



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# Chairperson's Corner

by Scott Haglund

As I begin my term as council chair for 2007-08, my primary emphasis will be the importance of effective communication and continuing personal, non-technical development. As actuaries, we have had years of education on the technical aspects of our jobs, but normally very little in the area of personal development. For the actuary today, clear and effective communication is essential. To most actuaries, personal development is seen as a "soft" skill. However, I believe that effective communication and people management is critical, and is as, if not more, important than technical ability.

To see how the Society of Actuaries views this area, I started by looking at the mission and vision statement as found on the Society of Actuaries' Web site. After reading through the mission and vision statement, there are four areas within the statement that I will address here.

- Advance actuarial knowledge
- Provide expert advice and relevant solutions
- Defining who we are to employers, clients, policymakers and the public
- Effective influence on public policy

## **Advance Actuarial Knowledge**

In order to advance actuarial knowledge, the insights the current professionals have gained need to be communicated to other actuaries as well as to those who have influence over our profession. This advancement of knowledge needs to be presented in papers, speeches, meetings and any other arena where we interact with others. This advancement also needs to be pres-

ent as we train, mentor and direct those around us in management or coaching roles.

Without a sound base to express your ideas, the insights you have gained will not be clearly and effectively communicated to the profession at large. Your speaking, writing and managing skills are critical aspects of your role in advancing the profession and your career.

## **Provide Expert Advice and Relevant Solutions**

To be considered an expert, your response must be seen as credible. To be relevant, what you say must be clear and focus on the issue at hand. Poorly worded and irrelevant comments will impact help-seekers' perception toward actuaries. At some point, those seeking advice will begin looking to others when they need comments.

Proactively, our profession can and needs to continue developing our writing and speaking skills so we can provide value to those needing guidance.

## **Defining Who We Are to Employers, Clients, Policymakers and the Public**

In order to define who we are, we first need to be clear on what we do and why others should care. Taking time to define not only your career but also how it can be applied to real-life situations is important for setting direction and realizing your potential. If the message is communicated in a clear and concise manner, our value and influence as actuaries will increase. However, if the message is poorly communicated, the perception of the profession will not be as favorable. In order to communicate the mes-

sage clearly, our personal skills as actuaries need to improve.

### **Effective Influence on Public Policy**

With the myriad of issues that face the world today, involvement and influence on public policy is essential for all people, not just actuaries. As the issues are complex, actuaries need to be able to present the problem and solution in a simple and understandable manner. Our speaking and writing skills need to be honed so we are seen as a valuable resource as these issues are being addressed.

During 2008, my plan is to continue my development as an effective actuary. In becoming more effective, my goal is to not only continue

my technical development by research and educational meeting attendance, but also to improve upon my writing and speaking skills. By taking opportunities to present and participate in actuarial meetings and seminars, I will obtain the feedback necessary to improve upon how I present ideas. My goal is to also search out books and other materials that will provide me with additional thoughts and ideas on how to improve my communication skills.

As you begin your own planning for 2008, make sure that your personal development is part of that plan. Although technical skills are what first made you an actuary, your communication and management skills will make you a better one. □



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