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JANUARY-MARCH 2017

# ACOUSTICAL INTERIOR CONSTRUCTION



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AN IMPOSSIBLE  
GOAL?

**ALSO  
INSIDE**

**Award Winner  
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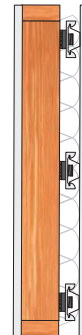


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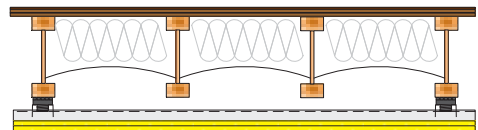
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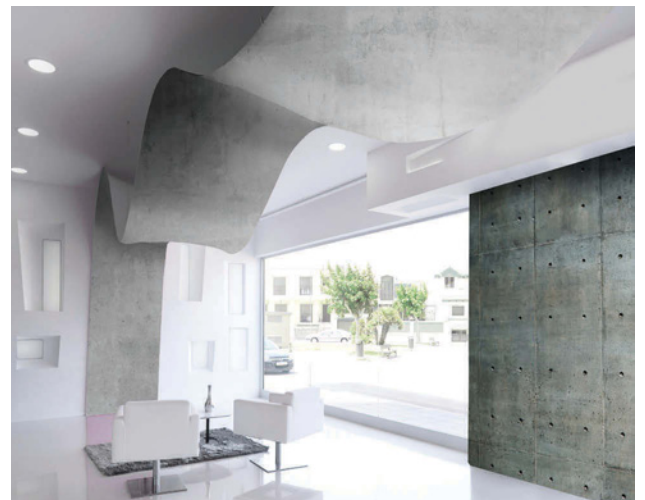
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### Acoustic Woods



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# Acoustical Interior Construction

JANUARY-MARCH 2017

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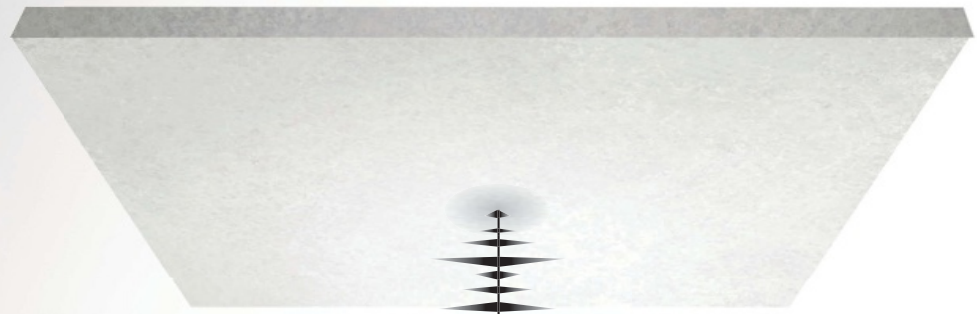
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**If every member planning to attend the upcoming convention March 26-30 in Las Vegas invited and brought one person, we will double the attendance; doubling the number of people to network with and doubling the fun!**



**BY JEFF HUDEPOHL, VALLEY INTERIOR SYSTEMS, 2016-2017 CISCA PRESIDENT**

**H**appy New Year!

I hope you had a great holiday season and are getting into full swing for the spring and summer construction season.

Registration for the convention is in full swing, and I encourage you to register and get your hotel room reservations now so you don't forget. Some highlights of the upcoming convention are:

### EDUCATION SESSIONS

Bob Treadway, sponsored by USG, is returning this year. Bob will share his predictions for the coming year in light of the change of president. This is important information we all need to know.

One of the education sessions this year will be on drones! We won't, unfortunately, be able to fly any, but we will learn what drones can do and the different types there are. This is a timely topic as drones are being purchased by many people for personal and business use.

As usual, the Education Committee has a great panel discussion planned. This year's topic is "Form versus Function." The panelists will be comprised of an interior designer, developer, independent rep, architect and contractor.

### CELEBRATION DINNER

Continuing on what was started last year, the dinner will feature an MC who is a local impressionist. The awards will once again be presented by Nora Degnan, Thorne Associates, and Steve Udolph, Tectum, Inc. The awards program was revamped this year and as a result only gold awards are being given out.

### NETWORKING EVENTS

Every evening there will be a social event to allow you to unwind and catch up with old and new friends. There are two not to be missed networking events:

One-on-One Manufacturer Meetings – Again, this year we are offering CISCA members the opportunity to meet with representatives of manufacturers for 15 minutes. Visit the CISCA website to make an appointment with one of the companies participating today.

Independent Manufacturers Rep and Contractor Event sponsored by the Specialty Manufacturers – This Monday afternoon event is a fun, two-hour opportunity for contractors to network with their independent reps and meet representatives from the manufacturer

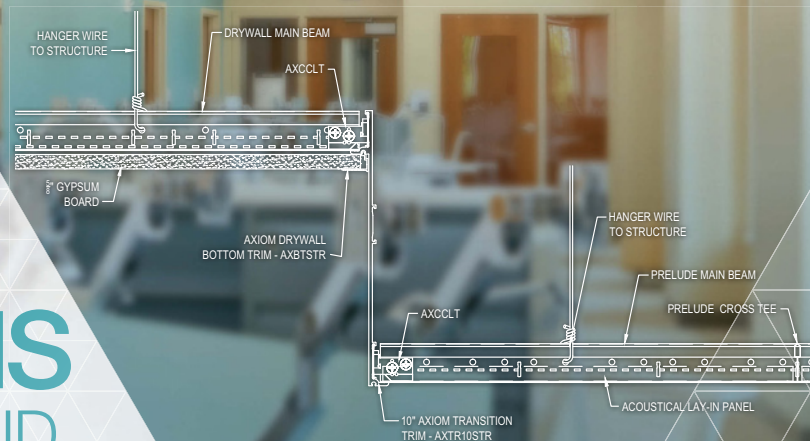
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# Joann Davis Brayman

## Retiring from Armstrong World Industries



**J**oann Davis Brayman, vice president, global marketing, for Armstrong World Industries, has announced her retirement. In her career, Joann has held numerous market-facing positions, in sales, marketing research, advertising, marketing and product management, with both a domestic and global scope. She worked in ceilings, flooring, furniture and insulation products.

Joann leaves her fingerprints on the business in many ways, from groundbreaking marketing research techniques, such as customer value analysis and product concept testing to new product strategy dating back to the early 2000s and, more recently, the company's current brand strategy and implementation including its new mobile showroom.

Joann served as national chairperson of the Conference Board Marketing Research

Council, board member of Ceilings and Interior Systems Construction Association (CISCA) and executive board member of the Design Futures Council. She has been a featured speaker at many professional events throughout the years.

She has also been a champion for women at Armstrong Ceilings. She was the only female sales rep in the residential ceilings business when she joined the company, and she was the first chairperson of the Armstrong Women's Network. She has spent countless hours mentoring other women, assisting them as they took on leadership positions themselves.

Her professional accomplishments run side-by-side with her commitment to her family, including her husband and two children, and the Lancaster community where she

has served as board member for a number of non-profit organizations.

When announcing her retirement, Armstrong World Industries CEO Vic Grizzle said, "Joann has been a significant contributor to AWI throughout her career, most recently in her role as global marketing VP. She has played a key role in making AWI the most profitable building products company in the industry. Her understanding of our customers and their needs and wants, and her ability to translate those needs and wants into successful products and services has been very valuable to us. She will be missed, by me personally and by many others in the company. I wish her great health and happiness in retirement."

Joann will lead the education session "Developing Your Personal Brand" at the 2017 CISCA Convention. ■



### Convention + INTEX Expo

#### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Engaging education sessions
- New awards criteria
- Award presentations and dinner
- Farewell reception
- Networking
- Fun!

Please visit [www.cisca.org](http://www.cisca.org) for more information.

If you have any questions please contact [cisca@cisca.org](mailto:cisca@cisca.org) or (630) 584-1919.

*See you March 26-30, 2017  
in Las Vegas!*



# 2017

## CISCA Convention

### Education Sessions Highlights

#### Drones for the Construction Industry

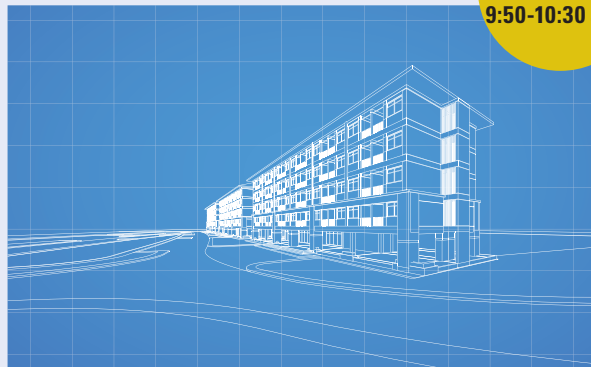
Tuesday,  
March 28:  
9:00-9:45 a.m.

