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Journal

OF THE INTERNATIONAL KITCHEN EXHAUST CLEANING ASSOCIATION

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Journal

OF THE INTERNATIONAL KITCHEN EXHAUST CLEANING ASSOCIATION

Serving the Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Industry Worldwide

The IKECA Journal is an industry publication for cleaners, fire marshals, insurance professionals, facility managers, vendors and other interested parties in the commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning and inspection industry.

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Letter From the *IKECA President*

From the Desk of the President

Randy Conforti, CECS / Precision Kleen, Inc.



IKECA's long-anticipated return to "in-person" and attending our 2022 Annual Conference is upon us. I would rather not speak about hurdles and struggles of the COVID-19 pandemic over the last two years which we all experienced, but rather focus on all the positive that we accomplished, all the great initiatives that are taking place, and the forward direction that your

association is headed. With any business, you have to have a plan and strategy to achieve the end goal.

As you heard me update you throughout my term as IKECA President, with the guidance of our management team, Stringfellow Management Group, and your Board of Directors, we have created IKECA's Strategic Plan, persevering to put all of the pieces in place, and got to work. The following are the outcomes of the plan.

- IKECA Membership remained strong during the last two challenging years. Though we declined a few percentage points in total membership, we have significant and strong member retention.
- The operating budget generated excess revenues in 2020 and 2021, which allows the Board to continue to use excess revenues to build programs and services.
- We strengthened our membership outside of the US borders and increased our AHJ membership.
- We implemented three successful virtual conferences where we were able to continue to offer education and CEUs.
- We are actively working on a robust restructuring of our certification program, which will provide ease of exam-taking and make it more affordable to IKECA Certification candidates. We are also developing a matrix of all data that goes into exam creation, monitoring, and data availability.

You will see the results of our Strategic Plan throughout 2022 and beyond as the developed tasks are released. I can't say it enough, but a big "Thank You" to our SMG management team, Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, Committee Members and to all those who

volunteer. The plan, vision, and hard work do not happen without your efforts.

Lastly, as your out-going President, I wanted to say that it is truly my pleasure to have served the IKECA Association and the membership. I looked back at the first time I was running for a seat on the Board of Directors in September 2015 for the 2016 election. When applying for the Board, you are asked a set of questions—two of which I believe are the most important:

- ***What do you feel IKECA should be concentrating on over the next few years?*** I honestly responded with, "I could not answer the question at this time. I feel I don't have enough knowledge of the inner workings of the current goals of the current board, but I can have a solid answer in the near future."
- ***What are your goals and objectives if elected to the IKECA Board of Directors?*** My response at the time was, "I will continue to learn and develop personally, assist in the future leadership, promote healthy stewardship, and assist in guiding the association in a positive, professional manner, and spearhead technology and any advances within the industry."

I don't think I fell short of my commitment to myself, the Board of Directors, and you, IKECA membership. As I move into Immediate Past President, I will continue to work with the Executive Committee and Board. The important task for me will be to recruit candidates to run for a seat on the Board of Directors. I can only ask of you, the members who share in the same vision and purpose, to have a conversation and volunteer as a Board Member.

I look forward to seeing you at future conferences, sharing in the comradery, providing educational seminars, and sharing industry advancements.

See you in Scottsdale! ♦

Letter From the *Executive Director*

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Kathleen A. DeMarco, CAE / IKECA Executive Director



Speaking Strategically

Under the leadership of brand-new IKECA President, Randy Conforti, in spring 2020 the IKECA Board undertook a deep dive into IKECA's strategic mission to gauge whether and how exactly it is presently being carried out. Although it was originally planned as an in-person, in-depth, two-day Board retreat (remember those

days?) it of course ended up being accomplished 100% virtually.

The Board knew it did not want to delay this work, due to the pandemic and shut-down of meetings during that spring. So they got to work, asking all the hard questions – including why the organization exists at all. They questioned everything IKECA does and thought hard about all the audiences IKECA serves and should be serving. In the end, with the help of professional facilitation, they concluded the process with a fresh understanding of the organization's mission and the key focus areas it needed to work on:

- **Membership & Stakeholders:** Connections, Experiences, Value Offered. Retention and Recruitment. Recognizing and Delivering Value.
- **Advocacy & Education:** Support and Advance IKECA Certifications. Increase Education about IKECA's Value. Evaluate and Focus Educational Offerings.
- **Sustainability:** Member Retention and Recruitment. Remove barriers to entry for Membership. Create a revenue-generating product and program strategy.

These three key focus areas then branched off into more specific strategies, which in turn resulted in the ground-level "tactics" or to-do list for the IKECA Board and Committees. Once at this stage, there were no less than 30 tactical items on the plan. This was around spring 2021 when the plan was introduced in Randy Conforti's President's Report to the Members at the 2021 Virtual Annual Meeting.

Since then – I really can't believe it has been a full year now – I am so pleased to report that a full one-third of

the 30 initiatives have been started, are in progress, or have resulted in deliverables! Here are some key items that have been moved forward in the past 12 months:

- Two "Hiring/Training/Retaining" Roundtable Sessions were held in fall 2021, via virtual meeting, for KEC Owners. The Education Committee did video capture, and edited footage is available, showing highlights of the discussions. Additional Roundtable sessions were held during the 2021 Virtual Fall Tech Conference and are planned for the 2022 Annual Membership Meeting this spring.
- A proposal developed by the Membership Committee was approved by Board in early 2022, updating the qualifications for IKECA's Emeritus or "honorary" membership, and creating a new Introductory one-year membership intended to remove barriers to entry for KEC operators to join IKECA.
- The Certification Committee is working on its plan to review, revise and update the written exam for the CECT certification, and to develop a new Study Guide to support candidate success. The Committee, having received approval from the Board, has also engaged with a professional firm to provide psychometric support for the next steps in the CECT exam development.
- IKECA has just completed a proposal review process and has engaged with Scantron, a professional exam delivery, and development contractor, to offer online certification testing with live, online proctoring provided, as well as opportunities for online testing at a local testing center. This is aimed at removing several barriers to testing, under the current paper-and-pencil testing delivery. The roll-out of this new exam delivery service is anticipated later this year.
- Former IKECA Marketing Committee Chair Joe Dahlheimer began development of a "Persona Database" in October 2021, with the support of the Board; input is being gathered through the IKECA Committees, regarding IKECA members and their response to survey questions. This Persona Database will guide marketing planning and decision-making and inform much of the marketing plan to be developed.
- On the education front, the 2021 Virtual Fall Tech Conference included three video shop tours,

Continues on page 05

Letter From the *Executive Director*

From the Desk of the Executive Director, *continued*

Kathy A. DeMarco, CAE / IKECA Executive Director

delivered by Dane Bundy of CSC Services Hood & Duct, Jim Roberts of Derby Pressure Wash, and Kevin Pearson of Grime Stoppers, Inc. You would think a video shop tour wouldn't be that good but these three contributors did an excellent job highlighting so many unique things about their business and operations! Looking ahead, more shop tours are planned for the 2022 Annual Membership Meeting.

- IKECA's advocacy work has been kick-started, by using specific industry events to educate and inform our target audiences. Over the past year, IKECA has participated in multiple events where representatives of IKECA's leadership made informative presentations and IKECA sponsored a booth or table to share information among attendees.

This is A LOT OF WORK for just over one year of actually having a plan to work on! While we are only about a third of the way toward accomplishing all our planned initiatives, I am so proud of the IKECA leadership, and all of its many volunteers, for staying the course, keeping the focus on the key strategic initiatives and continually striving to create more value in the organization, in support of the overall mission of IKECA:

*IKECA is a non-profit organization committed to
fire prevention and life safety
by advancing the quality of
cleaning, inspection, and maintenance
of commercial kitchen exhaust systems worldwide. ♦*

*“Since then – I really
can’t believe it has
been a full year now
– I am so pleased
to report that a full
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started, are in progress,
or have resulted in
deliverables!”*



IKECA in the *Industry*

IKECA in the Industry

April Elligson / IKECA Associate Director



2022 has been the year of the “come back” for industry events. There is a lot of excitement building around the 2022 Annual Membership Meeting at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort in April 2022—it’s hard to believe that this will be the first time IKECA will come together in person since October 2019!

In addition to IKECA members and non-members alike clamoring for in-person networking and education, many AHJs, Facility Managers, and other related industries were anticipating the sought-after education provided by IKECA President Randy Conforti and Secretary Jim Roberts.



Randy Conforti & Jim Roberts speaking at a tradeshow in Columbus, OH

Our IKECA volunteers were in front of over 500 contacts during The Fire Protection and Life Safety Forum and the Restaurant Facility Management Association shows (with standing room only audiences) and in the networking done at the IKECA exhibit booth. Attendees at these shows were so excited to meet with and talk to our IKECA representatives; asking questions about our standards, recommendations for KEC providers, and providing their contact information because they are interested in membership.

IKECA not only has been invited back to these shows in 2023, but many attendees requested information for education to come to their conference, fire hall, etc. around the country as well! Even our Canadian Chapter is getting involved! Alex Young and Bill Doherty will be representing IKECA at the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officer’s Association Symposium in London, ON in June 2022.

Our volunteer leaders are putting “boots on the ground” to educate different industries about the great work and strong membership we have at IKECA as well as the importance of protecting life and promoting fire safety. As we continue to grow and become stronger as an association, it is more important now than ever to gain volunteers for our committees and appearances from our passionate members. ♦



From Left to Right: Dennis Poulin, Randy Conforti, Jim Shea, & Jim Roberts

These two gentlemen, along with the assistance and strong volunteer efforts of Joe Dahlheimer and Dennis Poulin, traveled to Columbus, OH, and Nashville, TN this spring to “spread the word” on current codes and standards such as ANSI/IKECA C10, M10, and I10, as well as an overview of basic identification of related codes and fire hazards within food trucks.

