

**NOTES**

***Credit  
Professionals  
International***

***2009-2010  
Education Manual***

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## 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; a website—[www.creditprofessionals.org](http://www.creditprofessionals.org)—that has a special members-only section loaded with helpful information; local monthly meetings with educational speakers, programs and networking opportunities; and the opportunity to attend state, district and international seminars and conferences.

Members also receive *The Credit Professional*—an annual 40-page magazine filled with articles relevant to those working in the credit industry; *The Credit Connection* quarterly newsletter containing legislative news, helpful articles, program ideas and membership news; the Pre-Conference and Post-Conference Capsules; and the online CPI Membership Directory.

Credit Professionals International also offers a four-level certification program, which provides a vehicle for members to receive recognition for participation in continuing professional development through courses in the workplace, attendance and participation in seminars, conferences, college courses and activities at all levels of the association.

**Visit our website at [www.creditprofessionals.org](http://www.creditprofessionals.org)**

## G.E.M.



First things first. This manual is being brought to you because of the efforts of our Second Vice President, Billie Plasker (2008-09). Because of Billie's diligence and connections, she has been able to bring some great articles for your use this year in selecting educational topics for your local association meetings. Thank you, Billie. And, thank you Charlotte Rancilio, for your hard work and effort to compile all of the information you received for this manual.

This year's theme is symbolized by a GEM, which stands for:

**GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE  
EDUCATING IN YOUR COMMUNITY  
AND  
MENTORING OTHERS IN OUR INDUSTRY**

This manual will certainly help you “grow in knowledge”. The many presentations, scholarships, workshops and lectures we give are a part of “educating in your community”. We “mentor others in our industry” every day. Just think about all of the information you share with others, which helps them to grow just as you have. Keep up the good work and enjoy your year of education with Credit Professionals International.

*Jean Jervis, CCCE/MPCE  
International President, 2009-2010*

## THE 2009-2010 EDUCATION MANUAL



I am pleased to present to you the 2009-2010 Education Manual. Education is one of the most important missions of CPI—we base nearly all of our meetings and conferences around it, from the local association to District to International. Educating our community within CPI and, by extension, those in the public helps develop a smarter and more efficient credit community.

While developing this manual, I contacted all District Presidents for topics they would like to have covered and also solicited members who might be willing to write an article. In addition, we received articles on a number of timely issues from outside authors—certainly we, as the CPI family, grow stronger by learning from those on the outside.

It is my hope that you find this manual educational and a tool to help provide topics for speakers at your upcoming meetings. This manual is an important resource in our educational mission.

Thank you to all the authors who provided articles for this manual. Your efforts are most sincerely appreciated. Thanks also to Charlotte Rancilio at the Corporate Office for her help and dedication in producing this manual.

Remember: **G** Growing in Knowledge  
**E** Educating your community  
**M** Mentoring others

Billie Plasker, PCS  
*First Vice President, 2009-2010*



## MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

October 2009 – April 2010

### Team East

District 3 & 4

District 5

District 12

vs

### TeamWest

District 7 & 9

District 8

District 10

Victory will go to the Team with Highest Increased Membership  
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**G.E.M.**

## WHAT ARE YOU ABOUT? THERE IS MORE TO BUSINESS THAN JUST SALES

*by Mark Borofsky, CCE, CEW*

Ask any sales person, controller, VP of sales, you name it: what is the function of credit? Overwhelmingly, the answer you will get back, and rather quickly is, "collections." The predominant view of the credit function in business today is collections. I remember when I first started working in the area of credit, my father would tell his friends, "My son is in credit, he's a debt collector." Tragically that was over 25 years ago and it seems some perceptions never change.

One area of concern that I am seeing more and more of is that businesses have lost the art or skill of building relationships. The fact that the customer buys products/services from a company/supplier is typically the driving force behind the "relationship." Don't get me wrong, you have to have sales and sales may help to introduce you to a customer, but is that what drives the relationship? In the area of credit management, we see our job as making sure the client is creditworthy, setting the credit limit, and going on from

there. Of course, when the customer runs past due, we are on the phone calling to see when we will be paid or sending them a collection letter. But does this really constitute a relationship? Let's look at a couple of scenarios and see how we can enhance our customer relations.

**Case # 1**—You have a customer who buys a lot of your product and has for years. They have always paid well but now you are seeing a slowing trend. In fact, they are paying anywhere from 45-60 days late. You call your customer and ask them what is going on. They inform you that they have several large customers of their own who are paying them slow. Typically, most "credit managers" I have spoken with move from open terms to putting orders on hold, claiming "the slow pay is their problem, not ours." Or, they inform their longstanding client that they should go to the bank and borrow money as working capital.

**My Solution:** I find out how they check credit on their customers. If they say they don't have a "credit department", I give them direction on how to run an Experian credit report and even tell them I will review the report for them if they like. I then ask them what they are doing to collect from their customers and/or what steps they have taken to get their customer in line. At this point, I may very well offer to come and spend time with them to help them set up their credit guidelines and procedures (remember this is one of my larger customers). There are two schools of thought here: 1) I am working to help them increase their cash flow, which in turn means I will get paid sooner; and 2) Of all their suppliers, my company is the one who saw them for more than just a sale, but as a business partner.

**Case # 2**—You have a long-standing customer whose business is really growing. They buy your product, make some changes to that product and then up-sell it for a much higher margin. You get a call from them one day and they tell you that they have an unsolicited order from a

## **2010 CREDIT PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL CREDIT CONFERENCE**

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### **District 3 & 4**

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**Atlanta, GA**

### **District 8**

*to be announced*  
**San Antonio, TX**

### **District 5**

**March 25-27, 2010**  
**Branson, MO**

### **District 10**

**Apr. 30-May 1, 2010**  
**Great Falls, MT**

### **District 7&9**

**March 25-27, 2010**  
**Branson, MO**

### **District 12**

*to be announced*  
**Charlottesville, VA**

**T**rust is earned when we have proven ourselves and our product or service to our customers. People do business with people who are knowledgeable, efficient and will deliver what they promise. Trust is developed when we are totally honest with our customer.

Probably the hardest thing we ever have to do is to apologize when we find that the customer's distress is justified. We can say, "*I'm sorry this has happened. I would be upset too if this happened to me.*" Always let them know that we regret they have been made unhappy. We should not cast blame in another direction, such as, "*we have had this problem before with this supplier.*" We should think enough of our customers to 'face the music' truthfully, when either we, or our business, is in the wrong. Sometimes a dish of crow, seasoned well, doesn't taste all that bad.

Build **R**elationships, show **E**mpathy, improve **S**ervice, **P**repare and train personnel, take steps to **E**nsure loyalty, exhibit **C**ourtesy and earn **T**rust. If we adopt these simple guidelines, our customers will know we respect and value them and will continue to patronize our business. We must never be blind to the invisible sign every human being wears about their neck.

### ***About the Author***

*Shirley Clontz is retired from her position as account manager with Charlotte Metro Credit Union. Prior to her employment with the Credit Union, she worked for the Credit Bureau of Charlotte for twenty years. She joined Credit Professionals International in 1985 and resigned her membership when the Credit Bureau of Charlotte was dissolved. Shirley rejoined CPI in 2006. She is married to Frank, has four terrific children and two wonderful grandchildren.*

company that they have never heard of. This order is probably four times the average order amount from their other customers. This means they are getting ready to place a large order with you.

**My Solution:** The first thing I would do is ask my customer where the company placing the order is from. They tell me Nigeria. Assuming most of the readers of this article are informed as to the fraud that comes out of Nigeria, our first reaction is to run far and quick from this order. But let's assume, for a moment, your customer is not informed. I would let my customer know of all the fraud issues that come from Nigeria and help them to verify the authenticity of the company. This would be shared with them in a way so as to not burst their bubble over such a potentially large order. And whether or not it is Nigeria or Wichita, Kansas, I am going to do whatever I can to help my customer through the credit process.

What I am trying to say to all of the readers out there is that the credit function of your company can be an ambassador to building relationships or it can be the sales prevention department who interferes with the client/business relationship.

Credit for the most part is like an unwanted visitor and, more often than not, we foster that mentality. We live in a world where we focus on making credit decisions hoping they won't go bad, keeping our DSO down and praying against all hope that we do not have higher bad debt than the previous year.

Think about this for a moment: there is no other position within a company that can cause as much impact on a business, the client, and your company, than the credit management function. The credit role can influence the following aspects or functions within a business:

- **Sales**
- **Production**
- **Inventory**
- **Cash Flow**
- **Profitability**
- **Procurement (for production and inventory)**
- **Payables**
- **Marketing**

Your role and position in the company is vital; why not extend it and become the one area that helps to build the relationship with the customer? Look, any sales rep can take a client to dinner and wine them and dine them and make sure they get their customer's order processed. But what if you took on a more active role with the customer, especially those that have potential and you work with them and help them in their credit process? If you do that, you will have a loyal customer and friend for life. When your competition comes in and offers better pricing, just perhaps they will forget pricing and remember what you have done for them. Business should be about relationships first and foremost, everything else is after the fact.

For the record, if you think this is silly or won't work, I have been in credit for over 30 years and the company I used to work for (21 years) allowed me to go out and help over 15 of our distributors establish a credit department. The end result—they were the top 15 distributors to the company and they paid each invoice within terms. One more thing, they are still buying from my former employer.

I hope to have other articles published that I am sure you will find helpful. And remember, if you do everything else right in credit management, collections is the last thing you should have to worry about. In the meantime, if there is anything we can do to help you improve the credit function of your company, please give us a call.

“No, No”, he admonished. “*A customer is the only reason a company stays in business.*” Isn’t this the same thing (which is what I thought at the time)? Not at all!

Customers do not have to buy from any certain business or service, but that business or service depends on the customer for survival. No company can continue for long without devoted customers.

Retaining a loyal customer base is much more profitable and less expensive than landing new customers. If a customer is not happy with our business, they likely will not complain to us. However, they will probably complain to anyone else within hearing and will take their business to our competition.

To lessen this possibility, we can make a follow-up phone call or mail out a rating questionnaire after the sale. Keeping contact with current customers helps build loyalty. Sending out newsletters and advertisements to keep them aware of our firm and advising them of sales or new items is a good idea. Christmas cards also work well to let them know they are special. The more our customers learn about us, the more devoted they will be.

Courtesy is important in every aspect of interaction between humans, and never more so than with our customers. Does each customer entering your company receive the same greeting? Is your smile just as warm for the farmer in overalls as for the businessman in suit and tie? How do you cope with the knit-pickers, the fault-finders, the constant complainers or the folks who can never be satisfied? Do you shrink from them and try to pass them and their problems off to someone else? Too often, we tend to ignore or even rebuff certain persons who do not measure up as deserving of our attention. We should always say “thank you”. Never, never be so rude as to take or make a phone call or tend to paperwork in front of them. This makes them feel less important than whatever else is taking your interest. Should problems, such as a credit issue, arise, take them to a private place to discuss the concern so as not to cause undue embarrassment.



them to explain, in detail, what has gone awry. We cannot allow ourselves to become angry or excited. As Proverbs 15:1 informs us “*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*”

Service with a smile, as a motto, ought to be implemented within any company dealing with the public. We should inform the displeased customer that the utmost will be done to solve their problem. If a difficulty cannot be overcome right away, let them know that they will be notified as soon as the trouble has been resolved. Then we must DO it! To promptly follow up on a customer’s complaint may mean they will remain a customer. We should not fail to advise them of the results of our efforts, even though we may not have good news. Then, if the dilemma cannot be worked out to our customer’s satisfaction, they will at least know we have appreciated their situation and have tried to settle the problem. It is essential that our customer feels that we have done our best to help.

Preparation and personnel training is necessary to provide the best customer service. We cannot offer the best assistance unless we are knowledgeable about our product or service. Wherever possible, we can offer additional information on how to use the service or product. People like to feel that their business is appreciated, and the gesture doesn’t have to be a big thing.

Too many times we tend to think of customer service as handling customer complaints and sometimes this is true. However, keep in mind that the customer is giving us a chance, not only to correct whatever has caused a grievance, but to forge a more solid relationship.

Ensure customer loyalty, not only by offering superior products and service, but also with employee proficiency. A very wise friend, George Henderson, with the Charlotte Merchant’s Association, once asked me to define the term ‘customer’. I stammered something like “a customer is a buyer of products.”

