

ASSOCIATION ADVISOR

Fall 2007



Greater Cleveland
Society of
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President's Message

GCSAE President Bill Lavezzi
North Eastern Ohio Education Association

WITTs or YOYOs?

Using your search engine of choice, do a quick Internet search for the terms “WITT” and “YOYO” and you’ll discover that these terms are pretty hot in the blogosphere these days. WITT, of course, stands for “We’re in this together,” and YOYO for “You’re on your own.”

In *All Together Now: Common Sense for a Fair Economy* (2006), the Economic Policy Institute argued that these principles mark the poles of many arguments in government today.

“At the core of the YOYO value system,” write the authors, “is hyper-individualism: the notion that whatever the challenges we face as a nation, the best way to solve them is for people to fend for themselves.”

But “at the heart of the WITT agenda is the belief that we can wield the tools of government to build a more just society, one that preserves individualist values while ensuring that the prosperity we generate is equitably shared.” (I know—it’s not hard to figure out which side the authors are on!)

To liberal bloggers, most Democrats are shining WITTs and most Republicans are abject YOYOs. Freshman Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown used “We’re in this together”

as a campaign slogan. Nobody praises YOYOs, and as far as I can tell, conservatives don’t answer to the term.

This isn’t a political essay: I’m not convinced that the political world is quite so simple as to permit the easy right-left identification of YOYOs and WITTs. But limited as these terms may be in the political world, they may have some use in association management, because regardless of politics, we’re surrounded by WITTs and YOYOs.

Associations got the name because they’re formed by individuals who have decided voluntarily to “associate” for some purpose (or by organizations that have decided to do the same). So at their heart, associations are based on individuals realizing that they’re “in this together.” Joiners are WITTs.

(Why, even the political right and left agree on the need to gather their respective supporters together to pursue their otherwise disparate agendas. That’s one reason why political professionals of opposite political views actually have quite a lot in common—except, of course, on cable talk shows!)

Most of us in the association world believe that individuals who don’t join—

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GCSAE Schedule of Events

October 3 Liability Issues -
Hiring to Firing
Holiday Inn Select Strongsville
11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Remember that you can view the members-only section of the GCSAE website for Membership Rosters, GCSAE Bylaws, a Speakers Database, the GCSAE Lending Library and information about your Best Benefits Club discounts.

**If you are in need of your password, please call the office at
(330) 273-5756.**

Have a Job Opening?

Remember that there is no cost to members to post job openings on the GCSAE website's Job Bank. If you have any positions that you would like to have posted, e-mail them to gcsae@core.com.

ASSOCIATION ADVISOR is published 3 times a year by the Greater Cleveland Society of Association Executives, 3511 Center Road, Suite 8, Brunswick, OH 44212. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinions of GCSAE. **Editorial contributions are welcome. Deadline for submitting articles is the 15th of December, April and August.** Articles accepted for publication are subject to editing by GCSAE. Advertising is accepted on a space available basis. Contact the GCSAE office for further information. (330) 273-5756

President's Message

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freeloaders, uninvolved, apathetic, whatever—just don't get it. In their own way, they're YOYOs: believing, evidently, that they can succeed without associating.

In our individual personal and professional lives, self-reliance is a virtue, and it's wise to be ready to act as if we're "on our own." (For example, appreciate Social Security—WITT—but also build up your own 401k, 403b, 457b—YOYO.) But in my association experience, the people who believe that "we're in this together" are the ones who see the value of membership; they're the ones who get involved; and they're the ones who lead.

So I am convinced that at their core, associations are more WITT than YOYO. Let's encourage the tendencies that characterize WITTs. Let's applaud the WITTs in our midst and nurture them as leaders and professionals.



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Did you know that as a member of GCSAE you are also a member of Best Benefits Club (BBC)? Through BBC you receive over 250 discounts on everything from amusement parks and movie tickets to dining and fitness.

You may notice that at the end of every week you receive the Best Benefits Club Friday E-News. This helps you to stay informed about new discounts and special offers for members.

How do you get the discounts? Visit www.bbcmember.com. If you need your password, contact the Best Benefits Club office at 330-273-5756. Once you are logged in to the website you will be able to print off your BBC Proof of Membership card and view all of the discounts.

The Ethics of Apologies

by Bruce Weinstein, Ph.D.

The Ethics Guy®

Every day, it seems, we learn of an apology from a prominent executive, celebrity or political figure in response to an indiscretion of some sort. Those in the public eye have an unfortunate tendency to apologize only after they have been found with a hand in the cookie jar. When this happens, it is only natural for a skeptical (or cynical) public to wonder, "Are they apologizing for their conduct, or simply because they were caught?"

To make matters worse, the wrongdoer will often use the passive voice in his or her apology: "Mistakes were made," rather than, "I made a mistake." It is more comfortable to use the passive voice here, but doing so relinquishes any sense of personal responsibility. It is a non-apology apology and is therefore not very meaningful.

Of course, it's not just those in the public eye who readily offer an insincere "I'm sorry." You probably have at least one such person in your life. It may be the person working for you who spends too much time making personal phone calls or surfing the Web while at the office. Perhaps it is a friend who consistently cancels lunch dates at the last minute. Maybe you even find yourself offering apologies more than you should. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the need for the apology and whether you need to make one or feel you deserve one, the following questions arise:

- What makes an apology meaningful?
- Does apologizing make us look weak?
- How should you respond if you can't avoid repeating the mistake?
- What may we rightfully expect from someone who apologizes to us?

To answer these questions, it will be helpful to keep two ethical principles in mind: "Be Fair," and "Be Loving." Fairness or justice requires, among other things, that the punishment should fit the crime, and some forms of wrongful conduct are so serious that a mere "I'm sorry" isn't enough of a response. To be loving and compassionate in our professional and personal lives calls upon a different set of skills: we should do what we can to honor a person's sincere apology, even though our anger pulls us in the opposite direction.