Update from the Candian Chapter Alex Young, CECS

As for all of our industry, the past few years have been trying times. Canada was no exception, and we've seen and met many challenges. The view forward includes a lot of hours of rebuilding, and a long road to recovery.

Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting has changed so many aspects of a primarily hands-on industry. We all have had to embrace and rise to a new level of service. The ever-changing policy, procedure, protocol, and demands are something I have never seen in this industry in my 29 years of operation. The day-to-day operational challenges of a KEC company have a completely different face in today's world. There have been unprecedented demands and the need for flexibility and adjustments to adapt and maintain to even survive. All without previous history to draw on, which can leave us feeling overwhelmed.

These challenges are exactly the reason an association such as IKECA is so valuable to have for support and guidance, or just simply not feeling like you have to face this all alone. We are not alone--we have the strength and wisdom and experience to draw from this amazing organization.

The Canadian Chapter and committee have been working with management and our board of directors to continue the recognition and traction IKECA has gained here in Canada. Our primary focus to date has been building awareness within the AHJ community, and we are proud to have 130+ AHJ members to date. Our committee has built a plan to focus on Advocacy and education along with IKECA brand awareness both publicly and within the KEC and AHJ communities.

We were successful with a submission to the board for funding to both sponsor and support the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers and Association, along with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

As the Canadian president and IKECA representative, IKECA has been actively involved with the Ontario Fire College for the Office of the Fire Marshal. As previously mentioned in our last article, through IKECA and related sponsors, IKECA donated valuable training models and display units to the fire college. Along with these units, we actively took part in training courses for the AHJ community as an instructor for Effective Inspections of Commercial Cooking Systems.

While participating, we, as "IKECA," were very fortunate to not only gain membership of AHJs but have the privilege to now have two respected instructors on our Canadian Committee. Rob King and David Tiller have not only become members of IKECA, but have also been working with IKECA to help bring awareness to the AHJ community of the values and educational support gained through our association along with the importance of certification.

Our Committee is now laying the groundwork to begin building an IKECA exhibit display, and attending various training symposiums and trade shows in an effort to bring brand awareness across Canada. We will be extending an invitation to our Canadian AHJs to join us at one of our in-person conventions.

The value of education and industry knowledge, along with the wealth of experience IKECA has to offer the AHJ community, is a needed and appreciated "tool" in the understanding of and compliance with ANSI/ IKECA, NFPA 96, and Fire code requirements. IKECA's Standards, Certification programs, and IKECA values are gaining great respect and awareness in Ontario and surrounding markets. It is our committee's hope that as we build brand awareness through the AHJ community we will see an uptick in the KEC membership and our IKECA certification recognition.

Our KEC members, our KEC competitors, "potential members," along with the marketplace, all benefit and grow through the education and support of our AHJ community. Client awareness related to the ownership of a commercial exhaust system can only help promote IKECA.

I want to thank our committee for the work we have put in this year and in advance for the work ahead, taking the time to invest in our association and our message on top of all of our daily challenges is not a small sacrifice.

I and we as an association thank you and I would encourage any of our Canadian members to please step up and join our committee--more hands make less work.

I look forward to seeing all of our members in person very soon in Scottsdale. ♦

Association News

Update from the Conference Committee

Randy Russo, CECS

The start of 2022 has shown great progress in getting back to what we call the “new normal,” with many changes for IKECA and the world. I feel privileged to continue to be the Conference Committee Chair, to work with SMG staff, and to secure great locations for our Annual and Fall Technical Conferences. I want to thank everyone for their support in my role as Conference Chair, and I will continue to work hard to keep this Committee strong and move forward with the goal of successful conferences with the best results. I look forward to continuing working with everyone.

I stand by my 100% commitment to IKECA and the Board of Directors to continue growing the association as a whole and launch forward for continued success. Our team, the best of the business community, will push together to achieve the same goals. The stability

of the Conference Committee Team will continue to make improvements and grow our membership and the success of IKECA. I am confident that our growth with budgeting and planning will show how viable this Association truly is to the fire and life safety of all our customers. ♦



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“Business learning should never stop!”

ETCETERA OFFERS SEVERAL LEARNING MODULES, EACH CONTAINING INTRODUCTORY AND CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES AS WELL AS QUIZZES AND VIDEOS.

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Association News

Update from the Education Committee

Dane Bundy, CECS

The IKECA Education Committee is always working on new ways to get educational tools and resources out to the members and KEC professionals here in the states and our international members around the world.

Developing and Distributing Educational Tools:

- We are working on objectives assigned to us in the IKECA Strategic Plan, and handing out assignments to get content out to the membership. For instance, we will be starting work on development of a new Study Guide for the CECT Certification exam in conjunction with the Certification Committee.
- One of the larger tasks the committee is working on is creating a Resource Manual for membership. Solid fuel is our current topic to complete.
- The committee is also working on short educational YouTube videos.
- We executed two fall 2021 Roundtable sessions, in virtual format, on "Hiring, Training & Retaining Employees."

Working with Committees:

The Education Committee is working with various other committees. Including:

- ASNI/ IKECA Technical Standards Development Committee, to implement educational material between the two committees.
- The Insurance/AHJ Committee, with a goal of developing educational material for IKECA membership and insurance industry stakeholders.
- The Certification Committee, to develop the aforementioned Study Guide

The committee has received the strategic plan and came up with a game plan to hand out assignments and start getting the content out to the membership as it is completed. The committee has been taking direction from other committees on what content we can come up with to help get education out that directly ties to their agenda. We will continue to make educational videos and host virtual roundtables.

Go to the IKECA website or directly to our YouTube channel and learn from our latest videos, stay tuned. [IKECA's YouTube channel](#)

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Association News

Update from the Education Committee, *continued*

Dane Bundy, CECS

Looking for Micro-Volunteers: The Education Committee is looking for new members and members for short-term projects. If you have any topics or suggestions you would like to see the committee develop, or would like more information to join the Education Committee please email info@ikeca.org. ♦

Update from the Finance Committee

John Muller, CECS

The Finance Committee's primary role is to provide the Board of Directors with financial analysis and advice to inform its decision making with regard to budgeting, mid-year adjustments if they are necessary, and spending decisions that are made in the course of the year. The Committee works closely with the management company, which actually handles payments and receipts and prepares the financial reports.

For the fiscal and calendar year 2021 which just ended, we are pleased to be able to report that versus a budget that was essentially breakeven, the organization will have run a surplus in excess of \$40,000, largely as a result of better-than-budgeted surpluses from our virtual meetings and outperforming very conservative certification revenue estimates, which had been made at a bad point in the pandemic.

For 2022, the Board has decided to invest in several important new initiatives, including but not limited to website upgrades, improving our certification exams and working to make them available online, and revitalizing our Canadian chapter. Also, the return to live meetings will likely reduce the surplus which we gained from online meetings, but we are all happy to be going back live. Rather than raise dues, the budget calls for a deficit that is less than the surplus that the organization ran up in 2021. The revenue assumptions in the budget are still very conservative so we are hopeful that we can outperform the budget once again. ♦

CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

CECT = 10 hours (1.0 CEUs) every 24 months

CECS = 15 hours (1.5 CEUs) every 12 months

CESI = 30 hours (3.0 CEUs) every 24 months

There are many ways to earn your CEUs!

Attendance at the IKECA Annual Meeting or Fall Technical Seminar

Up to 1.5 CEU of content available per meeting

Presenting at the IKECA Annual Meeting, Fall Technical Seminar OR other industry-related events

0.5 CEU per presentation

Submission of a technical article for The IKECA Journal

0.3 CEU per article

Active Participation in an IKECA Committee

0.1 CEU per committee meeting

Attendance at an industry-related conference, meeting or seminar *

Eligible for a maximum of 0.1 CEU per meeting

Presenting to local AHJs within your jurisdiction

(Must submit official documentation signed by an AHJ on their letterhead indicating date, location and time of presentation.)

0.5 CEU per presentation

Online educational training programs

0.1 CEU per one hour of content

Technical Code Committee Work

**Sitting as an active member of NFPA, ASHRAE, ANSI Consensus Body qualifies.*

1.0 CEU /day

**Before pursuing an in-house course or internal training for CEU, contact IKECA to ensure the course qualifies. Email your request to info@ikeca.org.*

For more information, please go to:

<https://ikeca.org/certification/continuing-education/>



Association News

Update from the Insurance/AHJ Committee

**Mike Rosenau, MBA, CSP, ARM, CPCU
& Frank Mitarotonda, CECS**

It is truly a privilege to serve as co-chairs for the Insurance/AHJ Committee. We would like to thank all the members of this committee for their continued enthusiasm, fantastic ideas, and willingness to support our endeavors. Without our committee members, we would not be successful in expanding awareness of IKECA to AHJs and Insurance and Risk Management Professionals.

While our combined committee is still relatively new, we have been collaborating with the Education Committee on how to better serve AHJs and insurance professionals going forward. As a result, the 2021 Annual and Fall Tech meetings included an insurance/AHJ educational track. The inclusion of this AHJ/insurance track is intended to generate interest in IKECA membership among these vital stakeholders. Finally, we are building a plan to set IKECA apart as a premier resource for AHJs and insurance professionals on kitchen exhaust cleaning and fire safety.

