

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

News from the International Ombudsman Association

Drawing on the Past to Plan Our Future

BY JANIS SCHONAUER, IOA PRESIDENT

Although the name “Janis” is actually a feminine derivative of “John,” I decided to Google “Janus” in search of inspiration for this letter. Did you know that “Janus is the Roman god of gates and doors, beginnings and endings.”? Janus is portrayed as having a head with two faces, giving him the ability to look to the future and past at the same time. He was recognized at “...beginnings, especially the beginnings of important events.” Janus also represents transitions, especially “the growing-up of young people.”

This definition serves as a metaphor for IOA this year. We will look back at our history and forward to the important events that await us as a group and a profession. IOA will continue its growth from its youth.

IOA's first annual conference in April demonstrated our transitions brilliantly. For those who missed hearing our immediate past president Judi Segall speak at the closing of the conference, she eloquently expressed that the conference was “...an extraordinary experience — an amazingly synergistic offering that managed to weave teaching, learning, sharing and reflecting on the blending, merging and emerging of IOA.” It is these same elements that enhance the potential of IOA moving forward.

Those of you present at the April 2006 conference heard more than one reference to the “birth” of our organization; about people who had contributed to its “DNA”; to the fact that it had passed through “infancy”. The image of Janus appealed to me as both a personal and organization-

al metaphor. I continuously draw on my past experiences in the academic sector and more recently in the corporate world. The 15 years spent consulting with the staff, faculty and students of two academic institutions will always be a part of me and provide an awareness of the strains and opportunities present in those settings. Twenty months tenure in the corporate world has strengthened my previously held belief that our practice is fundamentally the same, regardless of our venue. The cornerstones of independence, informality, neutrality and confidentiality hold us much closer than our particular settings may separate us. I hope that my experience in these sectors will help me work effectively with the Board and the membership through the transitions that lie ahead.

This will be an exciting year. I hope that many of you will find time, just as Janus considers the past and future, to draw on your rich experiences and share your ideas and energy with the association to strengthen our profession in the future. ●

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Editorial Team:

Michael Eisner

mediatormike@aol.com

Tom Barnette

tom.barnette@aexp.com

Nicholas Diehl

ndiehl@princeton.edu

International Ombudsman Association

203 Towne Centre Drive
Hillsborough, NJ 08844-4693
USA

Phone:

+1 (908) 359-1184

Fax:

+1 (908) 842-0376

Email:

info@ombudsassociation.org

Website:

www.ombudsassociation.org

What Are You Going to Do?

In this issue we are testing a new feature called **What Are You Going to Do?**

The idea is to present a hypothetical scenario from an Ombuds practice and then invite IOA members to weigh-in with their "vote" on what they would do next. We will publish the cumulative results of the responses in our next issue. We recognize that limiting Ombuds to one, exclusive option is a bit artificial and not what you typically do in your Ombuds practice. But to keep this simple and manageable, please select the one option that you would choose among the ones that are listed.

We hope to achieve the following:

- Create value and interest by sharing the consensus of the members who reply
- Generate some discussion around some of the gray issues of Ombudsing
- Actively engage as many of our readers as possible in the content of this newsletter.

Please review the following scenario. To record your response, copy and paste the link listed below into your web browser or visit the Members Only section of the IOA website www.ombudsassociation.org for the survey link. Please choose only one of the options listed. Comments are welcome, but keep in mind that we may publish some of the comments in the newsletter, at our discretion. Let us hear from you.

THE SCENARIO

Upon checking your voicemail in your US- based Ombuds Office on Monday morning, you find a short message from an anonymous caller. The caller simply states that Vice President Jane Doe is harassing her administrative assistant. The caller leaves no specific facts but does request that "Human Resources be made aware of the situation." You have no way to contact the caller.

DO YOU:

1. Advise someone in Human Resources about the allegation?

OR

2. Advise no one about the message but seek to create increased opportunity for individuals who might have knowledge of the allegation to come forward to you?

OR

3. Do nothing now, but keep the concern on your "radar screen" in case you hear about it again?

Please choose one and only one of the three answers above.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO SURVEY LINK:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/recipient/survey-intro.zgi?p=WEB225CWM9ZCQ4>

Helping a Company Move from Compliance to Commitment: One Ombudsman's Journey

BY KENNY MOORE

When I lived in the monastery as a Catholic priest, 20% of my superiors thought they were Divinely inspired. Now that I'm working in Corporate America, the number's up to 80%. As the Corporate Ombudsman for my company, I'm one of the few who have a core competency for dealing with executives who believe themselves to be infallible. My CEO has even recognized this skill and has me reporting directly to him to assist in changing the company's culture. Oddly enough, my years in the Church gave me some decent skills for succeeding in the business world. I often feel that the jobs have proven to be quite similar, except the pay is now a lot better. Much of my work continues to remain priestly: building community, repairing trust, offering hope and trying to heal an inherently flawed human system.

Morale continues to remain dismal in most companies and employee surveys reveal three disturbing trends: nobody trusts, workers don't believe senior management and employees are too stressed out to care. Problems with trust, belief and caring. When I lived behind the cloistered walls, we referred to these dynamics as a crisis of Faith, Hope and Charity. Corporate America is facing a spiritual problem as much as a fiscal one. Napoleon once said that leaders are dealers in hope. That sounds like a sacred quality to me. So, maybe it's not all that surprising that the job of today's executive is as much spiritual as it is managerial.

COMMITMENT VS. COMPLIANCE

Even though prayer cards now outnumber Dilbert cartoons in employees' cubicles, talking about what is holy in the workplace leaves most corporate managers somewhat in a quandary. How do engineers and accountants become both astute business leaders as well as proficient spiritual guides? Addressing this predicament is a bit trickier than streamlining business processes or outsourcing operations overseas. Engaging the heart and soul of employees to gain business success is no easy task. While throwing money and corporate perks at workers garnishes their compliance, it does little to guarantee their commitment. And as we're increasingly coming to discover: if you don't get commitment from employees, the business falters.

