

# THE JOURNEY

## President's Message

### Core Values

**Adaptability:** We ensure the success of our association by embracing positive change and by nurturing diversity, creativity and visionary

Webster's New World Dictionary defines adaptability as "able to adjust oneself to new or changed circumstances."

IAAP goes considerably further with its definition by stating that we ensure the success of our association by "embracing positive change and by nurturing diversity, creativity and visionary thinking."

Let's put adaptability into a light that we can all relate to. You have a meeting tonight and your presenter has just called to tell you that she is sick and cannot come.

Adaptability is coming up with alternatives on short notice.

I, personally, have been the ailing presenter who was forced to call and say I couldn't make it the next day. Luckily for me, instead of cancelling their chapter meeting, the board of the Buffalo Chapter was able to find someone who could offer a program in my place.

I have also been the one who was called upon at the last minute by the Greater Bronx Chapter when their presenter couldn't make it because of a family emergency.

Adaptability is being able to "think on your feet." It is being able to figure out how to put the square peg into the round hole.

Adaptability is being able to look at a situation that everyone else sees as a huge negative and being the one who not only sees the positive aspect of it but gets everyone else to see it as well.

Adaptability.

Is your picture in the dictionary under that definition?

Bianca M. Constance  
President, New York State Division

### 2009-2010 Division Officers

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## Featured Chapter: Buffalo

Buffalo Chapter is the oldest chapter in New York State Division having been established on September 13, 1946. We are currently the largest chapter in New York State Division at 120 members. In its heyday, Buffalo Chapter was massive in size and far surpassed the number of members we have today. On September 27, 2009, we experienced the loss of 96-year old member Lois Anne Cook who we believe to have been one of our last remaining charter members.

We were proud to have hosted PSI's Convention in July 1997 with the theme of "Bridges to Opportunity." During that same convention our own Gerri Kozlowski CPS was installed as 1997-98 International President. It was an exciting time for Buffalo Chapter!

Over the years, we've been host to six NYSD Annual Meetings. The last was in 2007 with the theme of "Feel the Heat."

As with many chapters, our membership has dwindled due to member lifestyles and time constraints and, most recently, the economy. Despite this, we continue to remain positive about our growth and strive to offer our members quality educational programs and leadership opportunities.

Our monthly topics this year have been informative and relevant. This year's programs range from program management to cultural diversity. In addition, in September, we were honored to welcome NYSD's Vice President Jennie Barchet who presented "Practicing Safe Stress" and Buffalo Chapter's own Vice President Kim Stahl who presented IAAP's "Succession Planning" presentation to the membership.

Our most ambitious Chapter meeting will be our joint Chapter meeting with the American Association of Safety Engineers (ASSE) who will present "Office Safety and Ergonomics" during our April Chapter meeting. That same evening will be our Executive Recognition Night where we will showcase our Chapter to our members' executives. Each executive will receive a brief history of IAAP focusing on its importance in the community at their table setting.

Working with a limited program budget makes for a challenge but one that is not unattainable. By reaching out to our membership and seeking speakers from their places of employment and researching other organizations' chapter meetings, we've been able to bring in relevant topics and excellent speakers for small monetary charitable donations.

A recurring comment that I hear from our speakers and some of our guests is "I've never heard of IAAP. How long have you been around?" It's great to have them at the chapter meetings to show them what we are all about.

Our fundraising efforts have been quite fruitful and continue to help us keep the Chapter finances healthy. We've profited from the sale of Peapod Chocolates and Dee Dee's No Bake Cheesecake mixes. Our latest endeavor will be a Buffalo Chapter cookbook!

### 58<sup>th</sup> New York State Division Annual Meeting

This year, Flower City Chapter will be our host on May 21-23, 2010.

We will be networking, learning, networking and having fun. Have I mentioned networking? So, have you made your plans yet to attend?

Next month, we head downstate and visit with Queens County Chapter.

The annual fundraiser this year was a comedy show through Rob's Comedy Playhouse which included a 50/50 drawing and basket auction. Despite slow ticket sales, we surprised ourselves with a modest profit and consider the event to have been a smashing success.

Buffalo Chapter has been doing its part to give back to the community. Our members have contributed to some amazing and incredible organizations this year: Canine Helpers for the Handicapped (training dogs to assist people with disabilities to lead more independent and secure lives), Compass House (providing safe shelter and services for runaway and homeless youth) and International Institute of Buffalo's Refugee Resettlement Program (assisting refugees with immediate critical needs). These are just a few and don't include the countless others that Buffalo Chapter has reached out to in the past.