Our committee members look forward to the work ahead. If you have any ideas for us, please send us an email at mrosenau@societyinsurance.com or frank.mitarotonda@interstatefireandsfty.net. We welcome any suggestions you may have to further collaboration between IKECA and these groups. ♦

Update from the Marketing Committee

The IKECA Marketing Committee is tasked with understanding those we want to influence (stakeholders); communicating the benefits IKECA members provide those stakeholders; creating marketing tools; and developing messaging based on stakeholder personas, objectives, content, platforms, and frequency.

The Marketing Committee is working the process: we have adopted a time-tested process, a Marketing Audit, to better understand all stakeholders in our community.

We're soliciting input from IKECA members, including Committees focused on specific personas (Insurance/AHJ) and also to non-IKECA member Stakeholders.

We are smarter than we remember: Throughout this process, the Committee is also identifying existing knowledge and wisdom available in our membership. We will review content already available (IKECA Journal, website) and repurpose it.

The Marketing Committee is looking for Micro-Volunteers: The Marketing Committee is looking for new members and members for short-term projects. If you have knowledge, wisdom, or content you would like to share contact info@ikeca.org. Members of the Marketing Committee will advance their business and career by sharing and learning as we **Work the Process.** ♦

Update from the Membership Committee

Dennis Poulin, CECS

Like the start of every New Year, along with the celebrations and excitement of "things to come," we have the reality of things "that gotta be done". On the list is our annual renewal of membership, the payment of dues, and new insurance certificates, all to be sent into IKECA (that's code for sent to April at the office). Traditionally, we've always had early responders, some that need a little reminder, and handful that just might seem to enjoy putting it off just to see how much attention this annual campaign can garner. That handful did get attention from the Membership Committee with messages like, "Hey, it's me again, don't forget to renew," and "get 'er done before the deadline." We do it because it works, and we're glad you "got 'er done". This report goes to print before the final counts are in, so you'll get the up-to-date numbers when we are in the flesh and eyeball to eyeball in Scottsdale!

This Committee has been busy over the last year, and we're pleased to announce the establishment of two new categories of membership. The Board of Directors has approved Introductory Membership and Emeritus Membership. Introductory Membership is offered with a one-time \$500.00 discount and access to several

Association News

benefits. Check it out on the IKECA website. The Emeritus Membership has been established to allow individuals that have contributed to IKECA over the years and rather than walking away from the comradery of the Association in retirement, it gives them the opportunity to stay close and engaged with us without the ongoing requirement of dues and certification. Inclusion to this membership will be by referral or recommendation and considered an honor bestowed by the Board of Directors.

Think about it, IKECA has been around for 30 years plus, and some of them in the early membership weren't kids back then. If they're still walking around and talking the talk...they're still welcome to be shoulder to shoulder with us.

Membership Committee is the result of efforts from; Kathy Slomer, Charles Cochrane, Greg Fisher, Kevin Pearson, Don Pfleiderer, Frank Mitarotonda, and Dennis Poulin ♦

Technical Standards Development Committee Update

James Shea & James Roberts, CECS, CESI

Greetings from the IKECA / ANSI Technical Standards Development Committee!

It feels good to be returning to our live meeting formats! I am so tired of the virtual meeting space and navigating all the variations of them. Google Chat, Micro-Soft Teams, GoToMeeting, Zoom, Connectwise, Pexip, Slack, etc., and on and on...

Enough is enough. Time to GO LIVE IN ARIZONA!

The year 2021 was a roller coaster ride, to say the least. While many of our traditional restaurant markets continue to struggle with supply delays or shortages, rising costs of real estate, labor, and food and beverage supplies, revenue projections for 2022 are estimated to reach \$898 billion, despite the hardships still in front of them. This number represents a shortfall from pre-pandemic revenues, yet an increase from 2021 results. A resilient market despite all challenges. A pandemic-diminished workforce will require an estimated 400,000

additional projected new hires in 2022 to keep pace with sales. (A full market report can be purchased from the National Restaurant Association's webpage <https://restaurant.org>.)

I start this update with these facts because with diminished labor forces, challenges to profitability, and introduction of innovative technologies to overcome all these stresses, there is a definitive risk to fire and life safety by resistance to system maintenance, deficiency repairs, and inspection. At the risk of safety to employees and patrons, owners and operators will be obligated to look at ways to cut costs and improve profit margins, to offset revenue shortfalls and increased overhead costs.

As members of IKECA and the TSDC, we must drive

Continues on page 13

“Due to market changes in cooking operations and an increased surge in the use of Class A cooking in commercial kitchens, we established a subcommittee to study fire losses and our standards with inclusion of more stringent language regarding Class A cooking operations.”

Technical Standards Development Committee Update, *continued*

James Shea & James Roberts, CECS, CESI

our message and purpose stronger than ever. We must commit to further education of owners, operators, inspectors, cleaners, AHJs, Code enforcement, and the Insurance industry about the challenges and risks facing our communities, our facilities, and our industry. We need all of the membership's help to accomplish this. Now more than ever, the few that participate so many hours to the organization are also stressed with the same issues as the restaurant industry and so many others.

The TSDC continued our virtual meetings during the remainder of the FY21. While we were virtual, there was much going on. The current updates to membership are provided below.

- Our standards were all off-cycle in 2021 allowing the committee to take advantage of education through our subcommittee research on recent technology and through educational seminars delivered through the expertise of our technical committee membership.
- The committee voted and approved a proposal to move the standards to a 3-year review cycle, from the 5-year cycle. This will allow continued emphasis

on the development of the standards while gaining stakeholder involvement on a more regular basis and improving upon our early revisions of the standards.

- In the fall of 2021, your committee executive staff was contacted by Randy Conforti, President of IKECA, who had been contacted by an IKECA member located in the State of Alaska. The concern was the elimination of the reference to the ANSI/IKECA C-10 Standard in the state's fire code legislation. Existing language included the International Fire Code reference indicating cleaning in accordance with ANSI/IKECA C-10 Standard. The proposal rose over the concerns in rural markets that the expense to bring cleaners to these markets would cause financial hardship to owners and operators of smaller scaled local restauranteurs. After consultation and a full-court press, a strategy was developed. The strategy was simple. Invite as many IKECA members and the members of the Technical Standards Development Committee to support the rejection of this proposal and to provide them the necessary tools to petition the State Fire Marshal's office. Many IKECA and technical committee members responded to the outcry for support. Our actions averted the C-10 reference elimination and retained the current language as written and provided in the IFC. If you supported this effort, the committee and IKECA members in Alaska thank you for your support! TAKE A BOW! Nothing like



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Association News

strength in numbers!

- Due to market changes in cooking operations and an increased surge in the use of Class A cooking in commercial kitchens, we established a subcommittee to study fire losses and our standards with inclusion of more stringent language regarding Class A cooking operations. Expect to see proposals from this sub-committee to support enforceable language regarding these operations in each of the standard's cycles.
- The Secretariat and staff liaison to the Committee will be changing; Christine Wilks has left the position and Nikki Augsburgsberger will take on the role in March 2022. In the meantime, send all committee requests or concerns to me, Jim Roberts, or Kathy DeMarco.
- Your committee Chair saw a change of employment resulting in potential resignation. As of this day, I have reaffirmed my commitment to the membership and to the committee to continue as your Committee Chair.
- The committee received presentations from the emerging technologies subcommittee and proposals regarding grease sensor devices which will be included in current and upcoming committee discussions.
- Many NFPA Standards are currently in First or Second Draft Public input phases. NFPA 96 has proposed revisions that impact our business. These changes will be addressed during our April meeting and if the impact is determined to be negative, the

intention will be to respond with our concerns. It is so important that you review all the standards that impact your business and make comment as individual business owners in addition to what we do either through our membership's NFPA Liaison or through the single voice of our Technical Committee.

- We also worked closely with the PWNA management to review and amend the methods of communication around certifications and compliance with the ANSI/IKECA C-10 Standard and NFPA 96. We will continue to be a watchdog to ensure the integrity of our standards, our committee, and our organization.

We are eager to convene in person and look forward to seeing you all in April! If you would like to be a part of the audience at any committee meeting feel free to let us know and we can add you to the invite list.

As always, if you have any questions regarding your Standards or any technical issues you would like to address, feel free to reach out to us or any member of the committee.

We are all looking forward to a better 2022!



New *Certifications* / *as of March 1, 2022*

CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE WHO RECENTLY ACHIEVED THEIR DESIGNATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS!

PECT Professional Exhaust Cleaning Technician

- Cullen Nield / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.
- Donovan Maguire / Derby Pressure Wash
- Brad Holinka / The Hood Boss LLC

CECT Certified Exhaust Cleaning Technician

- Gavin Christman / Apex Hood Cleaning
- Eric Bristol / Apex Hood Cleaning, Inc.
- Trenice Smith / Apex Hood Cleaning
- James Carder / Rames Enterprises, Inc.
- Robert Lacerra / Rob's Fire Safety
- Victor Ledezma / Ventilation Technologies
- Weston Bennett / Industrial Cleaning Solutions Inc.
- Kaytlyn O'Sullivan / Apex Hood Cleaning
- Blair Pickup / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.
- Arnie Almario / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.
- Nick Klasson / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.
- Geoffrey Halcro / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.
- Geoffrey Halcrow / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.
- Danny Tarver / Northland Fire & Safety, Inc.
- Sam Larimer / Derby Pressure Wash

CECS Certified Exhaust Cleaning Specialist

- Michael Menta / ECSI II, Inc. DBA Environmental Control Services, Inc.
- James Galanis / J&S Restaurant Group LLC
- Steve Kennett / Phoenix Industrial Cleaning, Inc.