Commitment is not something that can be coerced or conscribed, it can only be invited. It comes as much from the heart as from the head. Employees won't bestow it if they mistrust their leaders. Monks seem to understand what's required for soliciting people's commitment; many business leaders don't. It's probably because much of their education was spent on measuring, managing and marketing. Not inviting. Courses in business school seldom explore the sacred component of leadership's responsibility. I wonder if that's partly responsible for the high turnover in the executive suite? Today's corporate leaders

may have lost their godly compass, and consequently the loyalty of their workers. Some form of Divine Retribution may be underway for those residing in the corner offices.

The good news is that there's a host of employees out there yearning to throw their commitment behind a leader who is making even small progress in mastering the art of invitation. The ancient Greeks used to say that in the land of the blind, the Cyclops rule. It is such a rare business skill that it seems leaders don't even need to do it well. Merely making the effort to abandon coercion in favor of invitation appears sufficient. Employees seem to be instinctively drawn to officers who are giving it a try. To separate the authentic leaders from those approaching it as just another management fad, discriminating workers are applying the same criteria as Supreme Court Judge Potter Stewart used in identifying pornography: I know it when I see it. Like plants drawn to light, workers are inherently attracted to leaders who are sincerely implementing this refreshing skill. These executives represent a type of heliotropic leadership in the rugged jungle of business life. They radiate a hallowed luminescence that employees gravitate towards and are nurtured by. With this type of leadership, corporate toxicity is kept to a minimum and a form of workplace photosynthesis takes place.

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WORK: A SACRED ENDEAVOR

Thomas Aquinas, the medieval monk and scholar, once said: "Without work, it is impossible to have fun." Urging employees to contribute their God-given talents in the workplace is liberating for the worker and an enhancement to the business. It also injects a needed flair of enjoyment into the workplace. A small but growing number of executives are learning to engage the spiritual side of business. It entails recognizing the inherent sacral qualities that employees bring to work and making demonstrated efforts to use them to satisfy customers. Spirituality at work isn't about hosting prayer groups or Bible study sessions. I don't think the business world is ready for that, and I'm not sure it should be. The

them for the betterment of others as well as ourselves. There's something inherently holy about embarking upon that effort.

I've spent numerous years working in large hierarchical institutions, twenty of them corporate and fifteen religious. Whenever you're dealing with large numbers of people joined together around a singular effort, many of the operating principles seem to feel oddly similar. The media once asked Pope John XXIII how many people worked at the Vatican. "About half of them," was his reply. It is amusing how the challenges confronting leaders, religious and secular alike, have some universal qualities. The journalist Eric Sevareid once said that he was a pessimist about tomorrow but an optimist about the day after tomorrow. I've

keeps reminding us: losing jobs is never good for the economy.

The Divine's invitation to us is to get in there and be a player as the ancient drama of good and evil unfolds. Using our hands, heads and hearts in service of something beyond myopic self-interest is what's required. Business has tremendous potential to be a force for good in the world. While it hasn't always lived up to this challenge, the opportunity remains ever present. We who labor there have direct influence on the outcome, and our impact has the potential to be significant.

WORKING ON THE IMPOSSIBLE

Some might balk at the impossibility of effectively nurturing the spiritual within the confines of the commercial. And for these people I have a compassionate understanding of this challenge. However, one of the things I learned in the monastery was just because something is impossible, that doesn't mean you don't need to work on it. Why else would I have been required to take the vow of chastity for so many years? Some of what we are required to work on will not be accomplished in our lifetimes. That's what vision, brilliance and legacy is about. To those needing encouragement, I give you the words of Father Theodore, my revered monastic confessor: if you think you're too small to be effective, then you've never been in bed with a mosquito. We all can have an impact, even if it's a small one. The poet Theodore Roethke said it well: "What we need is more people who specialize in the impossible." The challenges are formidable,

Spirituality at work isn't about hosting prayer groups or Bible study sessions..



separation of church and state continues to be a viable model in such a diverse world. Championing religious practices in the office sounds to me like the makings of another Holy War. Alas, in a global economy, it's not even clear whose version of God we'd need to direct our prayers to. I believe that the Divine is more interested in having us acknowledge our talents and use

come to feel the same way about business. I don't expect corporate malfeasance to end anytime in the near future. The workplace is a mirror of life. Like it or not, evil is part of the human condition and will always be with us. Besides, if immorality were to suddenly come to an abrupt halt, much of life's drama would be lost and organized religion would be out of a job. And as Alan Greenspan

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yet the need is great. Life invites us daily to take the risk and act on making the impossible happen. It's at the heart of what makes showing up for work so exciting.

Spirituality, both within and outside the workplace, will only increase as we move further into this century. There's a vast horde of aging baby-boomers growing older by the day and being uncomfortably confronted with their own mortality. The monks used to say that religion is the aphrodisiac of the elderly. I expect that the boomers will want to die as well as they've lived, and they'll be looking for some Divine assistance to make it all work out successfully.

Who knows, spirituality in the workplace might do for the economy what Viagra did for the male libido? But I don't think Bob Dole will be its spokesman. As a former monk who's learned some sharp business skills, I'd look elsewhere for endorsements. Perhaps I'd start with the Dalai Lama.

P.S. If you're thinking about writing me, give in to the temptation. I love getting mail ... and being influenced by what you have to say.

Please e-mail me at kennythemonk@yahoo.com.