This session will focus on interior building issues with UAV/Drone operations. Neil Opfer has extensive experience in the construction industry in various construction positions and as a construction faculty member and construction consultant. He has been employed in the construction divisions of such firms as Inland Steel (Arcelor-Mittal), Morrison-Knudsen (URS), CE Lummus, and Standard Oil of California (Chevron). He has been on the faculty of the Construction Management Program – College of Engineering at UNLV since 1989. He has been a licensed general contractor in the state of Nevada since 1999. He has had extensive experience in construction consulting for a number of ENR Top 400 Contractors and Fortune Top 500 Firms. He received a P.D. Engineering from University of Wisconsin - Madison, an M.S. Management (MBA) from Purdue University along with a B.S. Building Theory, B.A. Economics, and B.A. Business, all from Washington State University.



#### Plan Grid Technology

Tuesday,  
March 28:  
9:50-10:30 a.m.



#### Using Technology to Simplify Increasing Administrative Tasks While Eliminating Excessive Calls, Emails & Meetings

Tuesday,  
March 28:  
10:40-11:30 a.m.

Today's subcontractors face escalating administration requirements due to factors such as regulatory changes, varying billing requirements or extra forms, reports and documentation required on jobs that rob valuable time from each day. In addition to the tasks increasing, excessive calls, emails or meetings are needed to complete the tasks when there is already no more time left in the day. The effective use of technology has enabled many subcontractors to turn the challenge of rising demands into an opportunity to stand out from the crowd. This presentation highlights how top performers are using technology to overcome the growing demands of the trade.

**Chad Pearson** has been the director of business development for Plexxis Software since 2007. His education spans a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Guelph, police training systems and crisis resolution. After a career in law enforcement, Chad joined Plexxis Software in their mission to unite the trade.





## Developing Your Personal Brand

Tuesday,  
March 28:  
1:00-2:15 p.m.

We know that companies and products can be branded, but people can also be branded. In this session we will investigate what personal branding is, how to determine your own personal brand and how to manage your brand to optimize your personal success.

**Joann Davis Brayman** is vice president, global marketing, for Armstrong World Industries in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and she joined the company in 1976. Joann began her Armstrong career in sales, progressing to leadership positions in market research, advertising and business development. As vice president, global marketing, Joann focuses on new products, branding, digital marketing and growth strategies. She holds a B.A. in marketing from Bowling Green University and an MBA from Shippensburg University. Joann lives in Lancaster with her husband. She is active in marketing, industry and non-profit organizations, both locally and nationally.



## Form Vs. Function

Tuesday,  
March 28:  
2:30-4 p.m.

This will be a panel discussion with an interior designer, architect, developer, independent rep, and a contractor that will have an open dialogue about the design elements that are being discussed and installed in the creation of new buildings and spaces.

## 2017 Economic Forecast

Wednesday,  
March 29:  
9-10 a.m.

**Bob Treadway** possesses a unique ability to integrate forecasts for effective strategy development. Most of his practice is executive sessions with directors and top management in think tank, brainstorming, future visioning, decision-making and strategic planning projects.

He's called on to make forecasting presentations for a wide range of organizations and industries but participants often comment on the take-away, hands-on instruction that allows them to become better forecasters on their own. As one executive put it recently, "Your workshop, in just one short hour, helped the audience with HOW to think about their own businesses in the future."

He has been a guest lecturer and faculty for executive education sessions at the University of California Berkeley, Loyola, Illinois State, Oregon State and Kansas State Universities. His 16-year tenure on the faculty of the Institute for Management Studies educated thousands of Fortune 500 managers. He is a member of the Association of Professional Futurists, a charter member of the Society for the Advancement of Consulting and was awarded the National Speakers Association's highest earned designation as a certified speaking professional. ■

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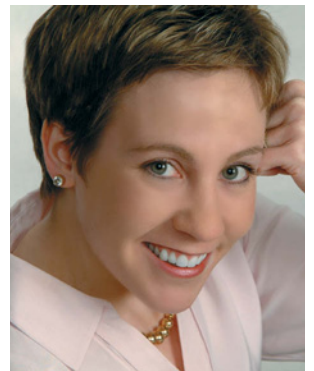
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# Why Your Employees **Aren't** Performing

**and** What You  
Can Do  
About It



BY KATE ZABRISKIE





*"I can't believe we spent a huge amount on customer-service training, and our staff still doesn't consistently give great service. What a waste!"*

*"We sent out a memo explaining the summer dress code. I thought it was pretty clear, but the intern showed up dressed for a night at the club. In addition to having bad fashion sense, she seems to have problems with reading comprehension."*

*"He does the minimum, and that's it. Why he doesn't take more pride in his work and our business, I'll never know. It's extremely difficult to have him on my team. The guy's a real energy drain."*

**S**ound familiar? Probably. At any given moment, there are legions of employees busy "working," but not doing the work their managers expect them to do or, worse yet, doing their work in ways that hurt morale, productivity and the bottom line.

Perhaps a few of those frustrating employees have a professional death wish — but most don't. In all likelihood, they are as frustrated by their performance as you are. The onus is on you, the manager, to identify and implement the fix.

For starters, you must come to terms with the five core reasons some members of your team aren't performing to your standard.



### REASON 1: THEY CAN'T

If you expect people to do something they can't do, don't be surprised when they fail. For example, if the receptionist is supposed to greet guests, answer the phone, order office supplies, clean the kitchen and cure infectious diseases all by himself, is there any wonder he can't get it done?

**The Fix:** Take a hard look at what you ask your team members to do. If some of them are not meeting your expectations, be sure that those expectations are realistic and reasonable. Assigning tasks to people who, for whatever reason, can't complete them to your standard means you've brought your situation upon yourself. Quit beating yourself up: Change the person you task, or change the tasks.



### REASON 2: THEY DON'T KNOW HOW

All too often people are thrown into a job with little or no training. They learn on the job, bring what they knew from their last job, or teach themselves, if you are lucky. In other words, they wing it — and most of the time it shows. If you are holding people accountable for performing tasks for which they've had no training, you're going to frustrate the employees and hurt morale. It's as simple as that.

**The Fix:** Train people on systems, processes and desired behaviors, and do it often. Good organizations teach forward as well as learn from their mistakes. Spend time thinking about what needs to be

## Come to terms with the five core reasons some members of your team aren't performing to your standard.

completed in a certain way. For example, if everyone is supposed to answer the phone, "Good morning, Fitzsimmons and Patrick, this is \_\_\_\_\_. How may I help you? Then you'd better tell them — and write them a script if necessary. Show them how to do it with a smile, and do it yourself when you answer the phone.



### REASON 3: THEY DON'T KNOW THEY ARE NOT DOING IT

People are not telepathic. When you fail to make your expectations clear in terms of both quality and quantity of work, and when you fail either to correct substandard performance or praise good performance, you have no cause to complain.

**The Fix:** If an employee's unsatisfactory performance is chronic in spite of training, managerial direction and on-the-spot correction or praise, it is time to schedule a one-on-one meeting to review goals and expectations. Employees should know where they stand within an organization. Failure to tell people whose sustained job performance is unsatisfactory is cruel, and failure to document the meeting is derelict. Your organization and the people who report to you deserve better.



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### REASON 4: THEY DON'T THINK IT'S IMPORTANT

Sometimes people know the rules, and they ignore them because they don't think the rules are that essential. How could someone reach that conclusion? It's easier than you think. If managers don't model desired behaviors, reward people for demonstrating those actions and coach their team members to preclude deficiencies, they're sending the wrong messages. Park in a spot reserved for visitors a couple of times. How long do you think it will take others in your purview to start doing the same thing?

**The Fix:** Walk the talk. It's as simple as that. Hold yourself accountable first and foremost. Next, recognize and reward what you want to see and address any shortcomings on the spot. Of course, this doesn't mean becoming a patronizing zealot and thanking people for doing things they should be doing, such as wearing clothing to work. Rather, it means having standards and sticking to them. If you've talked to the intern about observing the dress code and the next day she shows up looking terrific, acknowledge her effort.



### REASON 5: THEY DON'T WANT TO

On rare occasions you may encounter someone who is capable, trained and operating in a learning environment but who still fails to meet expectations despite repeated coaching and counseling.

**The Fix:** Document, document, document and keep that poison apple away

from the others in the barrel. There are times when people are simply not a good fit for a job, and you need either to move them somewhere else in the organization or out of the organization altogether. Be kind, firm and quick to act. The better your documentation, the easier the process will proceed.

Nobody ever said managing people was easy. It's not. It requires time, thoughtful planning, hard work and moral courage; in short, it

requires leadership. That said, the payoff can be huge for the employee, the organization and for you. ■

**Kate Zabriskie** is the president of *Business Training Works, Inc.*, a Maryland-based talent development firm. She and her team help businesses establish customer service strategies and train their people to live up to what is promised. For more information, visit [www.businesstrainingworks.com](http://www.businesstrainingworks.com).









# ZERO INJURIES: An Impossible Goal?

BY DAN HANNAN, CSP



**It's inevitable that** somewhere, sometime, a worker will make a really bad decision that results in an injury, regardless of our efforts to perfect safety outcomes. With human error as a certainty, you're kidding yourself if you believe that isn't the way it plays out. Risk is a game of probability, and as time passes without an injury, the closer you are to experiencing one.

Although the goal is achievable, the challenge becomes the ability to sustain zero-injury status for an extended period of time. But does a "zero injury" goal make sense? When an injury does occur — as it most likely will — does that mean our safety efforts and programs have failed? Measuring success by the outcome rather than the effort is a trap. In other words, is success the absence of an injury, or the presence of safety?





