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Julissa Sweeney
Graphic Designer
e: jsweeney@soa.org

Meg Weber
Staff Partner
e: mweber@soa.org

Glenda Maki
Staff Editor
e: gmaki@soa.org

Susan Martz
Project Support
Specialist
e: smartz@soa.org

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Chairperson's Corner

By Jennie McGinnis

When the Actuary of the Future (AOF) Section Council met last November to plan for the upcoming year, we couldn't help but notice how well aligned our section's mission is with the SOA's strategic theme to cultivate opportunities. While thinking about the future of the actuarial profession as the chair of the AOF, I can't help but also consider this theme on a personal level. What is the best use of my talents at this point in my career? How do the activities that I take on now shape which opportunities will be available further down the road?

In pondering these questions I believe that it's limiting to just think about involvement in projects at one's place of employment. Don't get me wrong—the ability to rotate through different departments, work on multi-department projects and serve on an employee activity committee certainly broaden one's view of their firm; but to stop there would limit the ability to learn from an even broader community.

Consider the opportunity to get involved at an industry level, and for the purpose of an example, with the SOA specifically. Serving on an exam committee provides an opportunity to collaborate with those interested in similar aspects of the field while exposing you to how concepts are applied at other firms. Serving on a meeting planning committee provides similar insight, though from a continuing education rather than basic education perspective.

Looking beyond the industry there are also plenty of opportunities to gain new perspectives and skills through organizations in your community. First, consider your passions and interests—seeking out an organization whose mission is aligned will make the work much more enjoyable. Next, reflect on what skills you bring to the table, and which ones you would like to develop. Consider the following:

- Participating on an event committee allows you to practice your project management skills
- Serving on a finance committee allows you to further hone your financial acumen
- Offering your time as a board member provides an opportunity to grow leadership and strategic thinking skills.

In my own experience serving in roles similar to these have “loosened the blinders.” That is, being exposed to bankers, lawyers, business owners, educators, etc. has provided me a new way of looking at situations that I can then apply in the workplace.

Can you identify the employer of the following individuals?

- “I am in a competitive environment and I ... feel the need to generate revenue.”
- “I must be very involved with the key issues facing actuaries and the industry.”
- “The job allows me to meet and work with thought-leaders both inside and outside our profession.”

- “I really love to connect people to each other—learning of interests and lining them up with someone else who can help them or whom they can help.”

I suspect these comments echo with most of us, whether in our current roles or in ones we hope for in the future. Perhaps, then, you’ll be surprised to learn that these are a sampling of the thoughts shared by actuaries employed by the SOA. It strikes me that the skill set needed to succeed in the “not-for-profit” realm is not that different from that needed in the “for-profit” world.

All this is to say that while we can grow our skill set by volunteering with various organizations, the possibility of working for these organizations should not be ruled out. Actuaries working in the public sector are nothing new—take, for example, Medicare, Social Security and State Department of Insurance offices. What else can we, as actuaries, offer?

As you reflect on your own career management I hope you’ll consider the benefit of volunteering as an opportunity to network and build a diverse set of experiences. Whether the diversity you’re seeking is within your company, your industry or your community, opportunities will abound if you keep your eyes open. And, of course, the AOF will be here to provide you with meaningful opportunities along the way!

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Jennie McGinnis, FSA, MAAA, CERA, is vice president at Swiss Re in Fort Wayne, Ind. She is also the special interest representative on the PDC. She can be reached at jennifer_mcginnis@swissre.com.