Our members continue to give back to our members as well. Vicky Wienke CPS DTM continues to offer her Speechcraft Workshop to our members at a nominal cost. The six-week public speaking course is held at Vicky's home where she provides invaluable tips to our members giving them the confidence they need to get up in front of a Chapter meeting. While Karen Thompson CPS was unemployed, she held the "Monthly Unemployed Admins Coffee Break" meetings. The meetings were for those members who had lost their jobs and discussion revolved around possible job opportunities and improving job-hunting techniques. They'd exchange successes, failures and their frustrations. In Karen's words, "Sometimes just knowing that you are not alone and others have experienced these same issues, gives you that extra confidence to re-focus on the task at hand." These are wonderful examples of members guiding and lifting up other members. It's what being an IAAP member is all about!

We were honored this Chapter year to have two of our members receive Northeast District's "Going the Extra Mile" (G.E.M.) award. Sylvia Bigler CPS received the G.E.M. award for her newsletter proofreading skills. The award letter read in part: "Sylvia exemplifies the tenets of the award with her grammatical and proofreading attention to detail, permitting the newsletter to be published as a proud and correct symbol of the Chapter." We are grateful for Sylvia's keen eye for detail! Our other G.E.M. award recipient was Gretchen Bingham CPS, a member since 1983. She has never missed a Chapter meeting and is at every meeting to greet and check in members at the registration table without fail. It was wonderful to surprise these members with the presentation of these awards! We are grateful to have these "gems" as members.

We have a couple of new and exciting endeavors that have been or will be entered into!

Buffalo Chapter now has a website sponsor. CityMade is an online gift basket company offering locally made items such as Anchor Bar Wing Sauce and Weber's Mustard. The Chapter receives 20% of all sales made through the CityMade website. Go to Buffalo Chapter's website to browse the site!

We currently have a solid Student Chapter through Bryant & Stratton. We are lucky to have Bryant & Stratton in our Chapter and, in particular, having Debbie Franklin, Buffalo Chapter member and Bryant & Stratton instructor, as an advocate for our Chapter. She has proctored many, many CPS/CAP certification exams at Bryant & Stratton over the years and has been a staunch proponent of membership in IAAP as well as the importance of certification. In an effort to bring in more new members, we've begun investigating the establishment of another Student Chapter. Two institutions that we are looking into are Erie County Community College and Empire State College. These could prove to be potential treasure troves of prospective student members for us.

We are confident that we will continue to remain a vibrant and innovative Chapter by relying upon the experience and knowledge of our seasoned members and putting into action the fresh ideas of our new members. With these ingredients, I know that good things will continue to happen every day for Buffalo Chapter!

Debbie Frederiksen  
President, Buffalo Chapter  
2008-2009 Member of Excellence

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## Beware The Energy-Sucking Idiot: How to Deal with Difficult Coworkers

By: Michael Essany

If there is anything more frustrating than working in an office full of coworkers who seem to know it all, it's working in an office those who seem to know too little - about their jobs, their responsibilities, and the established social norms of a civilized society, not to mention the professional workplace.

Five years ago I interviewed reality television mega producer Mark Burnett, the creator of Survivor, who shared his belief that aspiring professionals in any field must always beware the "energy-sucking idiots." This less-than-complimentary description fits anyone who drains the focus, passion, and vitality of others.

**Spotting an Energy-Sucking Idiot:** Similar to the process which comedian Jeff Foxworthy uses for rednecks, there is no shortage of warning signs that one is an energy-sucking idiot. If you blabber incessantly and can't lend an open ear to anything, you might be an energy-sucking idiot. If you can never meet deadlines and always derail others' projects in the process, you might be an energy-sucking idiot. If you bad-mouth any idea that didn't spring full bloom from your brow, you might be an energy-sucking idiot.

**Build a Buffoon Buffer:** Coping with the energy-sucking idiots that share our workspace requires building buffers between their actions and our work. Whether the "buffer" means politely setting ground rules or blatantly cutting yourself off from the irritating behavior, there are steps that can and should be taken to mitigate stress and minimize distractions.

**Tag 'em and bag 'em:** Ignoring them won't remove the anxiety they cause or eliminate the interruptions they create. Instead, make a conscious effort to identify the situations in which they are at their most upsetting, distracting, or irritating. Find subtle ways of limiting your exposure to or interaction with those individuals in these situations.

**Don't provoke the behavior you wish to avoid:** To be polite, we often patiently wait for the office chatterbox to complete his story about a funny thing that happened at taxidermy class. When you have a project to complete or a report to finish, it is perfectly acceptable to excuse yourself from such a "riveting" story so that you can finish your work. By not allowing your coworker to tell his tale, you have politely extricated yourself from an uncomfortable situation and safeguarded your focus from a nagging workplace distraction.

