

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

News from the International Ombudsman Association

Strategy Plan

BY JANIS SCHONAUER, IOA PRESIDENT

As many of you may be aware, the Board of Directors held a retreat on August 23rd and 24th in Houston to set goals and priorities for projects to be completed by December 2008. The meetings were intense and productive as we stepped through the process of identifying how we will directly support IOA's mission: ***The mission of IOA is to advance the profession of organizational ombudsmen and ensure that practitioners are able to work to the highest professional standards.***

In advance of the Board retreat, the Strategic Planning Committee developed an outstanding draft strategic plan which served as a very

helpful guide for our discussions. We identified four key priority areas with specific goals to achieve by the end of 2008. The key priority areas are to Strengthen Our Best Practices; Promote Ombudsman Programs; determine next steps for Credentialing Practitioners; and develop a fair and transparent process to Enforce IOA Standards.

STRENGTHEN BEST PRACTICES

Strengthening Best Practices will engage the collective efforts of our Professional Development Committee, The Journal Editorial Board, the Professional Ethics and Standards-Best Practices Committee and the Board. Together they will determine how to strengthen our already excellent training, encourage research about ombudsmen, present the Best Practices documents at the 2008 conference, and conduct a salary survey.

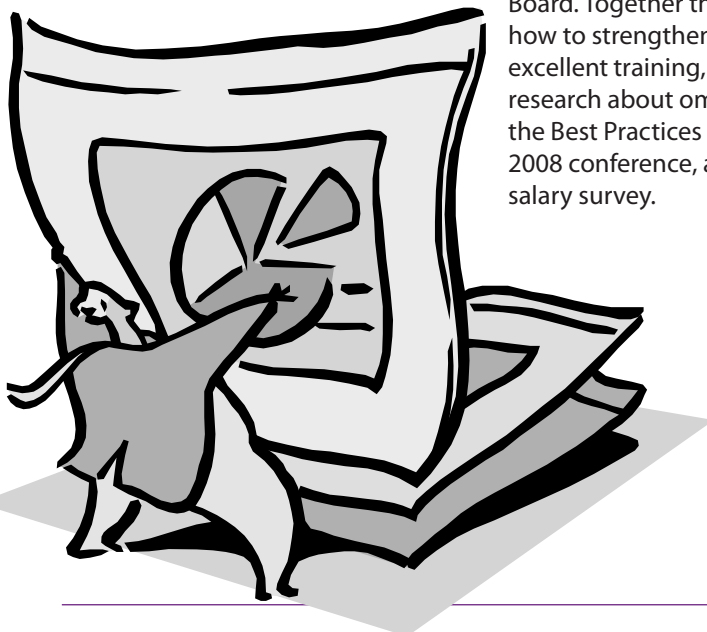
PROMOTE PROGRAMS

Promoting Ombudsman Programs will engage the efforts of the Standards of Practice, Professional Development, Membership, International, and Communications committees and the staff at Professional Management Associates (IOA's administrative support company). We will assist members who want to strengthen their offices, respond to requests for information about creating offices, and develop a comprehensive strategy to promote and create new programs. We reviewed the longer term plan, through 2012, and will refine it during regular Board meetings throughout this year.



JANIS SCHONAUER

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The IOA Board of Directors gather for the 2007 Strategic Planning Retreat.

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CREDENTIALING

The Certification Sub Committee has met with SMT, a firm specializing in certification programs, in late September. The meeting allowed IOA to explore the benefits, drawbacks and feasibility of developing a certification program. We expect a decision to be made about whether and how to move forward with this process in early 2008.

IOA STANDARDS

As a part of defining the role of an organizational ombudsman, the Association promotes a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. We are beginning to explore how the Association may want to respond to ombudsman offices which do not operate pursuant to the Code. The Board will develop a charge for a Task force to establish a one year pilot program to address issues relating to monitoring our Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. The goal is to launch this pilot program in 2009.

This is a broad sketch of the projects we highlighted as priorities. Of course these priorities do not diminish the importance of the other, ongoing projects that so many IOA volunteers continue to work on.

