



June 2022 Newsletter

From the President's Perspective:

This is the last newsletter I will be authoring under the title of From the President's Perspective. Tom Marino, Tony Buttino and I had a transitional meeting to “pass the torch (baton, plate, buck, pick your favorite token)” from one set of leaders to another. I am firmly convinced that Niagara Frontier Chapter is in excellent hands regarding leadership and we are headed in a direction of success in delivering value to our Members. Please, let's support and assist them in meeting that goal! Some of the ideas we discussed were outstanding, I could see both Tom and Tony thinking of solutions to problems as we spoke. I am quite happy!

Stepping down for me is a necessity. The lateness of this newsletter should be an indication of how I needed a rest. I've always been involved in Chapter Administration, but this time, it was almost a daily concern (especially with trying to get meetings to happen in the COVID times). Don't get me wrong, I like staying busy, but between my job as Safety Manager of Encorus Group (an excellent organization and plenty of professional challenges), maintaining my “estate”, some involvement in local politics (go figure, me have a political opinion?!?!), my addiction to hunting and shooting as well as everything outdoors, activities that I forgot at the moment, etc.; one less activity is another chance for much needed mental and physical relaxation (yea, right! I started a vegetable garden for the first time in 22 years; so far, it's doing well!). I will still be around, but in a different, less intense role.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, our Profession is undergoing re-definition. I cannot predict what social changes as well as paradigm shifts means for the Safety Profession. While some of the changes that are occurring in the Profession are long overdue (holding supervisors accountable for safety performance of direct reports; better Industrial Hygiene instrumentation, apps to facilitate improving and monitor safety performance in the field, Safety/Risk Management in “C” suite, etc.), some will need to be proven as having real value (yes, that iconic program, Behavior Based Safety, benchmarking, KPI goal setting, total employee wellness, technology based “safety management systems”, etc.). One issue is that Safety has many branches within the profession; trying to be a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in all of those areas means you become a very good Generalist and a poor SME.

To add to the issue, we now have the advantage of Institutional Education offering programs in Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) through to the Doctorate level. Many colleges today offer Master's level programs. Issue, say you? Yes. My reasoning is this. While we now have institutions that are conducting research in areas of Safety and Health; both in operational areas (like does facial hair on men affect respirator sealing, heat stress monitoring to avoid heat related illness, ergonomics and work design) and management areas (psychology of convincing employees to work safely and make good risk management decisions, how the interface of humans and systems can be improved to reduce error as well as personal injury, etc.); the issue is translation of knowledge from theoretical to practice. That one is as old as some organizations that developed to provide products and services! But, but, you have a piece of paper that says you have achieved that goal. Maybe not as completely as the organization and people you serve need or deserve. There's one more ingredient in the recipe that needs to be added to flavor the meal.



Learning the trade, as you advance through the organization, is one that challenges your skills, it never ends (until you retire, maybe not even then) and is a constant for those who are at the top of the game. It used to be easier. We had mentors within our organizations and structure that allowed for progress to the top position. You could learn the trade through formal education and actual practice with experienced professionals overseeing what you did to facilitate that process of translating theory to practice. It's not always as simple as we (management?) imagine (good term!) it to be. Mentors also helped with understanding how the organization worked (politics). Organizations are now "lean"; only the actual number of employees necessary to perform the essential functions of the department are on staff. Redundancy? Why, that's what the tech is for! There are organizations today eliminating "sick time" from the HR policy manual as the Work From Home philosophy has allowed us to work from home (even sick with COVID) and not lose productive time. I don't know about you, but I may not be inclined to work on a laptop while battling waves of nausea.....

We are also letting social trends that may not be durable over time influence how we manage safety and risk. Some of these trends can be extremely divisive. How can a philosophy that values differences succeed in promoting unity? Instead of focusing on differences between us, why don't we value treating each other with civility, respect, kindness and empathy? We are all human beings, we all have a common biological model of operation and, unless the person suffers a psychological pathology, appreciate being treated with those characteristics. Clothing preferences, adornment (tattoos, hair color, etc.) and personal philosophical values seldom affect the practice of safety. If the person values the practice of safety and is aligned with organizational values, let's help them succeed at being the best version of a Safety Professional they can be. We can, and should, as Professionals, set differences aside to achieve the goal.

The practice of Safety is a KNOWLEDGE profession; hopefully, we can agree on that point! It does not particularly require being one of 2 genuine biological genders to be successful; both women and men have made great contributions to this profession, some formally recognized, some not. Let's set aside any biases against gender as an indicator of success. Participate in knowledge transfer and collaboration with each other to make the protection of people, property and the environment to the best of our ability the value we hold paramount in dealing with each other.

The foregoing is the foundation of something I believe we need to promote and champion. ASSP, especially the Local Chapters are in a position to make this practice happen and be successful: **BE A MENTOR!** The profession has advanced and prospered because those of us with experience were and are willing to share knowledge. We can be a resource to each other; most importantly, to the people coming in to and rising through the Safety Profession. I don't have all the answers, but I can identify people who may within the Niagara Frontier Chapter. Many of them helped me learn lessons in the practice of Safety as well as career management. Most importantly, they were willing to share their information and experiences to help me be successful in my career.

And now you know why I stepped in for the 2nd time as Chapter President. Service to the Profession and You, the Members of the Niagara Frontier Chapter.