest principals may hide behind a maze of complicated corporate or partnership entities (mostly false) so that you will find it extremely difficult to check on the company.

What can you do?

- √ Find out all you can about the principals with whom you are intending to do business. Searchbug.com is an excellent site for verifying individual information, including verification of SSN# to the extent that it is a valid number, the year that it was issued and in what state it was issued. There is a limit of ten free searches per day.
- √ Insist on the name and phone numbers of companies with whom the principals claim past employment so you can confirm their business background. Searchsystems.net is an extensive public record database and contains over 12,500 public record databases in the world. You can even click on the topic titled "Outer Space" merely for entertainment and great desktop pictures. Searchsystems.net also provides PACER, which is public access to court electronic records for a minimal fee. There is no registration fee, but access to dial-up PACER systems will generate a \$.60 per minute charge. Access to web based PACER systems will generate a \$.07 per page charge. Users will not incur both per minute and per page charges for a PACER session. I use searchsystems.net on nearly all my credit investigations. I find that many states provide a great deal of information on principals.

- 5) **Take another look at those credit references:** References supplied by a fraudulent company may not be all they seem at first glance. To avoid being taken advantage of by a company with all the right references, re-examine those references with a more critical eye.
- Be suspicious if a reference provided by the new customer gives an instant "glowing" report without taking time to look up the account when you call.

- Friends or partners can also fake trade or bank references of the fraudulent businessperson. Be suspicious when you are told to "Ask for John" or given a specific extension to ask for.
- Answering services can also be used to provide a false confirmation or reference.
- Beware of hard to trace fax numbers supplied as the only way to contact references. They may all lead to a single location where one individual can respond to reference checks using a variety of business names.

What can you do?

- √ Check a reference company by confirming through outside sources, such as the Yellow Pages or on the Internet, that the company is truly an existing business. Infousa.com or Switchboard.com is a good site to get this type of information.
- √ Check to see if the phone number of the reference company can be obtained from directory assistance or cross-referenced on Infousa.com.
- √ Make sure the individual you speak to actually works for the reference company; and is in a position of authority to give out that information.
- √ Ask to speak to the credit manager instead of the individual name provided by your applicant.
- √ Be sure the reference name provided is in a line of business that makes sense as a credit reference for the company seeking credit from you.
- √ If provided with an 800 number, ask your customer or reference for the local number – then call it and confirm the location.

- 6) **The unsolicited new customer:** Did the application and order go through the proper channels or were you just lucky? Most orders are obtained through the company's sales staff. That does not mean sales people cannot be fooled some of the time, but pay special attention to those coming over the phone or fax.

Here are some red flags to watch for:

- The customer avoids giving you hard information about his or her company. They may act excited but vague; emphasizing what a great opportunity this is for you.
- Rush and last minute orders, or a sale or promotion that is already underway may be high credit risks.
- Unusually large first orders, large orders for this type of business, or their financial situation. Be even more careful, you have more to lose.

What can you do?

- √ Do your homework. Do not grant instant credit to a new customer, even when they threaten to go elsewhere for the business. Chances are the debtor is getting the same requests for credit information from other businesses - no matter what they tell you. Unfortunately, in this cutthroat business, this can be a fire drill.
- √ Be cautious of a sudden flurry of telephone calls for credit references on a company you just received an order for. It may be using you to set up credit with other companies it intends to defraud.
- √ Location, location, location: Map the location of the business or individual using Switchboard.com or Infousa.com, and if possible, make a visit to the address.
- √ Ask how long the applicant has been at its present location and if they lease or own. If they lease, then check with the buildings' management to confirm the address and that the applicant is a tenant. I use searchbug.com/companyfinder to confirm location of a business. On this page, there are two tabs; one for searchbug for addresses of all businesses on a specific street and the other is qwest (qwestdex.com). On the qwest tab, you can enter an address and ask it to list the tenants in a building or other nearby businesses by street name or zip code. The site also includes the type of business each listing is.
- √ Be sure the address is appropriate to the type of business. Residential areas are unlikely for wholesale or retail, for

example. Once again, check nearby addresses. I use smartpages.com or searchbug.com/companyfinder when looking up reverse addresses.

- 7) **What is in a name?** Do not be too quick to think that you have heard of a company, and therefore it is legitimate. Fraudulent companies will sometimes try to convince you that they have been around for a long time by carefully crafting a name to mislead you.
- The "familiar" name: The fraudulent company may use a name that is very similar to a successful, well-respected company in the same town, or similar to a company with a national reputation. This reminds me of one of my favorite movies with Eddie Murphy called "Coming to America". The hamburger place where he was employed was named McDowell's with similarities to the well-known McDonald's.
 - The "big" name: A fraudulent business may use an impressive, nondescript trade style that is intended to convey an impression of size and stature. Some of the favorite words used by these false companies are International, American, U.S., European, Atlantic, and Pacific.

What can you do?

- √ Again, get addresses and telephone numbers to help you confirm the existence and identity of the company and its relationship to other large, well-known companies. If they have listed their web page on your credit application, you can check icann.net (The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names & Numbers) which is a non-profit organization in the private sector that oversees technical coordination of the Domain Name System (DNS), that allows web pages and e-mail to be found by name instead of numbers. Other services to check are internic.net, networksolutions.com, or dotcom.com, to name a few that provide the public information on Internet Domain Registration Services.

At each of these sites, you can click on WHO IS and type in the web address to retrieve the company or person who has registered the domain.

- √ Contact the Secretary of State to check corporate charter information. Or visit the searchsystems.com site and click on the State where the company is located.

Fraud is generally well planned and highly organized, but it is easier to detect fraud when you are always suspicious. Fraud deterrence is a process, not a one-time event. This means that not only must you establish internal controls to guard against fraud; you must also evaluate those controls and update them on a continuous basis. You must take the time to conduct a thorough credit investigation in the fastest time possible. However, never feel so pressured to release orders that you forget that what looks like a wonderful company on paper could be your next bad debt.

In closing, you may recognize the characteristics of fraud in one or more of your current customers. This does not mean that you should immediately discontinue business with them and accuse them of fraud. These items were presented to help you recognize situations with a potential for fraud, so you will take the time to better analyze any situation. The ultimate goal is to help you make sound and safe business credit decisions.

About the author:

Pam Manor is the Business Manager at WDIV-TV, Detroit, Michigan, a division of The Washington Post Company.

She is a 29-year member of Credit Professionals International of Jackson, MI, where she currently serves as Parliamentarian. Pam also is a past President of Jackson CPI. She has a total of 24 years in the broadcasting industry and 10 years in the banking industry.

ETHICS AND COMPETENCY



by Brenda Lawson, PCS

Each of us has a standard that we live by. Most of us have probably not taken the time to think about what our personal standard, or code, may be, we just live it.

Those of you reading this in a Credit Professionals International (CPI) publication know that CPI has a creed, something that we believe and strive to live by. The CPI Creed is as follows:

*I believe in the Principles and Purposes of
Credit Professionals.*

I strive always to become more efficient.

I move forward in the endeavor of credit.

I protect the confidence entrusted to me.

I am ready to give as well as to take.

I cooperate universally for the welfare of credit.

I am loyal to my club in thought, word and deed.

I am true to myself, my associates, and to my God.

I maintain always, "Faith, Vision, and Courage".

You will notice several points in the CPI creed which are common in mission statements or creeds of other organizations; the continual improvement of skills or knowledge, honesty and loyalty, and an interactive and cooperative relationship with other members.

Other organizations have Codes of Ethics, something they want their members to embrace and adhere to. Practicing a high ethical code is the job of everyone who wants to succeed, not only on a professional, but a personal level. We should all be aware of the ethical codes of any organizations we are a part of and abide by them.

The following are ethical points which can be used in a personal or professional application:

- Other people's interests should be paramount, many times above our own interests.
- Maintain the highest standards, by striving to be the best we can be, by continually improving our knowledge, skills and competence.
- Practice confidentiality; consider all personal and business information as privileged.
- Disclose facts in a complete, understandable manner to those who need to make decisions.
- Personal conduct should reflect favorably on those you represent.
- Be honest and obey the law.

High ethics alone are not enough in today's world. Especially in business, public demand, market-place complexities, and a firm regulatory environment require strict adherence to market conduct and compliance regulations. You can be highly ethical and still unknowingly break a compliance regulation.

Whatever your business affiliation, your industry has compliance regulations that must be followed. These regulations are the foundation of good sales and service, while high ethics are the

peak. Learn all you can about compliance. This is where conferences, journals, etc. can be invaluable.

Continually audit your own conduct to identify any potential problems and take steps to eliminate them. Serve those around you in a highly ethical manner with full compliance and you can't go wrong.

Here are some actions that show or promote high ethics:

- Continuing to learn more about other people, our jobs, etc.
- Go the extra mile for others.
- Develop good character traits, integrity, sincerity, reliability and perseverance.
- Place the other person's interests first.
- Read all you can about current compliance regulations.
- Keep your promises.
- Earn professional designations.
- Build long-term relationships with people.
- Provide service before and after the sale.
- Contribute to your community.

Hand and hand with a high ethical code is competency. Being competent means having the skills, knowledge, commitment, and attitude to do a professional job in your chosen profession. It also means that you are responsible for your own professionalism. Your company may provide training opportunities and training schedules, but only you know what you need to succeed. That is a personal decision for each individual. Successful people always go beyond the minimum requirements set by their companies or industry standards. If you are not learning, you are not growing or reaching new heights.

Competency does not mean knowing everything. It means you readily admit when you do not know something. *Not* admitting what you don't know can lead to suspicion about what you *do* know. Guessing can lead to big problems!

Professional publications and industry journals, seminars, workshops are excellent resources for all of us. Many times there are articles or sessions that will keep us up with current issues and help us on the personal front, as well.

And we should not downplay the use of networking. You can learn much from other people. They are happy to share their experiences and quick to refer you to a publication, workshop or seminar which may be pertinent to your needs.

I would be remiss in closing, if I did not mention that Credit Professionals International "fits the bill" for many of the points that I have previously made. CPI provides the education, publications, and the networking opportunities that can make each one of us more successful in our personal and professional lives.

About the Author:

Brenda Lawson, PCS, is currently the Kansas State Representative for Inter-Americas Insurance Corporation, Inc. based in Goddard, KS. She has been a member of the Central Kansas Business Connection (CPI of Hutchinson, KS) in District 7 since 1996. Her position with Inter-Americas Insurance is a direct result of her involvement with CPI.

Brenda received her certification of Professional Credit Specialist in April of 1999. She was local, District and International Credit Professional of the Year for 1999-2000. She has served in all capacities at the local level, currently as Immediate Past President. She is currently First Vice President of District 7, and is serving on the International Education, Membership, and Advertising/Marketing Committees. She has participated in several "Take Charge of Your Life" training sessions.

THE CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURAL CREDIT



by Joyce Jones, CCCE/MPCE

Not so many years ago, a handshake and "crop-time" financing was the normal way of doing business in the farming community. "Crop time" financing occurred when a farmer had no cash flow at the time when he needed to purchase inputs for his crops, but promised to pay the suppliers when that crop was harvested.

This still happens, but usually not by design and is getting more and more rare in the business climate of today. Although credit applications for farming accounts were not unheard of in days gone by, it was not unusual to open an account without one. Even as recent as 15 or 16 years ago, if you were to ask for a signature on an application, you might be met with a farmer who was very offended at the suggestion that his promise was not good enough.

Today, of course, things have evolved into a very different kind of business atmosphere. Small family farms are going the way of the dinosaur, and more and more the majority of agricultural business is done with large partnerships, or corporate entities. Actually in our company, I see three distinct types of accounts

that we deal with on a daily basis, and each must be dealt with in a different manner.

