



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER

3 **Reflections**
By Jennifer Fleck

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
1 **No Good Deed Goes Unpunished**
By John West Hadley

5 **Responses to "Is the Emperor Wearing Clothes?"**
By John West Hadley

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
8 **Business Classics: Built to Last**
By Mary Pat Campbell

13 **Culture of Personality**
By Jamie Shallow

CAREER DEVELOPMENT
15 **Cultivating Alternative Career Paths for Actuaries (and Preparing Actuaries for Alternative Careers)**
By Ian Duncan

17 **Brand New Me**
By Kelly Hennigan

20 **The New C's Employers Expect of Actuaries**
By Darryl Wagner

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
22 **Communicating Internationally**
By Sue Blanck

23 **A Formula for Networking Success: 1 Healthy Mindset + 3 Basic Facts + 5 Simple Tips**
By Denise Mills

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT
25 **Are You a GREAT Boss?**
By Brian Pauley with Chris Edmonds

28 **Six Things Highly Productive Leaders Do**
By Barbara Taylor

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
30 **The Wisdom of Siddhartha: Think, Fast and Wait**
By Sophia Dao

32 **How to Be the Boss (Without Firing Yours)**
By Darcy Eikenberg

34 **The Zen Actuary Installment 4: "Embrace the Chaos"**
By Rich Lauria

What Would You Do? No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

By John West Hadley

Here is our seventh entry in the "What Would You Do?" series.¹ Write to me at SteppingStone@JHACareers.com to tell me what you would do. In the February issue, I'll compile the responses received (preserving your anonymity, of course), along with what actually happened in the real-life situation.

Help me craft future case studies. Write to me about your own challenging, surprising or nightmarish situations involving business, leadership, management, or any of the topic areas covered by *The Stepping Stone*, and what lessons you learned from them. I'll collaborate with you on turning your situation into a simple case study, being careful to ensure no one is identifiable. And share your own thoughts (pro and con) on the series as a whole at SteppingStone@JHACareers.com.

NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED

Jonathan has just taken his final actuarial exam, is in charge of a small product group and has been assigned a student, Greg, in the company's minority summer program. While Greg presents himself well,

the work he does is substandard. Although Jonathan goes to great lengths to explain what needs to be done, and why it is important, Greg regularly delivers work that is sloppy, containing careless errors.

Jonathan is scheduled for a two-week vacation midway through the summer. Although there are no official ratings for the summer program until the end of August, he decides that it would only be fair to have an in-depth discussion with Greg to give him plenty of time to correct his work habits.

The day before he leaves, he sits down with Greg privately. He tells him that this discussion is not an official appraisal, and will not go into Greg's record. He explains that Greg's work is substandard, and that were it the end of the summer he would be compelled to give him a poor rating, but that he wants to give him the chance to correct his work during the second half of the summer. He tells Greg that if he does so, the only rating that will matter will be the one he receives at the end of the summer, and that this discussion will be forgotten.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



John Hadley is a career counselor who works with job seekers frustrated with their search, and professionals struggling to increase their visibility and influence. He can be reached at John@JHACareers.com or 908.725.2437. Find his free *Career Tips* newsletter and other resources at www.JHACareers.com, and watch for his upcoming book, *Cruising Through Executive Interviews ... To Land That 6 Figure Job You Deserve*.

The day Jonathan returns from vacation, he is called into his boss's office. Len tells him that as soon as he left, Greg complained to the vice president in charge of the minority program about an inappropriate performance appraisal. Greg told the VP that Jonathan had it in for him, had unfairly criticized his work, and was impairing his future career potential.

Len told Jonathan that he would reassign Greg for the remainder of the summer to work directly for Len, and asked Jonathan to sign a document stating that Greg's work had been fully adequate to date.

If you were Jonathan, would you have handled the mid-summer discussion differently, and what would you do now? ●

ENDNOTE

¹ Past issues in the series have considered whether to demote or fire a difficult employee, interview challenges from both sides of the desk, evaluating job offers, and a difficult product decision. To catch up on the entire series, which started in May 2013, check out back issues of *The Stepping Stone* on the Management and Personal Development (M&PD) website at www.soa.org/mpd.