- Keenan Thompson / Bluestar Marine
- Sam Clark / Clark Services Group, LLC

BCCS Boston Certified Cleaning Specialist

- Thomas Hayes, Jr. / Cochrane Ventilation, LLC
- Matthew Johnson / Cochrane Ventilation LLC
- Michael Landry / North Star Contracting
- Kyle Arnold / Omni Pro Inc.
- Daren Duarte / Bay State Exhaust Services
- Gavin Martein / ASAP Fire & Safety
- Sean Linehan / BMCA, Inc. DBA Air Duct Services
- Andrew Linskey / Cochrane Ventilation, LLC
- Sakwasan Leesomsa / Cochrane Ventilation, LLC
- Longroy Dy / Cochrane Ventilation, LLC

CESI Certified Exhaust Systems Inspector

- Robert Penney / A.B.C. Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, Inc.

New *Members*

Associate Member

- Brodie Levadnuk / ZolaTerra

AHJ

- Danny Smith / Maynardville Fire Department
- Cameron Haubrich / City of Yakima Fire Department
- Elise Belanger / Kirkland Lake Fire Services
- Craig Humphreys / Logan Fire Department
- Ricky Phillips / City of Arab Fire Department

- Cale Rowan / Carleton Place Fire Department
- Brian Stahl / City of Wausau Fire Department

Active International

- Hamilton Buitrago / Protecmmmin Sas
- Edwin Caraballo / Inteco, Inc.
- Edoardo Brazzarola / Spazzacamino Italia Srl

Active North America

- Kenneth Woodruff / Industrial Cleaning Solutions

New Members, continued

- Lindsey Long / Nelbud Services LLC
- Marc Rubino / Clark Services Group
- Dominic Menta / ECSI II, Inc DBA Environmental Control Services, Inc

Additional Location

- Scott Deckard / Koorsen Environmental Services (Indianapolis)
- Dale Gallapoo / Nelbud Services Group (Grant, MI)
- Donald McMillan / AirTek Indoor Air Solutions, LLC
- Joseph Risky / Nelbud Services Group (McHenry, IL)
- Matthew Mertens / North Shore Fire Department
- James Mulkey / Moody Fire Department
- Matt Russell / S.E. Thurston Fire Authority
- Bob Hewitt / Ocean Wave Fire Company
- James Carter / Davie County Development and Facility Services
- Aaron Burden / Allegeny County Health Department
- Mark McConnell / Bernalillo County Fire & Rescue
- Ojasvi Arora / EFD
- Ruth Bek / City of Boiling Spring Lakes
- Brett Colavito / Raritan Township Fire Co.
- Jeremy Alldred-Hughes / Kirkland Lake Fire Services

- Jared Defoore / Missouri City Fire Marshal's Office
- Jose Palacios / FDNY - Range Hood Unit
- Joseph Flynn, Jr. / North Attleboro Fire
- Kevin Knippa / Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Thomas / Henderson / Fultondale Fire and Rescue
- Jarred Stamps / Homewood Fire Department
- Joseph Almon / Nashville Fire Department
- Ean Wallander / Sheffield Fire Department
- Henry Lane, III / Falls Church VA Fire Marshal Office

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Featured Articles

Kick-Starting the Education Process in Your Community: Present Your Knowledge & Passion for Life Safety Without Promoting Your Company

Kathy Slomer / Kool Klean, Inc.



About 10 years ago, I was approached by my local Health Department to supply them with some type of basic training on commercial kitchen exhaust systems. I admit I was a bit puzzled by the request since they have never acknowledged us in the past. I was also excited with the thought that they were finally going to take action on the vast amount of neglect seen in our industry

when it came to fire hazards in the kitchen exhaust system. As with many cities across the U.S., inspecting the kitchen exhaust system is not the responsibility of one specific official. As you all know, it can be extremely frustrating on the part of the maintenance providers or cleaners when hazards are not addressed.



So, there I was, 10 years ago standing in front of more than 20 County Health Department employees. Most of them have been working for the department for more than 20 years and never once considered looking into the elements of the exhaust system codes and hazards that came along with neglect. I showed my PowerPoint presentation that focused on what they should look for in the kitchen when it came to life safety and the systems. I pointed out things like missing grease filters, gaps in the filter bank, grease saturated ceiling tiles, and neglected cooking equipment. Since pictures often tell a story with more detail, I provided visual examples of what we are coming across on a daily basis. Using the actual before and after images that my technicians take on each job, I was able to provide them with some disturbing scenarios that should be addressed. I also provided them with a very basic and straightforward checklist regarding commercial kitchen exhaust systems. This checklist was easy to follow and did not require any additional equipment or physical restrictions for them. It listed things they could see with the naked eye.

The attendees were very responsive during the presentation, asking a lot of questions, and genuinely seemed enlightened with what they had learned. A person from the head of the department asked if I would be inclined to present during their next Pennsylvania regional meeting set in Harrisburg. I happily accepted the invitation. During this Harrisburg conference, I presented a similar PowerPoint as what I presented to my local Health Department, but I added more code-driven content hoping to expand the parameters of their interest. Toward the end of my presentation, I pulled up a copy of the general inspection checklist that I handed out to everyone. I posed the question, "How hard would it be to incorporate or implement any of these checklist items on to your current inspection forms?" I was not surprised by their answer--they just did not have the resources or protocols in place to enforce even the basic question of whether the exhaust systems are being cleaned.

Continues on page 19

Featured *Articles*

Kick-Starting the Education Process in Your Community: Present Your Knowledge & Passion for Life Safety Without Promoting Your Company, *continued*

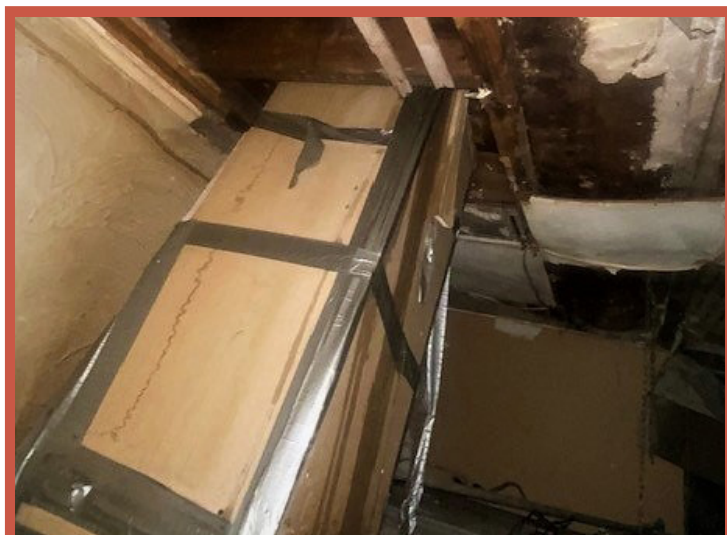
Kathy Slomer / Kool Klean, Inc.

The two presentations conducted with the health departments really built the base of my new point of view on their capabilities and concerns with the hazards I presented. They responded extremely well to the pictures shown in my PowerPoint and I could tell that if they had the authority to make changes to their current inspection processes, they certainly would. These meetings also showed me that it was not about promoting my business or getting our name out there, it was really about the life safety and hazards that are right under their noses (or right above their heads!). I could have walked in there with promotional items for them all to take home, but ethically, they could not promote my business to establishments they are walking into. I did however promote IKECA and how important it is to have certified companies performing maintenance services on these establishments. I also explained that IKECA has worked tirelessly to write safety and maintenance standards to ensure proper safety measures are in place within our industry.

Still to this day, I present to my local health department once or twice a year. Have I seen any change in their inspection standards? Honestly, no. On the other hand, there are more educated inspectors out there and they are carrying this information with them wherever their career takes them. We have received phone calls from ex-health department employees who have moved into a restaurant position with questions on what they can do from the inside to maintain their exhaust system accordingly. We also get inquiries from facility owners about maintenance recommendations from their health inspector. This shows me that despite not being able to make standard changes on record, education is being spread.

Fast forward a couple of years: Pittsburgh is starting to see some jurisdictions adopting a third-party reporting system for fire protection called The Compliance Engine. Monitored by the local fire marshal, this reporting system requires us to submit service reports after every cleaning. The Compliance Engine monitors the frequency of the service and any deficiencies that are documented. They then require the facility to address

any fire protection concern that is documented. During the initial setup, there was a training session at the fire department of that jurisdiction. Their fire inspector was present and asked if I knew anyone that could educate them on commercial kitchen exhaust systems and fire suppression systems. Of course, I told them I could



Yes, this is ductwork made out of drywall and held together with duct tape

provide a full educational training session regarding the exhaust system side.

Once I got home, I was hoping I did not bite off more than I could chew being that these fire department members were much more vested in fire protection. This particular fire department has an IOS class 1 rating and is an accredited agency through CFAI. There are only 200 fire departments in the U.S. & Canada that carry this status. I knew IKECA had some amazing members that regularly train fire inspectors and building code officials. Those member companies are more knowledgeable than I am when it comes to specific codes and regulations, and I thought I should perhaps ask a fellow IKECA member to do the training. After a long internal battle and a few

Featured *Articles*

glasses of wine, I decided I would tackle this task myself. I wanted to build a rapport with this group and become the face of education in my area concerning commercial kitchen exhaust systems.