1. Small family farms or "hobby farms"
2. Mid-sized farms and dairies owned by one family or a partnership
3. Large partnerships, corporate farms, ranches and dairies (sometimes referred to as "mega-farms" or "mega-dairies")

1. The small family farm

The small family farm is getting to be an endangered species here in the Yakima Valley. It is getting harder and harder for a family to exist on the income off of a family farm, orchard or vineyard. What we see are farmers who have outside jobs to support their family and the farm income is an extra, assuming there is a profit after harvest. Older farmers who do all of their own labor, and have no dependents other than a spouse often own the farms that are supporting them on farm income alone. The children of younger farmers are choosing careers outside farming and who would blame them seeing the obstacles in farming these days. Prices are low, but costs keep climbing for farm supplies. Government regulations on chemicals and fertilizer, wastewater disposal and hazardous materials, to name just a few, have become so cumbersome, it takes an expert to figure them out. What we do see a lot of is small "hobby farms", or farming for fun but not for profit. They raise animals for their own use, or maybe they have children involved in 4-H or FFA. We see a lot of small orchards and vineyards being taken out of production so the land can be sold for other (more profitable) uses, or sold to a large corporation that is engaged in farming.

The small farms that do remain have been around for years. They have always shopped at the same place and are usually very loyal to their suppliers. They expect personalized service and take advantage of the field advisors that we have working for our company. This group of farmers probably consume more of our

time than the other two groups, but they do pay a higher margin for their supplies due to the smaller sales volume. Many of the small farmers do not use computers, or if they do, not for everything and do much of their bookkeeping manually. This group often does not have financing for their crop year and it puts a lot of pressure on them to try and keep their accounts current. More collection calls and letters go out to this group, but the total amount of bad debt is usually very small.

Credit investigation for this group is really a lot like setting up a consumer account. They usually do not have a lot of business credit and even though the commercial laws prevail if they are farming for profit, we run consumer credit reports if the business entity is a sole proprietorship or partnership. You must be careful to make sure the applicant(s) receive the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act Notification if you are going to use their personal credit as the basis for opening an account.

2. Mid-size farms and dairies

Mid-sized farms and dairies are prevalent here in the Yakima Valley. Some of them are family corporations or partnerships and some are proprietorships. Usually on these mid-sized farms and dairies, the owner lives on the land and works full time in farming. There are a few that are absentee owners and have live-in help to run the place, but for the most part, the farm supports at least one family and sometimes more. This group of farmers tends to be more technologically advanced and many of them use computers for all of their bookkeeping. The larger the operation, the more the government regulations will affect them, and for the most part, the Internet will be the source for the rules and regulations that apply to them, as well as the crop advisors and field-men they hire.

Many of these mid-sized operations are newer entities and have not been with our company for very long. They buy in larger quantities than the smaller farmers, and will ask for the best price and for volume discounts. They utilize field-men and crop

advisors for their chemical and fertilizer needs and take advantage of the educational programs that are offered, such as pesticide management programs and grower meetings.

It is really important to get detailed information on business credit applications, and a credit report is run on each one. In the absence of detailed credit information on a report, all references on the application are checked, and we frequently ask for a personal guarantee, particularly if the entity has not been in existence long. If a consumer credit report is going to be utilized, then any applicant that you are running the report on must be given the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act Notification.

Getting the name and phone number of a contact person is really important for follow up as there are usually several people involved in the management of these mid-sized farms. Chasing around after the right person for information can be very time consuming when trying to open an account or if collection work is needed on down the line. Since monthly balances tend to be higher than the small family farm account, staying on top of delinquencies is very important as amounts can add up very quickly. Since we have several divisions and departments, we encourage our sales people and field-men to share any information they may have on their customers with the credit office. It is amazing what people hear about over a cup of coffee or "out in the country". We also belong to trade groups and cultivate business relationships with other companies that deal in the same products as we do. Sharing credit information, as long as the customer has accounts with both companies, is perfectly legal.

3. Large partnerships and corporations

Large partnerships, corporate farms, ranches and dairies are becoming very common these days. Many regional and even national companies are buying out the smaller farms and adding the acreage to their own. As a rule these companies owe no loyalty to anyone and are ruled totally by the "bottom line". Many

of these really large companies are not local and have their accounts payable department in another state. Again it is so important to have the name and phone number of a contact person.

The larger accounts frequently put purchases out for bid and what they buy ends up being extremely low margin goods. Because of the very high volume they buy, special terms are frequently in order. Our normal terms are 30 days with the monthly balance due by the end of each month. On large volume, low margin orders we sometimes ask for half down prior to delivery or 10 day terms instead of our normal 30 days. When you have to pay for something before you get paid, and you're not making much on the product in the first place, you need to get creative.

A completed credit application is always required to process a new account and because these are large businesses, there is usually a detailed credit report available with many trade lines. If there is no credit report, then check out your information very carefully, as it would be very unusual for a large company to do all of their business on a cash basis. If they do, you need to know why. Sometimes it takes a lot of digging to investigate the really large accounts. We spend a lot more time on them as the potential for loss can be much greater than on the mid-sized or small farming accounts, and most of these larger companies refuse to sign a personal guarantee. Setting a credit limit is important on every account that is opened. In order for the limit to mean anything, your computer system must be able to notify you if the account exceeds the limit, or when a pending purchase will put it over. You don't want to stifle your customer, but you do need to keep an eye on high balances and do an updated credit report or recheck their references if necessary.

When one of these large accounts goes bad on you it can be devastating, but there are usually warning signs if you know what to watch for. Any change in payment habits can signal a cash flow problem, or maybe something more serious. Follow up if there is any question in your mind. Call the accounts payable

office and talk to your contact person. Ask pointed questions, such as "are you getting your statements and invoices in a timely manner?" If you don't get satisfactory answers, speak to a supervisor. If you still can't get anywhere, talk to your salesperson that deals with that account and ask them if they will talk to the person on the farm that they deal with to see what they can find out. Make sure your company has guidelines to follow, and insist on "cash only" if the account goes beyond what is acceptable.

Since the large farm owner is very often absentee and a corporation, this is where an outside salesperson really comes in handy. They form relationships with the foreman or on-site manager and are aware of the needs of the farm. That way they are in line to submit bids and are available to provide information about products and services available. These large farms usually have their own field staff for fertilizer and chemical applications so you can sell just the product (without field assistance) for a lower price since they provide their own technical support.

The changes in farming have been coming fast and furious in the last few years, and I see it continuing the same way. Who knows what the future will bring, but you can be prepared by always staying informed of changes in the credit laws in both the area of commercial credit and consumer credit. Read everything you can on the subject (the Internet is an excellent source of information) and attend educational seminars and courses whenever you can. You can never have too much education, and in the volatile business climate of today, you need to keep up or you'll be left out in the cold.

About the author:

Joyce Jones, CCCE/MPCE, has been in credit since 1964 and has been employed by Bleyhl Farm Service Inc., as credit manager since 1986. Bleyhl Farm Service Inc. is a co-op owned by 1150 local farmers and is located in the Yakima Valley in Central Washington. Prior to Bleyhl, Joyce worked for the Portland Credit Bureau, Seattle Credit Bureau and for a Hart-Marx Clothing store in Seattle.

Before moving to Central Washington, Joyce was a member of Seattle, Washington CPI and joined what is now CPI of Yakima Valley when she and her husband, Don, relocated in the mid 1980's. Joyce has held all offices in the local CPI association, served District 10 as President in 1999-2000, and has served as a member or chairperson for several International committees. She is currently serving as International Secretary/Treasurer and recently earned her Master Professional Credit Executive certification.

Joyce is active in her homeowners' association and is currently the President. She also serves on her local water district as a commissioner, and through her employer, has worked in fund raising for both the United Way and Cancer Relay For Life.

Credit Professionals International has additional publications available to aid you in your career!

The Credit Professional	\$10.00
<i>bi-annual magazine with credit industry related articles</i>	
The Credit Connection	\$15.00
<i>quarterly newsletter with legislative updates</i>	
CPI Membership Directory	\$20.00.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM UPDATE



by David Kyle Blazek

Congress is grappling with Bankruptcy Reform yet again...if a bill actually passes – what will it look like?

A long view of the history of Bankruptcy Law in the United States reveals that most attempts at reform have typically been a direct response to a severe economic crisis. Across the 19th and 20th centuries reform efforts for the most part have been a liberalization of bankruptcy provisions, particularly for what is now known as the consumer debtor. From what was originally deemed a criminal act in the early 1800's, to a civil process that is now inviting enough to induce more than 1.5 million filings in 2002, the evolution of bankruptcy law has been largely pro-debtor, and contrary to the interests of creditors. The current reform effort, first begun in 1998, is atypical in that it did not originate as a response to a severe economic crisis, and in its reversal of the pattern of progressively increasing protection for the debtor.

Bankruptcy reform legislation in the current Congress emerged from the House of Representatives in mid-March (on a 315-133 vote) and awaits passage of a Senate version and then very likely conference action to reconcile the two bills. President Bush has indicated that he will sign a reform bill if it makes it to his desk.

The latest bill from the House of Representatives would create a means test to direct debtors who can presently file Chapter 7 into Chapter 13 – if their incomes exceeded state medians, and if they could pay 25% of their debts in a 5-year period following filing.

The present effort to reform bankruptcy law includes 6 years of efforts to get a bill to the President. It died in the Senate in 1998, stalled in the House in 1999, was vetoed by President Clinton in 2000, and was stillborn in Congress in 2001 and 2002. The 2001 hearings on the reform effort were scheduled for the day after 9/11 – and never got back on track as the Congress addressed critical intelligence and security matters. House and Senate versions were passed in 2002 – but died in conference when the contentious issue of discharge of debts from abortion clinic protests became a stumbling block.

The present reform bill is often characterized as a pitched battle between consumer advocates (largely associated with Democrats) and the credit card industry (typically assumed to be the Republicans favorite special interest). Republicans backed the bill solidly and Democrats in the House of Representatives split evenly on the vote in March 2003.

Party politics may serve as an imperfect predictor of the Senate outcome. While prior versions have been stalled in the Senate by the actions spearheaded by Democratic Senator Charles Schumer, sponsor of the Senate-passed provision to bar the discharge of debts incurred by acts of violence against abortion clinics, some interesting aspects of state bankruptcy exemptions may cause Senate Republicans to balk at reform provisions which override unlimited exemptions provided in several states.

On the Senate side – Democrats have invited SEC commentary on the conflict of interest standards that apply to investment banks and their role in corporate bankruptcies. Because the gestation period for this round of bankruptcy reform legislation has been so long – the opportunity for various corporate scandals (Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, etc.) to impact the evolving

legislation has been great. The Enron scandal applied additional attention to the lack of uniformity in state homestead exemption standards. Texas, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, and South Dakota are the states that allow an unlimited value associated with the debtor's residence to be exempted from the bankruptcy estate available to pay creditors. Executives from Enron and WorldCom generated headlines with multimillion-dollar mansions in Florida and Texas – which could have provided a store for personal wealth despite bankruptcy, fraud considerations aside. Although not entirely driven by these scandals, the House version addresses the unlimited state exemptions.

If legislation ultimately emerges from the Congress along the lines of the House version, here are some of the changes that can be expected in Consumer Bankruptcy Law:

- Individuals will find it more difficult to file for Chapter 7 (debt liquidation) bankruptcy. Those filers with household incomes above their state median (adjusted for family size) will be required to use Chapter 13 if they can repay the lesser of \$10,000 or 25% of their unsecured, non-priority debt in a plan with a minimum duration of 60 months. Debtors would be able to rebut the means test by providing evidence of special circumstances.
- Any debt incurred to pay state or local tax (Federal tax debts are already covered) becomes non-dischargeable. Chapter 7 cases may be converted to Chapter 13, or dismissed outright on a finding of abuse.
- Debtors would be required to negotiate a repayment plan via a court-approved credit-counseling agency, before seeking bankruptcy protection. Information developed in repayment plans would be required to be filed in an eventual bankruptcy filing.
- Chapter 13 would be transformed by extending the minimum plan length from a present 36 months to 60 months for debtors who have incomes above the national median. Those below the national median would still be allowed to file plans as short as 36 months.