It's not too far of a stretch to imagine workers hiding injuries so that they aren't pegged as the person who ended the winning streak. In fact, in recent years the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has called-out employers with incentive programs that may actually

Many safety professionals believe that a more reasonable approach is to focus on the prevention or interception of precursors to injuries, such as unacceptable behaviors and unsafe workplace conditions. The objective then becomes pursuing zero unsafe behaviors rather than zero injuries. Daily inspections, pre-shift safety briefings and near-miss reporting allow for the identification of trends that could result in an injury. In fact the Henrich principle, developed by Herbert William Heinrich, is based on the concept that each workplace fatality is preceded by 10 serious injuries,

In order for the workforce to embrace safety initiatives and goals, the following development and implementation elements must be considered:

- 

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# Being Liked is Serious Business

## 10 Steps for Repairing and Protecting Your Online Reputation

BY KATE ZABRISKIE

*"The worst customer service experience ever! The bed was dirty, and the bathroom had hair on the toilet seat. My dog refused to enter the room. He slept in the car. I don't know why I didn't do the same thing. Do not EVER stay here!!!!!!!"*

*"If you are offered a job at this place, run — do not walk — to the nearest exit. This company is an asylum. I have never worked with a more dysfunctional group of people in my life."*

*"There are a lot of fake reviews on this site. Anyone who has ever been here knows there is no possible way on earth a real customer would say this place was anything but a pit. Enter at your own risk. You have been warned."*

**Ouch! Those hurt.**

And there it is, in black and white for anyone and everyone to see — the naked truth: what someone thinks of your product, your service or your organization.

Bad reviews can bite, wound and sting. Worst of all, a mountain of them can appear in a matter of seconds. Social media: It's a wonderful thing, until it turns against you.

But what's a person to do when his or her online reputation is suffering at the hands of others? Plenty.





# ONLINE REVIEWS

## STEP 1



Take a deep breath. You can fix it. Not overnight, but you can fix it.

## STEP 2



Get over any hurt feelings or embarrassment, and do it quickly. The people who complain have done you a great favor. It's now up to you to decide if negative reviews are going to be the kiss of death or a wakeup call.

## STEP 3



Uncover everything being said about you. If you found a bad review in one place, there are probably others. You will need to spend a few hours researching yourself online. Start Googling, and take notes of what you find and where. A word of caution: Resist the urge to respond to anything. Be strategic, not impulsive. You will need a game plan before typing a word.

## STEP 4



Automate. Sign yourself up for Google Alerts at [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts). If new content mentioning your company shows up online and Google sees it, the search engine will send out an automatic alert

letting you know. There are also a variety of free and paid services that will monitor online search terms and any major review sites for mentions, and will quickly notify you if new information about you is posted. If you are serious about managing your online reputation, these services are extremely valuable.

## STEP 5



Once you have a good picture of your online grade, get ready to roll up your sleeves and start problem solving. If your employees are rude, train them. If your establishment is dirty, clean it. If people hate working for you, investigate. Unless you are the victim of competitor sabotage, what you are reading is probably based in truth. If needed, revisit step two.

## STEP 6



Involve your team and communicate your improvement plan. You will reach your goal faster if everyone in your organization understands what it is and is working toward it.

## STEP 7



When you are interacting with people, ask them what they think. You already know some of them have no problem sharing



their opinions with the world, so they will probably be willing to candidly tell you the good, bad and ugly. Asking your customers or clients for help can prove extremely beneficial.

Try saying the following: *"We are working hard to improve. Would you be willing to talk to me for a few minutes? Thank you. What two or three things could we have done differently in order to make your experience with us better?"*

If at all possible, ask these conversations verbally. You may be surprised by the





quantity and quality of information you are able to quickly gather.

## STEP 8

Once you have a clear sense of what is going on with your business and are on the road to smoothing out the rough spots, get back to the reviews. It's time to answer them.

First, thank the reviewer for letting you know about a problem, and include something good about yourself, too.



*"Thank you for your feedback, and I'm sorry your son's birthday experience with us wasn't what you expected. We've hosted over a thousand birthday parties for children in our five years of business, and we strive to delight each of our guests."*

Second, describe what you have done to prevent the issue from occurring again. *"We've taken a few steps to prevent what happened to you from happening to another parent of a birthday boy or birthday girl. Since your visit, our staff has taken several classes to improve their service skills. They've focused specifically on techniques for positively engaging with children."*

Third, ask the person to give you a second chance.

*"Please celebrate with us again. I believe you will be pleasantly surprised. My name is Kate. If you ask for me when you make your reservation, I will take care of you personally."*

Resist the urge to be snarky, judgmental or to correct your customers. Yes, some customers are wrong — however, pointing that out will not help. Lots of people are going to be watching how you respond to others. Take advantage of the opportunity to be polite, helpful and solution-focused. People who rely on the reviews can often tell when other customers are being difficult. If you are gracious in your dealings with them, you will win in the long run.

## STEP 9

Ask your happy customers to post reviews. Over time, your average will improve. Obviously, this approach only works if you are indeed making changes and removing the causes of bad evaluations. If you are not, prepare for more of the same reviews you've gotten in the past — because they're coming. You simply cannot turn off the social media tap.

## STEP 10

**Step 10:** As tempting as it may be, do not post fake reviews or go to a service to get others to do the same. Apart from the fact that it's dishonest, it's also dangerous. If you get caught, you will look even worse than you did before. Instead, get busy writing more content to post on your site, press release sites and other appropriate places. The more that's out there, the less visible bad comments are.

Followed closely, this 10-step plan for a reputation overhaul could earn you five stars. What do you think? ■

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# Using a **B.O.L.D.** Approach to Succeed in an Unpredictable Business World

**B**USINESS STRATEGY  
**O**PPORTUNITIES  
**L**EADERSHIP  
**D**ECISION MAKING

BY JILL JOHNSON





**I**n the 1980s hit song “Material Girl,” international pop singer Madonna belted out the lyrics, “We are living in a material world.” Fast forward to today, and we are living in a world that’s highly unpredictable.

Our economic, political and social environment is exceptionally volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. It has become increasingly difficult to develop strategies for success when every time you turn around there is another challenge that threatens your enterprise’s survival.

One of the most effective methods you can employ in this unstable business climate is the B.O.L.D. Approach. This four-point framework will focus your strategic mindset on gaining the insight and critical skills you need to thrive.

## **1. BUSINESS STRATEGY: GROW YOUR ORGANIZATION WITH PURPOSE AND PROSPERITY**

Rethink your approach to planning. Stop engaging in strategic planning focused on fun, bonding events where you visionquest about idealistic wishes for your future, resulting in ineffective plans and written reports that collect dust.

Focus instead on grounding your planning efforts by gaining the information and insight you need to develop effective business strategies. Leverage the emerging opportunities available to you and minimize

the risks that an uncertain business landscape creates for your enterprise.

Those who thrive in an unstable environment focus on understanding the potential future of evolving trends. So what do you do now? Let go of old ideas. Organize your business strategies around innovation and adaptation.

Build your sustainable success on a viable future that is grounded in a full understanding of your situation, not on wishful thinking. Manage your transitions effectively by hiring more sophisticated talent to match your evolving needs. Consider how you can leverage new opportunities to enhance your operation and profitability.

## **2. OPPORTUNITIES: UNCOVER THE POTENTIAL IN YOUR MARKET TO ACHIEVE SALES RESULTS**

Effective strategic planning in turbulent times requires a deep assessment of your market opportunities. This environment is driven by significant market forces, which influence your enterprise’s success and long-term potential. These market forces

impact your business lifecycle and the ongoing value of your product or service offerings to your consumers. You must fully understand the impact of the market forces determining your ability to survive and thrive.

Staying close to your target market is crucial to your long-term success. But market needs, wants and desires change over time. You must understand how your market is changing and why. To remain feasible, you need to determine what you need to change to meet those evolving market needs.

There are nine key market forces impacting most businesses today: Shifting demographics, competitive actions, fluid economic conditions, unstable capital markets, governmental interference impacting regulations and reimbursement, technology evolution, workforce skills and capabilities, industry changes as organizations adapt to these forces and generational shifts.





You have no control over these market forces. Yet you continually have to adapt and adjust your strategies to respond to them.

### 3. LEADERSHIP: LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

It takes many, many hours to master a skill or hone your expertise. Don't expect to be an effective leader in the beginning. It takes time. Building your insight to effectively navigate stormy strategic waters will take time, too.

Asking the right questions is the foundation of an effective strategic mindset. Yet learning to ask the right questions is extremely difficult, because most people only ask superficial questions that have easy answers. Asking challenging questions allows you to deepen your understanding of the impact of each market force and their influence on your long-term potential for success.

Effective leaders in turbulent times are not afraid to listen to divergent perspectives. They understand that their ability to take corrective action before things go completely haywire requires candor from their teams and a full understanding of market forces.

Confident leaders use objective advisors to uncover the truth and push their teams. Look for real expertise that has proven results. Stay away from advisors offering

strong sales hype and marketing sizzle. They can do lasting damage to your enterprise.

### 4. DECISION MAKING: GAIN THE CLARITY YOU NEED TO THRIVE

Effective decision-making in an uncertain and unstable world begins with a desire for clarity. Gaining clarity requires a complete and candid understanding of your situation. Truth gives you information. Well-researched information gives you insight. Insight gives you the clarity you need to set the right priorities and focus your team on the most critical activities impacting your success.

