



NEWS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

By Sherri Buxton, MWA Office, Peoria, IL,
and Melissa Stiefel, Lansing, MI

“DISCOVER TOOLS” CONFERENCE A SUCCESS!

The MWA Program Administrative Support Meeting, Discover Tools to Build a Better You, held in St. Louis, MO, October 19-21, 2004, was enjoyed by ARS Office Support Professionals from the Midwest Area and members of the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals. The PASTG would like to thank all the participants, speakers and especially Dr. Adrianna Hewings, Dr. Terry Nelsen and Diane Strub for their involvement.

What you thought about the meeting...

Sandra Johnson, Ames, IA

The speakers were very good with their mixture of good information and humor! The hotel and the meeting facilities were very nice. I had a great time and I am glad I attended the meeting. It was very uplifting! We are fortunate Dr. Hewings supports us!

Nancy Sanders, West Lafayette, IN

A valuable item I learned at the meeting was how to improve my performance write-up. The other important thing I learned and appreciated about the meeting and speakers was that maintaining my standards and integrity are important to my spirit and job performance.

Karen Burianek, Ames, IA

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to attend such a professional meeting and have the opportunity to meet the faces that belong to the voices I talk to every day. I feel very fortunate to be in an area where the administrators support such activities and give credibility to our positions.

Marva Nesbit (Speaker), Newcastle, ME

What a nice meeting! Beautifully done. I know the participants had to have been pleased. I appreciate being invited to be a part of the meeting. It's always great to renew old acquaintances.

Lonajean Strickland, West Lafayette, IN

My experience during the PASTG Conference "Discover Tools to Build a Better You" held in St. Louis, MO was a very valuable one - personally and professionally.

Dave Carter (Speaker), Beltsville, MD

Thank you for inviting me to be a part of your Midwest Area conference! I really enjoyed the whole event, and had a lot of fun speaking to everyone on Wednesday.

Favorite photos...



The “Gateway to the West”, St. Louis, MO.



Participants listened...



The IT Queens loved their new accessories.



Discussed...



The meals were always a hit!



And acted...!



Traci Lynn demonstrates how to interact with a "tough" boss.



Cathy Lonaberger and the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals explained their roles and current activities.

INDIANA STAFF FORMS SUPPORT GROUP

By Stephanie Brennan, West Lafayette, IN

The conference "Discover Tools to Build a Better You" allowed many individuals, including myself to walk away from the conference excited about the possibilities within our job description. I no longer felt compelled to stick to the confines of my performance standards. The individual speakers stressed the importance of attitude,

going above and beyond the call of duty, and thinking outside of the box.

On my trip home to West Lafayette, IN, the discussions in the vehicle led each of the secretaries to believe that we would greatly benefit by a unified group. This group could then share ideas, offer support, and most importantly share a meal together (food is the highlight of my life). So, it was established that the West Lafayette, IN secretaries would meet on the first Wednesday of each month at a local eating establishment to converse.

Our first meeting was most productive because we had applied the knowledge obtained from the conference and put it into practice within our individual units. Some of the topics that were discussed at our first meeting were job practices that make work flow better and how we can be more productive. We also discussed the uses and advantages of an in/out board as well as calendars for all unit members to use as a central appointment system. Being a valuable asset, effectively conducting, and participating in the unit's meetings was another topic of our discussion. We collaborated on how we can avoid duplication and receive up-to-date information in regards to personnel actions that circulate between secretaries and the location administration office.

Probably the most significant piece of information that we learned from our first meeting of the West Lafayette Secretaries, was to not eat at an establishment with the word "belly" in their name as we all came down with a case of food poisoning! Despite the sour ending, I would like to encourage all locations to set up a meeting time as the information and support you receive is invaluable.

COLOR-CODED ORGANIZATION

By Kit Mernick, Peoria, IL

In addition to keeping and checking a "To Do" list, project folders are my preferred organizational tool. Transparent color coded folders speed collection and retrieval of paperwork rather than shuffling through stacks of white papers.

Project folders usually come in assorted color packs. Because several of our projects take time to pull together and complete, the color-coded folders provide an easily identified collection location.

Tips for using transparent folders:

1. The clear folders prevent the need to label or open a folder to read contents.
2. The top page of the papers you are collecting can be easily read through the plastic. Put an identifiable paper on top or write in large letters one word that will quickly identify the contents like, CATS, ARIS.
3. Circle the due date or write it on the top page for quick reference.
4. Assign colors by priority: Red – "A" High Priority, Blue – "B" soon to be a priority, Yellow – "C" Important only to me, Gray/Clear – "Waiting" for response.
5. Have a location for each type of priority. Clear/gray for "waiting" for a reply is located on the edge of my desk.
6. Shuffle through the "A" folders each morning and after lunch to make sure you do not forget the immediate tasks. Look through the lower priority folders to make sure they haven't changed to a higher priority.
7. As soon as you print an email or receive a new task, put it in a folder. You can add the task to your "to do" list when you have time.

THE FINE ART OF PERSUASION

By Melissa Stiefel, East Lansing, MI

As ARS support staff, we rely on scientists, technicians, research leaders, LAOs, and others to provide accurate information with which we can successfully perform our duties within given deadlines. We don't supervise these individuals directly, so sometimes it becomes a challenge to shake them down for the information we need. By learning effective persuasion techniques, we not only make our work lives easier, but may also make our personal lives simpler as well.

Many people see persuasion as manipulative and devious or even beating someone over the head until they acquiesce. Here are just a few misconceptions that are commonly held regarding what persuasion is or should be. *Misconception #1:* Powerfully stating your position at the beginning and then relentlessly pushing your idea until your colleagues change their minds. *Misconception #2:* Never compromise; it's a sign of weakness. *Misconception #3:* The argument alone will win approval. *Misconception #4:* You have only one shot to present your argument and it had better be good or nobody will accept it.