- Deemed as non-dischargeable would be all debts of greater than \$250 incurred within 90 days of the filing. These would be presumed fraudulent and would be non-dischargeable in either Chapter 7 or 13.
- The homestead exemption would be capped at \$125,000 for residences owned for less than 40 months. After 40 months of ownership the exemption would raise to the state law level – for those states with a state mandated exemption set. Other complex provisions aim to prevent debtors from taking advantage of migration from one state to another merely to take advantage of more liberal homestead exemptions.
- Debtors would be required to submit federal tax returns or transcripts prior to the first meeting of creditors.
- Attorneys for creditors would be required to certify that they have performed a reasonable investigation into the circumstances giving rise to the client's bankruptcy and that the filing is well grounded in fact. At present only the debtor submits information under oath, and attorneys often make only cursory investigations into filing information.

The upshot of this reform effort is that consumer debtors at the higher end of the income spectrum of those who file will face difficulty in choosing Chapter 7, and once in Chapter 13 will face longer plan duration than at present. It will be harder for an individual to preserve extremely valuable homestead property in those states with unlimited exemptions. The process of going through bankruptcy will cost more. Attorneys under present rules chafe at the typical compensation (limited to \$1500 legal fees for consumer Chapter 13 in the Northern District of Georgia at present, for example). The investigation requirements as well as additional verification of filing information by attorneys will require that those fee ceilings be raised.

For creditors – there will be more opportunities to get involved (or to object) in more Chapter 13 cases – cases that are going

OH, MY AGING RESIDENTS



by Arlene Tuschl, CPM/CCIM

Three sisters, ages 92, 94, and 96, live together. One night the 96-year-old goes upstairs to draw herself a bath. She puts her foot in and pauses, confused. She yells down to the other sisters to ask, "Was I gettin' in or out of the bath?" The 94-year-old hollers back, "I don't know. I'll come up and see." She starts up the stairs and pauses halfway. "Was I going up the stairs or coming down?", she asks. The 92-year-old is sitting at the kitchen table having a cup of tea and listening to her sisters. She shakes her head and says, "I sure hope I never get that forgetful.", knocking on the wood table top for good measure. And then she yells, "I'll come up and help both of you just as soon as I see who's at the door."

We laugh at stories like this, but the truth is, we are all getting older. This article is about the changes we landlords face in marketing, leasing, managing and collecting rent from our residents whose average age will move from 30 to 60 in the next few years as the baby boomers move into their retirement years.

Our new resident profile will present many challenges and opportunities for the apartment market. Older Americans will find rental housing as a viable alternative to home ownership

for several reasons:

- No yard work
- No maintenance
- Great amenities
- A "pick up and go" lifestyle
- They can be nearer the grandkids

Population and migration studies show that the population is getting older and moving South. The combination of immigration and population shift to the sunbelt will increase the population of states like California, Texas, Florida, and New York. By 2025 it is estimated that these four states will contain 37% of the United States population.

There are two situations that, as landlords and property managers, we want to be prepared for as we capture this emerging resident trend. We should have policies and procedures in place and employees trained and comfortable with our decisions before either of these situations arises.

Situation #1: Uncle Steve and his dog Spot

Steve's daughter and niece come to your property to look for an apartment for him and his dog, Spot. Steve's wife has recently passed on, and he can no longer afford to maintain their house on his own. They would prefer to move him into assisted living, but it isn't financially viable. Assisted living would cost about \$3,000 per month. The apartment rents for \$700, and even though they'll have to add the cost of utilities and food to that, it's a much better deal. As long as Uncle Steve is physically able to care for himself, the apartment just makes more sense. The daughter and niece co-sign the lease.

Things go just fine for a while. Uncle Steve is a great guy, and everyone loves Spot. But then one day Steve's daughter comes to you and asks you to sign a statement that says that Steve needs to be in a nursing home. They've found Uncle Steve wandering the

property one cold morning dressed only in his shorts, unable to find his way back to the apartment. He's lost because he's been taking medications on an empty stomach. He's been skipping meals to save money to buy dog food for Spot.

What do you do? What are your policies for your staff? Can you be liable if you make the wrong decision...do nothing...do anything?

Situation #2: Collecting and Raising Rents

There is a definite upside to renting to older, more stable residents. They tend to be more responsible and pay their rent on time. They are less likely to go drag racing or skateboarding in the parking lot. They aren't moving every six months so you don't have to paint walls and clean carpets as often. They tend to encourage a "neighborhood" feeling. And they are your eyes and ears.

So how can you plan on passing on rent increases for your owner when your residents don't get pay increases? What if the loss of a spouse cuts the household income in half? What are you going to tell the widow when she can't pay the rent?

Remember Edna over in 2B who lets you know every time a new kitten arrives on the property? Did you know that she has the consumer affairs line of every local TV station speed dialed into her cell phone?

Can you see the news cameras at your front entrance interviewing the widow as the sheriff hauls her belongings to the road?

The solution to both of these situations is to be prepared.

- Be ready to help Uncle Steve by having policies in place for your staff to follow.

- Consult in advance with your attorney and know your liabilities and obligations.
- Be sure that your staff have the authority to make decisions that won't leave you liable.
- Have a list of agencies available that can help in an emergency.
- Have a plan for rent issues. In a soft market, you may be willing to reduce or even waive rents for some period of time. If you are willing to offer two or three months free rent to attract move-ins, might it not also make sense to "carry" an existing resident for a short period of time to help them over a hurdle?

Think through these issues now, not when the police or the TV cameras arrive. Be prepared, or you won't be the one running your property.

Of course, as we face retirement and grow older ourselves, we may be the ones seeking residential alternatives...and it is always good to have a Plan B.

I found my Plan B on the Internet:

"When I'm an old lady, I'll live with my kids
and make them so happy, just as they did.
I want to pay back all the joy they've provided
returning each deed. Oh, they'll be so excited
...when I'm an old lady and live with my kids

I'll write on the wall with reds, whites and blues
and bounce on the furniture wearing my shoes.
I'll drink from the carton and then leave it out.
I'll stuff all the toilets, and oh, how they'll shout
...when I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

When they're on the phone and just out of reach
I'll get into things like sugar and bleach.
Oh they'll snap their fingers and then shake their head
and when that is done I'll hide under the bed,
...when I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

When they cook dinner and call me to meals
I'll not eat my green beans or salads congealed.
I'll gag on my okra, spill milk on the table,
and when they get angry, run fast as I'm able
...when I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

I'll sit close to the TV, through the channels I'll click.
I'll cross both my eyes to see if they stick.
I'll take off my socks and throw one away,
and play in the mud until the end of the day
...when I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

And later in bed, I'll lay back and sigh,
and thank God in prayer and then close my eyes.
And my kids will look down with a smile slowly creeping,
and say with a groan, 'She's so sweet when she's sleeping!'.
...when I'm an old lady and live with my kids."

About the author:

Arlene Tuschl, CPM/CCIM, is currently Senior Vice President of Property Management for Brencor Asset Management, overseeing a growing portfolio management operations for 25 assets in the Southeastern United States. She is a former Regional Vice President with Lane Company, where she managed cash flow, client relationships, profitability, and performance strategy for over 10,000 units valued in excess of \$500 million. Her portfolio included 6,000 student beds and some commercial and retail space in nine states. Her previous professional experience also includes two years with Kaimor Management/Plaza Pacific Equities managing multi-family communities throughout the Southeast, and on-site positions with Southmark Management, Robert A. McNeill Company and Smith Barney Real Estate from 1981 to 1987.

She obtained her Georgia Real Estate Broker's License in 1986, became an IREM (Institute of Real Estate Management) Certified Property Manager in 1995 and earned her Certified Commercial Investment Member designation in 2000. She is an active member of the Atlanta Apartment Association, receiving their Go-Getter Award in 1993 and being named Multi-Site Manager of the Year in 1996. She received the National Apartment Association's Go-Getter Award in 1994, and Lane Company's Leadership Award in 1996. In 1998 she was IREM's Certified Property Manager of the Year, and in 1999 was a Finalist for the Pillars of the Industry Multi-Site Manager of the Year award sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders.

Arlene has taken courses in business, management, accounting, and liberal arts at the University of Tennessee and Memphis State University.

MEDICAL COLLECTIONS & HIPAA



by Michele Rocher

Long gone are the days when your physician came to you, with your medical history in his head, and he would take a chicken, eggs, or whatever you had to give in exchange for his services. Medicine has evolved into a complex industry, and credit and finances now play a major part.

Every time a patient walks out the door without paying, it turns a medical provider into a credit company requiring a lot of your personal information. The filing of insurance creates a billing company that needs sensitive medical history documented. All of this information is kept on hand at your provider's office with many people having access to your file, and the potential for unauthorized access is increasing.

You may have seen some of these recent news stories:

- Hundreds of patient records were found in the parking lot outside a clinic.
- Healthcare organizations found discarding medical reports in unlocked dumpsters.
- Medical records fell out of a vehicle while being transported to be destroyed.

In all these instances the information included diagnosis and descriptions of sensitive medical procedures along with names, addresses and social security numbers.

No matter how or why a disclosure of personal information is made, the harm to the individual is the same. Our privacy is a fundamental right and has historically been expressed in American law. If we continually reveal other people's privacies we harm them and ourselves; thus, the need for HIPAA....The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which has gone into effect in 2003.

HIPAA provides for uniformity and a basic level of security and privacy in medical practices throughout the country. Think of it as legislated common sense when it comes to protecting the personal, private and confidential information relating to the patients in a medical practice.

HIPAA will require changes to how an office operates. Most medical practices already have privacy and security measures in place, but now you're required to document those policies and procedures. It also requires employees be trained in the HIPAA law and policies and procedures of the office.

Other business associates affected are lawyers, accountants, consultants, billing companies, collection agencies, practice managers, and medical transcription services. It also has an impact on florists and Pastors trying to obtain room numbers at hospitals. Hospitals should be having you sign a release that will allow them to give out your room number. If you do not sign this form, florists, clergy, and other visitors will not be able to obtain your room number.

As of April 14, 2003 the HIPAA changes had to be implemented. Fines, penalties and possible jail time can be imposed for non-compliance.

COMPLIANCE IS NOT AN OPTION, IT'S THE LAW!

It is easy to be targeted for a HIPAA audit. ANYONE can turn in a practice. An unhappy employee or dissatisfied patient can make a simple call or send a post card to bring your practice to the attention of the Health and Human Services Office of Discrimination.

Know if your business is affected by the act and, if so, protect yourself and your employees by following it to the letter. For further information or questions, you may contact your local Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights. There is also information to be found on the web at www.gov/ocr/hipaa.

Now you say, what does this mean to me as a patient?????

Providers need your help....be ready to sign extra releases for referrals and insurance. Always be prepared to pay when service is rendered or know your insurance plan for co-pay amounts and services covered. Sometimes knowing what documentation your plan requires is also helpful. Basically, it's a two way street for your provider to provide privacy protection.

Privacy continues to play an important roll in American lives. Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy, in their book, *The Right to Privacy*, describe the importance of privacy in this way: "Privacy covers many things. It protects the solitude necessary for creative thought. It allows us the independence that is part of raising a family. It protects our right to be secure in our own homes and possessions, assured that the government cannot come barging in. Privacy also encompasses our right to self-determination and to define who we are. Although we live in a world of noisy self-confession, privacy allows us to keep certain facts to ourselves if we so choose. The right to privacy, it seems, is what makes us civilized."

