

# IMPACT

The Official Newsletter of the South Carolina State Government Improvement Network

From the Chairman

Spring, 2009

## Back to Basics

by Walter Caudle

For me, the hardest part of being chair of the Network is coming up with an appropriate topic for this column. In times past, I would be looking for something new or novel that would appeal to those of you who are the champions of continuous improvement within state government. However, in light of the current economic downturn and 2009-2010 budget forecasts, I think that most of us are more preoccupied with organizational survival than finding that latest organizational development fad.

I'm reminded of the late *Peter Drucker* (1809-2005) and the fact that many of his insights and teachings have been applied to public sector organizations, in spite of his own opinions about the "futility of big government," which he called "obese, muscle-bound and senile." In 1954's *The Practice of Management*, he posed three now-classic organizational questions:

- What Is Our Business?
- Who Is Our Customer?
- What Does Our Customer Consider Valuable?

Revisiting these questions within your own office, division, or organization may help determine how to allocate precious resources at a time that the citizens of South Carolina need our help more than ever. I'm not advocating or suggesting any particular methodology, but the questions posed by Drucker over 50 years ago may be a good place to start the conversation.

While spending time answering these questions and engaging in creative budgeting, please don't overlook our most valuable resource – our employees. These "Joy Building" hints come from an old Time Magazine article and are good food for thought in times such as these:

**Be here now.** Employee appreciation days do not make up for an otherwise insincere or abusive behavior. What do you do every other day of the week?

**Don't be a fair weather friend.** Keep your employees engaged in good times and bad.

**See team members as individuals.** Define your goal and use each employee's strengths to get there.

**Remember that silence is not golden.** Talking to employees only when they make a mistake alienates them. Especially now, communication is key to maintaining effective working relationships and quieting the Rumor Mill about budget-related problems.

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A 501-(C)-3 NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

### Mission Statement

The South Carolina State Government Improvement Network creates opportunities for organizations and individuals in state government to improve services they deliver. We do this by providing a central point of contact for education and information sharing on innovative management practices.

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## Fusco Elected to National Baldrige Foundation

Budget and Control Board Executive Director Frank Fusco has been elected to the national board of the Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award.

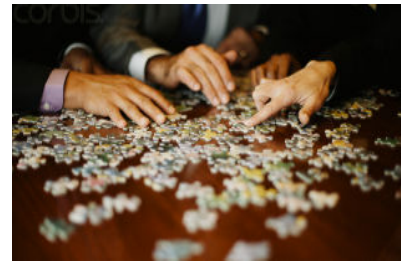
The Baldrige Award is the nation's highest Presidential honor for organizational performance excellence. The award was established in 1987 to enhance the competitiveness and performance of U.S. businesses and today recognizes entities from all sectors of the economy. The Foundation for the Baldrige Award was established to provide the private sector with a means of financially supporting the Baldrige program and ensuring that it meets its long-term goals. It currently oversees an endowment of \$15 million.

Fusco has been a leader in the South Carolina public sector for more than three decades. He has worked for both the General Assembly and the Governor and has twice served as Executive Director of the Budget and Control Board.

Fusco has long been dedicated to the Baldrige principles of organizational performance excellence and currently serves on the Governor's Quality Award Advisory Committee, which supports the state-level Baldrige process. Fusco received the Milliken Medal of Quality from the SC Quality Forum in recognition of outstanding achievement in the implementation of quality systems.

"In my career, I have not found a better or more systematic approach to continuous improvement for organizations than the Baldrige process," Fusco said. "Serving on the foundation board is an exciting way for me to further the mission of excellence in the public and private sectors."

*Reprinted with permission from "in the Loop," S.C. Budget and Control Board*



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### Back to Basics *(continued from page 1)*

**Let friendship ring.** When employees find friends at work, they feel connected to their jobs and will likely be a happier and more productive employee.

**Let the outside world in.** Asking employees about their weekends or their kids shows that you see them as people, not just slots on an organizational chart.

**Be yourself.** What works for celebrity CEOs doesn't always work for everybody else. An honest, low-key chat can be as effective as a high-voltage pep rally.

**Make it meaningful.** Tell the mailroom clerk why that package is so important. Let people know The Big Picture. Everyone wants to feel that their work matters.

Take a few minutes to rediscover your employees and customers while you tackle the challenges that lie ahead. Who knows, you might approach things from a different perspective and achieve a greater sense of fulfillment, even happiness, with your accomplishments.