Kenny Moore is co-author of ***The CEO and the Monk: One Company's Journey to Profit and Purpose*** (John Wiley and Sons, 2004), rated as one of the top ten best selling business books on Amazon.com. He is Corporate Ombudsman and Human Resources Director at a New York City Fortune 500 energy company. Reporting to the CEO, he is primarily responsible for awakening joy, meaning and commitment in the workplace. While these efforts have

largely been met with skepticism, he remains eternally optimistic of their future viability.

Kenny has more than 20 years experience with managing change, developing leaders and healing the

the National Cancer Institute and survived. Kenny came away from that experience recalling the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us." Kenny's lifetime goal is to spend more of his time playing his

I believe that the Divine is more interested in having us acknowledge our talents and use them for the betterment of others as well as ourselves.

corporate community. He's been profiled by Charles Osgood on **CBS Sunday Morning News** and interviewed by Tom Peters, **The Wall Street Journal** and **Fast Company** magazine regarding his unique leadership style. Kenny is the recipient of Notre Dame University's 2006 **Hesburg Award** for his significant contribution to the field of business ethics.

His business practices are based on those of Louie Armstrong who said: "I am here in the service of Happiness." Louis died a rich and beloved man; his voice still sings in the ears (and hearts) of millions.

Prior to his work in corporate America, Kenny spent 15 years in a monastic community as a Catholic priest. Several years ago, he had the good fortune of being diagnosed with "incurable" cancer, at its most advanced stages. He underwent a year of experimental treatment at

music. Having dealt with both God and death, Kenny now finds himself eminently qualified to work with senior management on corporate change efforts.

Kenny is a watercolor artist, poet and photographer. He is Founding Director of **Art for the Anawim**, a not-for-profit charity which works with the art community in supporting the needs of terminally ill children and the inner city poor. His poems have been published in several anthologies; one was selected as a semi-finalist in the North American Open Poetry Contest. Kenny lives in Totowa, New Jersey and is married to the "fair and beautiful" Cynthia. Together, they are fighting a losing battle of maintaining their mental stability while raising 2 growing boys.

Kenny can be reached at kennythemonk@yahoo.com or (973) 956-8210. ●

FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Charting a New Course

From April 2-5, 2006, organizational ombudsmen from across the globe embarked on a new journey as they convened in San Diego, California, for the Inaugural Conference of the International Ombudsman Association.

ANCHORS AWEIGH: Charting a New Course for Organizational

Ombuds proved to be an outstanding four day event. Educational and professionally-enriching programs combined with extracurricular events provided the perfect backdrop for this monumental occasion.

A celebration of the first anniversary of IOA, the meeting demonstrated our transitions brilliantly. Members reflected on their past and solidified plans for the organization's future.

We are pleased to present highlights from a number of sessions during the conference. Special thanks go to **Mari Marsh, Carolyn Noorbakhsh, Cynthia M. Joyce, and Tom Sebok** for preparing these synopses:

Meeting the Help Line Challenge

Presenters:

Chuck L. Howard, Attorney, Partner, Shipman & Goodwin LLP, Hartford, CT; **Arlene M. Redmond**, Managing Director, Redmond, Williams & Associates, LLC, Warwick RI; **Randy Williams**, Managing Director, Redmond, Williams & Associates, LLC, Morristown, NJ

Hotline growth is exploding in response to the passage of major federal legislation requiring companies to provide a means for employees to report criminal conduct or ethically questionable practices by individuals or organizations without fear of retaliation. Hotlines have evolved and now present their services as pro-active to their clients in the corporate, non-profit, academic and governmental sectors. They are designed to protect clients' reputations, minimize financial/legal risks, help maintain ethical environments and comply with Sarbanes-Oxley and other regulations. The National Hotlines Services' (NHS) client base has doubled from 2002 – 2004 and the Global Compliance Services serves 1,450 organizations, including nearly 1/2 of America's Fortune 100 and nearly 1/3 of America's Fortune 1000. Comparative data shows the growth, establishment, and continuance of ombuds programs remaining flat.

Hotline usage however, is low. As hotline providers work to remedy

that problem, ombuds can work to market and expand services to match or exceed the quality and capabilities of organizational hotlines. Ideas to explore are multilingual capability, accessibility through phone, website, email, in person, and regular emergency contact information. Case management through customized data capture and a robust and flexible analysis and reporting system were also mentioned.

While hotlines have their place, ombuds must communicate their unique value to organizations. Ombuds can focus on their abilities to identify issues quickly and get them resolved appropriately, assisting with the compliance of federal regulations, and their role as organizational change catalysts. Ombuds must be proactive in communicating their value added role to senior leaders and take opportunities to cultivate a relationship with the internal sponsor of the hotline service. Ombuds can also proactively communicate through company newsletters and websites and can support the organizational ombuds role through networking and other social venues.

— **Mari Marsh**

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International Approaches to Measurement

Presenters:

Dick Hermans, Student Ombudsman, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, **Sue Morris**, Staff Ombudsman, Scotiabank, Toronto, Ontario and **John Zinsser**, Principal, Pacifica Human Communications, LLC, Charleston, SC

The premise of this session was defined as, "Measurement matters, culture matters and culture matters to measurement." Sue Morris reported that her office noticed through their tracking system that stressors in the organization may be increasing absenteeism and consequently negatively impacting productivity. This was borne out by other offices in the organization that track workplace absence. The organization implemented a wellness program, in part as a result of input from the Ombuds office. After the wellness program was implemented, they saw a decline in stress related cases brought forward to the Ombuds Office. Dick Herman presented results of a survey he had conducted that was designed to get information to improve the Ombuds process and to learn about the perceived value of the Ombuds office. The survey was distributed to staff and students of his university that had been involved in a complaint in the previous 18 months. He realized a phenomenal return rate of approximately 60%. The respondents to the survey overwhelmingly indicated feeling favorable about their interaction with the ombuds-



man. This was evidenced by their responses to such statements as, "In this case, calling in the Ombuds was more effective than other possibilities"; "The problem has been solved in a fair way by the agency of the Ombuds"; "The institution of an Ombuds has a preventive effect on the arising of student complaints/problems"; and "The institution of an Ombuds promotes correct behavior of employees toward students." Dick compared his results with those of John Zinsser, (presented at the 2005 joint UCOA/TOA conference) on the value of the Ombuds office. The results were quite similar. In both surveys, the respondents reported positive experience with the Ombuds, and believed the office to be an enhancement to alternative resources.

