

Focus IPMA - CANADA Alberta & North Chapter

A publication for Alberta, Yukon, Nunavut, N.W.T. and members of the International Personnel Management Association - Canada

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By William Betteridge

Spring has been an off and on again event this year with the weather being extremely mild for us city folks and absolutely too dry and hot for those looking to grow crops and raise animals in the rural areas. It was a change to get 3 inches or 7.6 cm. of rain. How easy it is for us to forget that the planet has it's own rhythm which we on occasion need to take into consideration. I believe individuals traveling between Europe and other destinations learned that earlier this year with the eruption of the volcano beneath the Eyjafjallajokull glacier. What an interesting name for a glacier to help us remember how diverse our world is.

Diversity is indeed a focus of the National Training Conference being held in Ottawa June 6 to 9, 2010. The selection of speakers will expand our awareness of the critical issues being addressed during this time of recession and change. Dr. Linda Duxbury has expanded and refined the research being done regarding the Canadian demographics and the Public Service of Canada and her presentation on June 8th will be well worth listening too. This year the conference is presenting the opportunity to participate via telephone conference call for those unable to make the journey to Ottawa or who cannot obtain the necessary funds for the travel, etc.

Mrs Daphne Meredith, Chief HR Officer for the Government of Canada will be speaking on June 7th. Her presentation on managing people in the Public Service of Canada and support from

Margaret VanAmelsvoort-Thomas of the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada will be another topic of interest.

If you have not seen the registration flyer and form for these and the other keynote speakers presenting at the conference please contact us at ipma@interbaun.com or contact **Carol Hopkins** at 1-888-226-5002 or national@ipma-aigp.ca.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Page	Topic
4	Address Change Reminder
4	Future Events
1	Letter from the Editor, by William Betteridge
3	Membership Corner
2	Nearly everything I really needed to know about staff recognition I learned from my dog by Nelson Scott
4	Upcoming Conferences, Luncheon & Workshops Dates

NEARLY EVERYTHING I REALLY
NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT STAFF
RECOGNITION I LEARNED FROM MY
DOG by Nelson Scott

Kojak is the only dog I've ever owned and it is not easy to ignore a large, active dog that knows it's time for his walk. For several years, meeting this need meant spending 45 minutes, morning and evening, on the trails near where we lived in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Kojak and I often found ourselves alone on routes more frequented by deer, moose, black bears and foxes than by other humans or dogs. This solitude created opportunities for contemplation. Learning about people by observing dogs is nothing new as we recall Ivan Pavlov's work, he was the Russian physiologist and Nobel laureate.

When Pavlov presented food (an unconditioned stimulus), the dogs salivated (unconditioned response). Next, he combined the food with the sound of a bell (conditioned stimulus). Once the dogs had associated the ringing bell with food, they would salivate at the sound of the bell, alone. The promise (the ringing bell) of reward (food) was all that was needed to stimulate the desired behaviour (salivation).

The routine of the walks Kojak and I took didn't very much. At the start, Kojak would romp about doing dog things, you know, the canine equivalent of punching a time clock or signing a guest book. As the walk progressed, he would appear at my left side from time to time, demonstrating the heeling position that he had learned when the two of us had enrolled in puppy kindergarten.

This was when I learned four key lessons. Here was my first lesson:

Dogs will do what they believe we expect of them.

Kojak was heeling and this was the behaviour that I had learned to reward (and Kojak had learned I would reward) during our obedience classes. If ignored Kojak would progress to the next phase. Still at my side, continuing looking up, he would emit a gentle growl, just enough, he hoped, to catch my attention. Maybe I had not noticed how well he was heeling.

Through this sequence, I discovered the second lesson:

Sometimes dogs will ask for feedback in the form of praise and reward when they know they have performed as expected.

When there was still no reward—likely because I had not remembered to refill my treat pocket—Kojak would once again return to heeling position, but only momentarily. Sensing that no reward would be coming, he would leave my side to explore in the nearby woods.

I was left to contemplate the third lesson:

Ignore your dog and he will soon begin to ignore you.