*Walter Caudle is an Education Associate at the South Carolina Department of Education. He has been a SCSGIN member for fourteen years, served on the Executive Committee since 2003, and is beginning his third term as Chair.*

### Online Resource: "Improving, Not Just Cutting"

That's the theme of an online article authored by **Edwin C. Thomas, Jon B. Pierce, and William E. Tomes** for the *Institute for Public Policy and Research* at the University of South Carolina.

They state that "government managers are used to operating in an environment where demand for service exceeds the resources available. But South Carolina is currently experiencing a period of unprecedented fiscal stress," and they offer approaches that can be taken "if we want government to be more efficient and effective rather than just smaller."

The article focuses on the choices managers make in response to fiscal stress and the long-range impact on our state, and includes their choices for "best and worst practices in cutback management."

*The Challenge of Cutback Management*, can be accessed at <http://www.ipspr.sc.edu/publication/cutback.pdf>

# Surviving Workplace Stress

by Sara Pope

**Stress** - an internal process that occurs when a person is faced with a demand that is perceived to exceed the resources available to effectively respond to it, and where failure to effectively deal with the demand has important undesirable consequences.

Based on the definition above, we are certainly experiencing stress in state government! As public servants, we are facing ever-tightening budgets, the possibility of additional cut-backs, and trying to find ways to accomplish our jobs with fewer resources. There is no denying that we are working in stressful times. How that stress affects us and what we do about it is the key to getting through these difficult times. Let's look first at some of the possible effects of stress:

- ✓ Increased irritability
- ✓ Heightened sensitivity to criticism
- ✓ Sleep disturbances
- ✓ Angry outbursts
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Suspiciousness
- ✓ Decreased tolerance to frustration

Does that sound like anyone you know? Are your co-workers more irritable than usual? Does it seem like people around your office are jumpy? Are you experiencing any of these feelings? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, these reactions may be due to stress.

In addition to the behavioral indicators listed above, research tells us that people who are stressed may also experience cognitive difficulties such as increased forgetfulness, inability to concentrate, and difficulty focusing on details. There are even some studies that show that stress can make you more accident prone!

The factors that are creating this workplace stress are not likely to go away in the near future, so what should we do? The key to dealing with stress is to develop coping strategies. We will not eliminate stress – life has stressors even in the best of times. The best that we can do is find ways to cope with it. The following strategies have proven to be effective in helping to cope with stress:

## Express appreciation to your fellow employees

A recent survey conducted by *Mental Health America* shows that individuals who feel valued and cared for are better equipped to deal with stress and adversity. Words of encouragement and expressions of appreciation don't have to come from the supervisor or manager. When co-workers demonstrate concern and appreciation for each other, it goes a long way toward creating a positive workplace.

## Practice good humor

If we take ourselves too seriously, it's very easy to fall into the "woe is me" mindset. Healthy humor can be helpful in maintaining a positive outlook on life, reducing tension, and lessening anxiety. Finding ways to laugh at a situation, keeping things in perspective, and not letting small issues become "big drama" is very important to surviving these tough times. (Sarcasm and put-downs are not included in the category of "healthy" humor.)

## Promote good health

Studies have proven that stress is hazardous to your health – so start with the basics. Eat well, abstain from smoking and excess drinking, and engage in exercise. If you're fortunate enough to work in downtown Columbia, we have one of the most beautiful parks in SC right here at the Statehouse grounds. Take a walk at lunch and enjoy the scenery!

## Practice good communication skills

Effective communication is difficult even in the best of circumstances and becomes rife with land-mines during times of stress. Communication includes what is said, how it is said, when it is said, and the history between the people trying to communicate. With all those different factors in the mix, it's hard to believe we ever communicate effectively! We can improve our communication with each other by following some simple rules:

### *Avoid blaming, judging, and moralizing*

Telling people what they "should" or "ought" to do will create immediate barriers to communication, adding to the stress levels. Placing blame or judging others just wastes time that could be better spent on solving problems.



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# SC Forestry Commission Implements New Processes to Generate Savings

by Judy Lucas

In an effort to reduce energy costs, the Commission has implemented the following practices in our offices:

- 1) Set thermostats to a maximum of 71 degrees in winter during the heating season and a minimum of 73 degrees during the cooling season. During the heating season thermostats are to be set to 68 degrees during non-business hours and weekends. During the cooling season thermostats are to be set at 75 degrees during non-business hours and weekends.
- 2) Turn off lights in restrooms when not in use during business hours.
- 3) Employees are to turn off office lights when going to lunch or out of their office for any lengthy period during the day.
- 4) All individual computers, monitors, and printers in offices should be completely shut down at the end of the day.
- 5) Place timers on hot water heaters and turn off any unnecessary hot water heaters in all buildings.