— Carolyn Noorbakhsh

Exploring the Possibility of Publishing a Journal

Presenters:

Alan Jay Lincoln, University Ombuds, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell, MA; **Tom Sebok**, Director, Ombuds Office, University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, CO

Ten conference participants shared their thoughts about establishing an IOA professional journal. While we discussed many options for the possible orientation, mode of publishing, and audience, we agreed that a professional IOA Journal is a worthwhile undertaking and will be

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beneficial to the Association and the members.

Alan Lincoln and Tom Sebok facilitated the discussion. The idea of developing a professional journal was brought to the attention of the Communications Committee in January. The committee recommended that the idea be brought to the wider membership through the conference and, if warranted, through other means to reach the membership. As a relatively new profession, we may need to define and refine the role and function of the organizational ombuds. We need to foster recognition that what we do for our agencies, corporations, colleges and universities is valuable and worthy of study. Scholars and practitioners outside our profession have an interest in what we do and how we do it. A scholarly journal will foster a greater interest in ombudsing and allow ombuds who conduct research to reach out to their colleagues with their ideas and findings. It was noted that a professional journal is consistent with Tony Williams'* assertions that fostering an Ombuds Canopy of Knowledge is a strength.

A suggestion was made to survey membership to assess interest. It also was suggested that we consider the strategic implications; how does publishing a journal position us in the future?

Following a discussion of the potential value of a journal, several issues were raised and examined at the Town Hall Meeting including:

Options for publication

Potential audience

Publication standards and practices

Potential contributors

Priority within IOA

Attendees included Judy Guillermo-Newton, Wendell Jones, Tom Kosakowski, Alan Lincoln, Susan Neff, Jan Schonauer, Tom Sebok, Kathy Stewart, Drew Strayer, and Jim Thompson.

*Editors note: Dr. Tony Williams delivered a keynote speech at the IOA conference that examined the evolution of professional practice among well established professions as learning examples for the Ombuds profession. He is a professor at Royal Roads University.

— **Tom Sebok**

A New Ombuds Program: Successes and Challenges

Presenters:

Laura Bradbury, Commissioner, Fair Practices Commission, Toronto, ON Canada; **Thomas Irvine**, Fair Practices Specialist, Fair Practices Commission, Toronto, ON Canada

In the summer of 2003, two members of the board of directors of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in Ontario, Canada conducted consultation interviews with injured workers and their representatives. Comments revealed that workers were dissatisfied with the lack of an independent arena within the WSIB to address concerns about unfair treatment. In response to these concerns, the board formed the Fair Practices Commission, which opened in January 2004. The Commission's mandate was to "receive, investigate and resolve complaints about alleged acts, omissions, and unfair practices" by the WSIB and to "identify complaint trends, policy matters, and systemic issues, and recommend improvements."

Laura Bradbury, and Thomas Irvine presented a detailed program on

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how the Commission was established by the WSIB and discussed both challenges and successes. Using the Commission's *Annual Report 2004-05*, presenters took participants through the processes of developing a business plan and budget, conducting research and hiring staff, developing complaint resolution procedures and protocols, and reporting needs and communication materials. For a copy of the report see the Fair Practices Commission website at: <http://www.fairpractices.on.ca/>.

— **Mari Marsh**

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in Higher Ed

Presenter:

Laurie McCann, Campus Ombuds, University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

The model of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) developed by Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D., serves as a method to facilitate rich and meaningful connections with others and ourselves. Sometimes referred to as compassionate communication, the style was derived by Rosenberg in an

effort to decrease the misunderstandings in communications that result in physical and verbal violence. Laurie described how this model, which is designed to create an environment where it is possible for everyone's needs to be met, can support the success of the new IOA. The model also has the potential to initiate a shift in how members of a campus community relate to each other and resolve conflicts.

The model is simple, but powerful. It relies on skillful speaking and listening, taking the blame out of one's thoughts and words, and negotiating agreements by making requests rather than demands. Laurie presented an overview of the Compassionate Communications Model, which includes four components:

- **Observations:** what is seen and heard as contrasted with judgment, evaluations, assumptions, conclusions
- **Needs:** values, wishes, and wants as contrasted with expectations, blame, and "shoulds"
- **Feelings:** emotions as contrasted with thoughts, perceptions, what I think others are doing to me and "victim language"
- **Requests:** actions as contrasted with demands, "no choice," my way,

implied or real threat, and negative consequence

For more information on NVC, Laurie recommends Marshall Rosenberg's book, *Speaking Peace in a World of Conflict*. You can access the Center for Nonviolent Communication website at <http://www.cnvc.org/>.

— **Mari Marsh**

Sailing in a New Direction: Plotting Your Course as a Private Provider Ombuds

Presenter:

Dina Beach Lynch, Ombuds and CEO of ADRPracticeBuilder.com, Boston, MA

"What lies ahead for our profession?" was one of the first questions asked by presenter Dina Beach Lynch launching participants into a discussion exploring new directions for the organizational ombuds. According to Dina's research, the number of smaller companies is growing and these organizations are showing interest in the services of private provider Ombuds. Through lecture, discussion, and small group

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work, participants explored marketing ideas, assessments and plans, targeting/niche ideas, obstacles, getting started, advertising, pricing, and contracting.