We are indebted to the Strategic Planning Committee co-chairs **Michael Turpenoff** and **Randy Williams** as well as committee members **Eric Berger**, **Carol Breslin**, **Deb Cardillo**, **Howard Gadlin**, **Josee Guest**, **Jennifer Wolf** and **Katherine Ziff** for their vision of the future of IOA. As I mentioned at the start of this letter, their hard work was of great assistance to the Board. The Board has made some revisions to the plan which will be shared with the Strategic Planning Committee then the complete plan will be available to the members by year end.

During this retreat we set some very high standards and increased accountability for what we will accomplish before the end of 2008. It is only through the generous dedication of individual IOA members that we will be able to achieve these goals that are so important for both IOA and the profession. ●

What Are You Going to Do?

BY TOM BARNETTE, REGIONAL OMBUDSPERSON, AMERICAN EXPRESS WITH COMMENTS FROM NATHANIEL HADDOX, OMBUDSMAN AT TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY AND MEMBER OF THE IOA STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND BEST PRACTICES

In June, we asked readers to consider and respond to a hypothetical scenario that involved a stakeholder questioning an Ombuds about a statement that an individual attributed to the Ombuds Office. Following is a recap of that scenario and how our readers responded:

THE SCENARIO

Stanley, the Vice President of a large department, calls you to advise that he has a serious concern about what you are doing in the Ombuds Office. He says that one of his employees, Sara recently visited your office regarding a progressive disciplinary process. In the typical process, employees receive a "letter of concern," then a "warning letter" and finally an employee may be dismissed. You did meet with Sara who told you that she received a warning letter without ever receiving a letter of concern. One option that you suggested was that she inquire as to why she never received a letter of concern. Stanley says that Sara said "The Ombuds Office wants there to be a formal investigation into why I never received a letter of concern". Sara did not expressly give you permission to let anyone know that she had spoken with you. Stanley is very upset and says that he knew the Ombuds office would eventually muck things up.

DO YOU?

1. Since Sara has apparently revealed that she visited your office, you advise Stanley that you will speak to Sara to clear up the misunderstanding?

0 responses 0% of total

2. Ask Stanley why Sara didn't receive a letter of concern?

0 responses 0% of total

3. Advise Stanley that you cannot confirm or deny that you have spoken with an individual. Do nothing further unless Sara contacts you again?

1 response, 3% of total

4. Advise Stanley that you cannot confirm or deny that you have spoken with an individual. Then offer to work with Stanley to help him find options for addressing the situation?

24 responses, 77% of total

5. Advise Stanley that you cannot confirm or deny that you have spoken with an individual. After the call you contact Sara to discuss the matter without disclosing that you have spoken with Stanley?

1 response, 3% of total

6. Advise Stanley that you cannot confirm or deny that you have spoken with an individual. After the call you contact Sara to explicitly discuss Stanley's call to you?

5 responses, 16% of total

Some readers added comments to their response:

- I often use this approach to coach a manager on dispute resolution without revealing anything about the case with the other person. It is like another case to handle by our office.
- Without responding directly to Stanley's assertion, he should be advised that the ombuds office is neutral and does not conduct formal investigations or enforce policies.
- Without explicit permission from the employee, confidentiality requires me to neither agree nor deny having spoken with an individual; working with Stanley would help me 1) listen to his concerns *vis a vis* the Ombudsman office and work on his feedback and 2) understand exactly what Sara said, when, to who etc... and help him address the issue which is a good way to demonstrate and to prove how useful the Ombudsman can be!
- As always there is not one "simple" course of action. I have chosen what I deem to be the most appropriate first up course of action. However, there are a number of issues here; one is the accusation that the Sara is making about a perceived flaw in the

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(What Are You Going To Do continued from page 3)

process, the other is the reputation of the Ombudsman Office. Both need to be addressed. At an appropriate time and in the appropriate manner I would educate or re-educate the Stanley on the how the Ombudsman function works and why it has to be the way it is.

- By offering assistance to Stanley the ombudsman would help to demonstrate the added value of an ombudsman and build support for this function.

has visited. On the other hand, Stanley is also a “visitor” when the call is placed and the confidentiality of Stanley’s call should not be disclosed to anyone including Sara. The OO would also not want to disclose the concerns of Stanley unless given permission to do so. While using shuttle diplomacy, I would consider the information shared by both parties as confidential information given in a caucus. I would move the parties towards constructive dialogue so that they

any type of complaint, and discuss how they best deal with conflicts. You may also give communication tips to help a manager effectively deal with office conflict.