Make sure you are not operating under a false set of assumptions that were correct at one time, but have not been updated to reflect your current situation. If your assumptions are wrong, your ability to make good decisions will be severely limited by your skewed viewpoint.

It is critical that you reassess your assumptions about the future. Getting the right information for effective decision-making is essential. Look for more than superficial answers to the critical issues you face. Be willing to invest the time and money to bring in a fresh and different point of view to discover the truth.

### THE VALUE OF TAKING A B.O.L.D. APPROACH

By taking a B.O.L.D. Approach, you will integrate an action plan for uncertainty

into every facet of your strategic mindset. By asking challenging questions to understand your current and evolving situation, you will build your confidence that you are developing the business strategies to enhance your success. You will uncover the potential in your markets. You will be a more confident and effective leader, and you will make better decisions.

As a result, others will be more confident in following your lead. If you demand more of yourself and your team, they, too, will think more strategically, become more effective leaders, make better decisions and achieve results designed to create lasting success for your enterprise.

So take action now. What is the first B.O.L.D. step you will take to address the impact of uncertainty and volatility in your enterprise? ■

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# Award Winner Spotlight:

## E&K OF CHICAGO'S

### University of Chicago, William Eckhardt Center

BY META LEVIN

#### Other CISCA members involved in the project:

Mau, Inc., Armstrong World Industries,  
ACGI

#### Architect/Designer:

HOK, James Carpenter Design Associates

# W

hen it came to creating the University of Chicago's William Eckhardt Research Center, nothing was typical, according to Horace Sene, E&K of Chicago's project manager for the project.

E&K's work on the project involved six different types of high-end specialty products, including a wood baffle system; fabric panels; paired, extruded aluminum trim; custom shade pockets; metal mesh; and interior and exterior linear metal plank ceilings, totaling 103,000 square feet. The job took about 9,000 man-hours to complete.

The 277,000 square foot, seven-story building (five floors above ground, with two below) was built on the University of Chicago's Hyde Park campus and houses offices, conference rooms and laboratories for the Division of Physical Sciences and the Institute of Molecular Engineering. That includes astronomy and astrophysics, as well as the Kavli Institute for Cosmological Physics and the Pritzker Nanofabrication Cleanroom Facility. It was completed in October of 2015.







"We knew this was going to be a difficult project," involving multiple manufacturers and specialty products, says Sene. E&K chose those vendors who they believed were well qualified and Sene says "we had faith in them."

The two below-ground floors were designed that way to house what is known as vibration-dampened laboratories used for nanoscale fabrication and imaging. They also are built to filter out most airborne contaminants that carry the risk of interfering with precision work in various types of scientific research.

Armstrong's 2x2 grid system was used in the building's laboratories. Although the light fixtures were supposed to fit perfectly into this system, they did not. E&K had to work the grid system around the fixtures, but they made it work.

The irregularly shaped fume hoods also posed some challenges, requiring atypical framing and making the transition from grid to fixture to hood difficult. "Realigning them was difficult," says Sene.

Long lead times, combined with the fact that the specialty products came from multiple plant locations, made the project even more challenging for E&K. In the case of the metal plank ceilings, Armstrong's interior and exterior MetalWorks RH200 metal plank systems came from Europe. The system uses J-bar suspension with rectangular hook on panels.

With a complex design, the project involved multiple changes, causing the components to be ordered at different times. The interior system, in fact, had to be ordered two months before the exterior.

"Trying to get everything done on time was a challenge," says Sene.

With a 16-week lead time for each part, everything was complicated. The interior and exterior linear metal plank ceilings had to be installed so that they were perceived to be aligned with each other through a glass curtainwall system, while also meeting the centerlines of the curtainwall mullions, as well as the columns.

The two different ordering and delivery dates, however, made that even more

challenging. "We hit it as close as possible," says Sene.

To make the perimeter look finished, E&K recommended using custom tile along the edges. "It made the transition seamless," says Sene.

ACGI's wood baffles, featured in the main conference room, caused some consternation. They initially were designed to be suspended below a hard, drywall ceiling, using a threaded rod, but, says Sene, "the architect forgot to design access." E&K suggested that they use access panels.

They also provided a layout for the baffles so that they would land along grid lines, allowing them to hang a one-quarter inch thread rod in the ceiling system. "Every tile has access," says Sene.

"E&K was able to modify it to make it work," says Eric Mau, president of Mau, Inc., Architectural Specialty Products. "There was no cost to the change." The 10-foot-long, V-shaped baffles were finished with wood veneer over particle board, and all were custom lengths and sizes. "It was an expensive job," says Mau. "There were no off-the-shelf sizes."

Mau credits E&K for making the project successful. "E&K really shines at solving problems," he says. "They had a great foreman and superintendent on the job. They do a great job in the field."

It was, says Sene, all in a day's work. "Once we explained the situation and gave a solution that was aesthetically pleasing, they accepted what we suggested."

Sene also pointed to the multiple squared concrete columns that penetrated the ceiling with linear light fixture systems.

E&K field measured every wall by hand. "We did not use BIM on this project," says Sene.

Every office had a 20-degree pitched ceiling and the open laboratories have a technical ceiling layout comprised of 2x2 and 1x2 panels, aligning with recessed ceiling fixtures.

"This was a challenging project, but we were able to handle the road blocks by working with the general contractor and architect to make them happy," says Sene. ■





# Trends in Acoustic Ceilings

BY META L. LEVIN

**N**ot long ago, Rick Hanson's Sorlie Acoustics, Inc., did a job that epitomized three of the major trends in acoustic ceilings:

1. Customization
2. Installation by a specialty crew
3. Artistic results

As the economy improves, architects are designing with — and owners are willing to pay for — custom acoustic tiles/panels, especially in public areas of buildings, such as lobbies and important conference rooms.

"We're seeing a trend toward higher-end and more architecturally sophisticated acoustic products, especially the new ones coming from Europe," says Jason Gordon, president and CEO of Heartland Acoustics & Interiors and CISCA immediate past president.

This is especially true in Heartland's Denver, Colorado, office, but Gordon is seeing it in his Austin, Texas, and San Diego, California, locations, as well. Designers are calling for felt, cork, clouds and blades, among other things. "Creative types of products, mostly from Europe, are becoming more mainstream," he says.

In Phoenix, Arizona, Alan Skinner agrees. He not only is seeing high demand for wood, metal and clean air room ceilings, but he says his clients are willing to spend more.

In the case of the University of Minnesota-Duluth's new Amsoil Ice Arena's lobby, colloquially known as "The Ice Cube," Hanson's crew was working with oversized cloud-like dropped ceiling tiles with no bracing to hold them in place. They had to figure out how to wire them in the right spots.

There are blue LED lights that go all the way through, dropping down to provide soft lighting. As a result, when spectators traverse the new skywalk that

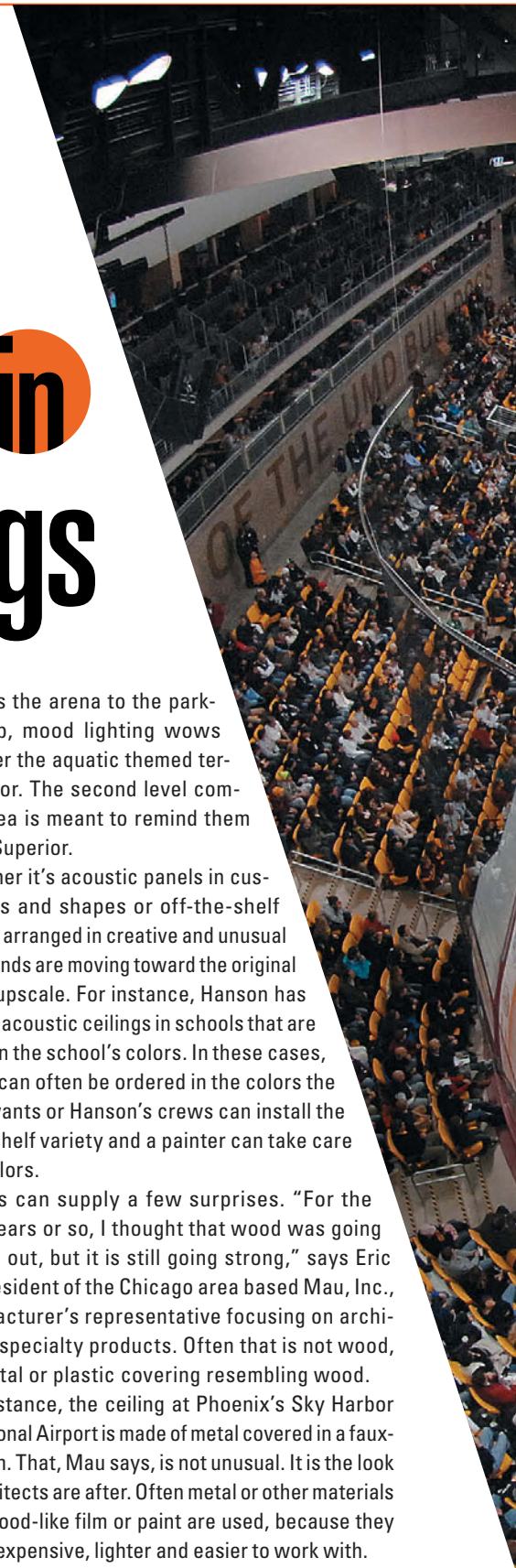
connects the arena to the parking ramp, mood lighting wows them over the aquatic themed terrazzo floor. The second level commons area is meant to remind them of Lake Superior.

