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CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER

Are You a Hippo?

By Scott Randles

“There is an eagle in me that wants to soar, and there is a hippopotamus in me that wants to wallow in the mud.”

—Carl Sandburg

I have found that this quote is true in my life, and I expect that it is true for most people, not the least of whom are actuaries. In our personal lives or actuarial careers, it is all too easy to go through the motions in the daily routine of life, and avoid taking the initiative to ever get out of the figurative mud. We always have a choice to make, as to whether we will remain stagnant, or take the initiative to do something to develop ourselves each day. Nobody is going to do this for us—it's our choice.

Hippos are fascinating creatures. They are very powerful animals that remain calm and stagnant most of the time, often wallowing in the water or mud on the sidelines. However, if provoked, their instincts and emotions cause them to lash out in bursts of dangerous energy and in a strong way. They are known for being one of the most ferocious animals alive. While I definitely know some leaders and actuaries that I could describe in a similar manner, I certainly would not want this description to represent me or my legacy.

So how do you soar and not wallow?

Start by taking daily steps to identify small opportunities to develop yourself. For example, have you taken advantage of the new resources created by the Leadership and Development (L&D) Section this year? In looking back at 2017, the section has created several new development opportunities, such as:

- Attend sessions at Society of Actuaries (SOA) meetings featuring new and innovative leadership speakers, as well as opportunities to interact with senior leaders. These sessions consistently get ranked as some of the top sessions at each conference.
- Read our new monthly e-bulletin (*LeaD*), from L&D council members, that provides a short leadership article, along with other useful tips and resources.



- Visit the new L&D website¹ that includes easy navigation to resources and more frequent updates of leadership content. It also includes a new digital format for the section's flagship publication, *The Stepping Stone*,² that makes it easy to access and read on mobile devices.
- Engage in self-development by participating in L&D-sponsored career coaching or emotional intelligence self-assessments and training, as offered through our recent member invitation.
- Share and learn from others' experiences in the actuarial community by participating in or reading the *LeaD* member response section or through our leadership inspiration contest.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to take advantage of these, as well as the other opportunities that are available to you every day.

This is my last Chairperson's Corner, as my one-year term as chair, and three-year term with the L&D Section Council, has come to an end. Participating in the section has certainly helped prevent me from "wallowing" in my career, and held me accountable to find new ways to develop.

At the beginning of the year, I committed to focus on two things. As I discussed in my last Chairperson's Corner, the first was to volunteer more in my community, which I have continued. This has helped me develop more compassion for others. The second was to add more mentors in my life. In the last several months, I reached out to three different mentors and set up meetings. For me, I have found it beneficial to have several different mentors in my life at any given time in order to learn from a broad set of

perspectives and experiences. Each conversation was different, but all were impactful in a unique way. Top takeaways included:

- A challenge to be patient yet persistent to fight for the things I feel are actuarially the right thing to do;
- A reminder to make it a high priority to set aside 20 percent of my time each week to focus on developing and promoting work from my team; and
- Even a challenge to be a better leader in my family when it comes to working with my high school daughter to set up dating guidelines. (This one might be the hardest and I will save the details for another day.)

Had I not taken the small step of setting up these meetings, I don't think any of these topics would even be on my radar right now.

Finally, I would like to congratulate our new L&D Section Council Chairperson, Anne Katcher, and Vice Chairperson,

Mitch Stephenson. Thank you for agreeing to volunteer and for your commitment to help challenge actuaries to be better leaders. I also wanted to thank everyone who contributed to this issue of *The Stepping Stone*, which has helped continue to make this publication so valued. We always appreciate any ideas or articles you have for future issues, which can be sent directly to SteppingStone@JHACareers.com. ■



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ENDNOTES

- 1 www.SOA.org/ld
- 2 thestepingstone.SOA.org

SOA Explorer Tool

Find Actuaries Around the Globe

The SOA Explorer Tool is a global map showing locations of fellow SOA members and their employers, as well as actuarial universities and clubs.

Explorer.SOA.org