Dina suggested that prior to drafting a plan building a private provider small business, one might explore the potential for personal success and suggested that all participants read Thomas Kelly's book, **Ten Faces of Innovation: IDEO's Strategies for Defeating the Devil's Advocate and Driving Creativity Throughout Your Organization**. Other good resources include Steven Shapiro's, **Goal Free Living: How to Have the Life You Want NOW!** and **The Entrepreneur Next Door** by Bill Wagner. *Inc.* and *Entrepreneur* magazines provide the most current information on opening a private consulting business.

Useful websites include Dina's online conflict management toolkit at (www.workwelltogether.com) and the site for the United States Small Business Administration at www.sba.gov. — **Mari Marsh**

Exploring the Underlying Causes of Conflict: Positions & Interests

Presenter:

Mary-Jane (M.J.) Gibson, Private Consultant, San Diego, CA

Unraveling the knots and exploring the underlying causes of conflict was the focus of this session by trainer and consultant, M.J. Gibson. Participants were prepared for the session with the reminder that most conflicts are built over time and can be challenging to unravel. M.J. assured the group that resolving any conflict requires the same tools, no matter how the conflict comes or whether it is large or small.

Through examples and demonstration, M.J. took the group through the process of interest based problem solving. In a conflict between two people, what one party wants bumps up against what another party wants. These two different "sides" are called *positions*. Focusing on positions to solve problems is not usually effective. Looking below the surface through thoughtful reflection and questioning by a neutral third party can lead to an understanding of what each party needs and values.

The needs and values identified within the context of each party's position are defined as *interests*. Once interests are identified, the rationale for each position is clearer. When interests are understood, problem solving becomes a search for common solutions through a process that maintains both parties' needs. After defining interests, the parties move on to the process of determining the options that will best meet the needs of both individuals.

You can contact M.J. Gibson at mjgibsonsd@aol.com.

— **Mari Marsh**

Database Categories Task Force

Three of the four members of the Database Categories Task Force presented the Task Force's work on Tuesday, April 4 to an audience of approximately 30 colleagues at the Inaugural Conference in La Jolla, CA. The classification system that could be used by organizational ombuds across sectors was presented. This draft included the names and definitions of nine broad categories, including:

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- 1) Employee Compensation and Benefits,
- 2) Evaluative Relationships,
- 3) Peer and Colleague Relationships,
- 4) Career Progression and Development,
- 5) Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance,
- 6) Safety, Health and Physical Environment,
- 7) Services/Administrative Issues,
- 8) Organizational, Strategic and Mission-Related, and
- 9) Policies, Procedures, Ethics and Standards.

In addition, over 70 subcategories were presented and defined in the draft classification system. Attendees were told they could create their own subcategories, if needed.

Reactions to the classification system were favorable. Those present were asked for feedback about potential areas of confusion and missing categories or subcategories. Several suggestions were made, including soliciting feedback from representatives of two emerging ombuds sectors (health care and religious organizations) and a request to consider the addition of a tenth

broad category (Values and Ethics). The Task Force members agreed to consider all of the feedback and suggestions and to make contact with representatives from the two sectors.

Finally, two questions which had been discussed from the early days of the Task Force were raised once again: 1) "Who decides how we classify issues (the visitor or the ombuds)" and 2) "How do you define a 'case'?" The Task Force agreed to discuss both of these questions and add them to the category system's documentation.

A website address was provided where Ombudsman could download the latest draft of the Task Force's work on an Excel spreadsheet: <http://mysite.verizon.net/vzepuauu/>. All IOA members are invited to view the Task Force's classification system and provide their comments and suggestions.

Next steps for the Task Force include: 1) defining relevant terms, 2) suggesting the taxonomy (categories and subcategories) for use by colleagues, and 3) suggesting related data colleagues might want to collect. Once complete, the Task Force will send its work to the IOA Board and suggest it be added to the IOA website. After this is accom-

plished, the Task Force expects to propose to do a benchmarking study with data collection from IOA members, to compare by sectors and in total, the categories of issues concerns, etc. for which visitors to Ombudsman offices have requested assistance.

— **Tom Sebok**

Revising the Institution Using Systems Thinking

Presenter:

Wendell B. Jones, Manager of Systems Transformation, Application Department, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM

This workshop discussed large-scale, complex social systems and the evolution of systems methodologies to understand and change these systems.

Wendell Jones began with a description of "wicked problems," incredibly complex situations that illustrate the challenges of systems thinking. One example of a wicked problem is the merger between TOA and UCOA. Wicked problems produce a "mess," which is a system of problems and

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opportunities. These systems are multi-dimensional, with multiple feedback loops, and they exhibit emergent properties (which only exist in the whole, not in the parts) and counter-intuitive behavior (e.g., events may have multiple effects; cause and effect may be separated in time and space; an effect may have an independent life of its own and may not be removed by removing the cause). The TOA/UCOA merger clearly exhibits a number of new problems and opportunities as well as dynamics not seen in either parent organization and unexpected behaviors (e.g., the response of members to the new membership criteria).

The first step in dealing with these systems is to formulate the “mess.” In the case of IOA, this would include descriptions of the history of the parent organizations and the merger process. The next step is idealization (determining the ideal design for a merged IOA), followed by successive approximation or realization of the ideal design (continued changes to IOA structure and policies over time). Developing solutions to complicated problems is non-linear and chaotic, as this last year of IOA can clearly attest. Sometimes the problem cannot even be defined until a solution is tried, and the solution itself may in turn produce new problems.