Implementation of such practices should be beneficial to all in these stringent budgetary times.

To further save money, we have also implemented a new servicing procedure for our bulldozers. We will service them every two years or 150 hours instead of the normal yearly service. This is expected to save the Forestry Commission around \$25,000 a year.

Additional savings are generated as the Commission strives to expediently process invoices from Mansfield Oil Company as credits are issued equal to .311% of the invoice amount when payments are received within 10 days of the issuance of the electronic invoice.

Fuel expenditures and usage continue to be monitored to identify opportunities for cost-savings. As of mid-FY 2009 we have received credits/refunds totaling \$1,929. Such credits/refunds are a result of the timely processing of payments and or disputing of erroneous charges.

*Judy Lucas is senior consultant for the S.C. Forestry Commission and a member of the SCSGIN executive committee.*

## Surviving Workplace Stress *(continued from page 3)*

*Demonstrate respect for the other person's message* - You don't have to agree with the message but you do have to recognize the other person's right to his or her beliefs. Often, there are points of agreement that we don't hear because we over-react to some perceived disagreement without hearing the entire message. Put aside your own thoughts and opinions when listening, otherwise you are not truly communicating, you are just waiting your turn to talk.

*Give others the benefit of the doubt*  
During stressful times, we tend to look for slights. If you are always "on guard" for a possible criticism or put-down, you are likely to take offense at something that was not meant that way.



If we can approach situations with the attitude that we are all on the same team, we will have many more positive interactions than negative.

The stress that we are experiencing in the workplace right now is real. It doesn't appear to be something that will be short-lived, nor are any of us immune to its effects.

However, a crisis can also bring out creative ideas, make us look at old problems in new ways, and allow us to become a stronger organization. The key is in how we handle it. We owe it to ourselves and each other to try to practice these coping strategies in order to make the best of difficult times.

*Sara Pope is Director of Employee Development for the S.C. Budget and Control Board. Her background is in organizational development and training and she has served as a consultant with both public and private sector employees.*

# THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE GOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENT NETWORK

## SCSGIN MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/Government/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership: \_\_\_\_\_ Check Number: \_\_\_\_\_

FEIN: 57-0964349

Payment is to accompany Membership Form. Cost is \$10 for an individual membership and \$50 for an organizational membership (up to five members – please attach list of names). Detach this form and mail with your check to: SCSGIN, PO Box 1914, Columbia, SC 29202.

## SAVE THE DATE: May 5 Event!

### From survival to success: providing exceptional service despite budget cuts

Faced with reduced budgets and manpower reductions? Trying to figure out how to maintain the services your customers have come to expect? Or, just trying to figure out how your organization can survive in today's economy? If any of these apply, read on!

To help local, city and state government, education, and other not-for-profit organizations address today's budgetary and economic challenges, the South Carolina State Government Improvement Network will host a very special three-part program on May 5, 2009, in Columbia that you simply do not want to miss. It will include:

- A seminar by the *City of Coral Springs, Florida*, the only local or state government organization to ever win the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for performance excellence. Our presenter, **Bob Goehrig**, the City's Budget and Strategic Planning Manager will share how the city reduced the budget without affecting customers; discuss the city's "widget review process," how it applied the principles, tools and practices of high performing companies; and how it instituted a comprehensive performance measurement system.

- Two concurrent breakout sessions. Topics include the Department of Revenue's "*Pro Forma Budgeting Process*," one state agency's approach on reducing the impact of budget cuts, and a session focusing on employee motivation, rewards and recognition techniques presented by the State Budget and Control Board.
- Then, to finish the days' program, a facilitated panel discussion on "failure is not an option—moving from survival to success." Expected panelists include Bob Goehrig, and representation from the City of Rock Hill, the Town of Mt. Peasant, the SC Budget & Control Board, the SC Department of Revenue, the SC Forestry Commission, and the education community.

Now, to do our part, the South Carolina State Government Improvement Network will be offering this event for only \$29.95, including lunch. Everyone is invited! The event will be held at Dupre Northeast, 812 Bookman Road in Columbia. For additional event and registration information, please visit [www.scsgin.org](http://www.scsgin.org).

We look forward to seeing you at this very special event on May 5, 2009!

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• See page 5 for  
• special event  
• information!  
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