BEST PRACTICES

Develop professional relationships with managers and have a plan for handling problems before they occur.

Take time to educate all potential users on the neutrality of your office and how your involvement does not mean taking sides — all members of an organization have a right to consult with the OO.

Talk to visitors about expectations and what information they would permit you to share with others in helping communication.

Be open to criticism and develop a plan that will clarify any misconceptions others may have about you or your role.

A good practice is to build relationships with managers *before* there is any type of complaint, and discuss how they best deal with conflicts.

We requested some additional comments about this scenario from the IOA Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, Standards of Practice and Best Practices.

Nathaniel Haddox, ombudsman at Texas Tech University, in consultation with committee members, shared these thoughts:

I think the two most important ethical considerations raised here are confidentiality and neutrality.

In regards to confidentiality, the OO would not want to violate the confidentiality of the visitor Sara. Although it may seem clear to Stanley that Sara had visited, the OO should never confirm nor deny who

may resolve the conflict themselves and learn how to make communication safe.

The issue of neutrality is also key and goes hand in hand with confidentiality in this scenario. The statement from Stanley indicating that the OO would be a source of problems may show some bias and mistrust. This is a wonderful opportunity for the OO to share information on how the office operates and offer Stanley the neutral services of your office. Providing neutral information to empower the visitor will show that an OO operates in a neutral way and does not take “sides” on an issue. A good practice is to build relationships with managers *before* there is

OUR NEW SCENARIO FOR THIS EDITION

Following is another hypothetical scenario that an Ombuds might face. We invite you to weigh in with what you would do by “voting”. We will publish the results in our next issue. We recognize that limiting Ombuds to one option is a bit artificial and not what you typically do in your practice. But to keep this manageable, please select one option from among those that are listed.

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WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

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SCENARIO

Results from the recent employee satisfaction survey at the School of Engineering were a major disappointment to the Dean. She decided it was time to take action by convening a taskforce to solicit more detailed input and develop an action plan to improve results on the next survey. Because of his unique skill set and position in the organization, she immediately thought of Newt Reilly, the University Ombudsman. The Dean was comfortable that she would get accurate, uncensored data if Newt's office was involved.

Newt was called to the Dean's office, asked to lead a taskforce of selected staff from multiple departments in the School, and given the following mandate:

1. Get anonymous input from all of the staff
2. Prioritize the most significant opportunities for improvement
3. "Bring me a report with the three most critical changes I need to make to turn this around"

"You have 6 weeks. I know that you won't let me down." As Newt left the Office, his mind whirling, he suddenly had this thought: Is this the kind of support that an organizational Ombuds can provide?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. Tell the Dean that the informal nature of your function precludes you from leading or participating on this kind of taskforce. She will need to find someone else, **OR**
2. Agree to coordinate the collection of anonymous input, but decline to participate in prioritizing the opportunities for improvement, **OR**
3. Agree to lead the effort except for submitting a report documenting the most critical changes that are needed. You must drop out of the taskforce when that decision making occurs, **OR**
4. Welcome the opportunity to focus the organization on positive change and agree to lead the taskforce as requested.

INSTRUCTIONS

To record your response, click on the Zoomerang Weblink below or copy and paste this link into your web browser. You can also visit the Member's 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. ●

ZOOMERANG WEB LINK:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226XDUCTK2Z>



New Name for IOA Task Force

To more accurately reflect the purpose of its work the IOA Uniform Database Categories Task Force has changed its name to the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories Task Force. While it is true that for most colleagues, the Task Force's work could affect the categories they use in their databases, the underlying purpose of this work is to create categories to allow colleagues to report in a uniform way on the issues, questions, and concerns with which ombudsman offices offer assistance.

For additional information, contact **Joe Ganci** at: ganci.joseph@oig.dol.gov.

