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CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER

Transformation: A Change Would Do You Good¹

By Kelly Hennigan

Welcome to the November 2016 issue of *The Stepping Stone*! In this issue you will find insightful articles on leadership, personal and career development, communication skills, our popular “What Would You Do?” series, and our latest Diversity Spotlight.

Fall 2016 marks the conclusion of my three-year term with the Leadership & Development Section Council, as well as my one-year term as chair. I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the section during this time.

Over the last few years, the word “transformation” has continually popped up in both my professional and personal life. Hence, I thought it was very appropriate to focus my final installment of the Chairperson’s Corner around this theme.

*“Life is a moving, breathing thing.
We have to be willing to constantly evolve.
Perfection is constant transformation.”*

—Nia Peeples, singer and actress

Transformation—or change—can be a complex topic. It may be physical, or emotional, or intertwine both. It may occur overnight, or take several years. It may be self-induced or externally driven. Some welcome it; some hide from it. Each of us has experienced some type of transformation in our own life, or witnessed someone else’s transformation—professionally or personally.

I underwent my own personal transformations in recent months, based on my New Year’s resolution to run a 5K. With help from the Couch to 5K app (C25K) and some grueling—I mean inspirational—motivation from a personal trainer, I crossed the finish line just last week. This was a physical and emotional transformation, many months in the making. There were some days when I welcomed putting on my headphones and running, and others when I wanted to run from the running! But, I did it ... and I may just have to sign up for another one before the year is over.

Over the last few years, the transformational journey of the Leadership & Development Section included:



- **Name change.** One of the most visible changes was the 2015 name change—from Management & Personal Development (MPD) to Leadership & Development (L&D). This was an outcome of listening to our members and taking into account survey feedback. The renaming inspired the L&D Section to consider and pursue areas of joint partnership with other Society of Actuaries (SOA) sections—which has resulted in co-sponsored SOA meeting session topics and speakers benefiting multiple sections.
- **Face-to-face meeting.** Participating in an L&D face-to-face gathering in April 2016 was transformative for our L&D Section Council leaders. This meeting enabled the group to level-set on priority initiatives and resources—specifically with a focus on *The Stepping Stone*, meeting speakers and networking opportunities for section members.
- **The Stepping Stone’s Diversity Spotlight.** The 2016 addition of the Diversity Spotlight to *The Stepping Stone* originated from the L&D Section’s willingness to support the SOA’s Inclusion & Diversity Committee (IDC). The purpose of the IDC is to determine investments the SOA can make, or programs it can undertake, to achieve the greatest impact on inclusion and diversity in the actuarial profession, long term and short term. Impacts can include the number of diverse candidates and members and increased number and effectiveness of equal opportunities for advancement and leadership.



- **Leadership Inspiration Contest.** In 2015, we held our first Leadership Inspiration Contest that encouraged entrants to tell us what inspired them to be better actuarial leaders based around five different categories: an inspiring leadership quote, book/song, admirable leader/personal mentor, defining moment/event in their career, or any other leadership inspiration. We discovered that our section members are inspired via different channels and have been publishing those entries in *The Stepping Stone* throughout 2016.
- **Meeting speakers.** We continue to engage quality speakers at SOA meetings and symposiums. Over the last few years, the L&D Section has branched out to more frequently offer non-actuarial speaker sessions where the presenters have ranged from executive coaches to career consultants to social media experts. These sessions, along with actuarial-related leadership panel sessions, have received positive feedback and are much appreciated to counterbalance the more technical topics typically offered at SOA meetings.
- **Networking opportunities.** We will continue to facilitate and offer a variety of networking opportunities for actuaries. In addition to the popular Women's Leadership Forum and Luncheon at the SOA Annual Meeting & Exhibit, the L&D Section Council brainstormed on other types of environments that could encourage networking. One outcome was

the “Breakfast with Senior Leaders” held at the SOA Annual Meeting & Exhibit in October, where each breakfast table was hosted by an experienced actuary who has been in a senior leadership, senior management or C-suite role.

- **Podcasts.** During my first year with the L&D Section Council in 2014, we began recording podcasts. We now have 10 available on the SOA's website and iTunes and anticipate regularly adding to this podcast library of articles and interviews. Also, we continue to offer regular webinars, as we have for years, with a variety of speakers and topics—this year we had one webinar that attracted more than 600 participants!
- **getAbstract.** We continue to offer complimentary access to this library of business book summaries to L&D members. In 2016, L&D partnered with other SOA sections to advertise this resource and educate users on its accessibility.
- **LinkedIn.** The section's LinkedIn site, the “SOA Leadership & Development Section,” also is a newer resource available as a forum to further connect our members and encourage the sharing of leadership and developmental topics.

I encourage all of you to consider your professional and personal transformation—particularly as we move into the new calendar year, and New Year's resolutions are upon us. Whether your transformation includes running a 5K, taking on a home renovation project or pursuing a new job opportunity, it's very possible that “a change would do you good.”

I have very much enjoyed being a part of the section council over the last few years and look forward to the continued evolution of the section in the years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate our new L&D Section Council Chairperson Scott Randles and Vice Chairperson Anne Katcher. And, I would like to thank you for your continued interest in *The Stepping Stone* and the L&D Section. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of our section members with any suggestions you might have for future issues, or contact *The Stepping Stone* directly at SteppingStone@JHACareers.com. ■



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ENDNOTE

- 1 This phrase is also the title of a song by Sheryl Crow.