



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Foundation program fills information gap

by Cecilia Green

SOA Director of Public Relations

Indications are that the Society of Actuaries Foundation's first consumer education program is filling a gap for unbiased, factual information on the future of Social Security. By the end of October, just six weeks into the program, more than 65,000 copies of the brochure "On the edge of change: Putting Social Security back in balance" were in the hands of SOA members, their company's employees, and other members of the public. Placements of news articles in publications have reached almost 818,000 readers, resulting in several requests a day on the Foundation's phone line and by mail.

SOA members' positive response to an appeal from Jim Tilley, chair of the Foundation, to help distribute the brochures, either as an individual or through their companies, has virtually assured this program's success. About 430 companies have received "partner packages" that include information on:

- How to order brochures in quantities or with company logos imprinted
- How to use the materials in employee newsletters and seminars
- How the coded survey cards with each brochure can be tallied for individual companies to reveal their employees' attitudes and opinions toward retirement
- How to access the Web site (<http://www.soa.org/foundation>) and 800 number (800/932-3094) for more information on sources for retirement planning

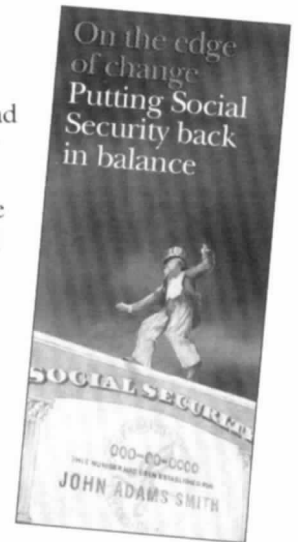
Some members believe so strongly in the message contained in the brochure that they are personally carrying brochures into libraries, schools, and companies for distribution.

Program's core message

The program's core message is contained in the brochure and was created with a blue ribbon panel of actuaries, headed

by Dwight Bartlett, who had no agenda other than to alert Americans to the realities of Social Security. The message has three main points:

- 1) Social Security can stay financially strong well into the future — if changes are made soon.
- 2) Any of the changes being considered could affect your retirement plans. (The four approaches to change are outlined in the brochure.)
- 3) Social Security was never intended to be your only source of retirement income. Start planning now to



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Left: The first brochure off the press marks an important accomplishment for the SOA communications department, who received the Foundation grant for the Social Security consumer education program. They include (L-R) Linda Delgadillo, director of communications and administration; Cecilia Green, SOA director of public relations; and Terri Nudelman, design manager. Right: John O'Connor, SOA Foundation executive director, and Linda Delgadillo, scan the color proof of the Social Security brochure.

The Wisdom of Teams (continued from page 17)

attack performance-oriented deliverables in a short time. The authors effectively use their real-life examples to illustrate how these and other approaches can help potential teams take the risks necessary to move up the team performance curve.

There is also a chapter devoted to team leaders. It contains practical guidance for team leaders, their managers, and their mentors.

Teams and their organizations

The final section looks at teams from a broader organizational perspective. The authors revisit and build on an earlier idea that it is the performance ethic of the company that will produce effective teams. They also explore the

potential role of teams in effecting major organizational change.

This section includes an interesting chapter on teams at top levels of organizations. While there are many examples of effective working groups at senior management levels, finding examples of real teams is difficult. Senior management groups have a difficult time identifying common performance goals for which the members can hold themselves mutually accountable. Hierarchical and functional positions drive the focus. The authors offer some practical ideas for senior management groups interested in achieving high performance, team-type results.

The Wisdom of Teams can be a

valuable resource for anyone — team member, team leader, or senior executive — who is interested in gaining the benefits of true high performance teams. The text is well written, interesting, and practical in application. **Edward B. Martin is vice president, Corporate Planning & Development, for Lincoln National Corporation. In his former position as vice president, Life Product Management, for Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, he was actively involved in the achievement of a team-based organization. He is a member of the SOA Committee on Management and Personal Development.**

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bolster the other two legs of the three-legged stool: pensions and personal savings.

Focus groups conducted by the Foundation confirmed an urgent need for these simple messages. Some focus group participants were aware that changes were being discussed to keep Social Security financially secure, but they knew little about the details and the effect it could have on them. All ages in our groups expressed concern about retirement income and whether Social Security would be there for them, their children, and their grandchildren, although the younger

participants were more skeptical. However, they were all eager for more information on what they could do now to prepare for retirement.

We also held focus groups and interviewed managers from corporate communications and human resources departments. They said their companies do not do much education about retirement to anyone under the age of 50 and have little focus on Social Security at their retirement seminars. Mostly, they just discuss their own pension plans.

Speculation is that the U.S. Advisory Council's recommendations will be

issued soon after the Presidential election. Then, everyone's going to try to get out information slanted to their particular cause. This program takes no sides, makes no political statements, and favors no interest group. It only tries to provide factual information on this issue.

The Foundation funds programs that can really make a difference — that have a national impact. With SOA members' support, the Foundation's first consumer education program, *On the Edge of Change: Putting Social Security Back in Balance*, can achieve that goal.

Lemmings taking the northern route (continued from page 13)

When legislation requires us, as actuaries, to do it another way, we should resist it immediately. I am upset that my organizations have participated in and supported the political games

that have led us where we are today. Stretching my travel metaphor, we are lemmings taking the northern route. **Leslie John Lohmann is with Lohmann International Associates in Kitamachi,**

Nerima-ku, Tokyo, Japan. His e-mail address is llohmann@japan.co.jp, and he maintains a home page (<http://www.japan.co.jp/~llohmann/>).