

Keeping Your Feet on the Ground

It seems that once you have been president of the Society, there is a great deal of hoopla and then nothing at all—or at least not much of anything at all. I admit that me and my family enjoyed the 2006 ASPE Convention more than previous Conventions. If you missed it, you missed a really great event. I know that I will miss the interaction and am looking forward to the Technical Symposium next October in Atlanta.

A wise man once told me, “Don’t panic when you are behind, don’t gloat when you are ahead, and do the best you can all the time.” I have tried to incorporate this concept into the way that I live and interact with people over the several (okay, many) years that I have been involved in this industry. It is easy to cast the blame on someone else when things go bad, and even easier to soak in the glory when things go good. But that will go to your head, and you will not be able to do the best you can if you have a big head.

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I know that each of us has had a project that did not go quite as well as we wanted, and there were issues and problems that seemed as if they would never go away. I know how easy it is to ignore a problem until it becomes something that is too big to deal with by yourself, and then the worst thing possible happens: The boss steps in because he received a phone call, and you find yourself in an office and not feeling very comfortable. This is not a time to panic, but you should have planned ahead and solved the problem when it was much smaller.

Sometimes solving a problem proactively actually is more productive in keeping a client than you can believe. Clients know that we are not perfect and are often more concerned about dealing with issues in a timely manner, regardless of how many items may need to be addressed. Being proactive does several things for you. You do not have time to panic because you are trying to be responsive and do the right thing. This action alone will give you a good feeling, and that keeps the panic away.

Of course, I am now sitting here finding it quite ironic that I am writing about being proactive, since I am seriously late with this column. I had made excuses about being out of power for a week (it was a wonderful ice storm) and being out of town, and then it happened. My panic about getting this column completed did one thing: It caused the cursed writer’s block to step aside and allow me to put words on paper (or screen, as the case may be). So, I guess I need to make sure I am taking my own advice and not panic.

There are also those times when we need to keep a clear mind and not revel in the glory. I can tell you that if you are president of the Society during a Convention, you can let it go to your head if you are not careful. All of us have those times when things are going very well, and we begin to start thinking more highly of ourselves than we should. It was an interesting feeling getting back to work and not having the barrage of e-mails and phone calls that were coming in just a few weeks before. It is a humbling experience to say the least. It is good to remember the great experiences and to feel good about making a difference—just don’t let those experiences go to your head. There are times, though, when we may gloat about other things, and we need to keep our feet on the ground. Besides, there are always those persons who know how to humble us when we starting thinking more of ourselves than we should.

I can tell you that while I was on the board of directors the past nine years, I always tried hard and did the best I could to make the right decisions. I know that there may be a few things that in hindsight probably should have been done differently, but that is the clarity of hindsight. I want to take the last few words to thank those of you who helped me throughout my time in service to ASPE. We have made a difference, and the Society will continue to make a difference in our industry, something of which I am very, very proud. And that is not gloating! **PSD**



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