See also: www.hipaaps.com

About the author:

Michele Rocher has been a member of Credit Professionals International since 1990. Starting out in South Carolina, she has served in all offices at the local and State levels. She is now a member of CPI of Atlanta, GA and has most recently served as President of the Inter-City Credit Council. She moved to Georgia in 2002, transferring with her employer of seven years, SleepMed, Inc. as an Accounts Receivable Representative. She has also been employed as a Collections Specialist for an OB/GYN office, dealing with insurance and patients and as an Audit Control specialist for a hospital, auditing bills with the insurance companies. She resides in Jasper, GA with her husband David, 2 dogs and 2 cats.

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LOOKING FOR A JOB IS A FULL TIME JOB



by Sue Heusing, MCE

Conducting a job search today can be one of the most challenging things you do. It doesn't matter if you are a young adult entering the job market for the first time or a seasoned veteran hoping to move along a new path in your career. Before you begin looking for a new job it is important to understand yourself and the personality traits that may impact your success at achieving that goal. In order to draw a good picture of yourself and sell your skills and talent to a prospective employer, sit down and identify who you are. Make your Plan! Finding a job is just like everything else you do. You need to Plan, Prepare, Practice, and then Present yourself.

Your Plan Begins...

Make a list of your accomplishments, things you did well, enjoyed doing, and are proud that you accomplished them. Before you create your resume, jot down your employment history listing the names, dates, titles held; list the number of people you supervised, the budget you were responsible for, the committees you served on and your significant accomplishments. Do the same for each of your prior employers.

Ask yourself some very important and soul searching questions. What was my greatest accomplishment? Was it something as important as going back to school, a conversion or upgrade to a new system, saving a significant amount of money for the company, hiring and maintaining good staff members or anything you can jot down as something you were instrumental in doing. List your earliest achievements and remember back to those things you might have done in early life.

List the factors, activities or responsibilities you feel need to be a part of your new job and write a paragraph describing what your ideal job would be. Make a note of anything that would keep you from getting that ideal job or any adverse factors that might impact your search. For example, have you stayed current on legislation in your industry? Do you need to brush up on your computer skills? Now might be a good time to visit Video Professor, the world's leading computer instructor. They offer free training to job seekers to help increase their marketability. Have you maintained your certifications or licenses if your job requires them? Now is the time to correct any shortcomings.

Now list your formal education and be specific about your area of study. If you don't have a degree and you think it may prevent you landing that great job, consider getting your degree on line. It only takes 12 to 18 months and there are several available. Then add to that list your informal education, the seminars you attended, the workshops, and the certificates that you received. Make a list of the magazines, newspapers, and business books you have read lately. List the memberships in organizations in the community, in your business profession, social organizations or volunteer groups. These memberships might prove helpful when you actually begin your job search since they are the ideal place to network.

Make up your mind how much money you want to make and put it down on paper. Project what you want now, five years from now or by the time you are ready to retire. List any additional facts that you know you possess. Do you speak any foreign

languages, do you have any special skills or talents, even any hobbies that might demonstrate your talents.

Now decide what kind of a job you want. Major metropolitan reporters state that careers in Technical, Sales, Finance, Marketing and Human Resources have hiring managers fiercely competing with other companies to hire good candidates.

If you elect to use an employment agency, keep in mind they will ask you to do exactly the same thing and either you or your employer will eventually have to underwrite that cost. Agencies do know the pulse of the job market at all times and have already developed that network of companies where they will try to market your skills. You can do the same thing yourself with a little practice.

Prepare your resume and action plan...

Now that you have all those notes on you and your employment history, it is time to put it down on paper as a resume. Keep it under two pages and make sure you mention your top ten skills directly under your name. Limit your experience to 15 years for a managerial job, 10 years for a technical job, and 5 years for a high tech job. Leave your other experience off your resume or list it without dates in an Other Experience category. Consider using a functional resume rather than a chronological resume.

Today's human resource department is looking at hundreds of resumes applying for the same job you would like, so make sure your resume has a lasting impact on the reviewer. Use short brief and positive terms and list them in the order of their importance. Save a few things that can be outlined in your cover letter but may not be part of your resume.

You might do a second version of your resume to submit with any electronic applications you send via email. Some software programs are designed to look for key words or phrases and those words may allow you to move to the *call for an interview list*

instead of the other *stack of resumes*. Some job boards are overloaded with resumes so don't depend on Monster, Hot Jobs, Dice or Career Builder alone. Try some new ones and subscribe to an online newsletter (newsletter@thecareernews.com) that might also provide tips on your search. Make sure you secure the permission of your references before you provide their names and numbers. Then create a separate list for personal references and professional references that can be given to the prospective employer once you have reached the interview stage.

Write a short one minute speech that you can use whenever you are talking to someone about your job search. When someone asks "tell me about yourself" you should be ready to answer that question with your one minute biography. This is your best opportunity to market yourself and it should include your education, years of experience, functional skills such as system knowledge, and your assets or characteristics that outline what you have done. Close with a multiple choice question asking "which of these can I tell you more about?" "What would you like me to elaborate on?" "From what I have just mentioned, where do you see me fitting in?" Make sure your question fits the situation and the person who asked the first question.

If you need help with the interview process, try "Job Interviews for Dummies" by Joyce Lain Kennedy. The text recommends emphasizing the positive when interviewing: project yourself as cheerful and flexible, review the benefits of older workers – commitment to a career, hands-on experience, and successful track record and use storytelling techniques to back up your claims. Another good source is "101 Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions" by Ron Fry. A couple of hours of good preparation with either of these books will pay faster dividends in finding that new career.

Do you think you are ready? Not yet! Now you need to sit down and develop a list of companies for whom you want to work and to market yourself. This is where that newspaper reading might come in handy but you are not looking in the help wanted section.

You are looking for news about those businesses; things like their reported financial results might make a lead article. You might find an article about the company moving to a new location, recognizing an outstanding employee or honoring someone who is retiring. Make a mental note to do some research about that company. Many major cities have a "business journal" newspaper and once each year they publish the Book of Lists. It contains the top ten or twenty companies in nearly every industry both public and private. If you cannot afford your own subscription, you can usually find the book at the local library.

Use the Internet. Sites like Yahoo and MSN allow you to select the stock symbols of the companies you are targeting. If you don't know where to find information about a company, try google.com. Google is one of the largest search engines and provides a vast source of information that might assist you. If you know the company has a web site, save it to your favorites so you can study the details, their history, and the products they are marketing. If you are conducting your job search from home, treat your work area just as you would if you were working in an office. Answer your phone with a professional voice so a prospective employer would know your phone personality.

Your local chamber of commerce might also be a good resource. The chamber office can provide you with their membership list or you may find that listed on their web site. Those names may come in handy when you begin to target specific companies. They may not be the people you need to talk with about a new job, but they frequently will provide the names of the hiring managers in their firms. Many churches have started networking groups that help people to locate job opportunities. Your volunteer organizations, social and professional groups might also provide a networking opportunity. If you are currently working and just thinking about changing jobs or actually unemployed and you need to find a new career, you need to put your action plan on paper and track your progress.

Practice makes perfect...

Once you have completed your plan of action, you need to practice your skills for the job search process. Ask a friend or business acquaintance to provide you with a list of questions that their firm might ask during the initial interview stage. Practice your skills for both a telephone interview and a face to face interview. Practice, practice, and practice until you can recite your credentials candidly and without missing important details.

Remember, the whole point of the first interview is to get a second interview. Usually the Human Resource person or recruiter is screening candidates and only the final four or five will make it to the hiring manager. Don't forget to send thank you notes! It may be an email message or a hand written note or a formal letter further stating your interest. Then after a few days follow up to see if a decision has been made.

You might also want to practice how you would tell people you meet that you are conducting a job search. Not every person you speak with will be able to assist but many times if you mention that you are looking for a specific career, they might know someone you can call for additional information. Jot down those names and phone numbers, they may come in handy later.

Use every opportunity you can and enlist the aid of all the people you know to provide you with tips on possible job leads. Don't limit your search from Monday to Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. You need to be alert at all times for the next possible opportunity. If you are using the Internet and posting your resume to a job board, visit it frequently and update some information so it moves up to the top of the list. Use more than one list but keep track on your log when you visited the site and the highlights of what you posted.

There are more people hired in a new career because they were recommended by someone already employed by that firm or because they already had a resume on hand before they knew they

had a job opening. This is where networking within your circle of friends and acquaintances will assist you. Current employees usually know about new jobs before they are posted to the company web site. Once that job gets posted, there will be hundreds of eager candidates wanting to be considered, and you want to be one step ahead of them. Which would you prefer, jobs that are posted for the whole world to see or job openings that haven't hit the want ads or online job boards yet?

The Presentation Begins...

Once you have targeted the companies that you are considering, you need to initiate the contact. It might be a letter to someone within the firm whose name you gathered in your research or it may be a phone call asking for a meeting to discuss how your talents and skills might assist that company in meeting some new goal. Initially you may not even mention that you are looking for a new career. You may just be doing research to see if this is the kind of company that you would consider working for in the future. Persistence and patience are critical to the job search process. If you say you will call back about some details you are searching for, remember to do it. Maintain a positive attitude because this may take longer than you originally planned.

With more candidates looking for a job than ever before, you want to be sure you keep good notes. Perhaps a simple Microsoft Excel document which will allow you to sort your list by the names of the companies, the date you contacted them, or other pertinent details. Check and recheck your letters and resumes to be sure everything is spelled correctly and is easy to read. Use good quality paper and take extra copies of your resume and your reference list with you everywhere you go. You can never tell when you may meet someone who can assist you and they ask for a copy of your resume.

When you get that interview, make sure you are ready. Arrive a few minutes early, dress for success in conservative professional attire, and smile. The receptionist you meet is also forming an

opinion of you and that first impression can get to the hiring manager. Have extra copies of your resume to give to the interviewer so they can pass them on to the hiring manager or someone else in the firm who may be interested in your talents and skills.

Some companies are now using behavioral interviewing which is a one question interview. They expect you to outline in detail how you would handle a situation. Behavioral interviewing asserts that "the most accurate predictor of the future performance is past performance in a similar situation." The answers you provide will allow the interviewer to see your leadership skills, decision making capability, problem solving, how you are motivated, your communication skills, interpersonal skills and your ability to plan and organize.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

1. What are the necessary skills to do this job?
2. What makes a successful candidate?
3. What would make an unsuccessful candidate?
4. Why have people left this position previously?
5. What is the most difficult part of this job?

Once you have made it through the interviews with flying colors and you have received the phone call making an offer, don't miss an opportunity to give yourself a raise! Go in prepared to negotiate for a better starting salary. If you review some websites in advance (such as salary.com) you will have a better idea of the salary range for the position and the market you are working. When you have reached an impasse on the starting salary and the negotiator won't go any higher, try adding some other benefits that might enable you to accept their offer.

Items like dues and subscriptions to trade associations or journals, seminars and workshop registration fees, days off

to attend meetings or conferences and the costs associated with those meetings could up the ante.

The four essential job search skills are:

- effective resume and cover letter writing,
- uncovering job leads,
- interview preparation,
- and salary negotiation.

All the planning, preparation, and practice will now allow you to make the best presentation you can for the job. Good luck and happy job hunting!

About the author:

A long time member of Credit Professionals and Creditors International, Sue Heusing, MCE, is also a member of the Society of Certified Credit Executives. She is a past President of the Credit Education Resource Foundation and she has served Credit Professionals International as chairman of several conference committees and is currently serving as long range planning chairman. Sue has written several magazine articles, manual articles and installation programs for our organization and done workshops for both Districts and the International Conferences.

An International winner of both the Credit Professional of the Year Award from CPI and the Distinguished Service Award from ICA, Sue has also been elected to honorary membership in Credit Professionals International. When asked what that meant, Sue answered that she hasn't yet learned how to say "no" when someone asks her to do something in the credit industry.