Whether it's acoustic panels in custom sizes and shapes or off-the-shelf products arranged in creative and unusual ways, trends are moving toward the original and the upscale. For instance, Hanson has installed acoustic ceilings in schools that are painted in the school's colors. In these cases, the tiles can often be ordered in the colors the school wants or Hanson's crews can install the off-the-shelf variety and a painter can take care of the colors.

Trends can supply a few surprises. "For the last 15 years or so, I thought that wood was going to phase out, but it is still going strong," says Eric Mau, president of the Chicago area based Mau, Inc., a manufacturer's representative focusing on architectural specialty products. Often that is not wood, but a metal or plastic covering resembling wood.

For instance, the ceiling at Phoenix's Sky Harbor International Airport is made of metal covered in a faux-wood film. That, Mau says, is not unusual. It is the look that architects are after. Often metal or other materials with a wood-like film or paint are used, because they are less expensive, lighter and easier to work with.

Several of the vendors Mau represents make patterned ceiling tiles that allow a custom look without the custom price. They often are used in areas the architect or designer wants to highlight.











## Whether it's acoustic panels in custom sizes and shapes or off-the-shelf products arranged in creative and unusual ways, trends are moving toward the original and the upscale.

Like the Ice Cube in the Amsoil Ice Arena, Mau is seeing designers using lighting in different ways to give what would otherwise be an off-the-shelf product a unique look.

"It's not as expensive to use standard tiles, and they can be laid out in different elevations, different ways," he says.

But it is the call for custom ceilings that is growing the fastest, says Jeff Hudepohl, president of Valley Interior Systems in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area and current CISCA president. "There is a tremendous demand for custom ceilings," he says. "With it comes higher prices on both labor and materials."

It also comes with a learning curve for general contractors. Custom products often mean longer lead times, as well as longer installation times. General contractors often don't schedule the right amount of time to install the ceilings, says Hudepohl.

"They are so used to the standard 2x4 or 2x2 laid-in grid systems," he says.

That is beginning to change and Hudepohl's crews are starting to get the extra time that they need.

Keeping things within the budget can also be a problem with custom ceilings.

"The architects design and visualize," says Hudepohl. "The manufacturer makes the product. As a contractor, sometimes we are between a rock and hard place."

There is give-and-take on all sides. Mock-ups, though useful, can be costly. They take a lot of experience and knowledge, as well as willingness on all sides to be flexible. "Sometimes acoustic reduction has to be handled in another way," he says.

Skinner is seeing more awareness of the importance of acoustics in restaurants. "The restaurants, especially the fancier ones, are more conscious of acoustics," he says. "They are coming back to me and asking what they can do to help reduce the noise." They still want their spaces to look hot, trendy and high-end, though.

Skinner points to one of his favorite jobs: Several large studios for GoDaddy, the domain name and web-hosting site, in which they planned to film commercials. Skinner noted that the company spent a lot

of money on the project, in which acoustics were featured prominently.

Like Hanson, Skinner and Gordon, Hudepohl has specialty crews with expertise and experience in working with the custom products. "The laborers have to be better trained and qualified," he says.

Some of the manufacturers require that those working on the installation be certified in their products, which means special training.

"It takes more expertise," says Hanson of working with often oversize or unusually shaped custom panels. "You need to make sure that you have qualified people."

Finding good, qualified people is the biggest challenge, says Hanson. "Once you get a core group, you'd better keep them."

That means having enough work to keep them busy and challenged. There is, says Gordon, a "short list" of craftsmen who are qualified to do this kind of work.

"We bid so that we can afford to put the most qualified people on it."

Gordon is trying to train new people, and so are others. "Some of the craftsmen have had a learning curve," says Skinner.

In the Duluth, Minnesota, area, Hanson has worked to build up a reputation as a go-to guy for installing specialty projects. That is not unusual. The contractors who do these kinds of jobs work hard to position themselves as the ones to contact when high-end, custom acoustic ceilings are involved.

There are resources for those who are working to ensure that they get more of the challenging, custom acoustic work that they enjoy.

"CISCA has been able to help me get resources and training," says Skinner. "When I am confronted with a new product and am stumped, I have a resource to go to. Sometimes it takes an older individual with experience."

The contractors who have built reputations for working on high-end, custom acoustic ceilings find that they get a special pleasure from doing so.

"Everyone enjoys it," says Hudepohl. "They're able to use the skills they've been working on and advanced."

They also are getting more award-winning installations. ■



# The Power of Social Media

for

Workplace

Communication

&amp; Distribution

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

**T**here are many ways to leverage social media at your place of work. Whether you are a manager, business leader, team member or HR professional, social media could just be a platform to bring your workplace together and elevate how communication and information is being shared particularly in a way that encourages input, collaboration and sharing.

## ENTERPRISE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

On workology.com, I shared with the uses of enterprise social media at work. For those that need a refresher, see the graphic below. You can read more about the use of social media for enterprise by going to <http://www.workology.com/7-uses-of-enterprise-social-media-at-work/>.

When it comes to social media for collaboration and information distribution, social media is a great way to involve employees and brand ambassadors from all positions and levels within







your organization with the purpose of sharing news, information and resources.

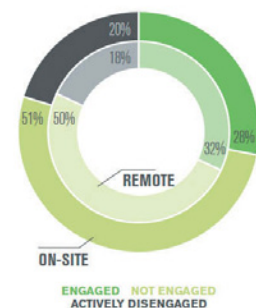
I can speak from personal experience that social media is a powerful tool for workplace communication, particularly an engaged audience when it comes to mobile. I currently communicate mostly through social media for both personal and professional purposes. The challenge for business leaders is that there is not much solid data and case studies shared in mainstream media supporting the use of social media for enterprise communication and distribution. Consumer numbers are in support of social media communication and use for distribution. The average American

#### *Uses of Social Media at Work*

- DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNICATION
- RECRUITMENT AND HIRING
- RESEARCH AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
- EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND ENGAGEMENT
- SOCIAL LEARNING AND COLLABORATION
- EMPLOYMENT BRANDING
- LISTENING AND MONITORING

WORKology

#### REMOTE WORKERS MORE ENGAGED



spends 1.8 hours a day communicating on a mobile device vs. 1.6 hours a day on their computer. That's 3.4 hours a day engaging using technology that is often associated with work even if we don't factor in that over 50 percent of all mobile activity is social media related.

### SOCIAL MEDIA IMPROVES EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & PRODUCTIVITY

Social media as a communication and distribution tool is particularly important for team members who are working together from distances whether on separate sides of the office or the other side of the planet. My team works remote in different time zones. We work on different schedules because of time zones, family situations or just to help balance our personal with our professional lives. The work still gets done, blogs get published and deadlines met. But most importantly, we work well together and communicate effectively thanks to the power of social media.

Social media does more than help us communicate, it keeps us engaged and happy especially at work where we spend more time than with our families working, sharing and interacting with individuals who are part of an organization which changes every single day.

Gallup's 2013 State of the American Workplace Report shows that remote workers are more engaged than their onsite colleagues. **Remote colleagues are 31 percent engaged versus their in-office counterparts at 28 percent.** These same remote employees also log more work hours being more productive with the primary catalyst to their communications related to work being email, virtual meetings, telephone and social media.

### ENGAGEMENT AND INNOVATION THROUGH CROWDSOURCING

While attending the SHRM Diversity Conference, I sat in a session that discussed social media use within the company was linked not only to collaboration but the increased sharing of information and internal crowdsourcing. Cisco used their social media platform for idea generation focused on workplace diversity. Nearly 600 suggestions and ideas were submitted and employees were then able to vote on the

best ones submitted by their colleagues. Just fewer than 5,600 votes were cast generating real time engagement, sharing and communication with employees throughout the global company.

It's case studies like these from Cisco that help demonstrate the vast ways social media can be used for communication and information distribution to serve different purposes. The key is for organizational members and teams who oversee and develop internal communication efforts to work together to make

sure messages, campaigns and communication strategies that leverage social media don't overshadow or overlap each other lessening the power that social media can bring. ■

***Jessica Miller-Merrell** is the VP of talent strategies for the Advanced Group, published author, speaker and founder of popular HR and workplace blog, *Blogging4Jobs.com*. Jessica has been recognized by Forbes as a top 50 social media power user. Follow her on Twitter at @jmillmerrell.*



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# Improving the Classroom Experience *Through Acoustics*

BY ROBERT L. MARSHALL, MANAGER,  
MARKETING TECHNICAL SERVICES, CERTAINTEED CEILINGS

**In a classroom with typical background noise, academic studies show that students sitting only 15 feet away can hear and understand only half of what the teacher says.**

**T**he business of educators is to promote learning. If this goal is not the forefront in the design or renovation of new school buildings, educators will have to work that much harder to reach students. Elements like natural lighting, indoor air quality, high-tech aids and acoustics each affect the physical space of any room. Ultimately, though, it is the built-in acoustics that will have the most profound effect on the learner.