### ***About the Author***

*Mark Borofsky is the President/CEO of CORE Strategies, LLC, a leadership firm in the area of credit, receivables and cash flow management. Mark was the 2001 National Credit executive of the Year for NACM. His company also handles some outsourcing for other companies who have CORE help them in their credit management. They have helped many companies in multiple industries establish their credit guidelines and procedures, as well as helping to make credit decisions for their companies. In addition, Mark is a Certified Expert Witness in Credit and Bankruptcy Preference issues. If you have questions, or would like to enquire how CORE can help you, please call Mark at 1-866-721-5549 or e-mail him at [info@corestartegies.org](mailto:info@corestartegies.org). Please visit their website for a more detailed view of the services offered. [www.corestrategies.org](http://www.corestrategies.org)*

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## NETWORKING...MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU



*by Carol Neal, CCBE/MPCE*

I have a confession to make—I am a closet introvert. It is very hard for me to go into new situations, meet new people, and present myself in public. But I learned from a series of mentors, and from my experiences in CPI, to “fake it till I make it”. So, even though networking is outside my comfort zone, that’s what I’ve been doing, quite actively and successfully, for the last few years.

I began for the usual reasons. I’d been downsized from Equifax and was looking to make new contacts for my independent multi-level marketing ventures—first Arbonne, then YTB Travel, and now PartyLite, Send Out Cards and Reliv International. What I found, however, was that everywhere I went I made not only contacts, but friends. They weren’t always business leads, but I found value in every meeting.

For CPI, I have found speakers, new members, caterers, vendors for our Spring Fling fundraisers, and people who knew of venues and other services we could use—such as our new hCard campaign. For me personally, I have found a financial advisor, income opportunities, health and insurance providers, a window washer, lawn services, cleaning services, and pet sitting services.

The word *customer* historically derives from “custom”, meaning, “habit”. A customer was someone who frequented a particular shop, who made it a habit to purchase goods of the sort the shop sold there rather than elsewhere, and with whom the shopkeeper maintained a relationship in order to keep his or her “custom,” meaning expected purchases in the future. The shopkeeper developed a personal connection with his customers.

So, how do we go about demonstrating our respect?

**R**elationships, such as those that could easily be established in the past, are difficult in today’s competitive marketplace. Whatever our occupation, we are in the people business. The customer is vital to us. To build a long-lasting rapport with our customers we must let them know they are special. Remember the customer’s name. It never hurts to ask questions about their family or items of general interest. Since memory will forsake us at times, it is a good idea to jot down a note or two about the regular customer. We must ask them to inform us if anything is not to their satisfaction and should always greet them warmly and make the goodbyes just as warm.

**E**mpathy is sometimes difficult to implement. It is very easy to work with people we like and with people who like us; however, sooner or later we will have to work with a demanding person. The most difficult person to deal with is the angry customer. This is an individual who believes he has been wronged. When faced with an irate person, we are like a small boat amid the waves of an angry sea; however, if we keep our cool and our rudder (our own emotions), under control, we can overcome the waves. We should listen to what they have to say and ask them to repeat it if we do not understand. It can seem, at times, that listening is all we can do, but we need to remember that we are dealing with a person who feels they have been disrespected in some way.

We should attempt to put ourselves in their shoes and look at the problem from their perspective. Without being patronizing, we ought to let them know we recognize that they are angry and ask

## I WANT TO FEEL IMPORTANT



by Shirley Clontz

My Mom once told me that everyone wears an invisible sign around their neck that states, *“I want to feel important.”* I believe we should see that sign very clearly when working with our customers. After all, this is just another demonstration of the “golden rule.” No matter what our occupation or position in the work place, it is a must to learn, early on, that this rule applies when dealing with those we serve and associate. How do we keep our customers happy and coming back?

Aretha Franklin sang, *“R E S P E C T: find out what it means to me.”*

In relating to our fellow humans, we need to find out what respect means and follow those principles. We should respect others just as we wish to be respected. What it boils down to is letting our customers know we value them and their business. Adhering to this approach as a general policy can assure our success, both in our job as well as our interactions with friends and family.

And I have met a lot of fun and interesting people. And for my business I have found great customers, hosts and hostesses, and members for my team. In return, I believe I’ve helped a lot of people find opportunities, business leads, and connections with individuals and services that they might not have found out about otherwise.

There are many different types of formal networking groups. Bonnie Ross-Parker’s “Joy of Connecting” is one of my favorites, because it fosters great relationships and support for businesswomen. There are also Leads, Business Networking International, Women in Networking, Power Networking, and countless other national and local groups. Check out other trade associations similar to CPI, such as the American Business Women’s Association and the Risk Management Association, or join your local Chamber of Commerce, alumni group, or hobby groups. All of these are great prospects for you to visit to find prospective members for CPI and leads for your own businesses. Costs will vary. Some groups have annual or quarterly membership fees in addition to meeting or meal fees. Others are free. Check out the groups in your area and choose what works best for you. Most let guests attend free at least once.

And don’t limit yourself to formal networking events. Get involved with a charity, a school, or at your church. Volunteering leads to important connections and the development of relationships that are not just based on building business contacts but on helping others.

Create your own networking opportunities. Start a book club, garden club, neighborhood watch, or game night. Host a party to honor someone you admire, give an award or even create a scholarship program. There are countless ways of getting people together—all you need is an idea and an invitation. Visit [Evite.com](http://Evite.com) and [HouseParty.com](http://HouseParty.com) for lots of ideas. Don’t overlook the value of online networking sites such as LinkedIn, Meetups, Facebook, myspace, plaxo, mylife, Zorpia, and Twitter, just to name a few. Most of these are free, and can

lead to more face-to-face meetings and network events. Once you get out there and start meeting people, they will invite you to other events. Don't judge an event in advance. Many that seem like they'll be a waste of time often turn out to offer valuable networking opportunities. You never know who's going to be there. And while it's possible you may connect with only one person, that connection could turn into a powerful, long-term relationship that leads you to many other great connections.

I have found that I can keep very busy attending networking events, but that doesn't mean I'm always being effective. Attending events is only half the battle. You also need to know how to behave at them, and how to follow up.

If you talk too much, say too little or arrive unprepared, you can ruin your chance to make a great first impression. Always stay focused on the person you are talking to and maintain eye contact. Don't scan the room trying to decide whom you'll talk to next. Show interest in the people you meet. You can make a great impression by asking a few thoughtful questions. Above all, be genuine and sincere. A strong professional or social network is based on relationships, and it takes time to build a relationship.

Do your homework. Find out which person or organization is sponsoring the event and be sure to thank them. See if there will be speakers, presenters or any special guests in attendance. Make a list of people you expect to be there and want to meet, and do a little research on each of them. A little knowledge goes a long way. If you know something about the people you approach, it's much easier to start a conversation and keep it going.

I've always found it helpful to go into a new situation with a goal in mind, so that you can make sure you accomplish your purpose in attending the event, but also with an open mind, so you can be alert to all opportunities, not only for yourself, but also for the people you meet.

*Toastmasters. She rejoices in her clients success stories and continually provides encouragement and support to her clients. One of her clients had this to say, "You are very compassionate, caring, and committed—the three C's".*

*Her personal experiences with debt and her business savvy have proven her to be an effective and competent speaker on personal finance and business credit issues. She is also the author of "How to Get out of Debt: Get An "A" Credit Rating for Free", a self help book on credit repair that provides consumers with a step-by-step plan on how to get out of debt, increase their credit rating and maintain their good credit. Her purpose and passion in life is to give back to her community and help others become savvy in personal finance. She currently lives in Washington DC.*

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Or e-mail orders to [creditpro@creditprofessionals.org](mailto:creditpro@creditprofessionals.org) and pay via PayPal, available on the CPI website.

purchases. You end up paying two to three times what the item is worth due to finance charges when paying by credit card. Save yourself some money by paying cash.

Following these tips will help you pay down debt, increase your credit score and will put you on the path to a debt free life.

### ***About the author***

*Harrine Freeman is the CEO and owner of H.E. Freeman Enterprises which provides credit repair services to help people restore their credit rating and develop good money management skills to pay off debts and plan for retirement. The firm is 10 years old. She is an energetic speaker, author, personal finance expert, and freelance writer. She was once \$19,000 in debt, while making only \$21,000 a year. Yet she was successfully able to get herself out of debt without filing for bankruptcy. Her knowledge and tips have helped her diverse clientele restore their credit, learn how to manage their finances and get totally out of debt.*

*As a guest speaker at regional and national churches and schools, national radio shows, organizations and Fortune 500 companies, Freeman's simple, yet effective methods positively impact the bottom lines of her clients. She has provided credit repair, debt management and business credit seminars to various audiences. As a panelist, she participated in a number of national and local conferences. She has appeared in Market Watch, Wall Street Journal, Black Enterprise, Essence Magazine, Pink Magazine, Forbes, the Prince Georges Gazette, Bankrate.com, Creditcards.com, Yahoo.com, and on NBC. He is an Advisory Council member of Russell Simmon's HSN Get Your House Right Home Ownership Initiative. She is also a columnist for the Washington Informer.*

*She is a member of the American Association of Daily Money Managers, Credit Professionals International, the National Association of Women Writers, SPAWN, SPAN, and*

Don't forget to prepare your elevator pitch. You'll need it to introduce yourself to people at a networking event. It should be brief enough to share during an elevator ride. In your pitch, give a three-minute summary of who you are, what you do and why you're there. Some groups only allow a minute for formal introductions, so ask what the format is and be prepared! Practice your pitch before the event so that it will sound natural. Be confident, but not pushy. Lead with your passion, and smile!

In a presentation made to the Equifax Women's Forum last year, Steve Ely, Vice President of Personal Solutions, shared these nine easy steps to networking:

1. Stay in touch with people you like and respect even if they can't help you immediately. You don't want to go to someone only when you are desperate.
2. Talk to people you don't know everywhere you go. Cocktail parties and weddings are just the tip of the iceberg; don't forget about airplane rides, supermarket lines, sporting events, festivals, bookstores and so on.
3. Learn to ask "What do you do?" with comfort, sincerity and interest.
4. Become a better listener. Ask a question and then be quiet until you hear the answer.
5. Practice your own presentation of your skills. Learn more than one approach, whether frank or subtle.
6. Keep a great updated brochure, business card or other form of information about yourself on you at all times. Get comfortable handing out your card.
7. Take classes to improve your public speaking, body language and writing skills.
8. Join every networking club and association in your field.

## 9. Follow up on any lead, no matter how minor.

Focus on the quality, not quantity, of your connections at networking events. You'll get better results by making a few good connections than by handing out dozens of business cards indiscriminately.

Another great networker, Annette Walden of Painted Lady Enterprises and a Joy of Connecting Licensee, has this to say:

“There is value in networking, however it’s like taking a bath—you can’t just attend one meeting and expect to receive a pile of leads. Networking works if you work it. Most people do business with someone they trust—someone they have built a relationship with. Most people are not going to give you their business or a referral the first time they meet you. You have to build trust and a relationship by showing up again and again. That says that you are a hardworking, reliable, trustworthy person. Participating actively and adding value helps to also build the relationship.”

Here are some of Annette’s tips to further accelerate the networking process:

- Present the right image. Be dressed professionally and appropriately for the group.
- Always wear a nametag and wear it on your right shoulder.
- Approach people you already know so that they can introduce you to others. This is a good strategy for you also. Introduce those that could benefit from each other’s services, such as a real estate person and a mortgage broker.
- Ask questions about their business so that you are clear on good leads for them. Listen carefully. Remember, you are NOT there to sell, but to meet others and establish relationships.

payment, your balance will go down faster, however, as a good money management rule you should still send more than the minimum monthly payment.

Once you have gotten out of debt or paid off a good portion of your debts where they are manageable, you want to make sure that you stay out of debt and minimize your risk of having another financial crisis. This also requires great sacrifice, discipline and commitment. It is easy to get into debt but hard to get out. You can get into debt in a matter of seconds but it can take years to get out of debt. Here are five ways to stay out of debt.