As we returned home through an open field I would pick up and toss a stick for Kojak to retrieve. When he dropped it at my feet, I would either give a pat on the head, which was sometimes accompanied by a treat, before throwing the stick again. Having discovered that a retrieved stick would lead to a cookie, Kojak would chase a stick, even if he had not received a cookie the last time he retrieved the stick. There was always the promise of a cookie the next time . . . or the time after that. That anticipation is what Ivan Pavlov had observed and labelled "conditioned stimulus." As Kojak grew older, he seems to have grown wiser. He will still chase a couple of sticks and return them with no more than a pat on the head as reward. But throw the stick to many times without a treat and he will only watch it fly through the air. That expression on Kojak's face told the whole story "So! What

are you going to do for me now that I have tracked down your stupid stick?"

Kojak had taught me a fourth lesson:

You can't fool an old dog with the same old tricks.

How do these lessons apply to recognizing the performance of human employees?

Let's rewrite these lessons in people and/or employee terms!

Lesson #1: *People will do what they believe we expect of them.*

Lesson #2: *Some employees will ask for feedback in the form of praise and recognition when they have performed their jobs well . . . and that's okay.*

Lesson #3: *Ignore your staff and they will soon begin to ignore you and your expectations.*

Lesson #4: *You can't motivate staff with the same old recognition tricks.*

Unfortunately there are few "puppy kindergarten" opportunities for new supervisors and managers to learn when and how to recognize individuals and/or their employees. Observation of employee work, being able to listen carefully and knowing when to maintain employee self-esteem and self-confidence are all part of putting these four lessons to work. In the absence of direction and feedback from supervisors, new employees will do what they *believe* is expected of them. Some employees have a greater need for feedback than others. These individuals need to know that you are pleased with their performance and that they have your acceptance and support. Your response should reflect your true assessment of their individual performance. If you were pleased, let the staff member know this, and why you feel as you do. If you feel the performance was not up to standard, let the employee know this, too. Be careful to balance the three types of feedback, positive feedback, negative feedback and no feedback. Each has a time and a place to building strong performance and self esteem. It is

Volume 12 Issue 5 Spring 2009-10

essential to learn what type of feedback each of your employees likes. There is no merit or value to the feedback that doesn't fit the recipient's needs and expectations.

Nelson Scott trains front-line supervisors and managers to make great hiring decisions and to recognize and retain great staff. He can be reached at nmscott@telus.net or (780) 433-1443.

www.seaconsultingonline.com

And here is a link to my August 2009 newsletter in which I ranted about tea that tastes like coffee. You may wish to share with the Royal Glenora and anyone else.

http://www.seaconsultingonline.com/Briefly/Downloads/BN_2009_08.pdf

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

In June we have our Annual General Meeting and there will be several positions opening up. Steven Fanjoy as President is moving into his second year and is looking to expand several committees.

The committees being expanded include Membership, Communications and Marketing, and Program Development. Several volunteer have come forward already as volunteers to support these committees and additional helping hands would be welcome.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES
LUNCHEONS & WORKSHOPS
DATES

Future Alberta and North Chapter
Events

At the Royal Glenora Club

June 16, 2010 - Annual General Meeting

This meeting will be accompanied by a workshop facilitated by Doug Aitkenhead, Director, Human Resource Services, Edmonton Catholic School District.

Mr. Aitkenhead's breakfast session will be "Dealing with Conflict". We look forward to the session and your attendance after the breakfast.

To register for this and/or other IPMA-Canada sessions contact:

Pat McLaughlin:

Phone: 780 – 441 – 6120

E-mail: mclaughlinpa@ecsd.net

Future Events

June 6th – 9th, 2010

"Human Resources: Rising to the Challenge"

IPMA-Canada's 2010 National HR Training Conference, Westin Hotel, Ottawa, Ontario

This conference features numerous keynote speakers and concurrent sessions. The keynote presentations are all available via audio connection through telephone conference facilities. More information is available at:

<http://www.ipma-aigp.ca/conferences/2010Pre-ConferencePoster.pdf>

ADDRESS CHANGE REMINDER!

Please help us in updating our records by sending your change of address to:

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21 Midland Crescent – Unit 74
Ottawa, ON K2H 8P6

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