I still had to face another hurdle with this venture. I did not know very much about fire suppression systems. Our company does not provide fire suppression services with our cleaning services. Fortunately, we work hand in hand with most of the fire suppression companies in our area. We often refer to ourselves as their “hood cleaning division”, providing a subcontracted relationship with our services. There was one individual who we have worked with for many years and has been in the fire suppression service industry for 25 years. I asked Joe if he would be interested in working with me on this presentation with the fire department by handling the education on the fire suppression side – he naturally agreed.

We had about a month to prepare our presentations, so I immediately got to work producing a 100-slide PowerPoint that covered NFPA 96 as much as possible. I broke down each chapter and included pictures that related to the specific codes that were being covered. Joe had his presentation completed and even brought a small hood display with the fire suppression components in place. I admit, I was very nervous the morning of our meeting but as we got the ball rolling with the group, they seemed very receptive to the information and eager to ask questions. Joe and I felt confident that the information was well recognized and we looked forward to more educational opportunities.

Our education prospects grew into more presentations over the years with similar groups in different jurisdictions. We often jokingly refer to ourselves as the “Kathy & Joe Show.” In November 2021 we hosted a training session, inviting fire inspectors, fire marshals, insurance agencies, and facility managers. We worked with one of the customers that we currently serviced and provided our attendees a light breakfast and lunch. The group consisted of about 50 people, and we really enjoyed the interaction. They repeatedly asked about some of the before and after pictures we displayed; wanting to know which facility they were from. Of course, we could not divulge that information but it felt good knowing they were sincerely concerned and intrigued. This gathering resulted in an invite to present to the Western Pennsylvania Commonwealth Building Code Officials during their December meeting. We gratefully accepted the invitation.



Similar to the results from working with the local health departments, there have not been many changes in our area, but there are more AHJs out there now that are educated about our industry's concerns. I frequently get calls or email inquiries asking questions about deficiencies they see out in the field. I was even approached about doing inspections if needed for a local jurisdiction. There are a lot of things to consider and explore before I agree to do so. To start with, I will need to take the CESI in April 2022. I hope to see everyone at the annual meeting, it has been too long!

All in all, do not be afraid to start an educational program in your community. Remember to focus on concerns you see every day and not promote your company. Hopefully, by doing so, you will start to see changes occur and relationships bloom as they start to reach out to you for guidance. Utilize the resources IKECA has to offer and feel free to contact me with any questions. ♦

Kathy Slomer is the Owner of Kool Kleen Inc. based out of Pittsburgh, PA, which her parents started 37 years ago. Along with overseeing daily operations, Kathy shares her passion for life safety when it comes to commercial kitchen ventilation systems by regularly holding training sessions for Fire Marshals, Building Inspectors, Facility Managers, and members of the Health Department.

Featured Articles

When the Grease Hits the Fan

Dennis Poulin, CECS / R&G Vent Cleaning



How many times does the enthusiasm of starting a job get turned into a demoralizing “what the heck am I getting into?” Picture this: you make it up to the roof and discover uncontained grease surrounding the exhaust fan. Even an experienced KEC tech can’t be blamed for feeling that they just got thrown under the bus with an undesirable job assignment. It is a fact that

there is a difference in the work when you’re navigating around a minefield of grease just to be able to clean the fan... and on top of that, dealing with the collateral mess of tracking grease with every step including all the deposits left on roof access ladders.

In a “perfect world,” grease containment is in place and effective, and the roof does not require additional,

unplanned time to just accomplish minimum standards of service. All things considered, that “perfect world” really should be “business as usual.” This discussion doesn’t have all the answers but there may be one possibility that you haven’t considered.

All too often, there is an assumption that grease is leaking from the fan, or it’s the result of careless workmanship of the cleaning tech. A good investigator won’t jump to conclusions. They will slow down, find the real source, and discover there can be more than one explanation for the unwanted grease on the roof. To start with, if the fan base is not properly sized and secured to the curb, the sloppy fit invites vibration to “dance” the fan into a position with gaps at the transition. Having hinges in place not only provides ready access for critical cleaning, but also secures the fans to the curb, eliminates high wind displacement, reduces damage from the rigors of manhandling in the normal course of service, helps extend the life of power supply conduits, and adds years to the useful life of the fan.

Another common culprit of uncontained grease are extensions mounted on top of fans, presumably to achieve clearance requirements between kitchen exhaust and fresh air intakes. In most cases, we have found the transition from the extension to the fan is not designed to capture the grease inside the fan. The result is grease leaking to the outside of the fan bowl with a direct path to the roof.

We’ve all seen fans that have been maintained with a life spanning well into a second decade, but there is a typical failure with older generation fans where the sheet metal of the fan bowl terminates at the connection to the fan base. As the seal deteriorates, grease can find its way out from the entire 360 degrees of that connection and almost any band-aid fix tends to be temporary at best. Newer generation fans have improved with a built-in trough at the inside bottom of the bowl that retains the accumulating grease between cleanings.

Everything mentioned so far can be in order, and there still may be an onslaught of grease on the roof that is interpreted by house management as less than satisfactory performance from the KEC operator. This is where you can put on a CSI hat and talk about the difference between splatter grease and aspiration

“One of the values of IKECA membership is the access we have to aftermarket suppliers of grease containment solutions specifically designed for exhaust fans. Encourage your customers to invest in solutions that are engineered to handle the scope of the problem.”

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grease, and expose a little science and physics that are a part of our grease-chasing world. Splatter grease can be identified with a stain pattern like a comet with a tail. This happens when a power washer hits an accumulation of grease and sends it flying predominantly in a horizontal trajectory. Compare that with grease that is carried through the airstream of the system and is projected vertically from the fan until gravity overcomes velocity and the droplet falls to the roof. You'll find a distribution of coin size shapes predominantly in the direction from prevailing winds. This aspiration of grease is an event happening between the cleanings and not the result of tech workmanship. Properly identifying this opens the conversation to challenge issues of the fans' CFM and cleaning frequency. We all like a robust exhaust flow for the hood but more is not always better. Making changes to the airflow can involve mechanical and electrical considerations. Sometimes the simplest fix is increasing the cleaning frequency to affect the volume of aspiration.

One of the values of IKECA membership is the access we have to aftermarket suppliers of grease containment solutions specifically designed for exhaust fans. Encourage your customers to invest in solutions that are engineered to handle the scope of the problem. IKECA has many Associate Members that supply this service. Don't hesitate to reach out to them. They will help you help your customer with a fix that works and promotes your KEC operation as a part of the solution, not the problem.

Part of transforming that "perfect world" into a "business as usual" environment requires addressing all the little things that add up to making the job easier for the tech that's dealing with it night after night. For all the things that I do as the leader of my business, paying attention to how I can make our tech's jobs more easily and safely accomplished tops the list. We give bonuses to our techs that identify Code deficiencies and safety hazards. This campaign to help the customer stay on top of wear and tear maintenance and Code deficiencies can be further enhanced if there's a third-party service report required by the local Fire Authority. I've found that embracing these programs has increased the opportunities for building better relationships with the AHJ community.

As the KEC operator of choice, we're often asked to solve problems for our customers that may be outside our normal scope of work. Whether you're guiding the customer in the direction of adding grease containment devices or simply teaching them the difference between splatter and aspiration as the origin of their problem,

having the knowledge that leads the customer to the proper conclusion for the fix reaffirms your value as a subject matter expert.

Many of us grew up hearing the adage "The Customer is Always Right." Perhaps it was motivated by wanting customers to feel ultimately appreciated and valued. We know customers are not always right, but the customer is always the customer. Knowing how far you'll go to satisfy a customer are decisions you may calculate based on relationships or projections of earnings. If a customer is unwilling to sufficiently maintain the exhaust system, and they want their problems to be your problems, the best fix may be to have them find a new KEC provider. That might be a possibility that you haven't considered. ♦

Dennis Poulin, CECS, and President of R&G Vent Cleaning Services. A graduate of Arizona State University with a Bachelor's in Business Administration and Marketing. Entered the KEC industry in June of 2006, CECS certified in October 2006, and has never missed an IKECA Conference since. Currently serves as the Membership Committee Chair, member of the Board of Directors, and current IKECA VP.

Featured Articles

Using S.M.A.R.T. Management to Overcome Business Triage Issues

Dr. Brian Smith, Ph.D. / IA Business Advisors

One of the most common questions I am asked by our small business clients is “how do you affect change when people continue to make the same mistakes over and over?” When I hear this, I know three things;

1. I am dealing with *Issue Triage Management*
2. *Root Cause* is not a high priority
3. *Communication* is fractured or incomplete

Comfortable Focus

Humans fall into habits that become comfortable. In our work at IA, we call this *Comfortable Focus*, and it is simply a byproduct of being in an environment that is repetitive and busy. We all have a tendency to create shortcuts, accept minor nuisances and ignore the signs around us that there are issues. Most small business people manage from a reactive posture and when they find themselves facing an issue, it is surrounded by the other daily requirements of their job, so they triage issues to maintain workflow.

Fractured Communication

One of the common phrases we hear from people in

business related to these issues is; “it’s not my job (problem)”, or some variation of this sentiment. There is often a fear of not being liked or that we won’t be heard when we bring issues to others in our work environments. Or we may get reactions that are more aggressive or the opposite, no reaction at all. All of this stems from a breakdown of communication leading to forced triage to get past the immediate discomfort and ignoring the root cause of the deeper issue.