When Sue was wearing her International Credit Association hat, she served District 5 as President, as education chairman for many years, and was membership chairman of ICA of Greater Chicago and Sue was involved with the first four versions of the

Comprehensive Credit Manual and the "How to Use Consumer Credit Wisely" booklet and teachers guide. Sue has a BS degree in Management with emphasis on Human Resources and currently is the Corporate Credit Manager for Accor North America in Dallas, Texas. Accor owns and operates over 1400 motels and hotels under the brand name of Red Roof Inns, Motel 6, Studio 6, Novotel, and Sofitel in North America and many others all over the world.

\$\$ Take Charge of Your Life \$\$

This 73 minute audio program, available on tape or CD, covers the basics of money and credit management and is intended to help today's consumer learn to take charge of his or her financial future. It was designed by members of Credit Professionals International to be used in presenting credit seminars and for placement in public libraries and schools for consumer education.

Tape 1-5 copies	\$11.00 each	6+ copies	\$ 8.00 each
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HOW TO LAUNCH A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT



by Rhonda McKinney, PCE

I once had a mentor that used illustrations to drive a point home. As a very young, inexperienced manager, I went to my mentor complaining about the problems I had trying to get a handle on a particular project I was leading. After going through my list of difficulties, and explaining all that I was doing to make it work, he told me something profound. He said, "I can't tell you how to make your project successful, but I can tell you what will guarantee failure."

These are the steps he told me would be sure to make a project FAIL. I'm sure you've heard some of these comments in your place of work at one time or another.

1. Abbreviate the planning process.
There is nothing more painful than hours spent strategizing, defining every little detail, and planning a timeline. Not everything requires a blueprint of instructions to follow. Once the idea is formed, everything else will fall into place.
2. Don't ask "what if?"
So what if the project goals and priorities are different for everyone involved? So what if the specifications are going to change in a couple of weeks? So what if we don't have the

resources to spare? Hypothetical possibilities just take you off track and prevent you from focusing on the project at hand.

3. Eliminate or at least minimize customer involvement. The more people involved, the more discussion there will be on the direction of the project. Customers tend to spend too much time setting expectations and redefining decisions already made. Time is money, and it is important to meet the deadlines; not continuously refining the plans and deliverables.
4. Choose team members that are your friends. It doesn't really matter who is on the project team. Don't worry about the skill set, knowledge base, or learning curve. If you like each other, it will be easier to learn on the fly.
5. Be a task-master and demand overtime. Remember that people don't have anything better to do outside of work. The project is the highest priority, and extra hours never hurt anybody. It is a privilege to have a job.
6. Censor bad information to management. Structured communication and updates will only irritate your leaders. You should never bother them with the details of your problems. They expect you to handle it all alone, and not rely on their expertise or experience.
7. Don't worry about "scope creep". If you limit customer involvement this will not become an issue. But, if they are involved, keep the customer happy by agreeing to as many changes as they want. Don't stress out about getting the documentation updated, or refusing changes after the project is nearly complete. The customer won't blame you if the end result doesn't work.

8. Strongly discourage questions from team members. Their job is to do what they have been told without question. They don't need to know what anyone else is working on, nor do they need to question any instructions they have been given. The big picture is for you to know, and they to figure out if they have time after the project has been completed.
9. Don't give customers or upper management progress reports. When asked, just tell them the project is on track. Explain patiently that status reports are counterproductive; you could be using the time to work on the project. Tell them anything; just get them off your back.
10. Remember that project estimates are just that, estimates. Try not to hold yourself hostage to comparing the project plan to the project estimates. That way, you won't have to deal with the discovery that the project date might slide.

At first I didn't get the point of his little "how to fail" speech, but then I realized the message. If you remember to pay attention to the needs of the project, the team, and your customers, your project is bound to succeed. I now had my very own road map to running a successful project. This road map has been used time and time again for projects in my personal and professional life.

So here, for you, are my steps for making sure a project *doesn't* fail:

- **Planning each phase, step, or cycle of a project is key.** The plan should always include defined objectives and goals, assigned tasks and responsibilities, measurable deliverables, and a timeline or schedule for each phase and tasks.
- **All parties involved in the project should also be involved in the planning.** It is important that everyone is on board and agrees on the direction of the project plan. A good plan involves a great investment of time up front, but

in the end this is time well spent in order to set the tone of the project.

- **Anticipate the need for contingency plans.** Even with the best laid plans, the unexpected can throw everything into a loop. Ask the tough "what if" questions, use previous experiences, and get input from all parties involved to attempt to cover all your bases. Learn to make this an on-going process throughout the life cycle of the project.
- **Select a team based on specific skill-set criteria.** Ensure the project team contains all the expertise necessary to move the project forward. The skill-set, knowledge base, and learning curve are just some of the factors involved in putting together a project team. Also consider creating teams that represent the various perspectives on a project such as research and development, testing, programming, operations, etc.
- **Use the timeline and deliverable schedule to manage project hours.** If the project plan is followed, allowing for contingencies, overtime will be limited. The team will function more effectively when they are at their best, and not overwhelmed.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Management, project leads, and project team members should all be fully informed on the progress of the project. Communicate the success of the project, but the most important dialogues will occur if the unexpected happens. Keeping everyone in the loop fosters involvement, creative problem solving, and ensures no one is blind-sided by the challenges of the project.

- **Timely and consistent progress reports ensure everyone impacted by the project is as informed as the project team.** Internal and external customers need to be part of the project to ensure full support once implementation is planned. Many times the input of the customers is invaluable in the initial planning, as well as during contingency planning.
- **Limit changing and expanding the scope of the project once the project plans are defined.** Scope creep can cripple a project if the directions, specifications, and expectations continue to change over the life of the project. It is important that everyone associated with and/or involved with the project is aware of the risk and impact of all changes to the original plan.
- **Encourage questions, discussion, and brainstorming throughout the project.** Even with a detailed and thorough project plan, some changes will be warranted. It is important that valid ideas and suggestions are explored. The project team may be able to find a quicker, easier, or more efficient method to accomplish the project objectives.
- **Use the project plan and estimates as the guide throughout the project life cycle.** Even as the plan changes, it is still important to follow the blue print in order to successfully manage all the responsibilities of the project. The plan is the measuring stick that will let you if and when your team is or isn't on target.

Following the plan, documenting changes to the plan, and constantly assessing the progress of the plan will enable you to manage the project, instead of having the project manage you.

About the author:

Rhonda McKinney, PCE, is currently employed as a Business Systems Analyst II with Equifax, Inc. in Alpharetta, GA. She has been with the company since 1991, and was originally employed in the Consumer Service Center as a Customer Service Center Trainer, Service Center Manager, Customer Data Management Manager, and Senior Manager of the Office of Consumer Fraud Assistance before accepting her current position in the Technology division of Equifax.

She is a graduate of the University of Georgia, and enjoys traveling, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, and spending time with her extended family and friends. Rhonda is a member of Credit Professionals International of Atlanta, GA and attained her Professional Credit Executive certification in June 2003. She was one of this year's Helen B. Sawyers Scholarship Award recipients.

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UTILIZING THE INTERNET FOR CREDIT PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL



by Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE

How many times have you needed information in a hurry but were not sure what resource to use to find it? Or even if you knew what resource to use, it just wasn't available? Well that is the beauty of the Internet; it is a resource that is available 24/7.

That being said, shouldn't we utilize this resource, which is available in at least 65% of the homes in the USA, (not to mention other countries) to market Credit Professionals International?

Well, we do market CPI on the International level. Some Districts, States, and local associations already market themselves on various websites, as well. If you are not sure if your local association, State, or District is represented on the International site, go to www.creditprofessionals.org and find out! If your District, State, or local association has a site already established, just email the web host or creditpro@creditprofessionals.org or contact someone at the corporate office and link to the International site.

If your District, State or local association does not have a site, you have some options.

(1) Your District, State, or local association can create your own site.

- Advantage: A dedicated website is strictly for use within your local, State or District. It should be updated regularly. If you meet each month email your web host to update information each month. You can set up payments on line. PayPal (www.paypal.com) is a good resource, but there are many more, just search the web.
- Disadvantage: Cost, more detail later in this article. If you do not have any money in your budget for a website, utilize option 2.

(2) Your District, State, or local association can create a page to add to the International site.

- Advantage: Cost, depending on how you decide to create your page, can be kept to a minimum, possibly none at all except your time.
- Disadvantage: What you create and send to be uploaded to the International site may or may not appear exactly as you send it. This will be discussed more in option 2.

Option 1. When **creating your own site** some things need to be considered:

- What is the purpose of your website, just posting information about your meetings?
- Do you want to be able to accept registrations online?
- Do you want to be able to accept payments online?
- What is your budget? (Costs can include: domain name registration, monthly hosting fee, initial set up fee and, if accepting payment online, there will be a fee associated with that).
- What web provider do you want to host your site on?
- What services does each web provider offer?

Option 2. Make a page and add it to the International site

- Someone from your local, State, or District can create a page using any software that will create an html file, e.g. MS Publisher, MS Front Page or numerous others.
- If using publishing software you will create an html file. The file that you create will be the exact file that you will see once uploaded to the site.
- If html software is unavailable or *not* in your budget, a document can be created using MS Word or any other word processing software that allows you to save a file in "rich text format" (.rtf file). Most allow you to save in this format.
- If using word processing software that creates an .rtf file, your document may not look quite the same as when you submitted it. Also the web host will have to reformat the document prior to adding to the site. However all of your text should still be just as you submitted it. Also when using word processing software instead of publishing software you will be limited to adding graphics or pictures.
- If you use Yahoo.com to host your site, it offers page builder on your web console. I have never used it and cannot say how well it works.
- Updates on your page should also be done on a regular basis. Every time you have a change, update your page. Just email the changes to the web host. Your web host should get the changes made in a timely manner.

When creating your own site remember: Websites should be informational, user friendly, interesting and pleasant to view. They should always be a work in progress and should change at regular intervals.

It is very helpful if you have someone (or a team) proof the site for you. After you update, email your proofreaders to let them know changes have been made to the website. If they are good, they will catch all the little mistakes you make (and you will

make some...no matter how many times you proofread what you upload!).

To get the traffic you want on the site, you need to have a regular audience and also a way to attract new viewers. Some sites use E-News letters. E-Newsletters are just emails sent out, usually to members or anyone with an interest telling them about new events such as conferences, seminars, new legislation, etc. This can be utilized at any website level: local, State, District, and International. Start building your list with the members. Obtain all members' email addresses. At your meetings, start a guest book and ask for their email addresses.

If you are just starting to create your own site but are not sure what provider you want to use, do what you do if you are shopping for a car or a home. SHOP! Get on the Internet and start looking. Most providers will list their prices and what you get for that price. If not, you probably don't want to do business with them anyway.

Don't over buy. You will probably only need the minimum space. For example, District 5 has a dedicated website (www.cpi5.org). The District 5 site has a home page, a page for each of its local associations, a Conference/Events page, and a Sign up page. It is hosted through Yahoo.com, using the starter package (\$14.95 setup fee and \$14.95 per month). This price includes registration of your domain name and keeps registration current each year that you continue to use their services to host your site. Also there is no contract, so you can discontinue use at any time, just by notifying Yahoo. Yahoo's prices have changed recently so check out the site before you sign up. Remember, there are many other providers that can host your site, be sure to check them out thoroughly before you sign up. Keep in mind you can start your site with the lowest package and if you need more space you can always add it later.