The case for an improved acoustical environment is compelling for every learner and especially urgent in today's mainstreamed classrooms, where students with special needs are learning side-by-side with their peers. Consider these facts:

- 2.4 million children are diagnosed with specific learning disabilities.<sup>1</sup>
- 8 percent of children have been diagnosed with ADD/ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome.<sup>2</sup>
- At any given time, 15 percent of the

school-age population is suffering temporary hearing loss from ear infections or colds.<sup>2</sup>

- 17 percent of the general population has congenital hearing loss, and 12.5 percent have noise-induced hearing loss.<sup>3</sup>
  - 10 percent of public school students speak English as a second language.<sup>4</sup>
- Combine this mix of students into a single classroom and the line between the

exception and the rule becomes blurry. But whether the challenge is a common cold or communicating in a second language, it's clear that a well-designed acoustic environment is essential to learning.

A 1999 study from Heriot Watt University in Scotland illustrates the impact of acoustic ceilings on learning. Research found that in classrooms with no acoustic treatment, many students couldn't understand anything the teacher was saying. They were sitting in what researchers deemed "acoustic black holes." After the rooms were fit with acoustic ceiling panels, every seat met acceptable levels for speech intelligibility. And once they were able to hear the lessons, many underperforming students were revealed to be far more capable than their teachers had thought.

Acoustic expert and American National Standard Institute (ANSI) committee on noise co-chair David Lubman said it best when he stated that we put children in classrooms where they can't hear, but we would never put them in a classroom with the lights turned off. Sound is as important to the learning process as sight, and should be given equal consideration in school design.

## THE BASICS OF GOOD ACOUSTICS

In order to build the quiet environment that students need to learn and teachers to teach, certain acoustic fundamentals need to be understood, including signal-to-noise ratio.

The "signal," which in a classroom is the teacher's voice, originates at a certain



Nothing drives home the value of

# speech privacy

like finding a space to discuss ceiling solutions for



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decibel level. As the signal travels to the back of the room, it dissipates in a predictable manner. As the distance from the speaker doubles — going from 3 feet to 6 feet to 12 feet, and so on — the speech level drops by 6 decibels (dB). At some point, the background noise around some students will be louder than the teacher.

In a classroom with typical background noise, academic studies show that students sitting only 15 feet away can hear and understand only half of what the teacher says. Based on this, the American Speech Language Hearing Association advocates that the signal-to-noise ratio should be no lower than +15 dB, which means that at every seat in the classroom, the teacher's voice should exceed the background noise level by at least 15 dB.

### CONTROLLING BACKGROUND NOISE

There are two options for controlling background noise: Make the teacher louder, or the background noise quieter. To avoid vocal strain for teachers, ANSI guidelines state that the maximum background noise level for a 10,000 cubic foot (40 ft. x 25 ft. x 10 ft.) classroom should be less than 35 dB. In 2010, ANSI guidelines were revised to state that in such classrooms the maximum *interior sourced* noise level should be less than 35 dB.<sup>5</sup> This minor change of wording pointed the finger squarely at HVAC systems as the primary source of background noise in classrooms.

Despite this guideline, HVAC contractors are rarely directed to build a noiseless system. Rather, they are told to build an affordable one. Cost-effective HVAC systems that meet the ANSI 2010 guidelines (single stage systems below 35 dB; multiple stage or speed systems below 37 dB) are available. In addition, fiberglass insulation designed for industrial HVAC systems provides both acoustic and thermal insulation, for less noise as well as more efficient operation.

### SOUND ABSORPTION IS KEY

Beyond insulating the HVAC system itself, classroom noise can be reduced with acoustic ceiling panels, whose sound-absorbing performance is typically indicated by the noise reduction coefficient



Sound absorbing acoustic ceilings with high NRC ratings in a classroom setting provide for a calmer, quieter learning environment. (Ecophon® Gedina™ E panels, 0.90 NRC).

(NRC) rating. Noise reduction occurs when materials and objects convert sound into heat energy. Reflected sound always loses some energy, but the amount depends on the material reflecting it. This is measured as the NRC. An NRC of 0.00 indicates perfect reflection, while an NRC of 1.00 indicates perfect absorption.

Guidelines offered by LEED for schools state that spaces less than 20,000 square feet should use ceiling panels with a minimum NRC of 0.70 for 100 percent of the ceiling area (minus lights and other essential elements). That makes product selection relatively easy since manufacturers readily publish the NRC measurement for the ceiling panels. For example, CertainTeed® Ceilings Sereno™ panels, which were designed with classrooms in mind, offer an NRC of 0.75. High ratings for sound blocking also help to mitigate HVAC noise from any mechanical systems housed above the ceiling tiles.

### ACOUSTICALLY DESIGNED CLASSROOMS GIVE EVERYONE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

It is incumbent on education professionals to use every tool at their disposal to encourage learning. Creating effective

learning environments through acoustic design gives every child in the classroom a better chance to learn. All it requires is a thoughtful approach to background noise and sound absorption. ■

**CertainTeed Ceilings** offers acoustical ceiling and wall solutions that make commercial spaces sound, healthy and sustainable as well as beautiful. CertainTeed Ceilings has long served the North American building industry and is a subsidiary of Saint-Gobain, the world's leading producer of building products. CertainTeed and its sister brands Ecophon® and Decoustics® are committed to helping architects, designers and contractors improve the lives of building occupants everywhere. For more information, please visit [certainteed.com/ceilings](http://certainteed.com/ceilings).

### SOURCES:

- <sup>1</sup> Learning Disabilities Association of America
- <sup>2</sup> CDC
- <sup>3</sup> Michel Picard, University of Montreal, 2003
- <sup>4</sup> National Center for Education Statistics
- <sup>5</sup> ANSI S12.60-2002, "Acoustical Performance Criteria, Design Requirements and Guidelines for Schools"



# Knocking Down the TOP FIVE BARRIERS



# TO DIVERSITY

## and Inclusion in Your Organization



BY NATALIE HOLDER

**T**wenty years ago, when most of us thought of “diversity,” the prefix “bio” was attached to it — along with visions of nature. Today, diversity has become big business for corporate America and many organizations. The Glass Ceiling Commission found that companies who invested in glass-ceiling related issues had 2.5 times higher stock market performance versus companies who ignored them. Racially diverse companies have 15 times more revenue than the least racially diverse, which explains why 40 percent of the companies with \$5 billion in revenue have diversity as a focus in recruitment. However, many organizations feel stuck in their diversity mission, in part because they do not know the difference between diversity and inclusion.

Diversity is like being invited to sit at a table that is already set; inclusion is being asked to partner with the host and help set up the table. Inclusion can be measured with the level of employee engagement in your organization, which drives the overall quality of your staff, and has a positive impact throughout the company.

Studies have shown that it is natural for people to create in-groups and out-groups, depending on similarities and differences. The more people perceive someone to be different, the less likely that they feel comfortable or trust them — thus putting them in their out-group.

Knowing the benefits of an inclusive work environment, why do some organizations still operate with a mindset of exclusivity, creating inclusion roadblocks that are difficult to overcome? Identifying these five roadblocks in your organization is critical to success for the 21st century business,

because when you knock them down, your whole company will be better for it.

### 1. INFORMAL MENTORING

Formal mentoring pairs often have the best intentions; however, they rely on trust and shared interest being manufactured. However, informal mentoring is a self-selecting process where a senior leader has chosen to guide and care for the career development of a junior colleague. Trust and shared interest are inherent in the relationship. Informal mentoring is like a senior leader being obsessed with your success. Often, it is difficult to informally mentor members of out-groups, because unconsciously, we are more likely to be invested in someone’s career development — and create opportunities for them — when we can see our own characteristics in them. To challenge this natural inclination, think about the person who you feel adds the greatest diversity to

your team and ask yourself, “When was the last time I invited this person out for coffee or gave this person feedback on an assignment?” If your answers are consistent with your answers for other team members who are comfortably in your in-group, then you are on the right track. If not, an outing for coffee or an informal feedback session are solid steps in the right direction.

### 2. RECOVERING FROM MISTAKES

Everyone makes mistakes, but how they are dealt with makes all the difference. Are those who make mistakes at your organization given a second chance, or are they forever marked as a careless employee? Studies have shown that we have a greater tendency to blame external factors when our in-group members make mistakes, for example, understanding that a report was late because the printer was broken. However, when out-group members make mistakes, we attribute them to personal flaws — that is, a broken printer is no excuse because there were ample days to complete the report. While an employer may be instilling good relations with one employee, she is potentially ostracizing the employee she chooses to penalize. When employees in out-groups notice that they are treated “by the book” while their counterparts are not, this creates an environment where discriminatory discipline is part of the unwritten rules of the workplace.







### 3. BULLYING

Yelling, abusive emails and character assassinations are just some of the tactics workplace bullies use to usurp the power base in an organization. Bullies will target out-group members who seem vulnerable because they do not have strong informal mentors or allies. Managers should be concerned about and put an end to bullying, because it can destroy a team and decreases work productivity.