This cycle of issue, poor communication, triage, and ignorance ultimately leads to a failure that has a ripple effect throughout organizations; a failure that actually goes beyond individual discomfort and affects revenue or operations to a point where change becomes a



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necessity. The issue here is that like mentioned earlier, this change oftentimes is handled with a triage decision and while it may resolve an immediate business pain-point, it does not resolve the root cause and we see the issue resurface later.

Triage Management

A common example of triage management is when we have high turnover in a company. We see high turnover from people quitting to people being terminated and it is almost never due to what our client initially tells us. Triage solutions to turnover issues vary greatly from pay changes, benefit offerings to scheduling flexibility. Companies rarely look at how the position was advertised, how the person was vetted or onboarded, or how the people in the organization are treated. Each of these individually could be a root cause let alone collectively, and no change in pay, benefit, or schedule will overcome these issues long term.

The first step in resolving issues that appear to resurface is understanding that your management style is Triage-putting a Band-Aid on the issue. Looking in the mirror and facing the fact that your organization or self tends to solve immediate issues with short-term solutions will lay a foundation for you to *Slow Down* and actually employ *Root Cause Analysis* to get to the core of the issue.

Root Cause Analysis

To effectively employ *Root Cause Analysis*, you will need to allow for objective communication in your organization. This may include hearing issues you and your team are causing or contributing to. One of the things that can upset this process is self-justification or allowing for excuses to get in the way of resolution; most of us can justify our actions in the heat of a moment, but that justification only supports the triage mentality we are attempting to overcome.

When we communicate properly with ourselves and our team, the first rule is *Listen To Learn*. We can indeed listen to ourselves and identify when we are self-justifying and providing excuses for our actions. We can also support our team by allowing them to self-justify, and not engaging (communicating) objectively in a way that will lead us to the root cause of the issue, *Root Cause Analysis*.

Root Cause Analysis is generally tied to things like Technology, Industrial Issues, Engineering, and when you look at traditional Root Cause Tools, they will look complicated. When applying *Root Cause Analysis* to

small business issues, you can use these tools but generally, they are not needed.

S.M.A.R.T. as a Verb

When we teach *Root Cause Analysis* to our clients, we employ our S.M.A.R.T. management approach which is the action phase of setting S.M.A.R.T. goals. S.M.A.R.T. stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. We believe that you can apply S.M.A.R.T. to all business actions, that it is a verb in your management toolbox.

Getting to the root cause through S.M.A.R.T. is as simple as asking questions related to the business failure and ensuring that each aspect is addressed. So, for example, when a team member quits unexpectedly or fails to do their job as we anticipated and we terminate them, we need to ask questions that take us beyond the immediate action that influenced the termination.


Listen To Learn

Begin the process by asking, why the termination occurred and get specifics. If that leads to a failure such as quality of work, ask why. Each question will lead you to a new place and one must be engaged and set up to *Listen To Learn* to get beyond justification and to the real "Why". In quality issues we often ask; do you have a quality standard? How did you train your team to meet that quality standard? Did you set the proper expectation for that standard in your hiring process (advertising, vetting, onboarding)? Do you employ policies and procedures that support accountability through leadership? Do you give your team the tools to meet your standards?

Questions are the path to understanding root cause. Questions asked with a focus on *Listening to Learn* will allow us to gain an understanding of why things are happening. Asking questions in this way is not triage, it is a simpler form of *Root Cause Analysis* and it employs S.M.A.R.T. because at the end of the questioning we should be able to understand ways in which we were not Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely in how we prepared our team prior to the issues, which if we have *Listened to Learn*, will lead us to employing issue resolution that is S.M.A.R.T. and effective.

The bottom line is that any person can employ S.M.A.R.T. in an efficient way to resolve business problems. We

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Don't Miss In *This Issue*

Using S.M.A.R.T. Management to Overcome Business Triage Issues, *continued*

Dr. Brian Smith, Ph.D. / IA Business Advisors

can better communicate so that we cease relying on Triage Management to make long-term decisions. We can learn better to *Communicate* and *Listen to Learn* as we apply simple *Root Cause Analysis* to reach conclusions to those issues that seem to repeat and create stress and hold ourselves and our organizations back from reaching their full potential. ♦

Brian Smith is the Founder and Managing Partner at IA Business Advisors. IA supports clients across the United States and in 32 other countries. Brian is author of The "I" In Team Series of books, and has been a member of IKECA since 2010.



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Featured *Articles*

2022—The Year of Being Kind to Yourself

Steve Gore / KOAP



“As we enter another year of uncertainty and confusion, it’s time to reflect on how we feel and how well we have been looking after ourselves.”

So, just how has the pandemic affected our self-care?

Well, I can only speak from my own experiences and observations, but I don’t think I would be over-

dramatizing the situation if I were to say that it’s the worst I have ever seen it.

At a personal level, having had Covid and felt the debilitating effects of it and seeing my clients who have also suffered from the virus, but who are also struggling with increasingly challenging home and work lives combined with an all-pervading fear of what’s next and a desire for some form of “normality.” I believe most people are mentally struggling to cope and self-care is a topic we should all remind ourselves about and focus on daily.

The challenge as I see it is slowing down at a time when our brains are screaming try harder.

Many people I talk to feel they have let themselves or others down for various reasons and emotionally beat themselves up about it. “I failed as a parent because...”; “I am letting my co-workers down...”; “I feel like I am letting myself down...” These are all common phrases in my current coaching sessions and they all stem from low energy levels and confused priorities.

Personally, when I contracted the virus, I was surprised and scared at how fast and how hard it hit me. Within 24 hours, I was struggling to breathe, which was very scary and caused me to panic slightly at not being able to take a deep breath. I pride myself on being reasonably fit, taking long cycle rides, and being as active as I can. In fact, a few days prior to me contracting Covid, I was bragging to one of my clients that I could count on one hand the last time I had taken time off for sickness in the last ten years, and then this virus came along and

floored me.

But that was only the beginning. For four days I simply laid as still as I could, focusing on calming myself so that I could take shallow breaths. By day two, the rattle had started, so every time I breathed in, I heard a crackling sound from my lungs, which added to my anxiety.

By day four, every joint in my body ached, from my fingertips to my toes; no position was comfortable, and sleeping wasn’t an option, but my breathing improved so that was a bonus!

It was then that I realized that I couldn’t think straight. My mind just seemed to be shrouded in fog. Reading was a struggle because once I read a sentence and moved on to the next, I had forgotten the previous sentence so I had to go back, and even when I linked sentences, the context was confusing to me so I couldn’t make sense of anything.

Those that know me well know that I tend to sleep between 5 and 6 hours a night and that’s fine for me normally, but now I was lying in bed for fourteen or sixteen hours at a time and still feeling exhausted. By day nine, I started to feel physically better and so I thought “I can do something to occupy myself”. Even tidying up my office was better than lying in bed or on the sofa vegetating in front of the TV.

This was a big mistake.

I stood in my office looking at the usual mess and wondering where to start. The easiest thing to do was to pick the papers up off the floor that had somehow fallen from my desk. So, I bent down, picked up maybe five or ten pieces of paper, and then stood up and realized I was exhausted! I just needed to lie down. My mind raged against my inability to function, and so I tried to do more but once again I was just too exhausted to complete even the simplest of tasks and had to lie down, breathing like I had just run a marathon.

My body was just telling me to be gentle and kind to myself and I was fighting it, because, well that’s what you do. It’s lazy to sit around doing nothing, I have so many things to do, so many deadlines to meet, so many people to support!

Featured *Articles*

On the one hand, I knew that it was wrong to push myself, but I just couldn't stop myself from trying harder and harder. Even though I teach this every day, I saw how easy it is to get wrapped up in the outside world and deliver for and to others, that you forget to listen to your inner voice that knows you and wants to look after you and keep you safe. It's easy to miss that quiet voice that says no and convince yourself that you will slow down after this next meeting, call, or report that is so important only you can do it.

It's easy to sacrifice your time, your energy, and your well-being to support your ambition or the ambitions of others. Guilt drives our thought processes, but that guilt also drives stupid decision-making.

So, what can we do?

Being kind or gentle with ourselves is difficult, it is often thought of as a weakness or being lazy. Some think it's about pushing aside your difficult thoughts and saying, "Now I'm going to tell myself five positive things and everything will be ok," or lying to yourself to do something you like, to avoid doing work.

But that couldn't be further from the truth. When you are kind to yourself, you are actually doing something

very specific for yourself. You're noticing difficult thoughts, focusing on them, and creating a sense of psychological safety for yourself. You're creating a space in which you feel able to take risks. If you beat yourself up whenever you fail or fall short, it's naturally going to stop you from trying new things and taking chances. But when you are gentle with yourself, you know that even if you fail, you'll still like yourself. In this way, self-kindness gives you the ability to experiment, explore, and be courageous.

Remember there is power in being gentle with yourself and looking after your health and wellbeing. Being "kind" to yourself does not mean that you are not trying your best, it's simply giving yourself love and allowing yourself to go through life at a slower pace.

Research studies show that people who have greater levels of self-care tend to be more motivated, less lazy, and more successful over time. They still recognize where they've gone wrong, but rather than getting caught up in blame and judgment, they learn from their experience and adapt and change course for the next time.

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Featured *Articles*

2022—The Year of Being Kind to Yourself, *continued*

Steve Gore / KOAP

So, in our hectic lives, we must not forget that to help others or to be successful in whatever we are trying to do, just like any athlete, we need to be in the best possible shape we can, and that means our physical, psychological, and motivational energies need to be at their peak.

So, my gift to you are the top five ideas for being kind to yourself this year that I love, starting with my favorite.