Systems methodology has shifted from an analytic paradigm to a systems paradigm and can be defined as “a holistic language of interaction and design for seeing through chaos and understanding complexity; a language for dealing



with socio-cultural systems where the whole is becoming more and more interdependent while parts display choice and behave independently.” Holistic thinking is messy and non-linear, and iteration is the key to understanding complexity. Insight evolves from exploring the system dynamics and looking for patterns and areas where influence can be exerted, not through analyzing the parts. An iterative holistic process of inquiry for IOA would include understanding the context for the organization (e.g., the larger ombuds profession), the function a merged organization can serve, a structure that might be effective, and an appropriate process (how to pursue a merger). This information would be synthesized in a cohesive image of the whole situation, and then the process would repeat with a refined context and function and an improved structure and process. Eventually, as this process of inquiry continues, a fully functional IOA would be developed.

You can contact Wendell at: Wbjones@sandia.gov, or visit his website <http://tinyurl.com/rw964>

— **Cynthia M. Joyce**

Crystal Ball

The “Crystal Ball” session, initiated a decade ago by Mary Rowe for TOA conferences, brings together a group of seasoned practitioners who identify and discuss emerging issues in various sectors. Participants included: Wilbur Hicks, International Monetary Fund; John Barkat, Pace University; Carole Houk, Carole Houk International, LLC; Jan Schonauer, Alliance Bernstein; Brian Bloch, ISKCON Resolve, India; and Tom Sebok, University of Colorado at Boulder – moderator. Mary Rowe provided handouts for the session which compiled comments from a number of ombuds colleagues.

Wilbur Hicks talked about ombudsing in an international arena in which IMF concerns about attitudes towards sexual orientation in a country served by the IMF affected decision-making about an assignment offered to a visitor – in spite of the organization’s anti-discrimination policy. He concluded that, as the world becomes flatter, the future will see more of these value clashes (sexual orientation, the role of women, religion, belief, tradition,

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culture, the role of government, etc.) in which the ombudsman will be expected to play a role in helping find resolutions.

John Barkat spoke about new concerns emerging in the higher education and international arenas. In higher education, he cited political concerns regarding academics (e.g., increased military recruiting and protests against it) and "personal security in a post-9/11 world" (e.g., the use of ID cards and cameras creating a record, privacy concerns, e-mail surveillance). He also talked about a number of other new issues in higher education including discrimination/treatment of international students, binge drinking, plagiarism, academic freedom issues, university funding, and intellectual property disputes.

Internationally, John pointed to new legal reforms in a number of countries. England updated its discrimination/harassment laws, Japan granted more flexible hours to women returning to work after maternity leave, and Guernesey (Channel Islands) outlawed discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status. Additionally, John reported that workplace smoking bans took effect recently in Spain and Wales, a new anti-retaliation policy for whistleblowers was instituted in the UN, and in South Korea (for the first time within the insurance industry). Finally, he mentioned new laws affecting employees and sometimes curtailing rights that were enacted in Australia and Nepal, and France. The trend

was an increasing tension between laws that seek to accommodate minority groups, with simultaneous laws curtailing rights of other majority groups. The result is likely to be increased clashes between workers from various backgrounds including religious and ethnic groups.

Carole Houk spoke about another "new thing" – organizational ombuds for healthcare disputes. In an effort to build capacity for new OOs, Carole has been working with dozens of medical centers around the country, designing specialized programs, collaboratively implementing these programs with all stakeholders, and training full-time OOs to handle patient-provider disputes at point of care – at the bedside, rather than after a claim has been filed or a lawsuit initiated. These OOs are true internal neutrals and practice according to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of IOA. The genesis of the program was the realization that patients and families who experienced unexpected adverse events valued a number of things that the legal system wasn't able to provide: timely information about what happened, a sincere acknowledgment and apology from the hospital and physician, and an assurance that the organization would learn from the mistake and make every effort to prevent it from happening again. Although compensation may be part of an agreement, it is not the sole focus of the ombuds intervention.

Jan Schonauer explained that the job she currently holds was created as a result of an agreement between the firm and the SEC. Jan explained that the past two years have seen an increase in the number of laws and regulations and a higher level of scrutiny in corporate governance. This increasing scrutiny and regulation has created many of the challenges present in a zero – tolerance atmosphere (e.g.: feelings of insecurity, worries that "small things" have big consequences, a reluctance to raise issues because of the fear of enormous consequences, worry about retaliation for raising issues, worry that past acceptable practices may become suddenly forbidden and the individual will become *retroactively* accountable). Jan encouraged all those in attendance to think about codifying the bottom line contributions an organizational ombuds office makes to the organization. She provided a few examples of her own about how ombuds offices assist the bottom line. Finally, Jan said the good news is that many corporations are recognizing that in an atmosphere like this it is important to support and create a safe place where employees may seek guidance, ask questions, and raise troublesome issues without automatically triggering a formal response. As a result they are creating ombudsman offices!

Brian Bloch spoke about introducing the OO profession to religious/spiritual organizations. He said it has huge potential and is much needed. He mentioned that he's been doing

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FIRST ANNUAL IOA CONFERENCE



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organizational ombuds work with the Hare Krishna community for four years now and starting to consult with US-based Christian denominations. He explained that religious organizations often have especially tough conflicts because members place a lot of their identity into their choice of faith and added that his inspiration is that religions are called upon to bring about peace. He stated his belief that if they have peace amongst themselves, they will be more equipped to help others.

—**Tom Sebok**

Talent Show

The Inaugural IOA Talent Show was held on Sunday evening, April 2, 2006 during the Conference Welcome Reception at the La Jolla Marriott Hotel. It was co-hosted by Ted Williamson of The Coca Cola Company and Tom Sebok of the University of Colorado at Boulder. With hundreds of colleagues present, the audience was treated to both solo performances (involving comedy, dance, singing, guitar, and keyboard) and some inspired musical collaborations. Amazingly, some of these performers had never even met prior to the event so “rehearsal time” was minimal at best. One special treat was one of the conference’s keynote speakers, Tony Williams, who accompanied a

number of other performers on saxophone and flute. Several of these talented individuals perform regularly in bands and combos, at least three have released commercial CD’s of their own music, and one even has an original song in an upcoming movie starring Alec Baldwin. No wonder collaboration, mutual support, and harmony came so easily to this talented bunch of colleagues and performers!

