New York State Capital District Professional Section

November 2004

SWE Hosts World Café Discussion in September

Our September provided many of us the opportunity to discuss some real issues we face day to day both at work and in our home lives. Our sincere thanks go to KAPL for sponsoring this event at the Stockade Inn on September 16th.

So what is a World Café? The world café is a process that allows groups to have conversations that matter. The café style allows a collective knowledge to grow, an environment to promote dialogue, and encourage contribution from everyone.

At our September event, groups were arranged at tables of 6-8 people to encourage cluster conversations. In planning the event, our objective was to address work life balance, a challenge all of us face and struggle with on a daily basis.

The first question the groups discussed was “How do you balance work and life?” All tables had discussions concurrently for about 15 minutes. After this initial round of dialogue within the tables, all but one person change to different tables. The remaining person reviewed the topics from the first discussion group. Then those new to the table shared what they heard that was new to the group discussion. The discussion continued again for about 15 minutes. Following this round of discussions as a complete group, all had the opportunity to share take-aways and conversations that left impressions.

We continued this café style approach with a second topic “Perceptions and Challenges for Technical Women”. Again, we had 2 rounds of discussion with people changing locations for the second round of dialogue and followed up with a complete group discussion.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Among the many comments and experiences shared relative to Balancing Life and Work, a common theme centered around setting priorities, and making them clear to people around you. In addition, many guests emphasized scheduling and planning time effectively for home and work activities.

Having good role models is important and allows an avenue to seek help. This can be through mentoring programs or through other support groups. One key element discussed was making sure your family knows you love your job and similarly, making sure your co-workers know you love your family. Opportunities to change our expectations, career path and the endless “to do” list are also key in finding a balance.

More information about work/life balance can be obtained on the SWE website at: www.swe.org. In the section titled “SWE Resources”, there are articles relating to work life balance.

PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR TECHNICAL WOMEN:

The meaningful conversations continued with this topic relative to technical women. The dialogue uncovered that there are varying experiences among the technical women attending this event. Many female professionals felt overlooked, and got a vibe from male co-workers opinions that their positions were obtained on gender. Many women also felt that Professional Women in general need to do more to prove themselves. Alternatively, many women were satisfied that their co-workers have been supportive of their career goals.

Meeting Reminders:

December 8th - Wine and Cheese Tasting at the Wine Bar in Saratoga Springs.

January 19th - Leadership Skills with General William Martin.

Other Notes:

The Capital District SWE Professional Section is still looking for someone to help get us up on the web. If interested, please contact Marie Schnitzer, Section President.

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SWE-eeeet!!! Women Build For a Grateful Schenectady Family!!!

Saturday, October 16th, was a productive day on the site when an enthusiastic group of engineers (SWE) applied the final coat of paint to the entire WomenBuild house by 10:30 in the morning...they then moved on to complete the primer coat on the coed house before lunch. The afternoon offered an opportunity for our painters to become carpenters when they started on the baseboards in the WomenBuild. Special thanks go to the independent volunteers that answered the "call for help" on the coed build. We really appreciate the juggling of schedules it took to spend a day with us. Another special thanks to United Presbyterian Church for supplying all of our volunteers a wonderful lunch; these ladies really know how to feed a hungry group! Hey, we even had AnGel Danzy (home owner on leave from Ft. Drum) stop by to say hi...it was a very special day at the WomenBuild!

race for the cure!

On Saturday, October 2, the NYS Capital District SWE Chapter met to participate in The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Race for the Cure 5K Run & Walk. We joined over 3,800 individuals at the Empire State Plaza on a beautiful fall day. In addition to playing a part in raising a considerable amount of money for the Northeastern New York Komen Affiliate, we enjoyed the pre- and post-race activities and entertainment. This was the second race/walk the NYSCD SWE Chapter has participated in as a team. We hope to see even more members at our next wellness event!

This year’s participants included, from left to right, Marie Schnitzer, Kris Wheeler and Erin Caimano.

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Personal encounters such as those listed above created an experience base that we can tap into for support. Mentoring and support groups allow us a safe haven to discuss our personal aspirations and challenges, then allowing us to identify potential solutions and approaches for our daily lives.

Some of the inspirational words that can be found in the discussion note are: believe in yourself, project yourself as you wish to be perceived, be a woman first then an engineer second and – take credit for what you do.

More information about the word café format can be found at www.theworldcafe.com as well as the publication The World Café, A Resource Guide for Hosting Conversations that Matter by Junatia Brown and the World Café Community.
December Event – Wine and Cheese Tasting in Saratoga

Take a break from the holiday madness and join us for an evening of wine tasting. This is a great opportunity to taste a number of different wines that the Wine Bar has to offer. Bring a friend or meet new people and take the chance to network with other technical professionals.

Location: The Wine Bar (downstairs) 417 Broadway, Saratoga Springs
http://www.thewinebarofsaratoga.com/

When: December 8th at 6:30 p.m.
Cost: $12 per person
For those who would like to order dinner, this will be Dutch treat. Non-alcoholic options will be available.