1. **Create media blackout days.** The Guardian ironically published recently “News is bad for your health. It leads to fear and aggression and hinders your creativity and ability to think deeply. The solution? Stop consuming it altogether.” The truth is that not only are the devices we use to consume the news damaging our health, but the content itself is also damaging us emotionally. So, give yourself a media break, take time out from the devices and the never-ending torrent of disasters and find some calming space to re-energize emotionally and physically. Put your automatic reply on your email, turn off your phone, your tablet, and your TV, and quietly read or listen to music that soothes and inspires you.
2. **Take Care of Your Physical Health.** This may seem like an obvious one, and you’re not going to see me suggest you commit to a rigorous diet and gym routine. But going out for a walk every day is a great way to re-center your mind and improve your body’s health. When we’re feeling anxious or stressed, our physical body hangs on to all that pent-up energy and emotion. We need to clear that energy to maintain physical health, as well as emotional and mental health. Whatever you choose is up to you! Just make sure it feels good and you’re having fun while you’re at it.
3. **Practice self-gratitude.** We often find that people who practice self-gratitude and notice the things they are thankful for are happier and have a greater sense of wellbeing. Try and think of a few things in the morning or before you go to bed and write them down. Actively focus on the positives of your day. Reframing situations and looking for the positives can help strengthen your resilience.
4. **Invest in your interests.** Do things that really align with your interests and passions. If you have a

creative streak, make time for a creative outlet, or if you like being outdoors or doing sport – make time for these too. These are the things that can often get pushed off your priority list, but it’s important that you don’t compromise them at the moment and as part of your self-care regime, your personal passion projects are important.

5. **If you stumble, be your own best friend.** Don’t beat yourself up—that will damage your self-belief. Be a kind and supportive friend to yourself instead. Ask yourself: “How would my friend/parent support me and help me in this situation?” Then do things and talk to yourself like he or she would. Remember to also ask yourself what you can learn from your stumble and if there is an opportunity in this situation. Then take that new knowledge you gain and move forward once again.

2022 is going to be another challenging year, but with challenge comes opportunity. We just need to be in the best possible condition to take advantage of those opportunities. Counterintuitively this year, slow down and take care of yourself and see the great things around you that will make 2022 the best year of your life... until 2023 that is, which will be even better. ♦

Steve has extensive experience gained through a variety of Senior Management/Director and training and development roles held in the international technology private sector. He has a proven track record of delivering tangible results within the areas of leadership, negotiation, customer service, relationship management, organisational change, training, development and personal career management. He specialises in personality and emotional profiling and has been certified by the Paul Ekman International Group to help people understand their own emotional displays and how to interpret others emotions through micro expressions to help build strong relationships or sound negotiations.

Don't Miss In *This Issue*

Some Insights About Your Commercial Insurance Program

Pete McDonnell / Independent Insurance Review, LLC



In this article, I am going to share with you some insights (and suggestions) on how best to approach the next renewal of your commercial insurance program.

Did you know a business' commercial insurance annual premium typically costs between 5-8% of the annual revenues of that business and, depending on poor prior claims experience or many other

factors, that cost could be much higher.

Just think for a moment what the impact on your bottom-line profit could be if you were able to achieve an across-the-board 10% premium reduction on your next renewal?

Does this sound like the thinking of someone you might know?

"Oh yeah, we are on top of our insurance program. Our agent has been handling things for us for 5 years and they are doing a good job. They send us our renewal proposal a week or two before our renewal date and we pay the bill."

This is very common thinking for a large percentage of business owners, regardless of the types of business they are in. I believe this for two reasons. First, a company's commercial insurance is typically not a major priority of most businesses. It simply is not. It only becomes a priority when there is a problem, right? Whether that problem is the premium costs have been rising and are now considered way too high, or there have been problems with one or more claims.

Another reason is the complexity of the insurance marketplace you buy from and the need to stay updated on changes that take place in that marketplace. Very understandably, many owners are too busy running their companies to stay current about everything about their insurance.

There are plenty more reasons than the two mentioned, but let's dig into these further since there is a lot that goes into both of those reasons.

A typical commercial insurance program includes the following coverages:

- Property
- General Liability
- Commercial Auto
- Workers Compensation
- Umbrella/Excess Liability
- Professional Liability
- Pollution Liability
- Cyber Liability
- Employment Benefits Liability

Note – depending on the industry and particular type of operations involved, these coverages can vary widely.

Just the above list itself is quite daunting, isn't it? Now imagine if during the past 3-5 years your program has had five Auto, twelve Workers Compensation, two Property and three General Liability claims that your insurance companies have paid out and those payouts have made one or more of your policies unprofitable for your insurance company. Do you know what lies ahead for your next renewal if that is the case?

This is why it is so important, regardless of your past experiences with insurance agents and carriers, to both take a fresh overall look at your insurance program at every renewal and that during the year, you make sure to focus the necessary amount of your time and resources on evaluating how your current insurance program is performing.

Here are some reasons to continually evaluate your current insurance program:

- You think you may be paying too much for your insurance coverages.
- You haven't changed agents in 2-3 years and/or you haven't heard from your current agent recently.
- You have had trouble with your insurance carrier's handling of a claim.

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Don't Miss In *This Issue*

Some Insights About Your Commercial Insurance Program, *continued*

Pete McDonnell / Independent Insurance Review, LLC

- You're not sure if you have adequate insurance.
- You're planning to make an acquisition or build or add a new location within the next 12 months.
- You've had changes in:
 - Staffing and payroll levels
 - Revenues
 - You've started a new type of operations
 - New ownership, territory, and/or states you're now doing business in
 - New contracts that might require higher limits of liability than you currently carry.
 - Business Vehicles/Drivers

All of the above are a constant in most businesses, aren't they? That is why agents need to be continuously engaged with their clients to ensure their insurance policies are regularly updated to reflect their current operations. You don't want to find yourself in the position of a claim occurring and your insurance company was not aware of the exposures they were supposed to be insuring. Many times that is the leading cause of why insurance companies deny claims.

Understanding Your Insurance Company's Underwriting Processes for Renewals

Most commercial insurance companies operate in a similar manner in the processing of their renewals. Everything is sequenced in effective date order. What this means is that the processing of your renewal quotes and your agent's presentation of the quotes to you and your acceptance of them are all supposed to happen well in advance of your next renewal date.

But is that really happening? Why are the majority of renewal quotes not presented until only a week or two before the renewal date?

The truth of the matter from the insurance carrier's side of the equation is that the carrier typically initiates the underwriting and preparation of renewal quotes 60-90 days in advance of the expiring date of their client's current policies.

Once your renewal quotes are prepared the carrier immediately sends those to your agent for presentation to you. Now your agent may be also obtaining



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alternative quotes and that could be a reason for your not receiving your renewal proposal somewhere between 30-60 days prior to your renewal date but that is not always the case. That is a question I would suggest being asked of your agent.

The following are some recommended expectations for your insurance agent. In other words, these are the things the best agents are routinely doing for their clients:

- Your agent is visible – in-person visits at least once or twice per year.
- Completes full annual program reviews, including historical premium and claims analysis.
- Makes sure you are with a carrier (or carriers) that wants to write your class of business.
- Verifies your coverages are adequate - if not, suggests changes/additions.
- Every year provides 2-3 competitive proposals – in writing at renewal – and at a minimum 30 days in advance of renewal.
- Sends quarterly loss runs and explains them to you.
- Utilizes your carrier's Loss Control services, especially since you are actually already paying for these since carriers build the costs of their Loss Control services into their premium charges.
- Manages the agency's Customer Service activities to ensure they are doing everything needed to meet your satisfaction.
- Promptly answers and resolves audits, claims, and other issues.

Regarding being with carriers who want to write your class of business, this is very often the leading reason why your premiums are higher than what you believe they should be. Each insurance company has what is known as its own underwriting appetite. For instance, there are many insurance carriers who want to insure kitchen equipment cleaning accounts and will aggressively price their business to try to write those accounts. But there are also many insurance carriers who don't. That, however, doesn't mean an insurance carrier who typically doesn't entertain writing kitchen equipment cleaning accounts won't go ahead and quote it. That carrier just won't be the lowest price since that class of business isn't a target class of business for them.

This is why it is so important to have your agent present at least 2-3 optional quotes at every renewal, in addition to your renewal carrier's proposal. This is

vitaly important because even your current insurance carrier's underwriting appetite may have changed during the past year. It happens all the time.

Keep in mind, too, that each agent (and the agency they work for) generally has relationships with about 5-10 commercial insurance carriers. And of those 5-10 relationships, there may be only 2-3 carriers who are interested in quoting your class of business. If that is the case, this is a good reason to possibly entertain quotes from 1-2 other agencies at your next renewal. ♦

Pete is President of Independent Insurance Review, LLC which is an insurance consulting firm. Pete can be reached at IndependentInsuranceReview@gmail.com

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Don't Miss In *This Issue*

Coaching, Not Catching: Using Dash Cams to Protect and Train

Colleen Lyerla / Linuxup

Earlier this year Amazon installed AI-powered cameras in over half of its fleet to keep its drivers safe. It's not going so well.

According to Vice, the AI-cameras are frequently mistaking events outside of drivers' control for driver errors. "Every time I need to make a right-hand turn, it inevitably happens. A car cuts me off to move into my lane, and the camera, in this really dystopian dark, robotic voice, shouts at me," according to one of the Amazon drivers. "It's so disconcerting. It's upsetting when I didn't do anything." The owner of an Amazon delivery company said that rather than encouraging safe driving, the cameras punish drivers for acceptable driving actions or events that are outside of their control. Actions such as checking side mirrors, turning down the radio, or stopping ahead of a stop sign are interpreted as reckless.