Once signed up, Yahoo has a web console panel that is very informational and helpful. It offers page builder if you want to build your site with it, instead of using publishing software. It also offers FTP (file transfer protocol) if you want to upload your site there. You may of course use other FTP software of your choosing. One other advantage to Yahoo is that it offers you statistical information. Every two weeks you can go to the control panel and update your statistics. You can see how many hits, where most of your hits are coming from, what pages are hit most, and what time of the day or night your site is being accessed. You will even see who are the primary users of your site.

Of course if you go with Yahoo, you do need your Internet service already established. However you can upload your site on your personal Internet service, you do not need a separate service to upload.

Whichever option that your local association, State, or District decides to use, USE THE WEB!!!

**IT IS A GREAT WAY TO MARKET CREDIT
PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL!!!**

About the author:

Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE, began her career at L.S. Ayres, a local high-end department store in the new accounts department. She worked at Ayres for 14 years in all areas of the credit department. After May Company moved the credit department to St. Louis, she took a position with Sexton Companies that lasted for the next 10 years. In December 2002 she acquired her current position with IMC Credit Services, heading the legal preparation department.

Cindy has been a member of Credit Professionals International since 1993. She obtained her Master Professional Credit Executive (MPCE) certification through the Foundation. She has held all officer positions within her local association of Indianapolis. She has served on the District level as Chairman of Public Relations, Ways & Means, Chairman of the 2001 District Conference and is webmaster for the District 5 website www.cpi5.org. She has served on the Long Range Planning committee for the past several years.

Cindy is also the webmaster now for the International CPI website: www.creditprofessionals.org and is Chairman of the newly formed Website Committee. She encourages any member who would like to participate to contact her and be a member of the committee. Email to cwestenhofer@iquest.net. Cindy says that keeping our members informed regarding credit is what CPI is all about!

THE LATINO TIDAL WAVE



by Marsha Thompson, PCS

The largest new minority.....what are their needs, how can we serve them and how can we benefit?

As a third generation Mexican-American, I have grown up with English as my first language and been fortunate to have encountered minimal prejudice due to my ethnicity. I am guilty of previously not being very aware of those who were new to our country and faced a language barrier as well as trying to find a balance between assimilation into a new society and maintaining their native traditions.

I had to rethink my position after I traveled twice to Germany. While shopping, ordering food in a restaurant, or asking directions, I was the one who didn't speak the native language and was grateful to encounter anyone who could help me because they spoke my language.

Returning to this wonderful country, I became more conscious of the struggles of those who don't speak English. I also realized the need for them to have someone explain how and why we do things the way we do.

Regardless of our political or personal feeling about this great influx of Hispanic humanity, they are here and they have needs. We can profit while fulfilling these needs.

A recent Census Bureau estimate (June 18, 2003) numbered Latinos in the U.S. at 38.8 million. Latinos accounted for nearly half the growth in the U.S. population the past two years. High birth rates and the influx of immigrants secured Hispanics' position as the largest minority group in America. Immigration accounted for just over half of the population gain among Latinos.

Census Bureau Director, Louis Kincannon said "It is part of the continued growing diversity of this country which strengthens us not only politically but economically."

According to the magazine, *Banking Strategies* (July/Aug. 2003), Hispanic populations in the U.S. are projected to grow by 258% between 1995 and 2050, compared with just 50% for the nation as whole. With only 56% of U.S. Hispanic using banks, compared to 90% of the total population the potential for account growth is enormous. It will most likely not be a "quick" profit for banks, since many new account holders will have low incomes in the beginning. However, in terms of loyalty the profits will be many and will assure new business as the new consumers pass the word to their friends and family that they were treated well and fairly by our business.

If we are to be successful, there are several hurdles that must be conquered:

- **Language** - The majority of unbanked Hispanics have limited or no mastery of English. To increase the confidence level of the potential customer, financial institutions should be staffed with bilingual staff...not just in entry level positions but in management positions. ATM machines, call centers, and websites should also be bilingual. It is important that neutral Spanish be used because the immigrants come not only from Mexico but from all of Central and South America.

- **Trust** - This will perhaps be the most difficult issue to deal with. In Latin America only about 20% of the population uses a bank and in Mexico the figure is 37% according to the Inter-American Development Bank and Celent Communications. The figures are not surprising since Latin American governments have a tendency to devalue their currencies and freeze deposits in recurring economic crises.
- **Identity Verification** - Banking in some immigrant communities entails risks that are still a matter of debate and hard to quantify. When customers apply for checking accounts in the U.S., the financial institution can access enough data to verify identities with a high degree of confidence. This isn't usually the case with people from countries where records may be sparse or difficult to access.

Before 2001, it was difficult for Mexican immigrants to obtain U.S. bank accounts. Mexico then began issuing "matricular consular" cards to allow immigrants to prove their identities. This particular consular card is now accepted as a form of ID at 74 of the nation's 9,000 banks, according to the Mexican Embassy. Last year, Mexican consulates issued 1.04 million cards. Consular officials ask for an applicant's original birth certificate as well as a second ID with a photograph. According to Miguel Monterrubio, Press Secretary with the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., a high-tech version of the card introduced last year is more difficult to counterfeit.

However, critics charge that the matricular consular card continues to be subject to widespread fraud. The controversy presents banks with a dilemma since the USA Patriot Act - the anti-terrorism, anti-money laundering legislation signed by President Bush in 2001 - requires them to verify the identity of those who open checking accounts. Banks also have to report any suspicious

activity that might raise concerns the account could be used for money laundering or providing transfer of funds to terrorist organizations. The Treasury Department issued regulations clarifying when banks can or cannot accept the matricular card from Mexico or any foreign ID last April.

Banks that are accepting the matricular consular card are not reporting any major problems with false identities. Some banks contend that the risk of fraud is not greater than the risk they face from any group of potential customers. Robert Byrne, Director of Diverse Growth Segments Group at Wells Fargo & Co. San Francisco, deems the matricular card to be no riskier than federal or state-issued id's in the United States. Clearly this is an issue that will not be agreed upon quickly or easily.

Due to the spending power and rapid growth of the U.S. Hispanic population, this group represents an untapped reserve of potential credit card users.

Consumer spending by Hispanics is expected to become increasingly important to the nation's economy. The Hispanic buying power is growing four times faster than that of the general market. By investing resources to penetrate the Hispanic market, fast-moving companies can capture a disproportionate share of the Hispanic market and build strong brand loyalty.

I am of two schools of thought on the credit card issue. The Hispanic customers I have dealt with are wonderful savers and want to pay their way as they go. I would hate to see them fall into the morass of debt, which continues to be the case with a large segment of the population in general.

Financial education is by far one of the greatest needs of this immigrant population. Finding the most accepted venue is a difficult task. My bank's attempt to hold classes with the FDIC's SMART MONEY program met with stiff resistance. I feel that

in a group setting these individuals are afraid to lose their dignity when they admit that they don't want a checking account because they don't know how to write the numbers and, since they speak limited English, they feel embarrassed to ask bank personnel who might not understand their questions.

When opening accounts for Spanish speaking individuals I try to take extra time to answer questions and reassure them that I am willing to help them with their financial needs no matter how small. Often the most elementary conversation will lead to questions regarding establishing credit and buying houses. If I know they need to see someone who is not able to communicate in Spanish I try to set up their appointments so I am able to go with them to the different departments to aid with the translation.

Empathy is a small price to pay for customer loyalty and word of mouth is a very effective marketing tool that could reap huge benefits for financial institutions.

About the author:

Marsha Thompson, PCS, has been employed by First National Bank of Hutchinson, KS since 1983. She is currently an Assistant Branch Manager after having worked in the Consumer Loan Department for 19 years.

Marsha believes strongly in passing on credit education starting in the grade school level and up to and including her peers. She has taught classes not only in schools, but also as part of the local "Stepping Stones" curriculum, a vocational educational and "life lessons" training program for people working on getting their GED. She has also taught "Take Charge of Your Life" classes to her local Credit Professional organization and is involved with her bank in setting up a program to teach the FDIC "Money Smart" program to the Spanish speaking community.

An active member in Credit Professionals, Marsha has served in all the offices of her local, State and District organizations. She earned her PCS (Professional Credit Specialist) certification in September, 2000 and was selected as Credit Professional of the Year on the International level for 2000-2001. Marsha lives in the same city as her two daughters, Carmella and Sonya and is the proud Grandma of Sarah, Cole and Makayla Robbins and Tatyana Huhn.

HOLISTIC CREDIT COUNSELING



by Mary J. W. Kemp, CCFMC/PCE

Our society continues to abuse the credit process. Based on statistics from the International Credit Executives April 2003 Conference brochure, "the credit of 40,000 customers in 130 countries was risked." Debt is still a community problem, and a "holistic" therapeutic counseling service is definitely needed, because people are also abusing the credit counseling industry.

There is a lack of knowledge of the operations. People see the industry as "the people with the money that have control of the money". If they have no knowledge of credit, the industry, or money itself, there is a tendency to abuse what they do not know or understand.

Most non-profit Christian credit counseling services offer a very comprehensive holistic debt management plan that will analyze finances similar to traditional credit counseling services. The WFP Christian Credit Counseling Services offers a unique testimonial and faith-based concept of training to teach people how to get out of debt. This is a therapeutic-based program that identifies the problems, then instructs the consumer on the aspects of consumer credit, budgeting, and money management and provides a suggested reading list of books and/or group seminars

to attend. The WFP Christian Credit Counseling Services also publishes their own manuals, books, and literature. Most of its funding comes from members, creditors, business, corporations, and private donations.

Four years ago, we surveyed a group of 50 local college students at South Carolina State University to see what they knew about credit. These were the questions asked:

- What is Consumer Credit Counseling?
- How long has Consumer Credit Counseling existed?
- Who started Consumer Credit Counseling?
- Why is it essential to today's society?
- What are your future goals?

We found that the majority of the students had goals to 1) work in the business industry, 2) become CPA's, or 3) own their own business. The second percentile planned to enter the marketing field, or become certified network administrators. The third percentile included careers in counseling, joining a family business, investing in real estate, being an accountant, a human resource manager, or certified financial officer. The final results of the survey stated the industry has become more specialized. This is the key to success in different areas of expertise.

We in the credit industry have more opportunities to become lobbyists or advocates, commissioners, manufacturers, publishers, credit motivation speakers, to teach internationally, or work in credit reporting. We must integrate market research solutions for accurate data in the industry. Also opportunities in international banking, money investment, financial planning, and doctoral degrees in Credit Management are just a few of the options. Today there is access to technology that practically runs the office for us, also profitable communications for better decisions on consumer credit lending, more holistic and traditional credit counseling programs, and greater consulting opportunities.

In the survey, the students stated that consumer credit counseling is a financial teaching institution that counsels or advises people on finances and how to manage money to maintain good credit, provides services in debt management, and in credit improvement. Consumer credit counseling has existed since the Depression era, created by banks when Commercial Credit first opened and began to extend loans.

The future of the credit counseling industry is more important than ever before. We have better educated credit executives and more sophisticated technology. This requires educating more people in the community. For us as Credit Professionals, it is a time to continue our own education and training. Becoming certified is more important than ever. The industry is much more "accreditation and certification" conscious.

Holistic credit counseling is essential in today's society because of its mission to create a more intelligent, educated society rich in wealth, finance, and prosperity. Ethics in credit are very important. Get involved with your local CPI association's legislative committee to help write and lobby for good legislation that will help your town's corporations, businesses, and business owners. At The WFP Christian Credit Counseling Services we are active with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce Grass-Roots Government System. This process works and you become familiar with legislatures and the lay people. This can also help your organization increase membership as you raise awareness among large and small organizations and private business owners.

You may ask what else can we do as Credit Professionals? We can do a number of things:

- Select local non-profit Credit Counseling Service representatives to speak at your local meetings.
- Provide credit and credit counseling industry information and statistics to your members.