1. **New Accounts.** Don't open more than one new account per year unless necessary. It is better to maintain your existing accounts and bring them in good standing instead of opening a new account. New accounts make up 10% of your credit score and lower your credit score each time a new account is opened.
2. **Create a budget.** A budget helps you identify your total monthly income, how much you owe and how much you spend each month. A budget also quickly identifies areas where you may need to reduce spending.
3. **Live Below Your Means.** Buy needs vs. wants, control your spending, don't buy in excess or more than you need; keep debt (excluding mortgage or rent) at 15% of your total monthly income (after taxes). Reduce expenses by bringing your lunch to work, taking public transportation, shopping at wholesale stores. Delay buying the things you want until you have the money to purchase them.
4. **Keep balances low.** Keep credit card balances at 30% or below the credit limit. Having accounts with balances above the credit limit will decrease your credit score and may increase the chances of your credit limit being reduced or your credit card account may be closed.
5. **Pay with cash.** Use credit cards for emergencies only or for occasional expenses. Try to use cash more often to pay for

monthly. Pay the minimum monthly payment the first week after you get the bill, and then each week pay as much as you can toward the monthly balance and repeat every month. You can also pay as much as you can when you get the bill, and then pay more towards the bill when you get extra money. Some creditors are aware of this but may not apply your payment to the current month's bill. If this happens contact the creditor and tell them to apply all of your payment to the current month's bill.

3. Avoid late fees. Pay your bills on time. If you are unable to make a payment, contact the creditor right away to set up a payment plan or make other arrangements. If you generally make your payments near the due date, call the company's customer service department, ask if there is a certain time of the day (am/pm, or hh:mm) that they need to receive your payment to consider it paid on time, and make sure your payments arrive by that time. You can also contact your local post office to find out how long it takes your payment to arrive by mail.
4. Negotiate. As a consumer you have the option to negotiate. Don't be afraid to ask exactly for what you want regarding your account. Negotiate for lower interest rates or get fees waived to help reduce the balance owed. This also makes it easier to pay off the credit card debt.
5. Pay more than minimum monthly payment. If you pay only the minimum monthly payment you will end up paying two to three times what you actually purchased due to finance charges that accrue on your balance. Send more than the minimum monthly payment each month. An easy way to determine how much to send is by reviewing the total amount listed in the finance charges field on your statement for the current month. If your finance charges are equal to or more than your minimum monthly payment then your payment should at least equal to your finance charges. If your finance charges are less than your minimum monthly

- Mingle, Mingle, Mingle—Step out of your comfort zone. Look for the person who looks lost (usually first timers), introduce yourself and ask questions.
- Position yourself in the room near the food and/or drinks in order to be more visible and meet more people.
- Be able to describe your business or product in terms of the benefit to the potential client. Does your product or service save time and/or money? Also, be able to describe your perfect client.
- Offer to get together for coffee or lunch with those that could be good business alliances.
- Follow up with a note or phone call and, if possible, offer something of value like another networking group or meeting that might be of interest to them. (Invite them to your next CPI meeting for sure!) Or perhaps send a promotional item the person would keep and use.
- Keep your name in front of them. If you have a newsletter or ezine you publish, ask if you may add them to your distribution list.
- Send congratulatory cards and letters. If you see their name in the paper for an accomplishment and/or promotion, call or send a note.
- Pass well-qualified leads and ask that they use your name.
- When you get a referral, even if you don't get the sale, always thank the person who gave you the lead.
- Donate door prizes others will want and remember.
- Treat everyone you meet with equal consideration. When you're networking your way to the top, it pays to stay in everyone's good graces. Apply the Golden Rule to all of your networking relationships.

Now, having shared all this—don't let the fear of not being “perfectly prepared” keep you from getting started. We learn by doing and by making mistakes, and the more you network, the easier it is. Pretty soon you'll be having fun, building great relationships, getting lots of new members for CPI and leads for your business, and you won't even be faking it—you'll be making it on your own!

***About the author:***

*Carol Neal, CCBE/MPCE, was International President of CPI in 2004-2005, has served on the Board of Directors for the Credit Education Resources Foundation and was the 2008 International Credit Professional of the Year. She has been a member of CPI of Atlanta, GA, since 1981 and is serving on the local, District and International levels.*

*She is a Certified Credit Bureau Executive, a Master Professional Credit Executive, a Certified Public Speaker and a Certified Personal Life Coach. She was one of the original authors for the Foundation's “Take Charge of Your Life” audio program and created the program's Instructor's Guide and companion PowerPoint package. She obtained her certification and license to teach the True Colors communication model in 2005.*

*Carol was employed by Equifax for 24 years and was a Senior Business Systems Analyst in their technology division when she left the company in 2001. She returned to Equifax as a consultant for a year in 2007-2008. She is currently an Independent Consultant for PartyLite, an Entrepreneur with Send Out Cards and a Master Affiliate with Reliv International.*

*Visit Carol's website at [www.partylite.biz/cneal](http://www.partylite.biz/cneal).*

afford or a home that has more rooms than you use. It means examining every aspect of your life to determine what is most important and eliminating everything else. Many entrepreneurs started their businesses by living below their means, some were even homeless and slept in their cars, but that is how they eventually became successful. They understood the importance of sacrifice which allowed them to achieve their goals.

A simpler model of the Voluntary Simplicity Movement is to buy used versus new or recycle used goods. A great website that follows this principle is [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org). This is a network of consumers across the country that borrow used goods for free. You subscribe to your specific area and look for ads that you are interested in such as a tv, telephone, etc. You respond to the ad, the item is left at the owner's front porch and you go pick it up free and clear. You just saved yourself hundreds of dollars.

It takes a lot of hard work to get out of debt. Here are five ways to get out of debt.

1. Pay in full. Pay the balance in full each month prior to the due date or as soon as you receive the bill which helps to avoid paying finance charges. Beware of companies who may move your due date around to prevent you from paying your bill on time in hopes of being able to charge a late fee. Contact the company if you are a victim of this and tell them you want a set payment date. If they refuse tell them you want to close your account and give your business to another company. However, be sure the account that you close is two years old or less or has a low limit of \$1,000 or less, because closing an active account in good standing can lower your credit score.
2. Pay more than once. Many consumers do not realize that they can send in payments for their debts multiple times a month. You can pay half of the bill balance with the first paycheck of the month then pay the remaining balance with second paycheck of the month. Pay weekly instead of



The bailout has changed the guidelines for credit approval and the way consumers are treated. Many companies have started to close credit card accounts or reduce limits because consumers who frequently used their credit cards or maxed them out are now seen as a risk. If your credit card balance is 30% above the credit limit your account may be closed or the limit may be reduced by as much as 50%. For example, if you have a credit card with a limit of \$5,000 and a balance of \$2,500, your limit may be reduced to \$2,500 (still with a balance of \$2,500), now your credit card is maxed out, your credit score is lowered, and you are now seen as a high risk consumer. This will also decrease your chances of getting approved for a new credit card, refinancing or a new loan.

If you owe debt and have the money to pay it off, do so. It will maintain your relationship with your creditors, stop those harassing calls, increase your credit score and reduce stress caused by your financial problems.

The first step in getting out of debt is admitting that you have a problem. Next, you have to be committed to getting out of debt, just like you are committed to going to the gym or going to work. Now is a great time to negotiate with creditors to pay back delinquent debt.

To pay back debt, and stay out of debt in the future, you have to change the way you think about money. Money is a tool that can either be used to generate debt or to generate wealth. You have to know how to play to stay in the game. There are several ways to get into debt, and just as many to stay out of debt. You can think outside the box and think of creative and unique ways, or play it safe and follow the basic rules for getting out of debt.

Thinking out of the box will require great commitment, determination and sacrifice. One way to think outside the box to get out of debt and stay out of debt is to follow the Voluntary Simplicity Movement, which states that you don't buy anything new other than basic necessities such as food and clothing. Shelter is a basic necessity but doesn't mean you should buy a home you really can't

*Carol thanks Steve Ely and Annette Walden for allowing her to quote them in this article.*

*Annette Walden is a Marketing Solutions Consultant specializing in helping businesses build relationships with prospects and existing clients. She retired after a 20-year career with HP and now has her own business, Painted Lady Enterprises, specializing in greeting cards, gifts, imprinted specialty promotional products, apparel, and business resources.*

*Annette served as President of Women in Networking in 2001 and is an ambassador of the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Gainesville, GA, chapter of Business Networking International and the Lake Lanier Charter Chapter of American Business Women's Association, as well a licensee for the Joy of Connecting in Cumming, GA.*

**CPI of Atlanta proudly salutes:**

**Rhonda McKinney, MPCE**

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and

**Michele Rocher, MPCE**

District III & IV President



**"IT'S ALL ABOUT TIME"**

Train, Involve, Motivate, Educate

## AUDIT SURVIVAL AND WHERE TO HIDE THE BODIES



*by Carla Kay Barnes, CCCE*

I am a firm believer of doing things the right way the first time. I detest “do-overs.” But, I can honestly tell you that, having just gone through (and barely surviving) a recent internal credit and risk management audit at my bank branch, I think I either need to be retrained or just put out to pasture!

I feel mentally poked, prodded and scrutinized—to the point of thinking that a prerequisite of becoming a credit examiner or auditor is studying a type of brain proctology.

**Dr. Phil:** “Carla Kay, what were you thinking?!”

**Carla Kay:** “Oh, Dr. Phil, I took so much for granted!”

**Dr. Phil:** “Well, tell me Carla, why would you assume (there’s a word I will revisit!) that your files would just take care of themselves without performing some little audit checks of your own?”

## GET OUT OF DEBT, STAY OUT OF DEBT, AND INCREASE YOUR CREDIT SCORES



*by Harrine Freeman*

The recession has a widespread impact on Americans and other countries. Many Americans have lost their jobs, lost their homes, cars, retirement and savings trying to maintain their lifestyle or to just survive one day to the next. Many Americans have still not changed their financial behavior in light of the recession. Others are hoping that a burst of money will fall down on them and “poof” their financial situation will improve, while others try to hide under a rock and hope that their bills and debts will eventually go away. They don’t!

Many people are allowing fear to cause them to make hasty decisions. Don’t let fear cause you to make a decision you will regret in the future. During financial crises, scams, identity theft and other financial schemes increase. If something sounds too good to be true or requires you to pay money to receive a service that usually is free—don’t pay for it.

Prior to forming **Screening For Profit** in June 1997, he was a partner in **Media Advertising Network**, commonly known as **MADNET**. He also was Vice President of Operations for **Media Advertising Credit Services, Incorporated**. **Media Advertising Credit Services (MACS)** was a wholly owned subsidiary of the **International Newspaper Financial Executives (INFE)**, an association dedicated to the advancement of financial excellence in the newspaper industry.

Over the past three decades, Gary has held positions in credit management with the **Hearst Corporation**, **Fairchild Publications**, a division of **Capital Cities/ABC and Cablevision**. Besides the day-to-day responsibilities with those media corporations, he has been involved with many trade associations in media credit management including the **Media Credit Association**; **New York Credit and Financial Management Association**; **Alliance Against Fraud in Telemarketing and Electronic Commerce** and the **Advertising Media Credit Executives Association**.

He has authored numerous industry-related articles, lectured

*Carla Kay: “Well, Dr. Phil, I just thought that because the customer was paying as scheduled, I shouldn’t have to spend time on the file. If it’s not broke, why fix it?” (alligator tears are now present.)*

*Dr. Phil: “So, Carla Kay, how’s that workin’ for ya?”*

It’s not—and it didn’t!

And what have we learned from this audit? There is no getting around the fact that we do assume too many things about our due diligence in the world of credit. I was way too lax in taking time to really audit my own files with an established compliant-driven checklist. I lost focus and did not make time to practice the skills I have known—and even taught—for the many years in my career as a credit professional.

So I will pass on ten of my thoughts as to what must be practiced on a regular basis, whether you work in a bank, a medical office (very highly audited for documentary compliance), or in any business where you are entrusted with customer information and answer to some type of regulatory enforcement. Please know that this is mostly directed toward financial institutions but much of it can apply to other entities.

