



DEPARTMENT OF
PERSONNEL &
ADMINISTRATION



COLORADO STATE
MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

FALL 2004

REMIND ME, WHY SHOULD I JOIN CSMA?

BY MICHELLE PEDERSEN, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AGENCIES, AND CSMA BOARD MEMBER

As I begin writing this article, I'm finding myself at a bit of an impasse. Not because I can't formulate any number of good, solid reasons to join—but because it seems odd to encourage or solicit membership via an article in the association's newsletter. Shouldn't it be reasonable to assume that a *privilege* or *benefit* of membership is receipt of the *Leader's Digest*?

As many of you already know, CSMA is a "companion association" to the Colorado Information Managers' Association (CIMA) and the Colorado Financial Managers' Association (CFMA). The memberships of both other associations currently outnumber CSMA, and the CSMA Board is interested in significantly increasing its association membership in order to expand the many benefits it currently offers to its members, and to become an even more credible contributor to the effective management of Colorado State Government.

In lieu of initiating a comprehensive membership drive, the CSMA Board quickly offers the following "**Top 10 Reasons You Should Join CSMA**" (as you'll see, in random order):

Price is Right: Annual membership is a **bargain** at \$25.00. (Even purchasing Managing for Dummies is going to set you back \$21.99.) Sign up today, and receive your first Brown Bag Workshop at no cost (subsequent workshops at a discounted rate of only \$15 each, or \$40 for the entire series). Please refer to the Workshops article on page 6 of this issue for additional information regarding membership/workshop packages.

Leaders' Digest: Membership will include the "free" subscription to the *Leader's Digest*. Each quarterly newsletter features a variety of useful articles, and timely information about any number of issues of interest and criticality to state employees.



Excessive amounts of time or energy are not needed. Don't be mistaken—you can spend as much time, or as little time, as you'd like in participative activities; however, you can feel free to leave “the work” to others.

Additional opportunities, workshops, speakers, conferences, informational materials and resources, etc., will be available, given an increase in membership.

Seriously discounted registration fees for several worthwhile CSMA-sponsored events including (but not limited to) Brown Bag workshops, conferences, and the annual Legislative Luncheon. As many of you know, this luncheon is typically held at the Brown Palace, and is, without exception, **the** place to be following the Governor's State of the State address. Attendees are provided with a truly unique opportunity to listen to, learn first-hand from, and visit directly with legislators about key legislative issues and subjects of interest to state employees and state government.

Ease of sign-up (www.csma.info/pdf%20files/memapp.pdf), credit cards are accepted; and for the reasons highlighted on the CSMA web-site (www.csma.info/index.html), including access to the exclusive “members only” pages (www.csma.info/members_only/).

Joining CSMA is an opportunity that is available to state employees across all jobs, disciplines, professions, areas of interest, etc. You need not be in any specific occupational field to join—and also need not specifically or currently be a “manager.”

Obligatory language: Networking; looks great on a resume; discounted workshops; value added, educational forums; information exchange opportunities; dynamic and well-received conferences, etc.

“I AM a member, I've just forgotten to renew my dues—but thanks for the reminder,” is your response to this article.

No hidden fees, costs or obligations; members get more than they pay for; membership **does** have its privileges (and includes a commemorative pin and membership card that any state employee should be proud to possess).

Certain that this information has compelled you to promptly renew your membership, or join anew, please feel free to also take a moment to share this article (and any resulting enthusiasm) with colleagues, counterparts, office/cubicle neighbors, and (even retired) friends.

Thank you in advance for your interest and attention—and as always, please feel free to contact any board member with questions. (A list of board members and contact information appears on the last page of this issue.)

ACHIEVING A STATE OF 'FLOW' AT WORK

BY LAURA STACK, MBA, CSP

Do you ever feel like your mind is a million miles away? You can watch someone in a meeting who is "somewhere else," and they have a far-away, glassy look to the eye. You know they are not hearing a word of what is being said. They may be with you physically, but their minds are somewhere else, thinking about some meeting, worrying about that errand, or trying to figure out what someone meant by a passing comment.

Contrast that with a time you were so immersed in an activity that time just stood still. Your stomach suddenly growls, and you look up at the clock to discover you worked right over your lunch hour and didn't notice! You were totally immersed in what you were experiencing or doing. What are the benefits of this extreme focus?

- Output is increased. You simply get more done when you are 100% attuned to your task. You'll get more letters written and more projects completed.
- You perform optimally and do your best work. If you are giving your total attention to something, the quality will be better. Isaac Newton said, "If I have ever made any valuable discoveries, it has been owing more to patient attention than to any other talent."
- The time invested in projects is decreased. If you don't feel like doing something in the first place (like paying bills), wouldn't you rather have it over in an hour instead of stretching it out over three?
- Less rework. Your focus reduces the time it would have taken you to correct the mistakes and omissions that are a byproduct of inattention.
- Peace of mind is enhanced. There is an old legend about a man who travels the world searching for the meaning of life. One day he climbs a high mountain to a monastery to get the advice of a monk who is reputed to be the wisest man on earth. When asked for the secret to happiness, the monk replies simply, "DO whatever you're doing."