**Keep it professional:** It's important to demand the same professionalism of ourselves that we demand of others. When an annoying colleague aggravates you to the point where some corrective response is warranted, be sure that the action you take is handled with utmost professionalism.

**Avoid blowback:** Blowback is the unintended consequences of an action taken. Responding to an annoying coworker by sending memos up the chain of command about your frustrations, could brand you a "weak link" on the team who is incapable of "playing well with others." If workplace frustrations escalate to the point where voicing a complaint is necessary, wrangle several other coworkers who share your frustrations and collectively voice them to management.

**Confront the problem and its cause:** If you can, nip it in the bud the first chance you get.

**The Ugly Truth:** There are times when we become the dreaded energy-sucking idiot - a scenario born of our openness to critiquing everyone else's shortcomings but never our own.

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## Ten Smart Leadership Questions for 2010

By: [Gayle Lantz](#)

If you're like most business leaders, you spent much of 2009 feeling down and just about out thanks to the dire economic situation. Odds are you grappled with many new challenges, uncertainties, and 'don't want to, but have to' decisions. It was a difficult year—period.

Now 2010 is here and we're in the early days of an economic recovery. It's time to take the bull by the horns. Smart leaders will bypass the predictable New Year's resolutions and instead start '10 with 10 essential questions:

- 1. What matters most?** The good news is, there's no right or wrong answer to this one. What was most important a year or two ago may not be the driving force in your business today. Press the reset button and, together with your leadership team, clarify priorities and commit to keeping them in focus.
- 2. What is one problem that I can turn into an opportunity?** No need for rose-colored glasses—just view a current challenge through the lens of opportunity. Think about past successes in the business and figure out how to apply those skills to the issue at hand. Remember, you grow by building on strengths, not 'fixing' weaknesses.
- 3. What do my employees need to hear from me?** Be careful about sending the message that you need people to hear. Look at things from your employees' point of view—if they don't feel understood, they won't listen to you anyway—and resist the urge to tell them how they 'should' think or feel. Also, inspiration doesn't come only from motivational speeches to the masses. It should happen more informally, too.
- 4. What is our customers' greatest pain?** Be relentless about knowing and meeting that need. Skip the complicated surveys. Instead, pick up the phone and ask. Listen and understand first—then get busy offering solutions.
- 5. What new business relationships will I pursue?** New opportunities come from new relationships. Inside and outside your industry, seek out opportunities where there is potential for mutual benefit—not just 'what's in it for me?' Remember, too, that even in these boom days of social media, significant business relationships begin with real dialogue—not a Tweet.
- 6. How will I be more strategic?** Skip the SWOT analysis. Strategic planning isn't an event—it's a discipline. Get serious about setting direction, always starting with a big-picture view of the possibilities. Resist the urge to discuss and deal with tactics until you're clear on what you want to accomplish. Even then, don't check strategy off your list—put it into daily practice.
- 7. How can I make swift yet smart decisions?** Now more than ever, you can't afford to over-analyze. Clear the clutter—the 'mind clutter' that plagues even the best leaders—and make way for swift, smart decision-making. Hint: Slow down your thinking on the front end—during the planning process—so you can make faster and better decisions later.
- 8. What leadership skill can—and should—I get better at?** Your personal effectiveness affects the success of the business. Pick the leadership skill that most needs your attention—listening, coaching, problem-solving, and so forth—and commit to improvement. Small changes really can make a big difference; just ask your team and others on the receiving end.
- 9. How will I recognize success?** You won't know if the business is on the right path if you haven't first determined some key indicators. What's more, not all measures of success are quantitative, so also consider how you'll know when a result 'feels right.'
- 10. What is my biggest fear, and how will I face it?** Name it—and claim it. If you don't, it can be damaging, even deadly, to you and the business. After all, what you resist, you empower. Own your fear—before it owns you—and decide how you'll confront it.

New Year, new thinking. If you ask smart leadership questions, you'll come up with smart answers. Happy 2010!

### About the Author

#### Gayle Lantz

Gayle Lantz is founder and president of the leadership consulting firm WorkMatters, Inc. ([www.workmatters.com](http://www.workmatters.com)). She is author of *Take the Bull by the Horns: The Busy Leader's Action Guide to Growing Your Business...and Yourself* (WorkMatters Press).

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## Professionalism – What Is It and How Do I Get It?

By: Diane Rockwell Wetmore, New York State Division Treasurer

I've been an office worker for my entire thirty-four year career. During that time, my jobs have covered a wide range of duties from accounts receivable, billing, office equipment trainer, to babysitter and buyer for the "honor" candy box. In the middle of my career, I took a five year break to be home with my children. This break just so happened to coincide with the explosion of the personal computer usage into the world of office technology.