Persuasion is not an act of coercion—it's an opportunity for both parties to learn about each other's needs, wants, and expectations. Because each party learns about the other, persuasion is also a powerful negotiating tool. Effective persuaders learn to test and revise their ideas, taking into consideration their colleague's concerns and expectations. More importantly, an effective persuader will always be open-minded to consider others' ideas and possibly incorporate the new ideas into the original plan. Persuasion involves some basic steps that are outlined below, and learning to master these steps will take time and patience.

Establish your own credibility.

In order to be an effective persuader, you must first establish your own credibility. For example, if my dermatologist told me I needed heart bypass surgery, would I find him or her credible—knowledgeable of the subject at hand? I don't think so. Credibility is established two ways: your *expertise* regarding subject at hand and your *relationship(s)* with your audience. In order to increase your expertise, you need to prove yourself knowledgeable and well-informed on the subject, *and* display a history of good judgment when using this knowledge. By establishing your credibility, your audience will see you as trustworthy and helpful.

Identify mutual benefits and interests.

Your position must appeal to your audience by showing the benefits they can derive by supporting you. In order to appeal to your audience, you need to know *them*—*what they want or what they expect*. Ask them questions; learn what makes them tick. After all, who would go along with an idea if it would cause more grief than good!

Reinforce by providing evidence for your position.

Ordinary evidence will not suffice when presenting your idea. Stories and colorful language can captivate your audience, and research shows that listeners react more positively to what they perceive as compelling evidence.

Demonstrate an emotional connection with your audience.

Good persuaders will connect with their audiences in two ways: 1) they show their own emotional commitment to the position, and 2) they are in tune with the audience's emotions. Too much emotion, however, will leave the audience questioning your rationality. As any good speaker does, adjust your actions (tone of voice, hand gestures, etc.) to the audience at hand—a roomful of executives from Fortune 500 companies will connect to a bold voice, forceful hand gestures, etc. Quite the

opposite is true if the audience is a knitting club at the community retirement center!

Remember that persuasion is not a hard-sell presentation; if you view it as an experience in learning and negotiating, you will realize just how persuasive you can be!

Helpful resources.

Influence Without Authority by Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford

Say What You Mean Get What You Want by Judith C. Tingley

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In by Roger Fisher, et al

The Anatomy of Persuasion... by Norbert Aubuchon

MWA TRAINING SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE APPROACHING

The deadline for the MWA Training Scholarship is February 1, 2005. This scholarship fund is to assist in professional development of individual(s) through funding for conferences, workshops, short courses, or other appropriate short-term experiences. Additional information and application materials may be found at:

<http://www.arsnet.usda.gov/pastg/careers/training.htm>

CALENDAR

December

- Performance cycle for CAT 1-4 & 6 ends December 31. Pull Detail by Author reports, complete AD-435s and send memo to SYs to submit documentation of their 2004 accomplishments.
- Prepare new files for the coming year for T&As and any other “calendar year” files.

January

- Go through files, disposing of materials that may be discarded, and do a “house-cleaning” of computer and general files.

February

- Look for updated forms.
- Check websites to see if they are still current.

HELPFUL HINTS

MS Word Tips

By “Dr. Word”, OCIO Staff

ocionews@ars.usda.gov

AutoCorrect Can be Useful

Ever grumbled about typing those long scientific names? Word's AutoCorrect feature can be very useful. How does AutoCorrect work? You type one thing -- hte -- and Word automatically corrects it with -- the -- when you hit the space bar. To add your own entries to AutoCorrect:

Go to Tools | AutoCorrect Options | Replace: (Enter text you want to correct) With: (Enter correct spelling), Click OK.

If there are typos, misspellings for which Word can find suggestions, you can add typos and their corrections to AutoCorrect by right-clicking the red underlined typo and choosing Auto-Correct from the menu. Now select the correct spelling, and that particular typo won't bother you again. If Word has no spelling suggestions, the Auto-Correct option won't appear in the menu.

Backup Copy of Current Document

You have the option in Word to create a backup copy (the previously saved version) of the current document each time you save the document. Choose Tools | Options | and click on the Save tab. Now select the Always Create Backup Copy check box and click OK. (Remember, you can find out a bit more information about the options presented in ANY Office dialog box by right-clicking on the option and choosing What's This? You may want to explore some of the other options presented on the Save tab.) To retrieve a backed-up file, choose File | Open. When the dialog box opens, click on the arrow at the right side of the Files Of Type list box to expand the list. Select All Files (*.*) and look for files with

your document's name but with a .wbk extension. Load the .wbk file.

Blank Lines in a Bulleted - Numbered List

Ever want to insert a blank line in the midst of a bulleted or numbered list in Word (without getting a bullet or number)? Just press Shift-Enter to move to the next line without inserting a bullet or number. If you then press Enter, bullets or numbering will be resumed as you move to the next line.

Disabling Drag and Drop Text

You probably already know that you can move text in Word by selecting it, grabbing and holding it with your mouse, and dragging it to another location. While some folks like this feature, other people only wind up using drag-and-drop text by accident when they're trying to select text. If you find that drag-and-drop text usually just gets in the way, you can disable the feature. Just choose Tools | Options and click the Edit tab. Then, deselect the Drag And Drop Editing option and click OK.

Editing Where You Left Off

Want to begin editing at the point where you were in the document when you last saved it? One simple way to get to where you left off is to open the document and press Shift-F5. This takes you to where you were when you last saved the document before closing it.