First IOA Training in Africa

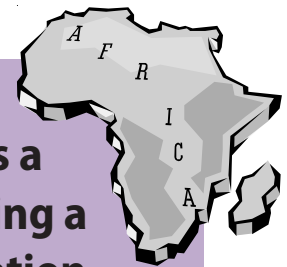
BY WILBUR HICKS, INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

The Northern Africa city of Tunis, Tunisia was the site of the fourth international training offered by the International Ombudsman Association. It was the first time that IOA had offered courses in Africa, a significant milestone for IOA. The training was held from June 10 – 14 at the African Development Bank. **James Nabina**, Mediateur/Ombudsman at ADB was the most gracious host for the training. Since 2005, the international training has been held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the mediateurs and ombuds of the United Nations and Related International Organizations (UNARIO). It was the sixth annual meeting of UNARIO. The IOA training took place Monday through Thursday, and the UNARIO meetings were held Thursday through Saturday. Following up on the successful efforts in Geneva in 2004–5, and Rome in 2006, IOA offered four courses for participants from all over the world. The courses were the flagship, **“Ombudsman 101,” “The Ombudsman Support Role,” “Helping People Come Forward,”** and a new specialized course, **“Ombudsing in the Field.”**

As usual, enrollment exceeded expectations and the course participants were drawn from a variety of career streams. Not all of the participants were organizational ombuds. Included in the group of participants was staff of the African Development Bank, the Ombudsman for the nation of Tunisia, and Advisor Ombuds from

the International Finance Corporation. Not only were the participants diverse in terms of job description but also in terms of geography. Participants came from all over the world including Indonesia, Tunisia, Switzerland, Austria, Rome, and the U.S. Most of the participants were taking IOA courses for the first time, but several had taken courses either in the U.S. or in previous international offerings.

under such circumstances, issues of confidentiality, independence and neutrality take on an entirely different complexion. For example, where does one set up a meeting place? How does one interact with the local management team? What does ‘upward feedback’ mean in this context when the visit is a brief one? The participants, many of whom work for the United



The international training is a big step toward IOA becoming a truly international organization.

The highlight of the training was the offering of a new course, **“Ombudsing in the Field.”** It was the first time that an IOA course had debuted outside of the U.S. The course was developed and delivered by **Veronica Luard, Danielle Fischer-Lebailly,** and **David Miller.** **James Lee** was on the development team but was unable to make the trip to Tunisia. The purpose of the course was to address the questions raised about practicing ombudsmanry when one is away from headquarters or the main office. When one is ombudsing

Nations and travel around the world to many international outposts, found the course extremely valuable.

The other courses, **“O 101,” “The Support Role,”** and **“Helping People Come Forward”** were taught by **Linda Wilcox, Howard Gadlin, Wendy Friede, Danielle Fischer-Lebailly, David Miller,** and **Wilbur Hicks.** It was the first time that Wendy Friede, PDC Chair, participated in the international training. “It truly was a gift to be a part of this international team. I felt so proud for IOA, seeing first hand the global impact we were having on the

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profession. The graciousness of our hosts made this a unique and very special opportunity.”

The opportunity to teach abroad is not an end unto itself. The international program is an opportunity to introduce to the world the concept of the organizational ombudsman. It is also an opportunity for IOA members to learn about how conflict is viewed and handled in other cultures. The mixture of a variety of cultures provides a learning opportunity for the participants as well as the instructors. This learning enriches the instruction that the faculty offers to IOA members in the U.S. and abroad. In this sense, the international training is a big step toward IOA becoming a truly international organization.

The international training program continues to grow. An announcement will be made soon about the site of the 2008 international training. ●



Pictured Above: Ombudsmen gathered from around the world for the first IOA training in Africa.

SCIENTIFIC PROOF THAT

Mediation and Meditation May Have the Same Effects

BY MAURICIO "REESE" RAMOS, SANDIA CORPORATE OMBUDS

People involved in the field of mediation often joke about how people get the word confused with meditation. I mean they are both about touchy-feely stuff right? Well, now there's scientific proof that the two (*and I'm going to include Ombuds work along with mediation*) may actually be more connected than we've realized. Before I explain any further I want to share a Zen koan that I've often pondered (dare I say meditated?) upon.