With these two principles in mind, I propose the following guidelines for giving and accepting apologies:

WHEN YOU *OWE* AN APOLOGY:

- Admit your mistake quickly and take personal responsibility for it. Don't say "we made a mistake" when you mean "I made a mistake."
- Apologize first to the person you have wronged. That is the person who matters most.
- Speak from the heart. An insincere apology is as bad as no apology at all. People can tell when you really mean it, even if you think you're a good actor and can fool everyone.
- Realize that "sorry" is just a word. For that word to be meaningful, you must do your level best to avoid repeating the mistake. This means coming up with a strategy and sticking to it.
- Understand that a meaningful apology is a sign of integrity, not weakness. Anyone can blame others, or deny that he or she did anything wrong, or lie about what really happened. Only a strong, self-possessed person can own up to their mistakes, and only such a person commands true respect.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you can't do something well on your own, invite others to work with you on the problem. If the problem is beyond your grasp, consider asking someone else to

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May Meeting Photo Gallery

The May meeting - "Dream It. Do It." - was held at the MAGNET Innovation Center. Judith Crocker, Director of Education and Training, was the presenter.



In January of 2007, MAGNET launched the "Dream It. Do It." (DIDI) campaign. DIDI is an aggressive marketing and awareness effort to grow a highly skilled manufacturing workforce.

In addition to learning more about the campaign, members also had an opportunity to tour the MAGNET innovation Center.

The Ethics of Apologies

Continued

take it on, if it is appropriate for you to do so.

WHEN YOU ARE *OWED* AN APOLOGY:

- If someone has done something wrong and apologizes to you, accept the apology graciously. However...
- You are also justified in expecting the person to avoid repeating the behavior that required an apology in the first place.
- Depending on the situation, you might need to make clear to the other person what the consequences will be if he or she makes the mistake again.
- "Three strikes and you're out" is fine for baseball, but in other areas, it may take only one strike for someone to be justifiably banished from being a player. Some mistakes are so serious that you should not grant a second chance. For relatively minor slip-ups, however, or if the task at hand is unusually difficult, it might be unfair not to allow more than three opportunities to get it right.
- If the apologist continues making the same mistake over and over, you may have to say, perhaps regrettably, "I can't in good conscience give you another opportunity to slip up," no matter how much that person continues to apologize.

The 1970 film *Love Story* featured the memorable line, "Love means never having to say you're sorry." Even if this were true, there are many other areas where we do have to say we're sorry - and mean it. The challenge for all of us is to admit we've made a mistake, to do our best to ensure that we don't do it again, and to forgive others who sincerely regret their own poor judgment. No one is perfect, but most of us do have the capacity to right our own wrongs and to accept the imperfections in others.

ASAE News

ASAE Names 2007 Summit Award Winners

The Summit Award is ASAE & The Center's highest honor for associations that implement innovative, community-based programs. Part of the Associations Advance America (AAA) Awards program, the Summit Award symbolizes the very best efforts engineered by associations across the country in areas like public education and information, economic development, business and social innovation, skills training and development, and civic and community volunteer activities.

The six Summit Award winners for 2007 were selected from more than 250 entries received in the AAA Awards program this year. The winners are: American Farm Bureau Federation (Program: Harvest for All); American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (Program: Early Hearing Detection & Intervention); American Anthropological Association (Program: RACE Are We So Different? Public Education Program); Amachi Texas (Program: One-to-One Mentoring to Children of Prisoners); Soroptimist International of the Americas (Program: Women's Opportunity Award); and National Lieutenant Governors Association (Program: Ending Cervical Cancer in Our Lifetime).

Form 990

Earlier this year, the IRS began an extensive mail campaign to alert small tax-exempt organizations with gross receipts of \$25,000 or less that they are now required to submit an annual return, the Form 990-N.

The new requirement was one of the charitable reforms enacted as part of the Pension Protection Act (PPA) last summer. The IRS mailed letters to more than 650,000 small groups that are now required to file the 990-N, also called the e-Postcard.

The e-Postcard requires small organizations to provide a legal name and mailing address, any other names used, a Web address, the name and address of a principal officer, and a statement confirming the organization's annual gross receipts are \$25,000 or less. The return must be completed electronically.

ASAE recently drafted comments to the IRS on the new Form 990, focusing on specific concerns the organization has with the core form and a couple of the new schedules. ASAE is also going to request a delay in implementation of the core form until the 2009 tax year (filed in 2010).

Vote Ends IRS Private Debt Collection

On July 18, the House Ways and Means Committee voted to repeal the private debt collection program used by the IRS to collect federal income taxes.

The vote was 23-18, with all 17 Republicans on the committee (and one Democrat) voting against the bill. The Administration had supported the private debt collection program as a means of reducing the \$345 billion tax gap. Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee ranking member Jim Ramstad (R-MN) told the Bureau of National Affairs (BNA) that without the program, the IRS would assign workers elsewhere and the tax debt would go uncollected.

Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee Chairman John Lewis (D-GA) countered that the collection of taxes "is a core government function. It is the Internal Revenue Service's mission." Lewis said the program wastes tax dollars by paying a bounty up to 24 percent to the private contractors hired to collect tax debt from delinquent individuals. "The private debt collection program is an insult to the American taxpayer and our federal tax system," Lewis said.

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Upcoming GCSAE Meetings

October 3 - Liability Issues - Hiring to Firing

Luncheon Meeting

11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Holiday Inn Select Strongsville

Cost: \$35.00 for members, \$45.00 for non-member association executives

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