- Train members to teach the seven step "Take Charge of Your Life" series. Then go out and teach it in your local technical schools and community universities.
- Participate in CPI's Credit Education Month, which is a time for us to teach what we know as members of the credit industry. You can start with a Proclamation from the Governor, or the Mayor of your town, to raise awareness and help alleviate credit illiteracy. For the past three years, we at The WFP Christian Credit Counseling Services have been doing this. This also needs to be done on a national level.

There is a market for holistic credit counseling, and the need is greater than ever. Our creeds, codes and motto are important...they are the rules we must follow to maintain good membership ethics. This is how credit works. It is a rule, guide, and leader. We at The WFP Christian Credit Counseling Services follow the Golden Rule from Luke 6:31: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

Remember, stay passionate for your careers, members, customers, clients, and students. Passion breeds success, and success leads to many things we want in life.

About the Author:

Mary Kemp, CCFMC/PCE, has been the Managing Officer for The WFP Christian Credit Counseling Services since 1996 and is a former Partner of Credit Management Services. She is a Certified Credit and Financial Management Consultant and a Certified Professional Credit Executive.

She has been a member of CPI of Orangeburg, SC for four years and is currently Chaplain, serving previously as Vice President and Chairman of the Scholarship Committee. She has served as an Ambassador for the Chamber of Commerce and is a Leadership Graduate, and is active with the State Chamber of Commerce Grass-Roots Network.

Mary is married and is a Christian family business owner, singer, author, guest lecturer, market research scientist, facilitator, and consultant. She is Co-Founder and President of her Grandmother's ministries, One Hundred Distinguished Women, and Queen "M" Christian Music Ministries. Mary received a B.S. degree in Business Administration from South Carolina State University in 1986 and is working on her M.S. Degree from America College of Metaphysical Theology.

She has developed a Doctoral Mentor Program in Credit Management for Professionals and a Credit Management Journal for her industry. To obtain a copy of her manual "How to Repair Your Credit", call her at 803.531.3280 or write P. O. Box 2244, Orangeburg, SC 29116.

CELEBRATE YOU



by Charlotte F. Maness, CCCE

What do you like about yourself? What do you dislike about yourself? Have you ever asked yourself these questions? I dare say most of us have not or at least we would not admit it. However, we have done this indirectly, if we will be honest. For example, we have wished to be thinner, have a different color of hair (or in some cases, more hair), we have wanted to be athletic, musical, or a better public speaker. The list goes on and on but we seldom think about what we like about ourselves and enumerate those positive attributes. Perhaps, we were taught as children that it was impolite to brag on ourselves and we took this too seriously. We often spend much of our life focusing on the "ought to's" and "should have's" and we ask "what will people think" or "it's expected" and we lose sight of the risks we should take in being who we really are.

It is very difficult to capitalize on our strengths, to accept that we are unique, and we constantly compare ourselves with others around us. In reality, we bring our own strengths to the table and our contribution may just be the missing piece of the puzzle. This often happens in our professional lives. We feel inadequate when we are in a new position, when we have different players around us and we are asked to take on new responsibilities. It is so easy to have fear of failure that we lose the opportunity to shine and add value to a project plan or event.

A personal experience changed my thinking along these lines many years ago. I had left a position with a corporation where I knew all the players, felt comfortable in my role, felt successful and results oriented. I moved into a much larger corporation where I was just a new pebble in the sand. I was charged with new responsibilities, learning new functions, and being a member of a much larger whole. I felt very uncomfortable, very inadequate, and felt that I was not going to be successful. In desperation, I had a conversation with my new manager and I will never forget what she said to me. She immediately reminded me of why they had chosen me for this position, what I was "bringing to the table" and encouraged me to focus on this and move on. That was a life changing experience and I have thought back to it many times.

As we evaluate why we often feel less important, why we would like to be different, we have to evaluate why we feel this way. LEARN YOURSELF, which is a paraphrase of KNOW THYSELF, said so many years ago. By this, I encourage you to remember that you are unique, you are special and you have much to offer. Someone has said that most people will go to their grave with their music still in them. Don't let this happen to you! Go ahead, dance to the music, let it out and shine. Let yourself go, smile, laugh heartily, believe in yourself and seek adventure. By all means, compliment yourself when you do well or you are pleased with your accomplishments.

Appreciate your uniqueness; the world has never seen anyone like you. You're it! Each of us is intended to have a character of our own, to be what no others are, and to do what no others can do. Don't spend your energy and your time worrying about what you cannot do, and what other people expect and think. Utilize that time and energy to develop the strengths you have and reinforce your self awareness. Some ideas for doing this are:

1. Make a list of what you like about yourself and what you don't like.

2. Get rid of the "should's" in your life, or change the behaviors that you have identified that you don't like. Only you can change these.
3. Resolve any unfinished business with the appropriate person, not someone else.
4. Do something you have always wanted to but you were afraid to try. Go ahead. Try. You may surprise even yourself.
5. Get rid of the mindset that "we've always done it this way".
6. Take a chance.
7. Dwell on positive things; you are the only one to control what you think.
8. Take charge of your life and don't let it control you. Have a quest and find your own yellow brick road.
9. Be a life long learner.
10. Find time for yourself each day to regroup and recover. Find some time to "JUST BE".

Now, you have found some things you may want to change. Go ahead and do it. Write it down; set a goal and the time to begin. Don't forget you have to be willing to do what you need to do. There is no time like today to begin and we must change ourselves before we take on the world.

I heard a story of a doting Mother who was watching the local band march down the street in a parade. She exclaimed loudly, "Look, everyone is out of step but my son, John". Don't we sometime feel that way about ourselves? Accept outside help and reinforcement but don't live for it. Create and make your goals

happen by accepting that you are unique and you are in control of your life. Like who you are and I really do hope you will let the music out and dance. You can! Go ahead and I know that life will bring many magical moments.

A few years ago, I discovered the prose that follows, called CELEBRATE THE TEMPORARY. It has inspired me and so many with whom I have shared. I do not know who wrote it but I have a feeling that it was divinely inspired for us all. I hope this will become creed for you, as it has for me.

Celebrate
You
Celebrate you!
You're worth celebrating
You are worth everything.
In the whole world, there is only one you.
There is only one person with
Your talents
Your experiences
Your gifts
No one can take your place
God created only one you, precious in his sight.
You
Have
Immense potential
To love
To care
To create
To sacrifice
If you believe in yourself
It doesn't matter your age, or your color,
Or whether your parents loved you or not.
(Maybe they wanted to but couldn't.)
Let that go.
It belongs to the past.

You
Belong
To the now.
It doesn't matter what you have been.
The wrong you've done
The mistakes you've made
The people you've hurt.
You
Are forgiven,
You are accepted.
You're okay. You are
LOVED
In spite of everything.
So love yourself,
And nourish the seeds within you.
Celebrate you
Begin now.
Start anew.
Give yourself a new birth.
Today
You are you, and that is all you need to be.
You
Are
Temporary.
Here today and gone tomorrow.
But today.
Today can be a new beginning, a new thing, a new life
You
Cannot deserve this new life.
It is given freely
That is the miracle called God
So celebrate the miracle and celebrate YOU.

About the author:

Charlotte Freeman Maness, CCCE, has enjoyed a long and diverse career in banking, with experience in operations, lending, human resources, total quality process, and various levels of management with most recent role as Senior Manager in Human Resources at First Union National Bank (now Wachovia Bank) in the Consumer Group. She has done extensive work in training, both in her professional career and in various organizations. She has enjoyed serving at all levels, including International President 1993-1994, of Credit Professionals International and serves as a motivational speaker for many types of organizations.

Charlotte is a musician, has served as organist for Central United Methodist Church in Albemarle, N. C. for 23 years, and teaches an Adult Sunday School Class, named after her late husband who taught the class for 20 years, is Chairman of the Board for Stanly County Community Concert Association, is serving as Director of the OASIS program, Older Adults Services in Stanly County, on the Board of Directors for The Stanly County Interagency Council, President of Albemarle Lions International, has her own businesses which include travel consultant, a distributorship of natural health and wellness products, and human resource consulting, in addition to her speaking career.

Charlotte enjoys life to the fullest, has two grown children, and one marvelous grandchild who is the joy of her life. She believes that life gives back as much as we give to it.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR FOUNDATION



by Terry J. Rowe, CCCE/MPCE

The Credit Education Resources Foundation (once known as CERF but now commonly referred to as "the Foundation") was established as the tool for us to accept donations to our organization that are tax-deductible through a 501(c)(3) corporation. The Foundation is committed to providing credit education to the general public by utilizing and enhancing the combined talents, education and expertise of the members of Credit Professionals International. The Foundation was started at the August meeting of Credit Professionals International (CPI) in St. Louis, MO, in 1987. The process to get everything in place took over another year and the charter was granted in 1989.

The President of Credit Professionals International appoints the President of the Foundation each year. The Second Vice President of CPI serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Foundation Board. One and two-year directors are also appointed by the CPI President, and the Immediate Past President of the Foundation is automatically a member. The Foundation President appoints a Walk-a-Thon Chairman and other committee chairmen and members.

Money that is received by the Foundation is designated as donations. The Walk-A-Thons were the first projects put into place to generate funds for the Foundation. The first two Walk-A-Thons were held in 1988 in Calgary, Canada by Hazel Wilson-Knopp's CPI association and in Twin Falls, Idaho by my association. At that time Hazel was the International President and I was President of District 10. The Walk-A-Thon program has brought in a steady income for the Foundation since that time.

The Foundation Board worked to link up with an international cause, hoping to add additional advertising opportunities for the Walk-A-Thons that would increase the volume and give recognition to the Foundations efforts. Hazel Wilson-Knopp met with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Child Find Canada, newer organizations at that time working to find missing children. They met with the founders of those organizations, including then Governor, William Clinton, and established a partnership for the three organizations. As the associations in Canada disbanded we continued our partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, giving 25% of the funds earned through the Walk-A-Thons to the Center. Thirty-five percent is given back to the local association having the event to be used for their own educational efforts, and the balance stays with the Foundation to further Credit Education projects.

We continue to have Walk-A-Thons or other fundraising events at the International Conferences, encouraging all local associations, States and Districts to actively participate by sending donations to the District Presidents to turn in at the International event. If you or your association are interested in having a local, State or District Walk-a-Thon, please contact the Corporate Office for details. They can provide information kits and additional information, including tapes explaining the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).

Some associations have chosen to have "non-walking" or "virtual" Walk-a-Thons, and have been very creative in having

dance-a-thons, bowl-a-thons, and other fund-raiser's, such as bridge benefits or socials, to raise money for the Foundation and NCMEC.

The funds from the Foundation are used to create educational information for our members and the public sector. Many of the educational materials ordered and published through the International offices have been funded by the Foundation.

Helen B. Sawyers, CCCE, a Past International CPI President, provided the Foundation with a significant grant several years ago which was used to fund a specific project designed to reach both the communities and membership of our organization. The result was "Take Charge Of Your Life", an audio program available on CD and cassette.

Authors were found to write lessons that we compiled, wrote scripts for, and recorded at a sound studio in St. Louis. We hired a professional for the male narrator and I volunteered my services for the female voice. The program consists of seven lessons that help the listener learn how to get the things in life that they want, how to be in charge of what happens to them, and realize that their financial future depends on knowing how to manage their money wisely.

The topics included in the program are: Introduction and Getting Started, How Credit Works, Credit and Credit Cards, You and Your Credit Record, You and Your Money Part 1 and Part 2, and Protection Against Fraud. The authors for many of the lessons are the names you have seen over the years in leadership in Credit Professionals, as well as individuals procured by our members and the International Board of Directors.