Once upon a time there was a wise woman whose reputation for wisdom and tranquility was known all over the village in which she lived. In this particular village there also lived a young man who did not particularly care for wise and tranquil wise women. So one day he stormed to the wise woman's home and pounded on her door. When she opened the door, he let out a litany of profanity and challenges to this enlightened status that the village had bestowed upon her. Throughout this interaction the wise old woman kept the serenity for which she was known. After he was finished she simply bowed her head slightly and gently closed the door. Not satisfied with the outcome, the young man repeated this same ritual the next day. After the same thing happened he decided to do this again the next day. When the same thing happened, he decided to do this daily since he believed that it would be just a matter of time before she reacted. On the seventh day, after he

finished yet another verbal lashing the old, wise woman calmly said, "Let me ask you a question: If someone gives you a gift and you do not accept it, to whom does the gift belong?" The young man, unsure where the old woman was going with this, snorted, "To the person who offered it." "Exactly, and so if I choose to reject your words of hate, who do those words *belong* to?" she asked. The young man finally understanding the wisdom and tranquility of the wise woman looked down (some say even shed a tear) and turned away.



to reveal what's active/inactive). The subjects were then asked to look at pictures with emotional expressions. When people attached a specific word, like "angry" to an emotion there was a noticeable *decrease* in the activation of the part of the brain (the amygdala for all you enthusiasts) that handles strong emotions like fear. The lead researcher described this effect like hitting the brakes when you see a yellow light. Part of you is reacting to the urge to speed up but then part of you is thinking "stop". In other words, when you put feelings into words, you

Researchers at UCLA apparently found that *putting feelings into words* calms the brain's emotion center.

I've always liked this story for a number of reasons. Recently in *The Ombuds Blog*, Tom Kosakowski published a blurb about a neurological study (check out *Psychological Science*, Volume 18, Issue 5, Page 421-428, May 2007) that took this story for me to a whole new level. Researchers at UCLA apparently found that *putting feelings into words* calms the brain's emotion center. In the study 30 people were hooked to fMRI machines (you know, those fancy machines that scan the brain

seem to hit the brakes on your emotional response. Following me so far?

Think of this effect as *responding* versus *reacting*. After the tirade she received from the young man, who would have blamed the wise woman if she reacted in kind? Who would have blamed her if, instead of bowing quietly and gently closing the door, she grabbed a broom and

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(Mediation continued from page 8)

started beating the young man? I have to confess that part of me would have paid front row tickets to see this and then another part of me resonates with how she actually responded. You see, she consciously created a gap between the stimulus and the response. **Viktor Frankl**, survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, stated it clearly when he said, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." In Buddhism this is akin to "mindfulness", where you are consciously aware of what's going on within and outside of you. When people are aware of the feelings being experienced and give the emotions labels, this can actually help the person deal with the situation better. And isn't this what we, as Ombuds or mediators, are constantly practicing with people? To an extent, providing them a safe forum where they can simply talk about their situation? This UCLA study indicates that simply talking about your feelings can quiet the brain and help control your response. So, in a way, mediation and Ombudsing can be instrumental in quieting the brain and helping people control their responses. Sounds like meditation and mindfulness doesn't it?

As a matter of fact, in the UCLA study there was a second experiment with 27 of the same subjects completing questionnaires to determine how "mindful" they are. Here's the kicker: When the researchers compared fMRI's from subjects that were more "mindful" than others, there was a noticeable difference in that "mindful" subjects experienced greater activation in the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex and a greater calming effect in the amygdala after

labeling their emotions. Translation of this neurological gobbledygook: In essence, choosing labels for these negative emotions lights up distinct parts of the brain that are involved in how those emotions are processed and experienced. This is big news because it means that what we are experiencing can be a much different experience simply by being aware and talking or labeling these emotions, skills that we can develop the more we meditate or practice mindfulness.

So how can we and the people we service *become* more mindful? We all know that in the heat of a conflict it is difficult to recognize what's happening, stop, close your eyes, and breathe (which is a great mindfulness technique) but the challenge is actually remembering to do this when it matters. As with many things we must encourage practice, when things are not in the heat of the moment, so that this becomes a habit. It's like driving a car. Not many of us get in the car, remember to adjust the mirrors, turn

the ignition on, flick the turn signal on, put our foot on the brake, shift to reverse, look back, and let go. We all just kind of do it, naturally. But it wasn't like that always, was it? The same applies with practicing mindfulness. We need to encourage visitors, and ourselves, to become conscious of what we are experiencing, even if the event seems mundane.

Below are two short exercises we can encourage our visitors to do to increase mindfulness. These can be practiced in our office or we encourage our visitors to try these on their own.

If we master these two simple steps, could we possibly become like the wise old woman who was able to control her response instead of reacting without much thought?