1. Document everything. Six months from now, chances are that you will not remember a specific transaction. Keep notes on each contact, phone conversation or appointment with your client, patient or customer.
2. Keep your files in order as prescribed by your policy and procedures and “be consistent!”
3. Set up and use ‘tickler’ systems—especially in banking—to update financial reporting, recording and filing deadlines, and any forthcoming changes in terms or conditions of your credit. TICKLER REMINDERS ARE OUR FRIENDS.
4. Keep accurate and hard supportive documentation of your credit investigations and research on your clients. For

- example: pre-loan UCC, business registrations, and any other online or data based searches and results.
5. Refer to your company's Policies and Procedures Manual frequently to insure that you are in compliance as prescribed—did I mention to “**be consistent**”?
  6. Make sure all documentation is properly completed, dated and signed. All incoming correspondence and financial documentation needs to be date-stamped and initialed. Be mindful of date/time sensitive material. **Use your tickler system!**
  7. Do not assume anything! Take time to research the procedure and act accordingly. Ask questions. There is no such thing as a dumb question if you need direction. If Moses had asked directions—well, you know the story.
  8. Time is a precious commodity. Use it wisely and do not procrastinate. That task will still be there tomorrow—staring you down.
  9. Communicate with other staff members that may be involved with your client. *Refer to #1—document and relay the information.* You don't want to call a client for a past due payment if the client called a loan support staff member earlier in the day to say, “the check is on its way.”—Hello, right hand, please converse with your left hand.
  10. Learn something new every day. Don't take things personally. Don't let anyone break your stride.

During our credit exam, I was very fortunate to be able to contact our internal credit examination department regularly to ask questions and to get feedback on specific issues. The credit examiners were very helpful, and genuinely eager to make sure I understood the information provided and the whys and wherefores of the issues at hand. I began to think that I might like to work in such a capacity. I've been in credit for 33 years (I started when I was 6 years old--☺) and maybe I could “test the waters”. So I asked our audit Department Manager what he looks for in a prospective hire as a credit examiner or auditor. And he sanctioned the following:

Maintain an adherence to your written credit policy. If you don't have one, write one and get it approved by the highest levels of management and don't deviate. Within your credit policy should be a short section on extraordinary economic conditions so you have some flexibility that applies to your company and your industry. Every industry has its own credit nuances, terms and conditions. One size is not intended to fit all. Not all credit practices will work across the board. That doesn't mean the fundamentals of credit management should be stretched to the limit of being unrecognizable. The idea is to be cautious, not wimpish.

Many factors are involved in the decision to be generous extending credit as the economy stirs from a recession. Your own company may have slow moving or excess inventory. Allow sales to find a way to get rid of it. In advertising credit, it may be that the inventory is selling one more ad page than your competition. Even if payment is not received for one page, if the publication is the leader in ad pages, it may bring in five more solid gold advertisers.

### **Always Be Prepared**

The companies and individuals that make it through this recession relatively unscathed will be those that were prudent before the recession hit. They had little, or at least, manageable debt. They were competitive within their industry. Even as this recession recedes, another is already in motion, hopefully many years down the road. Be ready to greet it and survive it.

### ***About the author:***

*Gary is the owner of **Screening For Profit**, located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. **Screening For Profit** is a pro active credit reporting and fraud investigating agency for the media. He has been in the field of credit and collections for 34 years. Thirty of those years have been in media advertising. For the past dozen, he has operated **Screening For Profit**.*

Banks put the kibosh on lending. Many of the new entities began without the help of banks; rather many of the start-ups got their financing from personal savings and loans from friends and family. Because a bank isn't involved in a start up doesn't mean commercial credit should automatically be denied.

The recession will turn the corner when lending sources, including the banking industry, return the flow of cash to businesses again. During difficult economic times, decreased demand and unstable commodity prices force companies to cut costs and only spend when necessary. Unfortunately that often means slowing payments to vendors and suppliers. Balance sheets during this recession turned negative so dramatically that some companies posted positive quarterly figures but became lost causes by the time their next quarterly figures were released. Ratio analysis based on past figures doesn't help much during a downturn of this nature.

What should be learned is to stop giving out easy credit but don't stop extending credit. Ease the Bad Debt ratio a bit and expect an acceleration of DSO. On the other hand, resist the temptation to ship and collect for the sake of sales without understanding how far you can go before your company becomes in peril itself. Many companies loaded up on too much debt while equity companies and lending institutions were falling over each other to lend or buy an interest. Over-leveraged companies are the ones in trouble or are already history. Companies with clean balance sheets, low debt, and good cash flow and cash reserves are the ones likely to ride out the storm. The principals established by commercial credit organizations like CPI and NACM are the ones to look to in the immediate aftermath of the current financial downturn.

## Credit Policy Rules

- Significant experience in the credit field. Check!
- Positive attitude with excellent "people skills". Check!
- Good listening skills and communication (verbal and written) skills. Check!
- Must be mature/level headed—"this work is not for the faint of heart". Check!
- Must be detail oriented and flexible. Check!
- Must be proactive, not reactive. *Well, I am working on that reactionary stuff.*
- Wants to do the right thing and wants to assist others. Check!
- Positive influence. *Right up my alley!* Check!

I could do this—but I am not sure I would do this. Not only is it a little late in the game to think about changing the playing field, but I rather like being where I am. I've learned a great deal from my friends in the credit examiners department, and I am still a work in progress. For the most part, we share (I hope) a mutual respect and confidence in one another. None of us became who we are without education, hard work, mishaps and constructive criticism—and we will not continue in our journeys with out more of the same.

Kudos and many thanks to my audit department buddies at PremierWest Bank—and let us not leave out all the compliance gurus who keep us all in line. They have an immense responsibility as well.

I wish you well in your next audit and hope you can build a positive rapport with those that proceed to poke and prod you into delirium. It only hurts for a little while, until you realize there are really no bodies hidden anywhere.

**Never let 'em see you sweat!**

*About the Author:*

*Carla K. Barnes, CCCE, is a member of CPI Pendleton, Oregon, and has been a very active and supportive member of District X CPI since 1978, making life-long friends in the organization—including LaFrance Grubbs, CCCE, who is her most cherished mentor and dear friend of 33 years.*

*Carla Kay began her credit career in 1977, as a collector for CBI Collections in Bend, Oregon. In 1983 she took a management position in Hermiston, Oregon, for another collection agency, and three years later, she met and married her ‘forever-after Prince’, David.*

*Carla began her banking career in 1990, with Baker Boyer Bank of Commerce in eastern Oregon. In 1998, she and David moved to Bend, where she continued her career with Columbia River Bank for over five years. In 2004, she accepted a job as credit coordinator of a 6-store locally-owned lumber company in Central Oregon, then joined the staff at PremierWest Bank, where she is currently employed.*

*Carla and Dave purchased and remodeled her parents’ old farmhouse in Redmond in 1998, where they now live with their four furry friends. They look forward to the spring and summer months for entertaining out of town guests in their home.*

*“We adore company—everyone who visits, always returns—and we love it!”*

regulation or not enough—but that they lowered standards is the way it was.

More people got loans to purchase homes. More businesses found seed capital and loan availability easy pickings. Equity funds financed buying businesses in all industries through debt. We became a bubble economy. There was the dot com bubble. It burst. There was the real estate bubble. It burst. There was a continuous stock market bubble. It burst. Assets became overvalued. There was too much money chasing too few assets. We entered the world of what former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan termed “irrational exuberance.” He made the comment on December 5, 1996. Although we experienced a minor recession in 2000, the full effect of his statement did not hit our economy between the eyes until 11 years later.

## **Lessons Learned**

Recessions come and go in cycles and monetary behavioral patterns ignore the lessons learned from one economic downturn to another. Eventually liquidity will return, but to a business landscape which has been altered. Recognizable names and some industry icons will have disappeared; others will have been transformed. New businesses will rise from the rubble and will need nurturing to grow. Many of today’s powerhouse businesses, technologies and brand names started during a deep recession or depression. Consider FedEx, launched in 1973 as jet fuel prices were hitting stratospheric levels. Then there is Microsoft, launched in 1975. Time Inc. introduced People magazine in 1974. During the Great Depression, Time Inc. introduced Fortune. During the ‘70s recession, Proctor & Gamble rolled out Pringles, expanded Bounce and introduced Era Detergent. Leisure suits became the rage and an ad executive imported 24 tons of rocks from Mexico, invented and peddled the Pet Rock. He became a millionaire. Hyatt Corporation launched its first hotel in 1957, during Eisenhower’s recession. General Electric started during the panic of 1873. There are 30 companies that make up the Dow Jones Industrial Index. Of them, 18 were launched during tough economic times including Johnson & Johnson, Caterpillar, Compaq (now owned by Hewlett Packard), and Walt Disney.

remains the same is the measurement of the economy. This is called the gross domestic product (GDP). It measures the market value of all final goods and services produced in this country. It is measured quarterly on a percentage basis. If the percentage increases, the economy is growing. If it decreases, the economy is shrinking. A recession is determined when real growth in the economy is negative for two or more quarters. That means you have been extending credit for half a year before you know you are in a recession. To come out of a recession, all that needs to happen is to have one quarter of economic growth.

A depression is when there is a sustained downturn in the economy. It is not part of the normal economic cycle, of which a recession is a part. A depression is characterized by abnormal increases in unemployment, restriction of credit, shrinking output and investment, numerous bankruptcies, reduced amounts of trade and commerce as well as highly volatile relative currency value fluctuations, mostly devaluations. Price deflation or hyperinflation may occur. There is no defined moment when a recession becomes a depression but many economists consider a 10% drop in GDP as the moment it is safe to say the economy has moved from a recession to a depression.

Whether the economy is emerging from a recession or a depression, there is a new economic landscape waiting for the credit manager to traverse.

### **Forever Blowing Bubbles**

There is no single trigger for a recession and quite frankly the United States economy has been resilient enough under both Democratic and Republican administrations to forestall the one we are currently experiencing. Our current financial predicament goes back to the boom 1990s. The banks lowered credit standards for getting a loan. You can argue why they did—government pressure, unbridled greed, too much

## **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT WASTE REDUCTION**



*By Stewart M. Espey*

My goal in writing this article is to provide facts and figures as to why it is important and how to reduce waste. We will review storm water pollution, air pollution and waste reduction. Many of the examples are specific to North Carolina and Mecklenburg County, but are provided as examples of programs which may exist in other local areas.

However, I would like to begin with the contention that God expects His people to, and will hold His people accountable if we do not, wisely use the resources He so lovingly provides for us. By reducing, reusing, and recycling waste, the children of God can demonstrate our love for Him and our obedience.

In Genesis, the Bible tells us that God gave Man the Earth so that Man might provide for his needs. God blessed Man and said: “fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Also, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the

whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. AND IT WAS SO.”

Proverbs 13:22a states that “A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children...” God expects his followers to be responsible for all the resources He provides and we are to ensure that there is an inheritance for our children.

And finally, in Matthew 24: 14-30, God says “well done my good and faithful servant, you have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.” To the man who does not use gifts wisely God says “... you wicked, lazy servant! For everyone who has will be given more and he will have abundance. Who ever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” God rewards men and women that wisely use the gifts He provides.

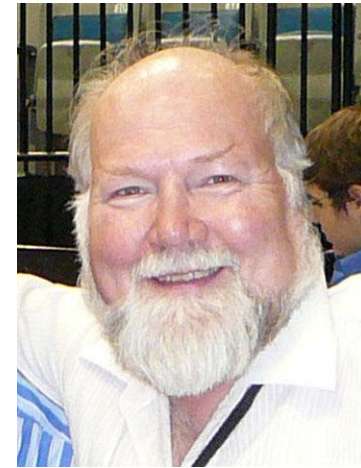
Based on these passages I propose that by reusing, reducing, and recycling waste, we honor our Lord God.

### **Storm Water Pollution**

With this in mind let me say a few words about “Rain Water”. Not too many years ago a new major source of urban pollution was identified—Storm Water Runoff. Rainwater drains straight into our creeks, streams, rivers and lakes unintentionally picking up urban contaminants along the way.

Examples of pollution unintentionally introduced to storm water are: yard waste (sticks, leaves, and grass clippings), yard fertilizers (have you ever noticed all the dead insects after a yard is treated, especially worms), pet waste (for example, in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, more than 158,000 dogs produce more than 52,000 lbs. of waste per day—this is a lot of bacterial contamination which streams are asked to absorb), automobile fluids (oil, grease, & engine fluids) and other contaminants.

## **GRANTING CREDIT WHILE EMERGING FROM A RECESSION**



*by Gary H. Bügge*

By the time this article is published, the American economy will be emerging from a recession or hopefully will have turned the corner to emerge from a pretty bad recession. Regardless, recessions don’t last forever and historically this one should be on its last legs. When an economy works its way to more boom than bust, certain things happen. Growth slowly begins. Housing starts and industrial production increase. Inflation remains under control. Interest rates, both long-term and short-term stabilize.

The economy has a way of cycling up and down. It doesn’t matter which political party is in power or whether it leans to the left or to the right. This is the nature of a free market economy. So long as one exists, this is the way it will be, so understanding what to expect as the recession recedes allows the credit manager to make creditworthy decisions to match the economic times.