Even worse, the incorrect data is automatically uploaded to a scoring system for drivers that determines bonuses, prizes, and extra pay. Without someone evaluating the context of logged actions, drivers are losing money and advancement opportunities. And that is a warning to other fleet companies looking to install dash cameras for safety and theft prevention. As ongoing labor struggles continue to plague many fleet-based businesses, look for solutions that will protect rather than penalize.

Don't be Amazon

Internet of Things (IoT) technology can be a dynamically useful tool for your business, but applied incorrectly can cause more harm than good. Aside from a nationwide driver shortage, the annual turnover rate for drivers is a shocking 90% according to the American Trucking Association. Constantly replacing drivers is costly in a variety of ways:

- **Lost business:** You can serve fewer customers, make fewer deliveries, and take on fewer jobs per day when you are short on drivers.
- **Increased safety issues:** Experienced drivers are safer drivers. Inexperienced drivers increase your risk of accidents and liabilities.
- **Added costs:** It costs roughly 33% of an employee's salary to find and train a replacement. With a 90% turnover rate, that's thousands of dollars a year spent spinning your wheels. (Pardon the pun.)

Do use technology proactively

The key mistake Amazon is making is their hands-off and punitive approach to AI and dashcam technology. Here are key tips to making this technology work in your favor and win over your drivers.

1. Remember AI is artificial. And not always intelligent.

It's important to remember that AI technology requires human input and will rarely account for all possible behaviors. For example, in 2018 a self-driving Uber SUV struck and killed a pedestrian. Authorities determined that the woman was jaywalking—a pedestrian behavior that was not programmed into the vehicle's AI protocols.

Whether or not your dash cameras use AI protocols, don't set them and forget them. Video footage should be reviewed by managers and with employees, and used as coaching opportunities to point out unsafe driving behaviors or praise excellent responses.

Using a GPS solution with dashcam footage has the added advantage of pairing alerts for speeding, harsh braking, etc. Combining GPS data ensures that managers have a complete picture of driving behavior and can respond appropriately and fairly.

2. Use positive reinforcement rather than punitive action

It's demoralizing for drivers to know that each mistake might result in lost bonuses or overtime. In fact, the Amazon drivers who spoke to Vice theorized that the real reason for the cameras was to save the company money in extra pay and prizes. Remember the cost of replacing employees. Don't put a system in place that automatically dings drivers.

Instead, make reviewing mistakes a team effort. Set up regular training sessions to review common driving issues you see from multiple employees. Include videos of safe responsive driving to be encouraging.

Many dash cams include a voice-activated way to



Don't Miss In *This Issue*

trigger recordings—which is also a way to engage your drivers in their own performance. Encourage them to trigger video captures when they spot risky events or interesting sights during their day.

3. Remind drivers that the cameras are there to help and protect.

It's likely drivers will be skeptical at first, but the truth is dash cameras greatly increase safety and protect your drivers' integrity. The National Surface Transportation Safety Center for Excellence (NSTSCE) found that when combined with driver coaching, dash cams reduced safety-related accidents by 52%. Footage captured can exonerate drivers from liability in an accident, or prove their innocence if the company receives random complaints about driving behavior.

Fleet-based service companies also find the footage useful in billing disputes with customers. It's one thing to show a customer arrival and departure times from GPS tracking. It's another to show them actual video footage of your crews coming and going from an establishment with equipment during a service call.

Coaching, not catching

The goal of dashcam and GPS technology is to help

your business grow and become more productive. Approaching technology with a positive attitude will help your employees understand that you aren't playing "gotcha." Demonstrate that you sincerely want to keep them safe and improve their performance, and you'll retain good employees. ♦

Colleen Lyerla writes about GPS technology, fleet management, worker productivity, and other service industry issues concerning fleet-based businesses. She is the director of marketing communications at Linxup, a leading GPS solutions provider.



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Three Secrets behind Nick Saban's Success

Eric Papp / Agape Leadership, LLC



When we see someone who has incredible success, we quickly assume that they possess gifts or talents far beyond our own. As humans, we gravitate towards complexity and mysteries.

For the University of Alabama, 2021 began with head coach Nick Saban delivering its sixth national title. A dominating performance in one of the most competitive industries:

division one college football.

There are many dynamics a head coach has to deal with. Chief among them are unrealistic expectations and pressure from boosters and fans, constantly rotating coaching staff, and the task of developing a squad of 18-year-old men into responsible adults.

How does he do it? And, crucially, what lessons can we learn and apply in our own situations? After studying Nick Saban's methods and reading articles and books about him, I believe there are three secrets to his success.

1. Focus on the lead measure

The lead measure in college football is recruiting. And Nick knows this better than anyone. In his book, "Saban: The Making of a Coach," Monte Burke recounts an exchange Saban had in 2007 with athletic director, Mal Moore, just moments after he hired him from the Miami Dolphins.

"'Mal, let me ask you something,' Saban said. 'Do you think you've hired the best coach in the country?'"

Moore was a bit taken aback by the question, not exactly sure where it was heading. 'Why Nick of course I do,' he said, while thinking to himself: For four million dollars a year, I sure as hell hope so.

'Well, you didn't. I'm nothing without my players,' Saban

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said, locking eyes with Moore. 'But you did just hire a helluva recruiter.'"

Where did Saban learn these skills? At his father's knee. From the age of 10, he was recruiting players for his dad's Pop Warner football team with lines like, "It will prepare you for high school," and "We have cheerleaders and ice cream."

This recruiting success has been visible throughout his entire college career and there are numerous examples. Frank Cignetti, the West Virginia head coach for whom Nick worked in 1978, recalled "Where Saban helped the most was off the field in recruiting." In 1980, while Saban was on staff at Ohio State, he demonstrated his ability to be not only likable and a good listener, but also a closer of top talent for the university. And on being appointed head coach at Louisiana State University (LSU), one of Nick's immediate goals was to "build a wall around the state" and keep the top talent at home to play for the Tigers. Within his second year, he was pulling in players that would help him win his first national championship as head coach.

Nick Saban knows the first step in winning college football games is finding top talent. He doesn't focus on winning; he focuses on recruiting.

So, what lead measures can you focus on?

- Want more sales?
Measure the quality of sales conversations you have on a weekly basis.
- Want to lose weight?
Measure your daily intake of calories or your weekly training sessions.

Selecting a lead measure to focus on improves your chances of success. It is all too easy to become overwhelmed by the complexity of your goals, and the constant pressure we put on ourselves measuring where we are compared with where we want to be is distracting.

2. Focus on "Process Thinking"

I know, this sounds boring. Who wants to focus on the daily grind? Isn't it much more attractive to dream about your goals?

Saban first introduced process thinking to his team while head coach at Michigan State. He came across a psychiatry professor named Lionel "Lonny" Rosen who helped Saban and his players focus on one thing at a time.

The concept is to focus on what can immediately be done and let go of the outcome. By focusing on the process, the outcome will take care of itself.

With Saban and Lonny, the goal was to get the players to a high level of focus for each play. Having the players focus for seven seconds — the average time of a play — and focusing on each quarter, paid off.

This approach was on display when Nick's Michigan State team took down a top-ranked Ohio State team. Even though they were down at the half, Nick nor his players showed any sign of concern. They came out focused on each play and eventually won the game.

Saban still continues to focus on the "process". During the football season, reporters will try to bait him with questions about Alabama's title hopes. Nick always finds a way not to answer, but instead steers the conversation right back to his next opponent.

What would happen if you started to "let go" of the result and increased your focus on the process?

Chances are that you would get to your goal faster. This type of thinking is similar to "deliberate practice," where you think about what you are doing, analyze and record your progress, and constantly look for ways to improve.

To have more of a process approach, start to see things as a process and not a result. You can apply this to almost any situation. For example, after a storm, I go into my backyard to pick up debris. Normally, I just do it. Recently, I caught myself thinking about the process, where I would start, and the most effective path around the yard. I find that process thinking makes for better decisions.

3. Success is an inclined treadmill, not a mountain top

Moments after Nick Saban won his first national championship game, he called in his starting quarterback Matt Mauck and star wide receiver Michael Clayton to ask them what they were going to do next year. (There is something to be said about enjoying success and from what I've observed, Nick's gotten better at this.) This may seem way too soon to think about the future, but for Nick, he doesn't see success the way most people do. He sees it as ongoing. Typically 24 hours

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Don't Miss In *This Issue*

Three Secrets behind Nick Saban's Success, *continued*

Eric Papp / Agape Leadership, LLC

after winning the national championship, Nick is back on the recruiting trail. That is one of the reasons he's had the #1 recruiting class since 2008--he is relentless.

In addition, he views each year as a clean slate. What his team did the previous year is in the past, and now he is starting all over again.

How many of us have had success in some area of our life, got comfortable and complacent, and then stopped doing all the things that got us there? And then we wonder what happened. To achieve continual success, we must combat the daily thoughts of our past accomplishments.

Something I often reflect on before every professional speaking engagement is, "Eric, no one cares how good your last program was. They care about what you can do for them right now."

If we can start to view success as an experience and not a goal, we may experience it more often. ♦

Eric Papp founded Agape Leadership, LLC, an intellectual capital firm focusing on leadership for business performance. He has a successful history of delivering proven strategies for being productive and increasing performance in a complex world.

Since 2010 he has worked with thousands of managers and is evaluated as one of North America's top management trainers.





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