I believe and science now indicates that by becoming more mindful and aware of what feelings we experience on a daily basis, we'll be much better at keeping calm when the storm hits. ●

Want to increase mindfulness? Try these exercises:

1) Help visitors truly connect with their emotions. The next time they see, or think about, the person with whom they have a conflict, what emotions come up? Are they angry, frustrated, sad, disappointed, or something else? What does their body do? Are they standing up straight and confident or are they slightly crouching and unsecured? How does their voice sound? The key is to not judge the moment or even do anything, but simply to be aware of what is happening.

2) Get our visitors to get curious. What's the message behind the feeling? We all experience emotions, but just because I'm angry and you're angry doesn't mean it's for the same reason. There is no doubt that our visitors display a wide array of emotions, but what's the reason behind the emotion? By answering this question our visitors get to the core of what's missing for them. The "needs and interests" behind the issues and emotions.

A MESSAGE FROM THE LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ("LLAC")

Ombudsman Confidentiality

BY DAVID TALBOT, COCA-COLA ENTERPRISES

Most of you are probably aware of the important work that has taken place over the past several months introducing the first Ombudsman Privilege legislation in Texas. The bill, HB 3578, received remarkable support in the House of Representatives as reflected by a 140-0 House vote but ultimately was not voted on by the full Senate in the recent December 2006 session. IOA was very instrumental in this initial effort and the organization continues to explore opportunities to create legislation protecting ombudsman confidentiality.

As we work to strengthen our confidentiality in the future, it's important we not lose sight of lessons learned from past legal decisions that have protected ombudsman confidentiality and help shape the way we practice every day. Since *Shabazz v. Scurr* in 1987, case law has grown to include both the recognition of a federal common law privilege and an implied contractual basis for barring disclosure of confidential communications. One court in California even recognized a state constitutional right of privacy barring disclosure.

While these legal decisions tend to be narrow, we are able to distill guiding principles for the design and operation of an organizational ombudsman program from the case law.

These principles include:

- widely publicizing the promise of confidentiality when creating an ombuds program and ensuring it

continues to be communicated on a regular basis and through various means;

- maintaining the office as an independent, impartial and alternative means of dispute resolution;
- fully operating to the IOA Standards of Practice, including not participating in formal processes or

Efforts are being made to even further imbed these guiding principles into IOA trainings, the annual conference, and the work of the board and various IOA committees. It is up to each of us to do our part to fully understand the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and to make them an integral part of our daily practice. By doing this we

It is through adherence to these guiding principles that case law protecting ombudsman confidentiality will continue to be strengthened...



investigations and assuring you are not an office of notice; and

- consistently honoring these principles in the operation of the office.

The principles learned from legal decisions providing an ombudsman privilege have been added to others developed over the years by practicing ombudsmen and are reflected in the IOA Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and Best Practices documents. It is through adherence to these guiding principles that case law protecting ombudsman confidentiality will continue to be strengthened and IOA will continue to make progress with privilege legislation.

will individually and as an organization continue to strengthen our profession and pave the way for broader legal protections of the confidentiality we promise our organizations and individuals we assist. ●

David Talbot is a member of the IOA Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee. Some information for this article was drawn from the IOA handbook "*The Ombuds Confidentiality Privilege – Theory and Mechanics*" by **Charles L. Howard** and **Maria A. Gulluni**

Mid-Atlantic Ombuds Meeting

BY MICHAEL EISNER

On August 3, 2007 25 people attended the 2nd Annual Mid-Atlantic Region Ombuds Meeting held at Princeton University hosted by **Camilo Azcarate** and **Nick Diehl** of the Princeton University Ombuds Office. Attendees represented corporate, academic and government sectors and also included those who are interested in ombuds work.

The morning began with a session about Integrated Conflict Resolution Systems facilitated by **John Barkat**, the Ombuds at Pace University. In addition to outlining some of the considerations in designing an integrated conflict resolution system for an organization, this interactive session provided participants with the opportunity to discuss designing a system based upon a hypothetical case study.

In the second morning session **Joseph Ganci**, ombuds at the Department of Labor, facilitated a

discussion of notice. Topics included: when an organization is placed on notice, who may be placed on notice on behalf of an organization and how the concept of notice ties into ombuds work.