Each recession is different because the conditions differ. What



*the Snows in Belleville, Illinois, and serve in third world countries. Her service to the Oblates includes authoring the prayer book, "Share the Healing and the Hope," and editing an autobiography written by a Polish Oblate priest imprisoned in a WWII German concentration camp. She also edited the inspirational autobiography of a successful Illinois businessman.*

*Charlotte's writing has appeared in numerous publications including Catholic Digest; The Liguorian; St. Anthony's Messenger; Living Faith, a daily meditation booklet; and Oblate Magazine, published by the Missionary Oblates of Mary. She was the first woman to serve on the editorial board of the St. Louis Review, the official newspaper of the St. Louis Archdiocese, a position she held for 15 years.*

*Charlotte has earned awards for her work, including a national Bulldog Reporter Silver Award for Excellence in Media Relations and a Catholic Press Association award for best editorial on a national or international issue.*

*Charlotte is a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and makes her home in Kirkwood, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis.*

Examples of pollution intentionally introduced to storm water are used oil, paint, car wash residue and other chemicals. So what can be done to protect our water?

- Yard Waste: 1) Start a composting bin and make a useful garden product, 2) Take the material to the curb and schedule Bulk Collection.
- Yard Fertilizers: 1) Use an environmentally friendly product, 2) Reduce the amount of material applied, 3) Do not over spray or allow it to be sprayed on impervious surfaces.
- Pet Waste: Scoop the poop. Place it in a plastic bag, place the contaminated bag into the garbage where it will go into a lined secure Municipal Solid Waste landfill. Here the waste will turn into useable METHANE GAS (new energy source). Don't forget—wash your hands afterwards.
- Automobile Fluids: Keeping your car well maintained will reduce the discharge of fluids.
- Other contaminants: Never use dumping as an option.

If you have additional questions concerning Storm Water Contamination you may check the webpage [www.stormwater.charmeck.org](http://www.stormwater.charmeck.org).

## **Air Pollution**

The average person takes 20,000 breaths, and breathes 3,000 gallons of air, every day. A child breathes more than 30,000 times every day. Poor air quality can hurt you and your family. The good news is that you can take action to protect your health on days when pollution levels are high.

Air pollution irritates the lungs and respiratory system, and can affect your breathing in mild to serious ways. Air pollution can make asthma worse or even trigger asthma attacks. Studies have linked air pollution to the development of asthma in some people. Even healthy people without asthma can have trouble taking deep breaths on "bad air" days, and can experience damage to lung

tissues. Repeated damage from air pollution, especially during childhood, can reduce lung function permanently.

Particle pollution, a type of air pollution, has also been linked to serious cardiac problems including arrhythmias, and even heart attacks. But we know that having cleaner air is achievable if we follow some simple rules:

- **Drive Less, Smarter, Cleaner** Ride transit, carpool, vanpool, bike, or walk to destinations. Sign up at [www.sharetheridenc.org](http://www.sharetheridenc.org) or similar sites to find a rideshare partner. Reduce emissions while driving by trip-chaining (combining errands). Keep your car tuned and tires properly inflated. Avoid idling. Park and walk into restaurants and banks instead of using the drive-thru. Delay refueling vehicles and equipment until after 6:00 PM on Air Quality Action Days. Bring your lunch to work or school, or walk to lunch on Air Quality Action days. Opt for conference calls rather than driving to meetings. When buying a new or used vehicle, include air quality in your priorities. (Log on to [www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/](http://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/) and make a cleaner choice.)
- **Use Electric or Human-powered Lawn Equipment** Off-road engines, like lawnmowers, are major sources of air pollution. Therefore, use electric or hand-powered lawn equipment whenever possible. Use gas-powered lawn equipment after 6:00 PM on Air Quality Action Days. Consider replacing some, or all, of your turf-grass lawn with low maintenance ground cover like shrubs and flowers.
- **Conserve Energy** Turn off lights and electronic equipment when not in use. Enable power/energy-saving modes on computers and other equipment. Increase your summertime thermostat setting and use ceiling fans to circulate the air. Replace incandescent bulbs in your home and office with compact florescent light bulbs. Purchase products and appliances that are EnergyStar certified.

and Internet safety. It also has a searchable library that includes computer, Internet and Internet safety-related material. Visit [www.NetSmartz411.org](http://www.NetSmartz411.org)

- **4NetSafety™**: This program helps young teens better understand the Internet's safety risks and educates parents, teachers, and others about the power of the Internet. It covers topics such as social networking and cyberbullying. Visit [www.NSTeens.org](http://www.NSTeens.org)
- **“Take 25”**: This national public awareness campaign encourages families to take 25 minutes to talk with their children about safety and abduction prevention. Its website provides 25 safety tips and other information for parents, educators and the public. The number “25” relates to May 25, which is the annual celebration date for National Missing Children's Day. Visit [www.Take25.org](http://www.Take25.org) or [www.Toma25.org](http://www.Toma25.org) in Spanish.

### Looking Ahead

After 20 years of Walk-A-Thons, it is time for CPI members to soak their feet and invest in some sturdy new walking shoes. The tasks of educating consumers about credit and child safety are ongoing. One effort helps save children's lives by fighting predators. The other helps secure the futures of individuals and families by teaching them sound money management.

### About the author:

*Charlotte Rancilio is the owner of Communications Rx, a free-lance writing, marketing, and public relations consulting firm. Her professional experience includes 40 years of serving the non-profit and corporate sectors, including 30 years directing public and media relations for the American Optometric Association.*

*Charlotte's clients include Credit Professionals International, where she manages the corporate office; the Self-Help Center in Kirkwood, Missouri; and the Missionary Oblates of Mary, an order of Catholic priests who operate the Shrine of Our Lady of*

as appearing to contain sexually abusive images of children. The ESPs sign a Memorandum of Understanding and agree to block or remove those websites from their servers.

- **HASH Value Project:** Every digital image has a digital fingerprint or “hash value” that is a unique identifier to that image. This project enables NCMEC to identify illegal child pornography images and create a database of these hash values, which is then used by ESPs to remove images from their servers.

### **Beyond Walking—More Ways To Support NCMEC**

In addition to Walk-A-Thon fundraising efforts, CPI members can support NCMEC by distributing its educational materials and spreading the word about its educational programs available on the Internet. This can be done easily at Walk-A-Thons and can also be incorporated into other CPI-sponsored activities during Credit Education Month each March and at Make a Difference Day projects on the last Saturday each October.

Here is a look at what is available. Information on all of these publications and programs can be found at [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com). Additional websites are given for some.

- **Publications:** NCMEC publishes a wide variety of educational materials in English and Spanish on child safety. Some are also available in other languages. The complete list, along with information on how to obtain copies or reprint them, can be found at [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)
- **NetSmartz® Workshop:** This free, interactive, online educational resource uses age-appropriate activities to provide children with the information they need to make smarter and safer online choices. NCMEC created this program in partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Its animated spokesperson, Clicky, is hugely popular with children. Visit [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org)
- **NetSmartz411™:** This website enables experts to respond directly to specific questions about the Internet

- **Most importantly** Be aware of the Air Quality Forecast and Air Quality Index. Know when there is an “Air Quality Action Day.” Please remember, small actions add up to cleaner air.

### **Waste Reduction**

I will begin the discussion of Waste Reduction by explaining “**Man’s Ecological Footprint**”. FACT—People must consume to survive. People must generate waste to survive. The more a person consumes and creates wastes the greater the impact on the ecosystem. The ecological footprint measures the amount of land and sea required for the Earth to provide the needs and wants of an individual **and** to absorb and render harmless the corresponding waste. As of 1999, the Earth’s population was (6) billion people. Based on this figure, the global average acreage available per person is 4.4 global acres. As of right now, the average person is using 5.4 global acres to provide their needs and absorb their waste. The biological capacity of the Earth is being exceeded. By the way, the average U.S. citizen uses 24 global acres to support their consumption. The Earth is in and has been in a deficit for some time.

That is why we **NEED** to take action. This is why we **MUST** take action.

Let me enlighten you on a few **benefits** that can be obtained by recycling a simple item like paper.

Recycling 1 ton of paper saves:

- 17 trees;
- 2 barrels of oil;
- 4,100 Kilowatts of energy (Enough power for the average home for 6 months);
- 3.2 cubic yards of landfill space;
- 60 pounds of air pollution.

Several Recycling Facts Pertaining to the United States of America:

- 1) Americans throw away enough aluminum in one year to rebuild our entire commercial fleet of airplanes every 3 months.
- 2) About 80% of what Americans throw away is recyclable. Yet, we only recycle about 28% of what we throw away.
- 3) Recycling glass reduces mining wastes by 75% and air pollution by 20%.
- 4) The United States of America has 5% of the world's population but uses 25% of its natural resources.

## Government Action

Do you know what action has been taken by our government to encourage recycling? Let me inform you. Currently, the Federal Government has established no recycling laws/regulations. They encourage the reduction of waste. But it is not mandatory.

The State of North Carolina has passed three bills affecting waste. The first is **General Statute 130A-309.10(f)**, which states that it is illegal to “knowingly” throw away: used oil, yard trash, white goods, antifreeze, aluminum cans, whole scrap tires, lead-acid batteries, motor vehicle oil filters, recyclable rigid plastic containers (except containers having held motor oil), wooden pallets and oyster shells. However, are there teeth to this law? Have you ever heard of a State inspector fining a landfill for accepting contaminated loads? Have you ever heard of a landfill rejecting a load due to contamination? Is the statute promoted?

The second bill is the **ABC Mandatory recycling law**. This statewide law applies to ABC permit holders. If alcohol is consumed on site, the business must recycle ALL beverage containers. However, once again, are there teeth to this law?

The third law of consequence is **Senate Bill “S 1592”**, with a House Bill Revision entitled “H 819”. Currently, it is lawful to send e-waste to a permitted Subtitled III landfill. However, that

battle against these forces. Here are some of the actions NCMEC is taking in this area.

- **CyberTipline:** This program has been mandated by the U.S. Congress to be the 9-1-1 for the Internet and serve as the national reporting mechanism for incidents of child sexual exploitation. Anyone can use it to make a report online at [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) or by calling 1-800-843-5678. Reports come from the public and U.S.-based Electronic Service Providers (ESPs). Child pornography represents 89 percent of the total leads received.
- **Child Victim Identification Program<sup>®</sup>:** Analysts using sophisticated technology and tools have analyzed more than 11 million images and videos in an effort to locate victims of child pornography. They work with law enforcement around the world to find and rescue these children.
- **Background Check Unit:** helps child-serving nonprofit organizations assess the suitability of potential volunteers to work with children. The Unit searches FBI records using criteria established in collaboration with Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the National Mentoring Partnership, and the National Council of Youth Sports.
- **Innocence Lost National Initiative:** a joint initiative between NCMEC, the FBI, and the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the U.S. Department of Justice that addresses the problem of child trafficking and prostitution in the U.S.
- **Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography:** Established to eradicate the profitability of commercial child pornography, it consists of 30 leading financial and Internet companies, representing nearly 90 percent of the U.S. payments industry. This collaboration has greatly disrupted the use of credit cards for purchasing online child pornography and is working to identify and attack new methods of payment.
- **URL Project:** a voluntary effort between NCMEC and ESPs to fight online child pornography. Participants download a list of active websites identified by NCMEC

## Reuniting Families—NCMEC’s Core Mission

Currently, the most widely recognized NCMEC program is probably AMBER Alerts, which provides an early warning system to help find abducted children. Begun in 2003, this program was expanded in 2007, when 31 wireless carriers, MySpace and airports agreed to distribute AMBER Alerts. This and other programs focused on reuniting families have enabled NCMEC to raise its recovery rate from 62 percent in 1990 to 96 percent in 2007.

Those other programs include:

- **The NCMEC Call Center** (1-800-THE-LOST<sup>®</sup>; 1-800-843-5678): receives some 300 calls a day related to missing children;
- **The NCMEC website** (www.missingkids.com): where sightings of a missing child can be reported and, through the new “Push to Call” feature, the reporting person can talk directly with a Call Center specialist;
- **Team Adam**: a program of specially trained, retired law-enforcement professionals who are sent to the site of the most serious child abductions;
- **Project ALERT**: a nationwide program of volunteers made up of more than 155 retired local, state, and federal law-enforcement officers who provide their skills and services to local law enforcement to help resolve long-term, missing-child cases;
- **LOCATOR<sup>™</sup>**: a Web-based poster-creation program that provides law-enforcement agencies with the ability to quickly create and distribute their own posters of missing children, missing adults, AMBER Alerts, and others. LOCATOR<sup>™</sup> Webmail enables law-enforcement agencies to communicate directly with all other LOCATOR<sup>™</sup> users nationwide.