Let’s Talk About Leadership Skills

You are invited to attend a unique opportunity to develop leadership skills which fuel potential and promote success. Experience the energizing talent and charisma of General William C. Martin, a motivational speaker and an engaging storyteller. He will inform you, entertain you and inspire you to take action. Martin speaks directly from the heart on a variety of topics. He offers a vast array of national and international work experiences that align with his role in leader development.

General Martin earned a bachelor of Arts degree from Siena College and a Masters of Arts degree from Catholic University. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and The U.S. Army War College. He was a Paratrooper, a Ranger and a combat veteran. His military assignments included:
- Deputy Adjutant General, State of New York
- Strategic Analyst and Speech writer for General H. Norman Schwarzkopf
- Political Military Planner for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- Program Manager - Army's 21st Century Training Program, Force XXI
- Executive Officer to the President of the National Defense University

This event will be held on January 19th. More details will follow in December regarding cost and location.

http://www.tigllc.com/

GE²MCS at Russell Sage College

The GE²MCS program is aimed at increasing the number of girls and women studying and entering technical careers in engineering, mathematics, and computer science. This multi-faceted program combines day-long programs on Fridays including hands-on workshops for middle and high school students, with Saturday morning programs focusing on careers and mentors.

The day-long programs are designed for students and are open to teachers and guidance counselors, while the Saturday sessions are geared towards students and parents.

Workshops specifically for parents will address smart college planning, and challenge gender-based attitudes and practices to reinforce the idea that their daughters are capable of success in any field.

If you would like to volunteer as a mentor, or would like to participate in the GEMS program, please contact Tina Mancuso at mancut@sage.edu or Deb Lawrence lawred@sage.edu.

Source: GEMS at Russell Sage College. For more information visit http://www.sage.edu/rsc/gems/whatisgems.html

10 Tips for Getting Your Work/Life in Balance

By Randall S. Hansen, PhD

Here are 10 tips to help you achieve a better balance in your life. Take a moment to read and reflect on these tips -- and then get your life in balance!

1. Negotiate a Change with Your

Current Employer. Progressive employers recognize the value of good employees, and many are willing to find ways to help current employees deal with short-term or permanent changes caused by family situations. The changes can include flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, or part-time employment. Your first step is to research your employer’s policies and methods of handling previous requests. Then go to your boss armed with information and a plan that shows how you will be an even
10 Tips, Cont.

more valuable and productive employee if you can modify your current work situation.

2. Find a New Career. Some careers are simply more stressful and time-consuming than others. If you need more time for yourself or your family, now may be the time to explore careers that are less stressful and more flexible.

3. Find a New Job. Rather than a career change, perhaps you simply need to take a less stressful job within your chosen career. This change may involve working with your current employer to identify a new position, it may involve a full job-search, or it may involve temping or becoming a consultant or starting a freelancing or other home-based business.

4. Slow Down. Life is simply too short, so don’t let things pass you in a blur. Take steps to stop and enjoy the things and people around you. Schedule more time between meetings; don’t make plans for every evening or weekend, and find some ways to distance yourself from the things that are causing you the most stress.

5. Learn to Better Manage Your Time. Avoid Procrastination. For many people, most of the stress they feel comes from simply being disorganized -- and procrastinating. Learn to set more realistic goals and deadlines -- and then stick to them. You’ll find that not only are you less stressed, but your work will be better.

6. Share the Load. Even though we may sometimes feel we’re the only ones capable of doing something, it’s usually not the case. Get your partner or other family members to help you with all your personal/family responsibilities. Taking care of the household, children, or parents should not be the responsibility of just one person.

7. Let Things Go. (Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff.) It’s simpler said than done, but learn to let things go once in a while. So what if the dishes don’t washed everyday or that the house doesn’t get vacuumed every week. Learn to recognize the things that don’t really have much impact in your life and allow yourself to let them go -- and then not beat yourself up for doing so.

8. Explore Your Options. Get Help. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your family responsibilities, please get help if you can afford it. Find a sitter for your children, explore options for aging parents, and seek counseling for yourself. In many cases, you have options, but you need to take the time to find them.

9. Take Charge. Set Priorities. Sometimes it’s easier for us to allow ourselves to feel overwhelmed rather than taking charge and developing a prioritized list of things that need to get done. You need to buck the trend. Develop a list. Set priorities. And then enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your list.

10. Simplify. It seems human nature for just about everyone to take on too many tasks and responsibilities, to try to do too much, and to own too much. Find a way to simplify your life. Change your lifestyle. Learn to say no to requests for help. Get rid of the clutter and baggage in your house -- and your life. In the end, the key word is balance. You need to find the right balance that works for you. Celebrate your successes and don’t dwell on your failures. Life is a process, and so is striving for balance in your life.

Dr. Randall Hansen is currently Webmaster of Quintessential Careers, as well as publisher of its electronic newsletter, QuintZine. He writes a biweekly career advice column under the name, The Career Doctor. He is also a tenured, associate professor of marketing in the School of Business Administration at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. He is a published career expert -- and has been for the last ten years. He is co-author, with Katharine Hansen, of Dynamic Cover Letters. And he has been an employer and consultant dealing with hiring and firing decisions for the past fifteen years. He can be reached at randall@quintcareers.com

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