### 4. INSENSITIVITY

Organizations often do not realize how changes in their employee and client demographics may require a few tweaks to their social traditions. The jokes, comments and even events that were once held may have a negative impact on the talent who add a new dimension of diversity to your office. Insensitivity can even become a source of workplace stress, which can result in burnout, low morale, drug use and violence. Ultimately, insensitivity can expose organizations to costly employment lawsuits. The manager who ignores complaints of insensitive conduct

is just as guilty as the person who makes the offending comment or gesture.

### 5. PERCEIVED UNDERPERFORMANCE

Kevin Costner's character in the movie *Field of Dreams* was inspired to turn his farm into a baseball field when a voice told him, "If you build it, he will come." People are influenced to act based on their beliefs, creating perceptions — whether false or true — that become reality. When you unconsciously believe that employees in an out-group are less skilled, less qualified or less talented, you consciously look for affirmation of these beliefs.

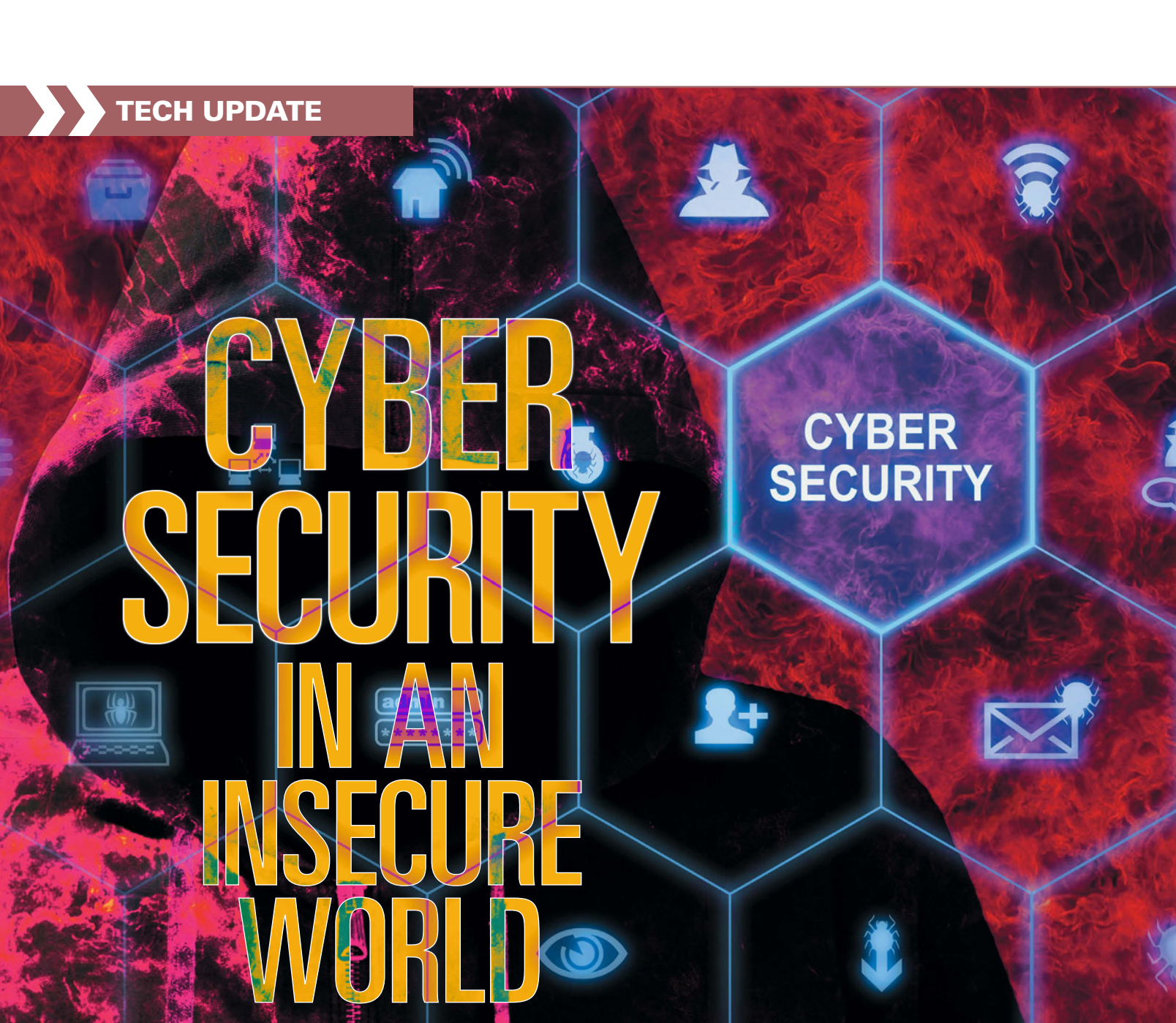
If you start a relationship from the premise that an employee is not going to succeed, more often than not, that employee will not succeed. Similar to how work styles can obscure a manager's perceptions about an employee's abilities, visible characteristics can also distract managers from truly valuing the employee's work. Sometimes those who bring a dimension of diversity to the office might not be appreciated because their

managers and coworkers are considering the *person* doing the work and not the *content*. When your subjective perception about how someone will work interferes with objective performance, everyone loses.

Training and other strategic actions steps can move your organization in the right direction toward diversity and inclusion. Increased profits, improved reputation and employee engagement are just a few of the huge returns on your investment of time and resources when knocking down these five inclusion barriers. ■

**Natalie Holder** is an employment lawyer, speaker, corporate trainer and author of *Exclusion: Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Recruitment, Retention, and Promotion*. As the co-founder of the New York State Bar Association's Labor & Employment's Diversity Fellowship she developed strategies to increase diversity and retention within the Bar by 200 percent. In 2013, NYU honored her with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award. For more information on Natalie Holder please visit [www.QuestDiversity.com](http://www.QuestDiversity.com).





# CYBER SECURITY IN AN INSECURE WORLD

CYBER  
SECURITY

BY CHAD PEARSON, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, PLEXXIS SOFTWARE

**W**e are moving from a world that is mostly digital to one that is digital-only — and will certainly deliver infinite benefits. While this is an exciting paradigm shift, it is also making us more vulnerable to cyber attacks than we have ever been before.

Thankfully, there are simple things we can do to protect ourselves from cyber attacks so we can get the most out of this connected world.

If there is only one thing you take away from this article, let it be this critical fact: Your people are your greatest risk.

So what is the first step toward cyber security?

Immediately after reading this article, we recommend you designate one person on your team as a Designated Security Officer (DSO). The DSO is responsible for seeking advice from experts who stay on top of cyber attacks and share that advice with the company.

The reason for this is simple:

Many companies hire IT security providers to protect them and expect results. This can be a huge mistake, as most security attacks target your people,

and the tactics used are always changing. Keeping your colleagues educated on how to use technology and what actions are dangerous is more effective than paying IT staff to react to mistakes. IT staff are critical, but you are wasting your money if you pay them to end user behaviors that should have not have taken place.

Without a DSO, the strongest IT infrastructure can be easily breached. For extra clarity, here is a small example of an update our DSO, Mitranand Singh, shared with our staff a while back.





Cyber security is about people first, and technology second. The most difficult challenge in a digital world is protecting people from themselves. This is what makes the DSO so important.

Once you have your DSO in place, we advise you to do the following:

**1 Implement internal controls.** Despite all efforts of the DSO, some people will ignore instructions. It only takes one mistake to impact everyone, so we recommend you protect everyone by limiting each person's access to only the tools and information they need to complete their work.

This includes blocking certain websites and online activities. While this may annoy some people, those who wish to use the

Internet in an unrestricted fashion have the option of using a personal device rather than devices on the company's network. There are many products that can help companies do this in an automated fashion.

**2 Reduce the number of technologies used by the company.** Without even realizing it, many companies use over a dozen systems, spreadsheets and apps. As administrative requirements, new regulations and customer expectations increase, contractors tend to add more systems and apps that help them complete their tasks. Each app and system you add to your daily operations increases the points of failure to your organization.

As we move closer to a digital-only world, we recommend you move closer to a single

source for all data and functions. It can be expensive to unite your entire team through a single solution that handles all tasks, so research on solutions that help reduce the number of system, spreadsheets and apps is time well spent. Managing three to four systems and apps rather than 12 to 15 significantly reduces your risk and points of failure while greatly simplifying security, data integrity and efficiency.

**3 Secure mobile devices.** Mobile devices sometimes hold more data than computers and should be considered just as valuable. Furthermore, mobile devices are at greater risk of being lost or stolen. For this reason alone, securing them is an absolute must.

Here are three simple steps to securing mobile devices:





*A virus is going around that is tricking people into typing in their usernames and passwords into a pop-up window when they are already logged in.*

*If you are logged in already and see a pop-up window requesting credentials, DO NOT enter your credentials. SHUT DOWN your computer, unplug your network cable and notify me through someone else's workstation or device.*

Thank you,  
Mitch

1. Ensure all of them are password protected.
2. Enable the lock-out period feature.
3. Purchase remote wiping software so you can clear lost or stolen phones.

All you need to do is use a combination of numbers, upper case letters, lower case letters and symbols and then occasionally change passwords. Your DSO can send reminders to everyone at an acceptable and manageable frequency.