## NCMEC Fights the Sexual Exploitation of Children

While the Internet has, on one hand, become an asset in finding missing children, it has, on the other, become a wide avenue for the exploitation of children. NCMEC is in the forefront of the

will soon change. Bill “S 1592”, referred to as the “Computer & Television Recycling Legislation”, states computer manufacturers are required to adopt producer responsibility plans for the recovery of discarded computer equipment. Under this section, manufacturers will need to register with the state and then implement services that provide free transportation and processing of discarded equipment from collectors, which can include local governments, nonprofits and retailers. H819 provides for the management of discarded televisions in addition to computer equipment. The law calls for a landfill ban for televisions effective January 01, 2011, and a landfill ban for computer equipment effective January 01, 2012.

Please know that the State has not left its citizens and businesses completely in the cold. The State of North Carolina has also established the North Carolina Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance program. For information you may look on the web at [www.p2pays.org](http://www.p2pays.org).

What about Business Recycling and Waste Reduction in Mecklenburg County? Did you know that the recycling of cardboard and paper is the law for a lot of businesses in Mecklenburg County? The law is the “Source Separation Ordinance”. This is a countywide ordinance that applies to all business entities, including property managers, churches, schools, etc. that “contract” for 16 cubic yards or more of garbage service per week. The business contracting for garbage service must provide for the recycling of corrugated cardboard and office paper. In addition to recycling, the program must ensure employees, guests and tenants are made aware that recycling is available to them. Businesses for which the Ordinance does not apply are invited to sponsor a Commercial Recycling Center or use any Mecklenburg County Recycling Center at their leisure. For additional information refer to [www.WipeOutWaste.com](http://www.WipeOutWaste.com).

In Mecklenburg County, for information on programs and services designed to assist businesses in understanding and/or complying with the regulations or for companies that

voluntarily desire to reduce waste and recycle, visit Mecklenburg County's Solid Waste & Recycling website [www.WipeOutWaste.com](http://www.WipeOutWaste.com).

Also, Mecklenburg County has initiated a new training program entitled **Waste Reduction 101**. This program investigates: if Reducing, Reusing, Recycling waste is important; what Federal, State and local law(s) apply to waste reduction; and, most importantly, educates businesses on how to start and conduct a successful Waste Reduction Team.

In closing, let me quote one of our great American Presidents, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt—"The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life." Please let us all be responsible! Let's begin to use the resources provided us with wisdom.

#### ***About the Author:***

#### ***Stewart M. Espey***

*Stewart M. Espey has been in the environmental sector in some shape or form for 30 years.*

*After graduating from Rome, Georgia's Shorter College with a B.S. in History & Political Science in 1977, he worked in a small chemical plant, The Ora Corporation, in Ora, SC, doing odd jobs trying to "find my place in life".*

*He started at the facility doing general maintenance work. But, because he was willing to listen, learn AND put into practice what he learned, within the first year, he worked in almost every department within the plant, including purchasing, transportation, laboratory Quality & Assurance, Chemical Operations, high PSI chemical reactors, and finally, with the*

printed on advertising fliers, and reprinted in large-circulation magazines and newsletters.

So, in addition to its monetary donation, the Foundation signed on to participate in the NCMEC photo program. Even 20 years later, it continues to publish photos of missing children in two issues (May and November) of *The Credit Connection* quarterly newsletter.

Although the photo distribution program remains an integral and important part of NCMEC efforts, the organization has greatly expanded its work of serving children. Its mission statement offers a brief summary:

"The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's® (NCMEC) mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them."

NCMEC is a unique organization. Established in 1984 as a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, it has, through a half-dozen federal laws, been given mandates to serve as the nation's clearinghouse for all matters concerning missing, exploited and runaway children. It receives some federal funding and is a shining example of how a private/government partnership can serve and benefit others. It does, however, rely heavily on donations from the private sector.

NCMEC continues to be identified with its programs to find missing children. Yet its efforts to end the exploitation of children are equally varied and aggressive. They address exploitation in the areas of child pornography, especially on the Internet; child trafficking; and child prostitution. Here is a brief look at some of the NCMEC programs in each of these areas, based on information from the NCMEC 2007 Annual Report.

primary fundraising event. But the Foundation's leadership had more than fundraising in mind.

They saw the Walk-A-Thon has a highly visible way to draw attention to the importance of consumer credit education and to make credit education information available to people in communities across the country. They knew that when CPI members signed up walkers and sponsors, contacted the news media, or sought permission to display posters in businesses and public places, they could also talk about credit education and distribute materials. This is what the members did, and it is what they are still doing. In addition, Walk-A-Thon start and finish points—as well as rest stops in between—became the perfect spots to set up credit education displays and materials.

As if this were not enough, the enthusiasm of those early leaders generated yet another great idea—to help others by sharing a portion of the Walk-A-Thon funds with them. They voted to:

- return 35 percent of a Walk-A-Thon's proceeds to the sponsoring local association to use for its own credit education projects;
- give 25 percent of the proceeds to another worthy organization; and
- keep 40 percent of the proceeds for Foundation programs.

After much consideration of many worthy candidates, they chose the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC), which directs 94 percent of revenue to support program services, as the organization to receive the Walk-A-Thon donation.

### **Why We Walk for NCMEC**

Only five years old at the time, NCMEC was popularly known as the organization that put the photos of missing children on milk cartons. The Corporate Photo Distribution Program, of which the milk cartons were a part, is the oldest NCMEC program and, even in its earliest days, was not limited to milk cartons. Photos were also aired on television, posted on chain store bulletin boards,

*dawning of the RCRA regulations, the plant's Chemical Waste Treatment & RCRA department.*

*His background includes being the Waste Treatment Supervisor and RCRA Coordinator for such firms as The Ora Corporation, American Hoechst, The Hoechst—Celanese Corporation, The Clariant Corporation, to name a few.*

*He has seen the thought process change from:*

- *dilution is the solution to pollution ... to*
- *dilution is not the solution to pollution ... and finally to*
- *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (If you don't generate waste, there is nothing to recycle.)*

*In 2003, he began employment with Mecklenburg County's LU-ESA—Solid Waste. He is currently employed as a Senior Environmental Specialist for Mecklenburg County's Land Use & Environmental Services Agency—Business/Commercial Recycling.*

*To-date, he considers his most important achievements in life to be his marriage of over 27 years to Brenda Rodgers Espey; their three children: Eric, Meredith, and Rachel; and, last but surely not least, their grandchildren Claire Abigail Rooke and Thomas Benjamin Rooke.*

*His most important contribution to LUESA is the development of a new class entitled Waste Reduction 101. The class is free and promotes waste reduction, obviously, and the creation of waste reduction teams. If you are interested, please contact him at (704) 432-0400.*

## YOU: THE GREATEST REINVENTION



*by Charlotte Freeman Maness, CCCE/MPCE*

Most of us are familiar with the recent account of Randy Pausch, the computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University, and his gallant fight with cancer of the liver, which finally took his life. I would imagine that you heard at least part of his Last Lecture, which professors are often asked to give. They are asked to consider their demise and to ruminate on what matters most to them. And while they do this, their audience cannot help but ask the same question of themselves.

Have you ever done this? Have you ever asked yourself the questions of what would I do if I knew that I would not live much longer, if my days were numbered, and what would I leave for my legacy?

Randy chose to give his last lecture even though he did not have to imagine what he would do. He was already aware that his life was going to be shortened with terminal cancer. His lecture was called “Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams” and it was not about dying, IT WAS ABOUT LIVING! He focused on

## THE WALK-A-THON TURNS 20



*by Charlotte Rancilio*

If the feet of the members of Credit Professionals International are sore and the soles of their shoes worn thin, it may be because they have been walking for credit education and missing kids for 20 years.

That’s right. This year—2009—marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of:

- The incorporation of the Credit Education Resources Foundation as a nonprofit organization to provide credit education to consumers and to train credit educators;
- The first Walk-A-Thon fundraisers; and
- The beginning of the Foundation’s relationship with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children<sup>®</sup>.

### **How It All Started**

The Board of Directors of Credit Professionals International conceived the idea for the Foundation in 1988 but it wasn’t until 1989 that it burst on the scene with a flurry of activity that continues today. Although the Foundation accepts donations from individuals and companies, it chose the Walk-A-Thon as its



### ***About the author:***

*Over the course of a financial services career spanning more than 15 years, Susan Franke has been employed by a variety of companies offering financial planning and income tax preparation. These included large firms such as Coopers & Lybrand (now PricewaterhouseCoopers) in Oakland, CA, and smaller employers such as Larry E. French & Associates, in Ann Arbor, MI. Prior to moving to Michigan in December of 2001, Susan worked with two CPA/CFP firms in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Her responsibilities included income tax preparation and financial planning projects for small business owners, corporate executives, and individuals.*

*Raymond James & Associates, at 350 South Main Street, in Ann Arbor, has been Susan's employer since September of 2003. Headquartered in St Petersburg, Florida, the firm encourages a comprehensive financial planning approach when working with clients. Much of Susan's work involves providing financial guidance for people whose lives are in transition—whether due to retirement, a death in the family, divorce, or job/career change.*

*Susan recently obtained her Wealth Management Specialist designation and is currently working towards achieving the Certified Financial Planner designation. She holds Series 7, Series 66 and Michigan Life, Health, and Disability insurance licenses. She can be reached at 800-338-7846.*

overcoming obstacles, enabling the dreams of others and seizing every moment!! It was a powerful message and his wife was sitting in the audience and heard this message that he ultimately was leaving for his small children.

If you have not read **“The Last Lecture”**, by Randy Pausch, YOU MUST!! It will change your life.

Many of us have seen the recent movie, **“The Bucket List”**, starring Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson. I did and it was a powerful message. I related to my minister that it could easily translate into a sermon. These guys were seriously ill and, in their creative way, composed a list of things they wanted to do before they died and they did!! There is so much more to the story and if you haven't seen the movie, PLEASE DO!! It may change your life, as well. Do you have your own bucket list?

What do this book and this movie have to do with reinventing ourselves? I think they both tell us that time is precious, we have many dreams of things we want to accomplish, we have been hesitant to step out of the box, we have been afraid of doing something different, we have always wished that we could sing, dance, write, travel, or follow a dream of a lifetime. Often, we don't even realize that we have these dreams because we fail to give ourselves permission to stretch the limits of what we can do.

One of the popular trends today is makeovers! Makeovers of individuals with hair, makeup, clothing styles and the whole look, are being done on many television programs. A very popular television program is making over houses for families, most often who have special needs. It is amazing at the makeovers that occur. We choose to makeover a room in our house, our office, our lawn, and all parts of our surroundings, but we often fail to allow a makeover of our lives.

My husband was a college professor and often was chosen to be the advisor for “undecided students” when they enrolled. He was

chosen to do this because he had a wonderful way of making both the student and the parents feel better about the fact that the student was coming to college and was undecided about a major. In other words, they were not sure what vocation or profession they wanted to choose.

This was not a problem at all as most individuals do not know what they want to do at that early age. He would advise these students and their parents that this was a good position and would allow for time to decide based on passions, courses taken, and relationships.

For those of us with children and grandchildren, we can remember how much fun they would have in playing “PRETEND”. Remember? Art Linkletter, in his interviews with children, often got interesting answers on what children wanted to be when they grew up. We often let the magic leave our lives and fail to dream of learning something different. It is never too late to learn, to explore and to find the magic back in our lives.

There are several junctions in our lives when natural reinvention can occur. When a career move occurs, a job goes away and we have to look for another, moving to a new geographical area and retirement to name a few. The workplace, for several years, has been assaulted by change, down sizing, right sizing, merging, and economic conditions. Many people have been forced to find new positions or to take early retirement. This does not have to be death in our lives. I, like most of you, have experienced most of these conditions. I can also look back at the opportunities that arose and how I would never have had them had I not been forced to change.