Next was a delicious lunch (and even better dessert) where attendees had the opportunity to network with colleagues. After lunch, Camilo and Nick introduced a concept called "Open Space." Attendees anonymously contributed suggestions for discussion topics. The suggestions were topics voted on and the top five topics were selected as a basis for the afternoon discussions.

The topics selected were:

1. Metrics for Ombuds
2. Working with Human Resources
3. Identifying systemic trends with a limited number of cases
4. Ombuds Certification
5. Fear and Civility

Five rooms were set up and attendees were able to choose the topic they wanted to discuss, and were also allowed to move freely among the different topics. The person who suggested the topic facilitated the discussion. After spending an hour in these discussion groups, everyone came back together and the facilitators presented a synopsis of the discussion to the entire group.

This gathering built upon the success of last year's meeting. It was an opportunity for ombuds and those interested in ombuds work to get together with colleagues and discuss topics of interest. It was also a wonderful chance for people who often work alone on a daily basis to network with their colleagues. Anyone who is interested in being placed on the mailing list for information about the next meeting can email ombuds@Princeton.edu. ●

IOA COURSE OFFERINGS

FALL 2007

Monday - Thursday
October 15 - 18, 2007
Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

SPRING 2008

Monday - Friday
March 3 - 7, 2008
Las Vegas, NV, USA

2008 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday - Wednesday
April 13 - 16, 2008
The Boston Park Plaza Hotel,
Boston, MA, USA

*"Making a Difference —
The Ombudsman Impact"*

SUMMER 2008

Monday - Friday
July 14 - 18, 2008
Washington, DC, USA

FALL 2008

Monday - Friday
October 27 - 31, 2008
Vancouver, BC, Canada

For more information on IOA Trainings and events see <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/>

EFFECTIVENESS CORNER

Planning an “Effectiveness Dialogue” with your Stakeholders

BY SHARI SWOISH AND CAROLYN NOORBAKHSH

You will recall from the June 2007 “Effectiveness Corner”, the discussion of “effectiveness stakeholders” within our organizations. These are the people who decide about the existence, purpose and achievements of the ombuds program. In the article it was suggested that you identify the five “effectiveness stakeholders” in your organization that matter most. Assuming you have done that, now what?

You will want to have conversations with each of your identified “effectiveness stakeholders” and gather information from them that will help you decide what to measure and what to report, (within the parameters of best practice standards). You will want to learn from each of them what effect they hope to see on the organization by virtue of having an ombuds office. Also ask how they will know if their desired effect is in fact being realized. Your goal is to walk away from your meetings with the answers to the following two questions: 1) “What information do you need in order for you to know the ombuds office is having the effect you hope for?” and 2) “How would that information best be delivered to you?”

Plan for these meetings by creating a customized agenda based on who the stakeholder is and where they reside, (departmentally) within the organization. Given some stakeholders will need a bit of assistance in

formulating their thinking about effectiveness, you should be prepared with some ideas about similar stakeholder expectations from other organizations, but like departments. For example: “I’m aware that legal departments sometimes view reduction in or avoidance of litigation as a measuring stick of effectiveness. Is that something that is of concern to you?” Or, “HR departments sometimes define their interest in having an additional resource for employees to utilize to reduce work-related issues. Is that something that you are hoping the ombuds office will accomplish here?” Being able to provide some prompting without leading is a difficult balance. However, having some ideas to share if your stakeholder doesn’t seem forthcoming will give you some starting points for the conversation.

The definition of “effectiveness” that the Effectiveness Subcommittee has offered is as follows: “Effectiveness is the state of alignment between Ombuds activities and the outcomes of these activities and the intended and expected effects desired by an “effectiveness stakeholder”. The noted “alignment” is expected to be established in concert with the ombuds in order

that Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the International Ombudsman Association are honored. Your effectiveness stakeholder conversations may include a discussion of this definition and their vision of alignment.

It will be useful in these conversations to remember all of the good ombuds skills you regularly utilize with visitors. Active listening, collaboration, option generating, etc., will be helpful to both you and the effectiveness stakeholder.

The next “Effectiveness Corner” will explore data gathering options and measurement tools that will begin to help you demonstrate the effectiveness of the ombuds office. ●



Welcome New Members

The International Ombudsman Association welcomes its newest members.

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