

## Facilitator — June/July 2014



## CRFP Spotlight

*Jack Kortekamp*

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

I have been on the vendor side of the restaurant business for the past 37 years. I spent a number of years in the specialty chemical business and always have provided services and solutions for restaurant chains. I have been with Roto-Rooter for 12 years and have been with our parent company, Chemed Corp., for 25 years.

I can assure you I have been fortunate; I keep showing up and trying to grow the business and they keep me around! I work with people I truly treasure: Tom Sullivan, Charisse Luckey, Carol Anderson, Mary Whitt and many others in our home office in Cincinnati. I am a very lucky man.

After spending so much time in restaurants, do you cook? If so, what is your best dish?

I am the designated breakfast cook in my home. Since I travel about 30 weeks each year, I don't have time to learn anything else, but I have mastered all types of eggs, omelets, pancakes, waffles and any other breakfast food you can name.

What was your first car?

Believe it or not, it was a company car. I grew up in a middle-class suburb on the west side of Cincinnati, where the emphasis was on education and your future. There was no time for cars, and as badly as I wanted one, it always fell upon deaf ears with my parents. Education was considered more important, and somehow through the generosity of my friends in high school and college, I was able to go everywhere I wanted to go.

What is your all-time favorite movie?

I have a lot of friends and grew up in the 60s and 70s, so one of my favorite movies is the "The Big Chill," which reminds me a lot of the types of interactions I have had with many close friends from high school and college over the years.

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

By far the most challenging is restructuring a business, and I have done it many times. It always comes down to choices that have a profound impact on someone's life, and I am always cognizant of that.

First of all, if you are operating a business properly you do not have to restructure since you are making the proper calls and adjustments to keep the business profitable and growing. It is when the business has been ignored that you have to restructure. Second, if someone doesn't fit into the future of the organization, you are doing them a favor by allowing them to seek another opportunity elsewhere. Things go wrong when it is a surprise to the person when you present them with a dismissal. They should be well aware of these issues and should not be shocked by your decision.

It is rewarding to watch a business thrive after getting it back on track. Lastly, if you work equally as hard when the business is in trouble as you do when it is growing, you will not have to worry about much. That is the key.

If you weren't in the restaurant facility industry, what you would be doing?

I am doing what I always wanted to do: working in a business-to-business environment. Over the years, I have worked in many industries, and I always find my way back to the restaurant industry. They are great people, and so many of us have found a home with RFMA. I have been able to feed and educate my family, travel and make a bunch of friends along the way. Why would I want to do anything else?

What was your very first job?

I was an institutional sales rep for the Campbell's Soup Co. I received good training, but it was not the career I wanted, and I was looking at a move to a different city every three years. This was not what I looked for in a business career, so I made a change to the marketing world with a large specialty chemical company that was a division of where I still work today: Chemed Corp.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Early in my business career, I worked with a department administrator who taught me how to deal with people. Her name is Ellie, and she showed me more about people than I could have ever learned in college. She taught me that almost all people are naturally shy and that you have to make the first effort each and every day to meet people and build a relationship with them. She also encouraged me to meet someone new each day to build a network of people who would support me in any organization. Her advice was put yourself out there; if they reject you, it is their problem not yours! I still practice most of what she taught me about dealing with people, and it still works today.

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

When RFMA was formed more than 10 years ago, a vision was put forth to start the process of building a program that would enhance the career of the restaurant facility professional. We started with a group of people and then it became a reality when Debi Kensell joined RFMA. Many hours were spent researching how certification programs had advanced the careers and professions of people in other industries. We realized that as fast as RFMA was growing, we could meet this goal.

I have to give credit to the people in the CRFP committee for working countless nights and weekends to finish the questions and conference calls that encompass the review and exam process. They are still an integral part of RFMA leadership, and are why we have this program: Debi, Curt Sawan, Angela Hughes, Rod Towns, Bob Fonville, Maria Johnson, Gary Richert, Joshua Rains, Bill Wallace, Russell Subjnske and Sean Downey.

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

Absolutely. Today in business, if you are not learning, you are dying. If you want to move ahead in our industry, why not try to achieve the highest and only certification achievement available to us?

Each year, we have a breakfast at the RFMA Conference and recognize the new and returning CRFP recipients. As I look around that room, I am impressed by the quality of the people who have attained the designation. There is not a person in the room who does not know their stuff. If you are able to challenge yourself and pass the exam, no one can take that away from you. Anything worthwhile takes work, so set your goal, start studying and show the industry you can earn your CRFP.

What has been the most significant change in the restaurant industry, and how has it affected your job?

The effect our economy and society has had on the casual dining industry is probably one of the areas in which I have seen the most change in recent years. It has affected and will continue to affect us since so many of our careers and futures depend on the health of casual dining as the core business within our industry. I am confident that we will adjust and the restaurant market will adapt to these trends, and we will come out as vibrant and healthy as ever.

It was also painful to watch the recession of 2008 bore down on our economy and many of our fellow RFMA members and friends lost their jobs. However, in most cases as I look back six years later, they are all doing fine and back working or doing better than they were before the downturn.

What do you do for fun in your spare time? What little spare time I have is spent with my very patient wife of 37 years (Rita) and my children (Liz, Bob and Chris) and my grandchildren (Jenna, Bryce and Casey), all of whom I love very much. Family comes first and when I was young I set out to be a good father, husband and businessman.

I am also a runner and golfer and am lucky to have many hundreds of friends in the Cincinnati area and beyond. I play golf with a number of high school friends each Friday. (We even have a website [www.fridaynitegolf.com](http://www.fridaynitegolf.com). Check it out!)

What's the one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you?

When I was 6 years old, I was very ill for a number of years. My family doctor was afraid that I had a serious health issue that involved my immune system. I had everything from colds to the flu to staph infections and pleurisy. Our doctor told my mom that he wanted her to put me on a swim team. He said, "That cold water and exercise will either cure him or kill him." Since that day more than 50 years ago, I have not had many sick days. I miss a day because of sickness every 20 years or so. This is a testament to the power of exercise.