At retirement, we are afforded the chance to find time to do things we never had time to do before. This is a golden opportunity to peel off the layers and find our authentic self. What do you enjoy doing? What brings you joy and satisfaction? Connie Ragen Green has written a book, “*Reinventing Myself*”, that helps us

have separated from service and some have restrictive distribution options. However, most plans do allow employees who separate from service to roll their 401(k) assets to a new employer’s 401(k) plan, or retirement plan, or to roll to an IRA.

Transferring your existing 401(k) assets to a new employer’s plan may be an option. To do so, you must first meet the eligibility requirements of your new employer’s plan. Additionally, the trustee on the new plan must agree to accept your assets, which may be a concern, especially if your existing 401(k) assets include shares of employer stock. Information on other considerations involved in transferring your existing 401(k) assets to your new employer’s 401(k) plan is available from your new employer.

A direct transfer to an IRA avoids the mandatory withholding of the 20% for income tax and the 10% for the premature distribution penalty, if applicable. Your 401(k) plan trustee may simply transfer your plan assets electronically or may cut a check payable to your IRA. Once in your IRA, the assets continue to accumulate tax-deferred. One of the more attractive aspects to rolling your existing 401(k) into an IRA is increased control over the assets. Not only do you have more control over your investment options; but, you will also have more control over the timing and manner of your distributions.

Your 401(k) plan account balance represents your savings; therefore, it is important to make informed distribution decisions that will preserve your hard-earned money. To learn more about the portability of your 401(k) assets, or for more information on preserving your 401(k) assets and 401(k) retirement planning strategies based on your particular situation, please contact a Financial Advisor for a complimentary consultation.

your existing 401(k) funds, you should think carefully before prematurely taking money from your retirement savings.

A hasty withdrawal decision by someone under age 55 could easily wipe out a third of your 401(k) assets. If you decide you want a lump-sum withdrawal paid directly to you, the 401(k) plan trustee must withhold 20% for federal income tax and, if you do not attain age 55 prior to the end of the year in which you separate from service, the trustee must also withhold an additional 10% premature distribution penalty. So you will receive a net payout of 70 to 80% of your existing 401(k) plan account balance. After age 55, however, the premature distribution penalty is no longer imposed if your withdrawal is prompted by your separation from service with the employer sponsoring the plan.

Of course, if you choose to take a withdrawal, you may, within 60 days of the distribution, subsequently decide to deposit it into an IRA as a qualified rollover. However, for the withdrawal and re-contribution to be a tax neutral event, you would need to deposit the gross distribution amount into the IRA, which means you need to replace the withheld monies with funds from another resource such as your personal savings.

If you can resist the urge to take a withdrawal when you change jobs, you are one step closer to making a distribution decision that will preserve your hard-earned money. To be in the best position to make an informed decision, you should consider other options available for your existing 401(k) assets, such as:

- leave your assets in the 401(k) plan;
- transfer your assets to a new employer's 401(k) or retirement plan; or
- roll your assets into an IRA.

Leaving your assets in the 401(k) plan may not be your best option. It depends on your existing 401(k) plan's provisions. Some plans have limited investment options for employees who

find our passion and live the life we have always wanted. It is suggested that we write down what we want to get from life. Has life become routine? Do we find our zest for life gone?

I have a plaque in my bathroom that I read every day. It reminds me to

**“Dance as if no one were watching,  
Sing as if no one were listening,  
Live every day as if it were your last.”**

Wow... what a philosophy!! We were all encouraged and almost programmed to do things that maybe did not turn out to be our choice. I have known children who were athletic or artistic, for instance, that were discouraged from developing those passions. There is a danger of parents choosing what THEY want for their children, rather than the passion of the child. We mean well but we often overlook that dream by labeling them. Then, as life progresses and relationships develop, we often see people drastically change their vocations, their extra curricular activities, and see happiness blossom.

In the 80's, much was written about reinventing corporations, jobs and how to accomplish this. John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene wrote *“Reinventing the Corporation”* after writing *“Megatrends”*. Now, decades later, these trends have happened, new ones have occurred and this is obsolete information written as we were preparing to go into the new information society. How much has changed since then? Have we changed with the times?

Through all of this, however, we have completely failed to grant permission to reinvent ourselves. It is time that we take control, make changes and reinvest in ourselves if we want to. Do we have a bucket list? What would we say if we were delivering a last lecture? Are we going to live out our lives with our song still in us?

I personally know several individuals who became professional musicians and one would never have imagined. I know, and I'm sure you do, people who have decided to go back to school, learn a new language, become an artist, or any number of passions.

Sharon Good, in *“Living the Creative Life”*, reminds us that reinventing ourselves can be exciting and yet scary. Some new paths may be intriguing and yet making changes can be uncomfortable. She suggests that we take it at our own pace, look where we want to go, how we will get there, do research and gather information. Be prepared to get negative feedback from family and friends.

I remember years ago when my co-workers actually told me that I was crazy to make a change and open a new office in a new location that was further from my home. That was a major milestone in my entire career and I would have missed so much if I had not made that simple move.

Be gentle with yourself. Always be willing to grow, take a new leap, dare to dream and be ready for a new adventure. Take simple steps and most of the time they will lead to bigger ones and can often be the most effective.

Back to Randy Pausch and his Last Lecture. What would you do if you had to make this list right now? What are you missing? Do you want to laugh, love and live again? Are you a butterfly bound by a cocoon? If so, it is time to set yourself free and fly.

Only I can do this for myself. I am responsible for my own happiness. Instead of making a list of where you want to be in one, five, or ten years, make a list of what you want to do NOW. Time is precious and it is the stuff that life is made of!! Don't miss out on a thing that you want to do. IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS AND THE TIME TO START IS NOW.

This means updating asset allocations and taking advantage of new investment opportunities.

Given the variety of investment choices available, there is almost no legitimate reason to have a portfolio that is not properly diversified. Buying company stock develops an ownership interest in your company that can make work financially and personally rewarding. GICs can help you balance your portfolio with a fixed-income component. However, to really minimize risk and potentially enhance returns, a diversified portfolio is recommended.

Take the time to periodically review your asset allocation decision, preferably with the help of your financial advisor. If necessary, adjust your portfolio as your long-term plans change; most plans allow you to transfer your assets to different investment classes at least once a quarter. Remember, asset allocation is the most significant tool you have of making a real difference in your portfolio's performance.

Asset allocation and diversification do not guarantee a profit or protect against a loss.

## **Changing Jobs?**

### **Don't let your 401(k) slip away.**

Today's job market is more transitory than ever. And, as more and more individuals switch jobs, they begin to wonder what they should do with the money they have accumulated in their employer-sponsored retirement plans such as their 401(k) plans. The good news for 401(k) plan participants is that your retirement plan assets are very portable so you may be able to keep your existing 401(k) plan assets in a tax-deferred environment.

The trick is to resist the urge to use the monies. After tucking money away in your 401(k) for quite some time, you may be tempted to use it to treat yourself to a new car or some other indulgence. Because it could literally take years to replace

emphasized the asset allocation decision as critical to investment selection.

Market studies published in the Financial Analysts Journal in 1986 and updated recently show that how dollars are allocated among stocks, bonds and cash equivalents is the single most important decision an investor can make. In fact, according to the studies, security selection and market timing are far less important to a portfolio's performance compared to the overall asset allocation.

Although these results have been widely publicized by the financial press and investment firms, a lot of retirement plan participants aren't taking the message to heart. Company stocks and guaranteed investment contracts (GICs) still compose a bulk of the assets in the country's defined contribution plans.

Company stock and GICs roughly constitute almost two-thirds of all retirement plan assets. Equities, the next most popular investment choice, composed less than a fifth of the portfolios. Bonds and cash equivalents represent the remainder of the assets. At first glance, one might suspect that plans are limiting the investment choices available to participants. However, this is not necessarily the case. Factors such as employee loyalty and familiarity account for the popularity of company stock.

On the other hand, GICs offer a fixed rate of return with a minimum of risk, thus making them attractive to investors who are understandably cautious about their retirement savings. However, placing too much money in GICs could limit an investor's ability to achieve higher returns available from other investments and necessary to achieve retirement goals.

Employees also tend to stay put and never transfer their balances to other investment choices within their plan, even when new investment options may be added. Retirement planning is a process that needs to be periodically reviewed.

Life is the real thing; it is not a dress rehearsal. Enjoy every moment of it.

***About the author:***

***Charlotte Freeman Maness, CCCE/MPCE***

*Charlotte 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 the most recent role, from which she retired, as Senior Manager in Human Resources at First Union National Bank (now Wachovia). 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 of Credit Professionals International and serves as a motivational speaker for many types of organizations. Charlotte was inducted into the Hall of Fame for Credit Professionals International in June, 2009.*

*Charlotte is a musician, has served as organist for Central United Methodist Church in Albemarle, N. C. for 29 years, and teaches an Adult Sunday School Class, named after her late husband, who taught the class for 20 years. She is Chairman of the Board for the Stanly County Concert Association, Past President of Albemarle Lions International, a member of Women's Mining Coalition, and owns her own businesses which include travel and human resource consulting, in addition to her speaking career.*

*Charlotte enjoys life to the fullest, has two wonderful children, Jimmy and Jeanina, and two marvelous granddaughters, Logan and Lena. She believes that life gives back as much as we give to it.*

## SAILING THE 7 C's OF COMMUNICATION



*by Susan J. Heusing, MCE*

Many years ago I wrote an article for the CPI Magazine about Sailing the Seven Seas of Communication. In the original article I paraphrased a newsletter that I had used to help me write letters, memos and even articles for CPI. Do people read what you write? If you use the 7 C's of Communication, you will always get their attention. Those 7 C's are Clear, Concise, Correct, Courteous, Candid, Complete and in good Character.

Many of us grew up in an era when a teacher assigned a paper by the number of words they expected. Wouldn't you think the subject would have been more important? Many people spend weeks and months gathering statistics and data and then throw up their hands in despair when the time comes to write a clear, organized report on their results. We can describe that as knowing WHAT but not HOW to convey the results of their work.

How can you write material that gets results? It is important to reflect that you are up-to-date but that doesn't mean you use

## HOW TO MANAGE AND MOVE YOUR 401K



*by Susan S. Franke*

*(editor's note: Like the majority of employed Americans today, you are probably saving for your retirement in a 401(k) plan. Because your future depends on this "nest egg" it is essential that you manage this and other investments effectively. Susan Franke offers some valuable advice on asset allocation within 401(k)s and on how to handle your 401(k) when you change jobs. We have combined two short articles by Susan to provide you with this useful information.)*

### **Make the Right Choice**

The rapid growth of retirement-planning options such as 401(k)s, IRAs, and variable annuities has provided an ever-increasing variety of investment choices within each plan to save for retirement years. Yet, numerous reports show that an alarming number of today's investors are oblivious to the importance of asset allocation in their retirement portfolios' performance. This is despite the fact that financial advisors and the financial press have

*Her sales and business philosophies are simple: follow up, follow through, and take time to develop the relationship along the way. Sales track records over her career consistently ranked her as either #1 or #2 in companies she has worked with. A partial list of client interactions include:*

- *Facilitating and training thousands of employees;*
- *1:1 coaching sessions;*
- *Integrating new plant manager;*
- *Strategic planning & implementation;*
- *Creation of vision, mission and values consulting to develop programs;*
- *Assisting companies ascertain their vision;*
- *Steering teams and project teams;*
- *Team cohesiveness/development;*
- *Sales and Business Development.*

*Keri's certifications for facilitation of training curriculum include courses with Wilson Learning; Allagi Learning; and Info Excellence email efficiency and productivity. She is also a Certified Ontological Coach with Newfield Network and a Licensed One Page Business Plan Consultant.*

some of the jargon we see today. Use technical terms when necessary but make sure your readers understand you.

Here are a few simple rules:

1. Keep your communication conversational. That way you will express yourself clearly. If you would not say something to a person face to face, then don't say it when writing. For example instead of saying, "*please find enclosed,*" you might use a simple term like "*after you have reviewed the attached.*" Your closing line should also be open and inviting and might say; "*if I can help, please call me.*"
2. Avoid negative words whenever possible. Using negative words can bring negative results or no results at all. Instead of using words like *misunderstanding*, try using *explains further* to clear up any problems. "*We regret we cannot help*" doesn't sound as good as "*as much as we would like to help*" if you need to tell a customer no. This is especially true in the credit and customer service industry where you often need to apologize for an error. For example, instead of saying "*we apologize for the inconvenience,* try using *your patience and courtesy are greatly appreciated while we correct...*"
3. Be concise. Give enough information to help your reader understand and react quickly, but don't be so brief you sound rude, untactful or incomplete. Write enough to generate action.
4. Try using suggestive words instead of commands. "*We must insist*" sounds like a command while using "*we are asking for your co-operation*" leaves the door open for further communication. "*You could*" sounds less demanding than "*you must.*" Instead of saying "*your letter came too late,*" you might try, "*your letter is being given our prompt attention, although it missed the deadline ...*" This is especially true when the letter is coming from the Human Resource Department where a job application was pending. Wouldn't you rather read, "*we carefully considered your application and alt-*

*hough we don't have an opening right now to fit your capabilities, your application will be kept on file."* That sounds better than "we can't use you right now" or "someone else was selected."