When I went back to work, I didn't know what Word Perfect© was let alone how to use it. Thank goodness there was a Xerox© memory typewriter at my desk. At least I knew how to use a memory typewriter, I had trained customers on a Canon in my last job. After a while, I taught myself enough to get by day to day but when I was challenged to change the way I did a task, I needed to do research to find a better way. Once I was comfortable enough with the job, I found that technology skills were not enough to be efficient and succeed in my job.

My boss and co-workers would often toss around the word "professionalism" and I found it to be a nebulous thing. They would often tell me that something I did was unprofessional or that something someone else said was unprofessional. I kept asking myself, "What is professionalism and how do I get it? How do I know what is professional and what is not?" So I went on a quest. I started looking things up on the Internet and reading everything I could find. It took me quite a while to finally "get" the concept.

What I concluded is that professionalism is not an action or an activity, it's an attitude. It's a maturity level, a calmness, a detachment from the politics and gossip and a concentration on the job. Being a professional means you've elevated yourself to a higher standard than people who are just working a job. You are confident in your skills and training to know that even during a crisis, you can get the job done or have the right connections to make sure a job gets done. Joining IAAP shows your commitment to being professional. Serving on a committee, chairing a committee, running for chapter or division office shows your dedication to your career, not your job, but your career. Most members will stay members even when they change jobs. So the job is not the end-all, be-all of your career. The body of work is.

At each job, I kept a sample of my work and took it with me when I left. I built a portfolio going back thirty years showing how my work has grown and evolved. It helps show my commitment to my profession and an office professional. In my current position, if things go wrong on a particular day and my co-workers are all stressed out and running around. I react calmly, discuss the problem, weigh the options, and we come up with the best solution at the time. They will remark about how calm I am and how things don't bother me. They do bother me, but not on a personal level. It's a professional problem; I try to solve it in a professional manner. I'm confident that I have the proper skills and know the steps to take to resolve a problem. At this point in my career, I've seen what can happen and have experienced several ways to handle it and decided how I want to handle it that stays true to my personality, ethics, and morals.

My former boss used to say, "I can teach skills, I can't teach attitude." Professionalism is an attitude. But it's one you CAN learn by watching, reading, attending classes, and participating in IAAP. I would not be the professional I am today without my membership in IAAP. I have learned many things coming up through the ranks. Each project, committee, chairmanship, and office taught me a valuable skill and enhanced my career.

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## Certification News

As many of you already know, preparing for the certification exams requires a lot of study and a lot of grit and determination. Listed below are the three newest certified members from New York State Division as well as the five members who recently recertified. This is from the November exams.

Please offer these hard-working members your heartiest congratulations when you see them next!

**Certified:**

Elizabeth McGinn CPS, *Division Member-At-Large*  
Stacey E. Thomas-Van Alstyne CPS, *Capital District Chapter*  
Penny L. Tompkins CPS, *New York City Chapter*

**Recertified:**

Rosemarie Martinez CPS, *New York City Chapter*  
Virginia C. Kitani CPS/CAP, *Queens County Chapter*  
Jennie E. Barchet CPS/CAP, *Flower City Chapter*  
Sharon W. Nusbickel CPS/CAP, *Flower City Chapter*  
Barbara Russo CPS/CAP, *Syracuse Chapter*

## Opportunity Knocks. Do You Answer?

Opportunities appear where you least expect them; and especially when you are not even looking for them.

In mid-November, I received an email from an organization called AMC International, inviting me to speak at their Global Congress for Executive Assistants & Office Professionals 2010. The Congress was taking place February 24-26, 2010, in Johannesburg, South Africa. They found my information on the New York State Division Website! Talk about the power of the Internet!

I received permission from my company to go to South Africa and have spent the past two months preparing not one presentation but two! Needless to say, it has been a very busy time for me.

Judie Yannarelli CPS/CAP put me in touch with a local admin who has been assisting in the process of chartering a chapter-at-large in Johannesburg, South Africa. The process is complete; the paperwork all done. When I leave this Sunday for South Africa, I will be representing IAAP as this chapter is launched.

I cannot even begin to tell you how excited I am to be taking this incredible, once-in-a-lifetime journey. I will do my best to bring back lots of pictures of the Congress and of the launching of the chapter-at-large. I only ask that you keep me in your thoughts and prayers.

Bianca Constance  
President, New York State Division  
2008-2009 Member of Excellence

Visit us online at our new home at [www.iaap-newyorkdivision.org](http://www.iaap-newyorkdivision.org).

Tell us what you think of it!

**POWER**  
**of**  
**Commitment**  
New York State Division