Talent Show Participants included:

- **David Rasch** of Stanford University;
- **Michael Dues** of the University of Arizona;
- **John Willis** of Sullivan University;
- **Nick Kepics** of NASA;
- **Camilo Azcarate** of Princeton University;
- **Virginia Santiago** of the University of Puerto Rico;
- **Marvin Neal** of Coca Cola Enterprises;
- **Brenda Woods-Patin** of the University of California at Los Angeles;
- **Tony Williams** of Royal Roads University; and
- **Tom Sebok** of the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Thanks to all these colleagues for sharing their talents and helping to make the Inaugural IOA Talent Show a great success! ●

— **Tom Sebok**

Singing and Dancing: What I Learned at the IOA Conference

BY NEAL MILNER

I'm an ombudsman newcomer, but a particular kind of newcomer. Recently the University of Hawaii chancellor asked me to set up an ombuds office. At the same time my HMO asked me to file for Medicare. It is easier to file for Medicare. For almost forty years I have taught political science. I know political science, and I know how to learn what I do not know about it. Conferences are places where I deliver a paper, schmooze with colleagues, and *kvell* whenever some graduate student introduces herself and tells me how much she admires my work. Workshops? Never.

And a talent show? Are you kidding? My colleagues would just as soon club a baby seal on the plenary room floor. Marye Anne Fox, the UCSD chancellor and a renowned organic chemist, knows exactly what I mean. In her opening remarks to the conference, she could not hide her amazement about the IOA talent show, which she described as "singing and dancing." No guitars for a chemist on company time, no matter how many Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons songs he sings in the decontamination shower.

Things are very different now. I do not plan on holding my breath until some youngster comes up to me and says she admires my ombudsman body of work. Right now my body of work consists of making sure my new office is not the back of a truck. Your *kvelling days* are over, *boychick*. I registered for the pre-conference workshop for new ombuds.

The workshop trainers began with a history of IOA. For the instructors, this was logical place to start because their professional lives were so linked to IOA, but for us students

In one way or another, discussions of formulas and creativity carried over into every session I attended. Sessions on starting ombuds programs were extremely well

Being an ombudsman is not about belonging to an organization that showcases singing and dancing. Being an ombudsman *is* singing and dancing.

this was a diversion. We came here to learn the nuts and bolts of the job. In fact that workshop and the rest of the conference taught important lessons about the usefulness and limits of nuts and bolts

Very quickly I discovered that ombudsing is as much about meandering as it is about staying on a path. The pre-conference workshop emphasized how important it was to follow the IOA Standards of Practice. Just as quickly we learned that these standards are rough guides, the implementation of which requires creativity and practice. Initially it was easier to understand the importance of the standards than it was to appreciate the creativity, so to some, the standards seemed confining. At the lunch break, someone who was about to become an ombuds said, "I don't think I can do the job. I can't see being neutral."

organized and clear. They were about steps to follow. As I was writing "#1, #2" in my note book, I was thinking to myself, "My God, you idiot, you should have done that already!" At the same time, these panelists stressed how important it is to not be formulaic and to understand your own organization's culture and idiosyncrasies.

On the surface, the justice panel was very different. No one offered a six-step plan to achieve justice. Still the message was the same. The panel showed practitioners that justice could remain an important part of our work no matter how vague and elusive the concept is. I asked the person who earlier had been so apprehensive about neutrality how she felt after the justice panel. "I feel better about the job now," she said, "because I now see that it's about justice."

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Overall, here is what I learned: Being an ombudsman is not about belonging to an organization that showcases singing and dancing. Being an ombudsman *is* singing and dancing.

On the plane back to Honolulu I came across this quote by economist Lester Thurow: "Great creativity requires hard facts, a wild imagination, and nonlogical jumps forward that are proved to be right by working backward to known principles." Path breakers like Coltrane, Stravinsky, Bill Monroe, Grandmaster Flash, and Agnes de Mille were creators this way. From what I learned in San Diego, Thurow could also have been describing the essence of ombuds work. I used to do improv, and it looks like soon I will be doing it again. I am looking forward to it even without the bar tips. ●

Eleanor Funk to Leave Board

On behalf of the membership of the International Ombudsman Association, the Board of Directors would like to acknowledge and thank Eleanor Funk for her service on the Board of Directors. Eleanor has informed the President of her resignation from the Board effective June 1, 2006 coincident with her move from California to Princeton, New Jersey where Eleanor plans to work as a policy analyst at Forums Institute on Public Policy. She also hopes to explore the possibility of becoming a classical ombuds with the state of New Jersey.

Eleanor has been the Ombuds at the California State University at Monterey Bay for five years. She started the Ombuds office there as well as the office at Bryn Mawr College in Philadelphia. On her work as an Ombud and her affiliation with IOA Eleanor commented:

"I have loved every minute of being an ombuds. I was honored to serve on the IOA Board and I would do it all again if I had the chance! I will miss colleagues and friends that I have made over the years and I plan to keep up with IOA as it creates its future."

She is also changing her name back to Newton and advises that she will keep her email address for the next year and colleagues can reach her at: eleanor_newton@csumb.edu.