5. Appeal to reader's interest or be reader oriented. Use the terms you and your because people are interested in themselves. Avoid we, I, me, my and our whenever possible. Try using, "it has been a pleasure to serve you or please let us know if you need help," instead of saying, "if we can help." "Thank you for your letter" sounds so much better than "we received your letter." Take a test! Have a five-minute conversation with a friend and try to avoid the use of the pronoun "I". In 98% of the attempts the word "I" will appear. Sometimes it becomes difficult to focus on the needs of your reader because you let your own needs interfere. If you remember to help people get what they want, you will also gain their cooperation, loyalty and positive results.

In all five of the rules, the one underlying theme is "I care." Your letters or memos will show attention to the reader's needs or ideas. They will convey concern for the status of your relationship even if your message is declining accounts or asking a customer to pay a bill.

Some people write letters and memos trying to use all the new words in their vocabulary when just plain English will do. Other people write that way because they talk that way. It may seem ordinary to them but they should look at the letter from the reader's viewpoint. If your reader talks that way, too, then your memo should do fine. Talk words work best. Don't be a show off.

Leadership skills also come in handy when writing letters or memos. Leaders make sure their communications motivate, empower, or support people. Their communication is not vague about deadlines and doesn't leave the reader dangling trying to determine the intent of the writer. Leadership qualities also come into play when setting the tone of a message. Sometimes

### **About the author:**

#### **Keri Stewart**

*Since 2004, Keri's focus has resided in the Organizational Development field. This field matches her passion for helping individuals reach their potential and organizations achieve their aspirations and vision. This involves experience with public and private sector companies of all sizes and challenges. A sampling of clients that Keri has interfaced with includes Libbey Glass and Syracuse China manufacturing facilities; Lucky Friday silver mine (a unit of Hecla Corporation); Sandia National Laboratories; Lockheed Martin; Navajo Refining Company; Brandt Engineering, a Dallas based heating and air conditioning company; and a variety of government agencies including the USDA Forest Service and the Department of Energy.*

*In July 2008, Keri Stewart founded Results 4 Business, Inc., an Albuquerque based business consulting firm, fueling her passion of assisting people and companies explore and explode what they want more of.*

*Keri is an energetic and enthusiastic person with a natural gift for successful multi-tasking. With over 18 years experience in sales, marketing, and four years in organizational development, her tapestry of experience comes from working for companies like Coca-Cola, Dr Pepper of Albuquerque, Northwestern Mutual Financial Services, Prudential Overall Supply, Norrell Temporary Services, and DeLaPorte and Associates.*

*Her tenacity and astute attention to detail has produced positive effects on companies' bottom lines via generation of new business sales; growth within existing clients by demonstrating exceptional customer service; and development of their employees.*

*(more)*



- Have the authority to give something away even if there's no immediate profit.
- Smile every time you answer the phone or handle a tough customer.
- Never forgot what it is like to be the customer and always ask what makes us return.
- Approach your customers with an attitude of sincere gratitude.
- Remember your internal customers with the same verve as your external customers demand and deserve.

Customer service is similar to purchasing an insurance policy. We think we bought enough; we bought what we could afford. We may not think too much about it until there is a disaster. Then we wish we had bought more coverage initially and it is now too late.

Competition is driving a similarity in products, services, and how companies use technology. The defining difference between competitors will be the quality of the people representing those companies when they are working with the customer or prospective customers. Therefore, it makes sense to hire, train and retain the very best who will be representing your company or department to internal and external customers.

Does your customer service policy need a check-up to match the times we are living in today? What adjective do you want your customers to use to describe their experiences with your company? We have the ability to change ourselves first and then influence change within our organizations. What do you want to measure? Satisfaction? Why not aim for jubilation, elation, ecstasy or other contagious customer service adjectives and see the reaction on the faces of your customers?

the tone has a more lasting impact than the message itself. You can say the same thing in a positive manner and get better results or reactions.

“I can't get this information to you until Friday” or “I can get you the information by Friday.” Both say the information will be available on Friday, but the second sentence is positive and the first sounds negative. Which one would you use? Positive phrases get positive results.

It doesn't matter if you are sailing the seven C's of communication in verbal or written communications. Those seven words still apply. Be Clear, Complete, Concise, Correct, Courteous, use Candor and Character whenever you communicate. The big difference, of course is once spoken, words are hard to correct. Written words can be changed, re-read, spell checked, and might even be tested by reading them aloud. If they don't sound good, don't be afraid to change them. Before long you may be as good a speaker as you are a writer. You will have developed the necessary skills to move ahead faster, gain cooperation, loyalty, and build rapport with others.

Those qualities can help resolve problems, accomplish tasks, and open doors of opportunity. Happy Sailing!

***About the author:***

***Sue Heusing, MCE***

*A long time member of Credit Professionals and Creditors International, Sue Heusing, MCE, is also a member of the Society of Certified Credit Executives. A past president of the Credit Education Resource Foundation (CERF), Sue served Credit Professionals International as Chairman of several conference committees and is currently serving as Strategic Planning Chairman.*

*(more)*

*As 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. She has received the Individual Excellence in Education Award, has written several magazine articles, manual articles and installation programs for this organization. She has done workshops for both District and the International Conferences.*

*When Sue was wearing her International Credit Association hat, she served District 5 as President, as Education Chairman for many years, and as membership chairman of ICA of Greater Chicago. Sue also 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, in 2004, was honored by the Foundation as the first winner of the Helen B. Sawyers Hero Award. This award was given in memory of Helen in recognition of excellence in leadership, a tenacious spirit and a wonderful sense of humor.*

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*Credit Connection* Newsletter, page 5.**

- Employees must earn the right to do more business with customers based on their positive performance and customer service attitude.
- Paul's secret weapon is to seek to surprise the customer in a positive way. They expect to have their expectations met—so reach beyond the norm at every opportunity.
- All employees are encouraged to follow the dress code of the 'sales' team. On the front line, on the phone lines, and in any line that serves the customer. The customers do not see any difference as they interact with employees and the employees have a visual reminder that they all play a role in sales and customer retention.

Earlier in his career, Paul was a manager for a large global copier company. He insisted that his technicians dress like the sales team. No difference in appearance. Everyone sold, even the technicians, no exceptions, so dressing the part was mandatory.

If we take exceptional care of our customers, they will reciprocate with loyalty, repeat business, and enthusiastic referrals to their friends and family members. They are the best source of business development at virtually no cost to the company.

Here is a challenge to companies that want to look closer at how they could serve their customers differently. Experiment over the next 30 days to:

- Focus on even the littlest thing your customer might need—do it!
- Require a manager approval needed to say no to a customer. Empower your customer service professionals to play a more active role in providing outstanding service.
- See what happens if the first words out of everyone's mouths were "yes; let's see how we could...."
- Do what you said you would do—no exceptions, and own it if things change.
- Be present with every customer. Connect with a solid handshake, smile with your eyes or throw in something else non-tangible that could make that customer's day.

office if there were a measurement for the customer's *jubilant* about exceptional service contained in *every* employee paycheck?

Our customers regularly give us an opportunity to reach *Above and Beyond the Call of Duty*. From our first interactions with a customer to a routine communication with an established customer at the end of a transaction, or as we close the call or a face-to-face conversation—these are all opportunities to excel instead of flounder in our relationships with our customers.

Customers that reside somewhere on the satisfied scale may have their eye “always looking—just in case” they might need a back-up plan if they become dissatisfied. This is a vulnerable, unsafe position in which to keep our customers and our business.

If we cannot respond to our customers in a differentiating fashion or tempo to meet their individual needs with our *exceptional (not satisfactory) service*, they will find one of our competitors that will. They will share their good and bad experiences with others and, of course, we prefer not to be on the bad list. The bad list spreads like wildfire in the hot months of August along the dehydrated hills of California.

Paul Bruno, CEO and founder of REFocus, Inc., a performance management coach and consultant from Charlotte, North Carolina, dispenses his unique philosophies as he assists companies with sales and customer service:

- Everyone is in sales throughout every organization.
- Customer service is part of sales like everyone else. These professionals (and they should be professionals!) continually earn repeat business based on their interactions with customers. This is crucial—guess why? The returning customer is by definition a repeat sale and generally comes back only after positive experiences following the initial sale.

## “CUSTOMER SERVICE” IS OUT AND “SEEK TO SURPRISE” IS IN!



*by Keri Stewart*

Every one of us has experienced a range of customer service that slides along a slippery slope of a continuum ranging from appallingly bad to surprisingly superb. We loudly and proudly share our experiences again and again in our conversations with many others.

Statistical research reveals that happy customers will sing our praises to six people. Unhappy customers tell 10 people, with one in five really unhappy customers broadcasting to 20 people. Add the ability of broadcasting via the Internet, and literally the whole world could know of a customer service blunder—instantly. Yet a satisfied complainer will tell five people how excellent your service is if the problem is solved on the spot.

If we go back to the golden rule of “do unto others,” what do we want our customers to experience? Do we treat our customers the

way we want to be treated? Satisfactory or exceptional customer service—what does your organization offer?

A collection manager with a Credit Union in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has made dramatic changes in how she trains employees in her department. Today, her members are experiencing scenarios they never imagined before: local and national layoffs, businesses closings, and fraudulent scams perpetrated against both members and the Credit Union itself. Choices made by some members have caused financial trouble as a result of over extending themselves. The numbers are staggering; they are handling a 1500% increase in requests to skip a payment. Creativity is mandatory to address these realities.

She offers these nine customer service tips in today's market for her employees to follow:

- Spend more time on the call, don't be in a hurry.
- Listen more deeply with extra empathy.
- Position probing questions—get the whole picture—even the embarrassing parts.
- Don't take the member's anger personally.
- Collaborate creatively—there is a solution to everything.
- Global savvy is imperative for a broader awareness of potentially fraudulent scams.
- Communicate suspected scams quickly internally to appropriate departments.
- Think as a resource, not a collection phone call—what else do we know that can assist our member right now?
- Extensive follow-up—much can change in a week; therefore, re-connect regularly.

In these tumultuous times, businesses need to *focus a keen eye, ear and heart* on customer service. Do you know what kind of customer service your organization truly offers—have YOU called YOUR organization lately? What do your customers hear, learn, and experience? Have you changed your voice mail greeting lately?

Customers, clients, members or guests—many terms—we'll address these people who keep our business going as *customers* in this article to prevent clutter of terminology.

Customers are in a hurry. They are more demanding, more savvy, and have immediate access to an abundance of data via the Internet. We are living history each and every day as the world moves alarmingly faster. It is a challenge to keep up!

A financial institution in Albuquerque has placed the most commonly requested supplies for transactions in the canister at the drive-up line. No second stop or a second trip for the canister. Upon reaching for the canister, a cheerful voice and a smiling face immediately welcome you and look forward to assisting you today. With your transaction safely in hand, your name is used and you are informed of your approximate wait time before you can be on your way. They get it—customers are usually in a hurry, are impatient, and the institution responds quickly, clearly and unprompted.

In customer service, we generate surveys gathering feedback about customer *satisfaction*. With the target being *excellence for satisfaction*—is this benchmark of satisfaction high enough to survive in these business and economic times? What if your customers *were jubilant instead of satisfied*? How would you know or measure this emotional state? *Exceptionally loyal instead of satisfied*? What would that look like? What does ANYTHING other than satisfied look like?

What an interesting concept it would be if we chose to create customer surveys measuring exceptional customer service or enthusiastic customer loyalty. Why do we search so hard for some degree of merely *satisfied* customers? Customers are the life blood of any organization and demand more attention today from the businesses they frequent.

What different conversations could be overheard as your *ecstatic customers* shared their word of mouth advertisements for your business? How engaging would the conversations be around the