

## Facilitator — August/September 2015



### CRFP Spotlight

Vance Arndt, Michael Helm, Daren Knight, Vance Arndt, Michael Helm, Daren Knight

Get to know some of our recent CRFP designees! We are excited to have had more of our members join this distinguished group. We credit that to their knowledge and experience, as well as them taking advantage of our online learning modules.

Vance Arndt, CRFP — Facility Manager with Longhorn Steakhouse  
Michael Helm, CRFP — Senior Facilities Manager at The Habit Burger Grill  
Daren Knight, CRFP — Director of Construction and Facilities at Wild Wing Café

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Arndt: I enjoy helping restaurants solve problems. There are a lot of challenges each day and many of them require unique solutions. I like the challenge of identifying what the real problem is and then figuring out the most cost-effective way to solve the problem.

Knight: The thrill of seeing a new restaurant come to life, either out of the ground or an existing shell. Nothing gives me a greater sense of pride than pulling a project through the construction process, with all of its potential surprises, to opening the restaurant. Seeing a beautiful new facility with a dining room full of smiling guests makes it all worthwhile.

Helm: I love solving problems and working directly with operations to resolve store issues. I like getting out in the field to visit our stores and doing site and roof inspections, meeting with our operation team members and working with our contractors on larger cap-x projects. Every day is different; every job is different and the job keeps you alert and always thinking.

What other companies have you worked for prior to your current position?

Helm: I owned and operated an air conditioning, refrigeration and plumbing company in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., from 1982 to 2005, and then I worked for Morrissey Construction building ground-up restaurants as a Project Manager. After that, I was with RealMex restaurants, first in the construction department then in Facilities as a Senior Facilities Manager. I left there in 2012 and accepted the position as Senior Facilities Manager at The Habit Burger Grill.

Arndt: I worked for Pizza Hut for 22 years prior to working for Longhorn Steakhouse. I spent my first 10 years at Pizza Hut in operations and the last 12 years as a Facility Manager. I have worked for Longhorn Steakhouse for five years.

Knight: I was the Maintenance Supervisor for KFC from 1997 to 2002. Then I was a Facility Manager for Bojangles Restaurants from 2002 to 2009. Then Bojangles decided to promote me (yay!) to a Construction Project Manager in 2009. I left Bojangles in 2013 to become the Construction Manager for Firebirds International until 2014. I was offered the position of Director of Construction and Facilities for Wild Wing Café in 2014, and, of course, I jumped on that. In this position, I oversee all new constructions, remodels and facility repairs.

When you were new to the industry, what was the most surprising thing you learned about the restaurant world?

Knight: The non-stop, hectic environment. This will date me, but I remember getting my first pager and being told to keep it with me at all times. I was “supposed” to work Monday through Friday so when the pager started beeping at 11:30 p.m. on the very first Saturday, I was completely thrown off. That’s where the fun started and when I learned there was no Monday to Friday in the restaurant world.

Eighteen years later, I’m finally starting to get used to that; no, not really.

Helm: Something will break every day, and you never close the store to repair it. You work around it—nights, early mornings, what-ever it takes to complete the task.

Arndt: There are a lot of things that facility managers are responsible for that have a huge impact on how a restaurant operates. If you are doing your job, most people don’t recognize the things you do. When a restaurant does have a major problem, it can cause a restaurant to close, which affects our guests and employees, who don’t get to work and earn an income.

What is your all-time favorite movie?

Knight: This may have negative effects on my “man card,” and I have several go-to movies, but I would have to say that “The Way, Way Back” is my all-time favorite. The bond that the two main characters (Owen and Duncan) form is heart warming. The movie also proves that there doesn’t need to be excessive bad language, guns and explosions for a movie to be entertaining. Not that I’m against guns, explosions or bad language. (Buying back a few “man card” points!) I have watched “The Way, Way Back” probably 100 times and have yet to get bored with it, which speaks volumes for me.

Arndt: “A Few Good Men” Helm: “Rudy.” It’s about hard work and determination. It’s old school but still a classic.

What is the most challenging situation you’ve ever faced in a facility or on the job? How did you handle it?

Arndt: I think that hurricanes or any big natural disasters are the biggest challenge. I handled the restaurants in Florida when we had three hurricanes back to back to back. There are so many challenges when you are trying to fix your restaurants while also dealing with permits, utilities, lack of supplies, lack of contractors, no access to fuel, hotels, etc. Knight: There have been several, but one stands out. One of the most visible, highest-profit restaurants in our system burned. It was a complete loss, and we think it all started with a forgotten cigarette in the dry storage area. That just screams fire, right? The building had to be taken to the shell and built back. The kicker was that it had to be built back to the exact standards, specs and codes as the original 2006 plans. Otherwise we would have had to permit the entire project all over from scratch, and zoning standards had changed, which would have caused us to rebuild and lose parking spaces. Building back to an older set of plans sounds easy enough, until you start factoring in electrical code changes, equipment changes, the unbelievably condensed timeline and every other external force conceivable that causes the project to lose time. Then it becomes a challenge.