Eleanor has contributed significantly to the work of the Board and our Association. We will miss her energy, her strategic thinking and her unfailing dedication to the interests of the Association membership. Please join us in thanking Eleanor and wishing her all the best in her relocation to the east coast. ●

Submissions Welcome

The co-editors of the **Independent Voice** would like to thank those who have contributed to the first three newsletters. We encourage anyone who has any ideas for future articles or feedback on the newsletter to contact us (our e-mail addresses can be found on page 2 of this newsletter). All readers are encouraged to participate in the new feature "**What Are You Going To Do?**" on page 2 of the newsletter. We would like to include a **Letters to the Editor** feature in the next newsletter, which can include comments about past articles, IOA initiatives or anything that impacts the profession. Remember all letters should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Letters should not be anonymous.
- Letters should be submitted in the spirit of promoting an exchange of information and ideas to further the profession and/or IOA.
- Letters should not attack any individual or group.
- Letters will be published at the discretion of the editorial team, space permitting.

Our hope is that the newsletter can continue to be a resource for ombuds to exchange ideas and to foster discussion on issues that affect the members of IOA. ●

Welcome New Members

**WELCOME TO ALL THE NEW MEMBERS WHO
HAVE JOINED IOA SINCE MARCH 1ST:**

Chani Beeman

University Ombudsman
California State University, San
Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA

Ken Brown

Employee Ombudsman
RBC Financial Group
Toronto, ON, Canada

Elsa Calon

Provider of Student Services
University of Puerto Rico En
Aguadilla, Puerto Rico

Shauna Carmichael

Program Support Manager
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA

Harry Chalmiers

VP Academic Affairs
Berklee College of Music
Boston, MA

Clay Chivers

Director Judicial Affairs,
Dispute Resolution
Utah Valley State College
Orem, UT

Carlotta Coleman

Manager, Employee Relations
Best Buy, Richfield, MN

LaDessa Croucher

Community Court Coordinator
Volunteers of America, Everett, WA

V. JoAnn Diaz

Director Human Relations
College of Charleston, Charleston, SC

James Fazio

Ombuds, Univer-
sity of Idaho,
Moscow, ID

Stevie Fenton

Disability Specialist/
Ombudsman
North Florida Community
College
Madison, FL

Nancy Forris

Manager, Employee Issues
DTE Energy, Detroit, MI

Gilles Gaignery

Ombudsman
National Capital Commission
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Martha Harriss

Martha Harriss Consulting
New York, NY

Serge Jette

Ombuds Officer
Health Canada
Gatineau, Quebec

Linda Johnston

Director Conflict Management
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA

Edward Modell

Ombuds, Office of the Courts of the
State of Maryland, Silver Spring, MD

Dr. Maria Moscoso Alvarez

Faculty Ombudsperson
University of Puerto Rico
San Juan, PR



Johnnie Niles

University Ombuds Coordinator/
Student Affairs, Florida A&M
Tallahassee, FL

Norko Okamoto

Ombudsman
Tyco International (US) Inc.
Princeton, NJ

John Schultz

Ombudsman and ADR Director
Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA

Noriko Tada

Ombudsperson
Guidea, Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Marsia Anne Tirrell

Administrator, IEEE
Piscataway, NJ

Educational Opportunities

SUMMER, 2006

**Montreal, Quebec,
Canada**

JULY 17 - 21

Ombudsman 101 - an introductory program for new ombuds or those seeking information about the organizational ombuds role (2-1/2 days)

Ombudsman 101 Plus - a special program for organizations and entrepreneurs who want to get started (half day)

Specialized Courses:

Dealing with Stakeholders

A full-day program to teach you how to develop and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders in your organization

Negotiation and the Ombuds Process

This course will guide Ombuds in assisting parties who must negotiate some aspect of their work relationship with one another.

FALL, 2006

Rome, Italy

SEPTEMBER 24-28

Held at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations website: www.fao.org

Ombudsman 101: An introductory program for new ombuds or those seeking information about the organizational ombuds role (September 24-26)

Specialized Courses:

Helping People Come Forward

A careful examination of the variety of reasons people in organizations are reluctant to come forward with concerns, complaints, grievances and reports of misconduct.

Working With Difficult People

The ombudsman typically coaches visitors to "separate the person from the problem." This separation can be difficult when those who seek our services, or those with whom they are in conflict, come across as truly "difficult people": difficult for each other and, perhaps, difficult for the ombudsman as well.

FALL, 2006

Arlington, VA

OCTOBER 23 - 26

Ombudsman 101 - an introductory program for new ombuds or those seeking information about the organizational ombuds role (2-1/2 days)

Ombudsman 101 Plus - a special program for organizations and entrepreneurs who want to get started (half day)

The Intermediate Workshop:

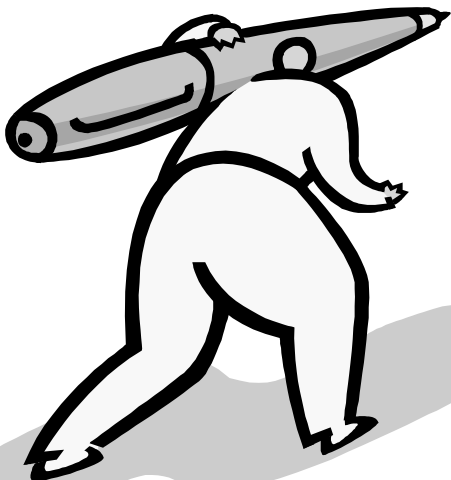
Skills for the Experienced Ombuds

The Intermediate Workshop is the second in the series of three courses (101, The Intermediate Workshop, The Advanced Series) designed to help the Ombuds respond masterfully to the challenges and opportunities presented to the organizational Ombuds.

Specialized Course :

Drawing from Psychology: Theory and Interventions for Ombuds Practice

This full-day program will provide tools for dealing with people whose psychological issues complicate their experiences in the workplace.



For additional information and to download the registration brochure please visit the web site at:
<http://www.ombudsassociation.org/training.html>