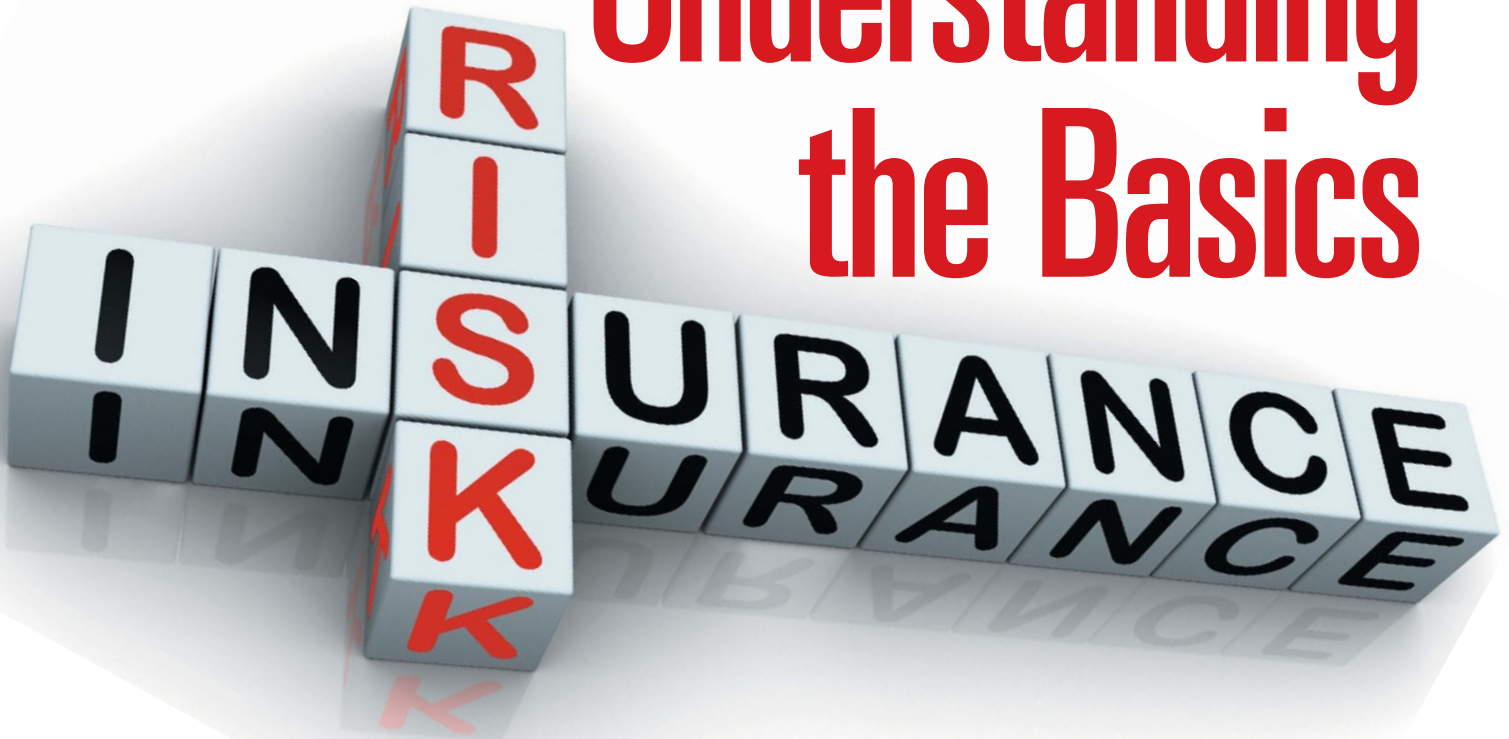
As attacks are getting more sophisticated every day, we recommend hiring experts who stay current and can implement and monitor multiple levels of security. Like the audit, the multi-level security should apply to all devices, workstations and servers. This multiple-level security measure will block attacks, notify you, recommend actions, help revise policies, manage user access and help your DSO stay informed.

data backup strategy in case of theft, loss or disaster. Encryption and backups should also be applied to flash drives and other external hard drives. These are often forgotten in the security plan, yet they almost always hold critical data and are lost or stolen with great ease. ■

**Chad Pearson** is the business developer for Plexxis, a software that is connecting the field and the office to exchange time card data, labor breakouts, material breakouts, purchase order requests, material delivery information, drawings with take-off properties, daily reports, extra work orders and job progress data.



# Indemnification Clauses: Understanding the Basics



BY LAURYN E. PARKS, ATTORNEY, MOMKUS MCCLUSKEY, LLC  
CISCA'S ATTORNEY

**M**any commercial contracts contain indemnification clauses. The purpose of these clauses is to re-allocate risk between parties, primarily with regard to claims brought by third parties.

If the seller's product fails to operate as promised, or if it otherwise causes damage to the buyer, the buyer can always seek compensation for its losses under a claim of breach of contract. However, if the buyer subsequently sells the product to a third party who is damaged as a result of the product and seeks compensation from the buyer, the buyer may have recourse against the seller under an indemnification agreement.

Depending on the language of the indemnification clause, the seller may agree to


compensate the buyer for any losses resulting from the product that arise from the seller's negligence, the seller's partial negligence or even the buyer's negligence. The parties could also agree that the seller will pay the buyer's attorney fees if it is sued by a third party and has to defend itself with regard to a claim concerning the product.

The terms "indemnify," "hold harmless" and "defend" are often used interchangeably, but actually have distinct and separate meanings. "Indemnify" means a contractual obligation by one party (the indemnitor) to pay or compensate for any losses, damages or liability incurred by the other party (the indemnitee). "Hold harmless" means to release from liability, but, in some states, this only means that the indemnitee

is released from liability to the indemnitor, and not to third parties.

In some states, the duty to indemnify is not triggered until there has already been a judgment entered against the indemnitee for damages, presumably after the indemnitee already spent considerable amounts of money in attorneys' fees and the cost of defense. In states such as California and New York, the duty to indemnify includes the duty to pay for the indemnitee's reasonable costs of expense. In other states, such as Illinois, this must be expressly stated, and the parties must agree that the indemnitor has a "duty to defend."

While there are different types, broadly speaking, of indemnification obligations, there are also different "degrees" to which



**Indemnification clauses are complicated and full of legalese, but it is important that their terms are carefully drafted and reviewed.**



## AVOIDANCE

an indemnitor assumes the risks of the indemnitee, based upon the language of the indemnification agreement. A limited indemnity clause only obligates the indemnitor to compensate for those losses, damages or liability arising from the indemnitor's negligence of fault. That is to say, the indemnitor must cover the damages that it caused.

In many cases, this kind of term does not shift or reallocate the risk between the parties, because the indemnitee would presumably be able to sue the indemnitor for breach of contract if it was solely at fault for the loss, regardless of whether or not the parties negotiated a separate indemnification agreement. The intermediate form of indemnification requires the indemnitor to cover those losses it caused, even if another party contributed to cause these liabilities. The broadest form of an indemnification agreement obligates the indemnitor to make good all losses, damages, or liabilities, regardless of who is at fault and regardless of whether it contributed to cause the losses. The intermediate and broad forms of the indemnification agreement serve to shift the burden of the indemnitee's negligent behavior to the indemnitor.

The idea of one party becoming liable for the other party's negligence typically raises red flags. For that reason, courts strictly construe the intermediate and broad types of indemnification agreements and, if the parties want to make sure the indemnification clause is enforceable, it must be carefully drafted. Some courts require that, in order to be enforceable, these terms include "magic language" such as "even to the extent such claim is caused by the concurrent or sole negligence of fault" of the indemnitee. Additionally, some courts require that these clauses appear conspicuous by, for example, printing the terms in large font type, in bold, in all capitals, and including the term on the first page of the agreement.

Indemnification clauses are complicated and full of legalese, but it is important that their terms are carefully drafted and reviewed. Failing to fully read and understand these terms could leave the seller in position where it has unwittingly agreed to assume the risk of the buyer's own negligence. Alternatively, if the indemnification clause is not carefully constructed, the term could be deemed void, and the buyer could lose the protections that it thought it had purchased. ■

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companies. Participating manufacturers will be posted on the CISCA website and included in upcoming announcements.

Finally, I would like to discuss membership. Members know the value CISCA brings to them and their company. If you ask them all you will get a lot of different reasons as to why they are members. I would like to share some of those reasons given recently:

- "Enjoying the comradery/networking"
- "Gaining industry knowledge; feeling like CISCA takes me to a new level and knowledge is power!"
- "Giving a chance to get to know people you may work with in the future"
- "Liking being a part of an organization that is part of my business"
- "Feeling like I'm in on the ground floor for new products and ideas"
- "Creating and fostering relationships that allow me to have a network of people to call when I have a challenge"
- "Having a lot of mentors. Being a young career driven person in this industry, there is a lot to learn."
- "I tell people – give it a shot, attend an event – you won't be sorry!"

We have created a CISCA Membership value video, and it will be on our website shortly. As you meet people, especially contractors, please take a minute to promote CISCA. Also, promote attendance at events such as the Convention and Leadership. The more contractors we get to an event, the more distributors, reps and manufacturers we get. If every member planning to attend the upcoming convention March 26-30 in Las Vegas invited and brought one person, we will double the attendance; doubling the number of people to network with and doubling the fun! Invite someone to attend today!

I look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas. ■



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