The Foundation has also funded an Instructor's Guide to accompany the audio program, and it and a companion PowerPoint presentation are now available. The audio program was designed to be used as a "stand-alone" guide for consumers to better understand credit, however it may also be used in the

classroom or as a basis for a credit seminar. The Instructor's Guide has been provided to give direction to consultants or teachers who are using the tapes and CDs as all or part of a credit presentation. Each local association may request one copy of the Guide free, and additional copies may be purchased or obtained with volume orders of the cassettes and CD's. Contact the Corporate Office for details.

Credit presentations featuring this program might be arranged with the cooperation of local schools (secondary, college, technical), libraries, churches, shelters, community outreach programs, county extension programs, Junior Achievement, senior citizens' groups, at career fairs, in conjunction with mortgage or first time home buyers' classes, through the local Chamber of Commerce or speaker's bureau, or as part of a local, State or District meeting of Credit Professionals International.

The Foundation also initiated the CPI Certification program, which has been very successful in the last year. More and more members are being certified each year and now many of those certified in the beginning are upgrading or renewing their initial certification after five years. There is an application fee to apply for certification and additional fees due depending on the level in which you qualify for certification. Current levels offered are Professional Credit Associate, Professional Credit Specialist, Professional Credit Executive, and Master Professional Credit Executive.

In addition to these special programs, the Foundation pays a portion of the expenses for running the International office, funds the bi-annual magazine, "The Credit Professional", and many of our educational brochures. The Foundation has offered scholarships for the last few years to first time attendees, one each from each District, to the International conferences, and it supports our International website. We invite you to visit that site, www.creditprofessionals.org, often for additional and updated information.

The Foundation continues to seek grant money to fund its projects, but we also are open to other non-dues funding. In addition to the Walk-a-Thons, we have held District Basket raffles at the International Conferences, the "Dollars in the Air" raffles, and a 50/50 drawing with the proceeds all going to the Foundation to pay for educational material. Other ways that money has come into the Foundation are personal donations, memorial donations, and miscellaneous donations. These funds make up a small but important part of our funding and are gratefully appreciated.

To quote former Foundation President and current Walk-a-Thon Chairman, Mary Nebeker, "The Foundation continues to accept donations and to look for creative and productive ways to gain revenue to teach and train our own members and then to teach the community at large."

Get the word out at your local, State and District meetings about the Foundation, and the educational opportunities it provides to the membership and their communities through Credit Professionals International. If you have questions concerning the Foundation, making contributions to the Foundation, or working with the Foundation, please contact me, the Corporate office, or any International CPI Officer or Foundation Board member.

About the Author:

Terry J. Rowe, CCCE/MPCE, is the President of the Credit Education Resources Foundation. She was CPI International President in 1994-95 and is serving her third year as Foundation President. Terry is a two-time Past President of District Ten Pacific Northwest Council and the State of Idaho, and Vice President of the Credit Association of Magic Valley in Twin Falls, Idaho. She is Regional Branch Manager for Pioneer Federal Credit Union in Twin Falls, Gooding and Jerome, Idaho, and can be reached at tj@magiclink.com.

OH, NO, THE SPEAKER DIDN'T SHOW



by Carol D. Neal, CCBE/MPCE

It can happen to any of us. You're getting ready to start the meeting and there is a conspicuous empty seat at the head table. You are the educational chairman or presiding officer, and you haven't heard from your speaker...is he just running late, been in an accident, forgotten all about it??? Whatever the case (and we always hope for the best), the key is not to panic...and the best way not to panic is to always be prepared.

What are some of the ways you can be prepared?

1. Have a back up speaker or program. You can do this yourself, or ask one of your members to have something ready in reserve. And if you don't have to use it in an emergency, you can use it for your final educational program of the year so your preparation doesn't go to waste.
2. Always have at least one copy of the manual and the current Credit Professional on hand at the meeting. Pass the manual or magazine article that was going to be the basis for your

speaker, or another one of the articles, around and ask each member to read a paragraph aloud. Facilitate a general discussion afterwards...you'll be surprised how much your own members may be able to add.

3. Have a copy of the "Take Charge of Your Life" tape or CD and a player at each meeting. If your speaker doesn't show, you can listen to one of the sections of the course and discuss it as a group afterwards. Of course, this also makes a great PLANNED meeting...I'll share more on this later.
4. Pack a supply of blank or lined paper and index cards. You should always have some on hand in case your members and guests want to take notes, and if you find yourself without a speaker, you can use them for a "problem exchange". Ask each attendee to write down on a piece of paper or an index card a problem they are currently wrestling with at work, in the association, or elsewhere. Then "pass the problem" and have the next person write down one solution or idea, pass again for a second solution or idea, etc. Return to the original members and allow them time to discuss and ask questions.
5. Have on hand a flip chart and markers. These are good to have anyway just in case your speaker needs them and didn't bring them, or if you really start brainstorming about something during your business meeting. I keep one of the Post-It brand table-top flip charts in my trunk...they don't need a stand, and you can put the pages up on the walls without tape and take them back down without damage.

How you choose to present your program without a speaker will depend somewhat on your audience. You always want to keep the educational session as professional as possible, but if you don't have any employers or prospective members attending that day, you have a little more leeway to make the learning more fun and less formal.

The articles in this manual and in the Credit Professional magazine are provided to give you a starting point, but don't overlook the knowledge within your own membership.

This association was founded by a group of credit industry employees who wanted to get together to talk about their challenges and successes, and find solutions to common problems. We can still do this today. Ask each of your members to tell about a difficult job situation they faced (protecting confidentiality, of course) and how they overcame it. Or ask them to share their greatest success story from work. Be sure to use your facilitation skills and make sure that every member gets an equal chance to participate, but don't push anyone too far out of their comfort zone.

Don't want to use any of the ideas above? Remember I suggested earlier having a flip chart on hand? Use the unexpected time to work out plans for your association's project for Credit Education Month, or brainstorm ideas for getting new members, and then put those plans into action.

Or use the time to get to know each other better, sharing your employment histories and interests and really networking. You might find that one of your newer members was editor of their college paper, and would love to do your bulletin!

Please do come up with something productive...don't use the lack of a speaker as an excuse to go home early. Your members, and especially guests, expect value for their attendance at the meetings. Who knows, your impromptu program might be better than that speaker ever would have been!

Some members have told me that they feel their associations are too small to invite an outside speaker in the first place. Consider these options:

Don't invite the outside expert as a speaker, invite them as a consultant. Instead of having them stand and give a prepared

program, give them a copy of the article ahead of time and tell them you'd like them to share their insights and personal experience on the topic in a casual "question and answer" atmosphere. You can have a real "round-table" discussion without any awkwardness you might feel comes with having someone stand up and lecture to four or five people. Ask your members to read the article ahead of time so they can participate fully.

Use your own members as resources. At the beginning of the year, ask the members to choose which topics they'd most like covered from those suggested by the manual, magazine, or current events in the credit industry. Ask each member to pick one of the topics and be responsible for "teaching" it during the year. They can give the presentation themselves, or find an outside expert, or come up with a "non-speaking" way to share the information.

Here are some of the ways my association has found to cover topics in the past without using a speaker. An added benefit to these formats is that we all get an opportunity to improve our teamwork and communication skills at the same time we're learning the information, and they are usually a lot of fun.

Use a common game format to present the material. My favorites to use are Jeopardy, Family Feud, and Wheel of Fortune. Whichever you choose, be sure to make them team competitions, as opposed to individual ones, and mix up the expertise levels on the teams so they all have a chance. Your goal is to get the information out there, not to embarrass anyone or cause hurt feelings.

To reinforce Parliamentary law, we've used a puzzle format. Make two or more sets of large cards (normal 8½" x 11" paper is fine) with the steps of a motion on each one. Scramble the cards in each set. Break the group into teams, and let them compete to see who can put all the steps of a motion (*by the way, there are at least eight steps in a straightforward motion*) in the proper order

first. You can use this format with any topic that includes steps, groupings, or a natural order.

For example, when the "History of CPI" was one of our topics, we created giant "time lines". The teams got two sets of cards, one with the years on them and the other with events from the manual chapter that corresponded with those years. We also included events from our local, State, and District history to make it more fun and personal. The teams competed to see who could match the events to the years and get them all lined up in the right order first. Everyone enjoyed the trips down memory lane the competition sparked, and we reviewed all the material from the chapter.

When you're having team events, you don't have to award prizes...a round of applause and the sense of satisfaction they get is usually enough reward. Or you can see that the "winners" get served first at your next meal function, or get to choose the theme for the next social event.

Another way to present material is through a skit. Most of us have at one time or another seen or taken part in a skit on "the wrong way to hold a meeting". These can be very funny, but they are also eye-opening and a good way to make a point "stick". Be sure and demonstrate the right way as well. You can also do role-playing...some of the industry events that lend themselves well to this format are consumer interviews, taking a credit application, handling a collection call, going for an employment interview, asking for a raise, inviting a prospective member to a meeting, and the list goes on.

And, as suggested earlier, you can always use the "Take Charge of Your Life" audio program, or any other audio program. Be sure and keep the audio segments short, as adult learners usually require visual stimulation, too. Review a session and then discuss it. Use the questions and other suggestions for audience interaction from your association's copy of the Instructor's Guide for the "Take Charge of Your Life" program. If your association

hasn't requested and received your free copy of the Guide, contact me or the Corporate Office.

If your meeting location comes with a TV/VCR hook-up, check with your local library or some of your employers' training centers for good training videos you can borrow. I've borrowed Equifax's copy of the famous cartoon "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Spencer Johnson, M.D. on three separate occasions to use as a learning tool and kick off discussion on the subject for different groups.

Credit Professionals International is all about learning, and learning should be fun and applicable to be most effective. If you follow some of the suggestions in this article to be prepared, to rely on your membership, and to seek creative ways to cover different topics, you'll never have to panic if you hear someone say "Oh, no, the speaker didn't show!"

About the author:

Carol Neal, CCBE/MPCE, is First Vice President of Credit Professionals International and editor of this manual. She has been a member of CPI of Atlanta since 1981. She has served as President of CPI of Atlanta, CPI of Georgia and CPI of District III & IV and the Inter-City Credit Council of Georgia and as a Director and Secretary/Treasurer of the Credit Education Resources Foundation. She is a past local, State, and District Credit Professional of the Year and has also won Atlanta's Outstanding Member of the Year Award and the Inter-City Credit Council's Comer Cherry Award. She earned her ACE in 1987, her CCBE in 1990 and her MPCE in 2000. She joined Career Club in 2001. An educator, facilitator and business analyst, she has presented workshops on a variety of subjects at work and at International, District, State and local meetings and has written articles for several publications. She recently completed the Instructor's Guide and companion PowerPoint package for the "Take Charge of Your Life" audio program.

WHAT IS CPI?

The association now known as Credit Professionals International (CPI) was established in 1937 for individuals working in the credit industry. CPI's focus is on strengthening the credit industry and the individual through education and interaction. Our mission is to support our members by providing opportunities for networking, career development, and community involvement.

Membership benefits include this educational manual with articles written by outstanding members of the credit industry; local monthly meetings with educational speakers and programs and networking opportunities; and the opportunity to attend seminars and conferences. Members are also eligible to subscribe to a variety of publications at reduced rates: CREDIT CONNECTION (a quarterly newsletter with legislative updates), THE CREDIT PROFESSIONAL (a bi-annual magazine) and the International Membership Directory.

Credit Professionals International also offers a four-level certification program available through the Credit Education Resources Foundation. See our website for additional information: www.creditprofessionals.org

COME GROW WITH US!



CPI DISTRICTS

Credit Professionals International is set apart in Districts as follows:

- District 3 & 4: States of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee
- District 5: States of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, and Ohio
- District 7: States of Arkansas, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota
- District 8: State of Texas
- District 9: States of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming
- District 10: States of Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington; Provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, Canada
- District 12: States of Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.



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Conference information and registration forms will be mailed with the Winter Credit Connection and posted at www.creditprofessionals.org.

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