The approach to this project was a systematic one that began with cleaning the shell and removing the residual fire and smoke odor. The decision was made to allow the general contractor to handle the logistics of the cleaning and odor removal, which worked well to bridge any potential gaps from different companies performing the needed steps. The insurance company wanted all the equipment removed and cleaned, then brought back to the restaurant. The cost of this alone was astronomical, so we were able to convince the insurance company to replace the equipment. This created another hurdle due to the fabrication lead-time of the equipment, but with a little luck, a lot of pleading and being blessed with a great equipment supplier, we pulled that off, too. We really had to call in a lot of favors, but were also able to get this building opened and selling product in six weeks. Even though I have since moved on to another brand, I still smile whenever I drive past that restaurant and think about all the obstacles that were overcome to get that restaurant re-opened.

My favorite work-related app is?

Arndt: Mapping apps and weather apps.

Helm: Google Drive. You can access all your information, whether it's files, reports or as-built drawings at your office or on the roof. It also has the ability to lock, so it remains private.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Helm: Work hard, study hard and results will prevail. Success is earned, not entitled. Arndt: Treat people the way you want to be treated. Knight: When I was in high school, a poster that hung in the vocational school said, "If you don't have time to do something right the first time, when will you ever have time to do it over again?" That simple question has stuck with me all these years, and I have used it time and time again. Since then I have always approached each task with the mindset that I never wanted to see that task, or piece of equipment, again. I learned to avoid cutting corners at an early age, and it has benefitted me greatly since. The best way to get an unpleasant task behind you is to get it done right.

Who is the most impressive person you have ever met?

Helm: My Uncle Art, who was a scientist for NASA through the 1960s.

Knight: Through all my years in the military and my time in restaurants, I have had the pleasure of meeting lots of impressive people. I have learned good habits from some and recognized habits I didn't want to pick up from others, but they all made a large impact in my life in some fashion.

After struggling with who I wanted to bestow the title of the "most impressive person" on, I finally came to the conclusion that person is my wife, Wanda. She has put up with me through all of my years of working late, long hours. She is there to support me during moments when I wanted to pull my hair out because a restaurant waited until 9:30 p.m. on Sunday to let someone know the freezer had been down all day. She understands that I travel on a fairly regular basis and sometimes have to come through the house for a "reload" of clean laundry. She endures all of my "ways" with grace and dignity. She is my balance, and I honestly do not believe I would have achieved what I have without her being part of the whole process. Without her being there to guide me, calm me and make me see things through different eyes, my path may have gone in a different direction.

To what would you attribute your success in achieving your CRFP?

Arndt: I worked with a lot of my contractors over the years and tried to listen and ask a lot of questions. The companies that I have worked for have always done a great job of bringing in experts in different areas and teaching the facilities teams. The RFMA educational seminars and the CRFP educational modules and practice tests are excellent.

Helm: Years of hands-on field work as a contractor and working with a great facilities team, where all knowledge is shared between the team members. All of us have our strengths and weaknesses, but we are always one team. Also, I studied hard for the test.

Would you recommend attaining a CRFP to other colleagues? Why?

Arndt: Absolutely. It provides the opportunity to prove to yourself that you have the knowledge to be successful as a facility manager in the restaurant industry.

Helm: Yes, I would recommend it. You gain a huge amount of knowledge in the process. It gives you pride in your accomplishments and to be recognized by your peers.

Knight: Absolutely! CRFPs are a small but growing group of people who are recognized for having in-depth working knowledge of the restaurant industry from years of experience. There are many out there that consider themselves experts in the restaurant facilities industry, but few actually wear the badge of one.

What do you do for fun in your spare time?

Arndt: Playing and coaching ice hockey, golf, boating, camping and spending time with my wife, Donna, and sons, Dylan, 17, and Dalton, 13.

Helm: I love to spend time with family. We have a fishing boat docked at Dana Point Harbor.

Knight: Taking my pontoon boat to the lake and just chilling is probably my favorite thing to do. There's nothing quite like floating around lazily on the lake with my favorite beverage to bring things back into perspective, provided the pager—or now the cell phone that is forever beside me—doesn't decide to interfere with my chill! We all know restaurants, and any time you can get to unwind is valuable. But I'm not complaining; restaurants have been very good to me, and I have enjoyed my journey.