What are some of the characteristics of the non-flow state?

- Continually stopping one task and starting another
- Not establishing a goal or "end" state
- Constant disruptions and interruptions, which make it difficult to concentrate
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Low energy period

What are some characteristics of the flow state?

- A vested interest in the outcome
- A strong belief that you can and will accomplish your goal
- Total focus, with no interruptions
- High energy period
- Passion/fun/enjoyment
- Proper environmental conditions (temperature, smells, noise)
- Minimal effort required (low learning curve)

How do you achieve this wonderful state of flow and become fully present-focused?

Master your job. Research shows that your ability to experience flow is related to your mastery of the mechanics of your job. The more unfamiliar you are with your work, the harder it is to achieve. Just as learning to drive was at first a conscious behavior, when mastered, it became subconscious. If you're on a learning curve in a new activity, it will be harder to achieve intense focus. The more you learn the job, the better your ability to concentrate and "let go."

Prepare for and expect to achieve focus. Set your mind properly. Consciously, willfully decide that you are going to concentrate. Have a positive attitude going into the task. Prepare your materials in advance of getting started and have what you need at your fingertips.

Clear your desk. Do your piles talk to you? "Do me!" "Don't forget me!" Clutter can be psychologically distracting. You will focus better on what's in front of you if you don't have ten other things surrounding you. Clear the piles, so everything is out of your line of sight except the single thing you're working on.

Set aside some time. Estimate how long the task will take and schedule an appointment with yourself on your calendar. Total absorption is very relaxing. It's splitting your attention—between what you're currently doing and what you have to do next—that's exhausting. When you become focused on the task of the moment, time seems to fly, and you get the job done easier and faster.

Ensure no interruptions. The ability to work uninterrupted is very important to devote your complete attention to an activity. Having privacy will help you achieve a state of flow. Tom DeMarco and Timothy Lister, co-authors of Peopeware: Productive Projects and Teams, claim reaching a state of flow requires at least 15 minutes of ramp-up concentration. People are especially sensitive to interruptions during this time. When people are disrupted, they can't go right back in. They require an additional 15 minutes of time to get started again. This leads to increased frustration and reduced productivity. Close your door if you have one, or leave your office and retreat to an empty office where no one can find you.

Take each step deliberately and with full attention. Strive to be "in the moment." When you read a book to your child, really *read* a book to your child. Don't be focused on all the to-dos that you must do when you're finished. Be present and available and in the now for those people and tasks you care about.

Make it a productive day!

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WORKPLACE WISDOM

How to hire creative people:

Thomas Edison had a unique way of hiring engineers. He'd give the applicant a light bulb and ask, "How much water will it hold?"

There were two ways to find the answer. The first choice was to use gauges to measure all the angles of the bulb. Then with the measurements in hand, the engineer would calculate the surface area. This approach could take as long as twenty minutes.

The second choice was to fill the bulb with water and then pour the contents into a measuring cup. Total elapsed time: about a minute.

Engineers who took the first route, and performed their measures by book, were thanked politely for their time and sent on their way. If you took the second route, you heard Edison say, "You're hired."

Looking to hire creative people? Develop an "Edison test" of your own.

(David Armstrong, *Managing by Storying Around*, Doubleday, NY, NY; as cited in *The Competitive Advantage*, 1102 King Street, Suite 101, Alexandria VA 22314)

One way of getting the truth...

There's the story of a man at a pay phone in a restaurant making a call. "Hello, Mr. Smith? I understand you have been looking for an assistant." He paused to listen to the response.

"Oh, you hired one two months ago and are pleased with your choice? Well, thank you anyway. I hope you continue to be satisfied with your decision."

When he hung up the phone, the restaurant manager commented, "I happened to overhear your conversation. I'm sorry you didn't get a shot at that job."

"Oh, that's all right," the man replied. "That was my boss. I was hired as his assistant two months ago and I was just phoning to find out how I'm doing."

(from a speech by Southwestern Bell Vice President for External Affairs Cassandra Carr, as cited in *For Achievers Only*)

***Try not to become a success,
but rather try to become a man of value.
-Albert Einstein***

CSMA BROWN BAG WORKSHOPS JOIN US FOR A GREAT BARGAIN!

After taking a break for the summer, CSMA's Brown Bag Workshop resumed on September 16th. Feedback from last year's series of workshops was used to plan this year's series. The October 21st workshop received rave reviews. The series will break for the holiday months and resume in February.

On February 17th, **Stacy Worthington** from the Attorney General's Office will share her expertise regarding Corrective and Disciplinary Actions. While every supervisor and employee hopes to avoid these actions, they are something with which we should be more familiar so that we can effectively deal with them if they are needed or happen. This workshop begins at noon, and will be held at the Galleria Building, 720 South Colorado Boulevard, in the basement conference room.

Are you confused or in the dark about FMLA? Joanna Miller of the Department of Labor and Employment is an expert on the Family and Medical Leave Act, and on March 17th, you can gain valuable information from her on this rather complicated federal regulation. The Denver Public Library will be the site for this workshop, which also begins at noon.

Registration information for both workshops will be sent to members and those who have attended previous workshops after the first of the year. For now, please save these dates on your calendar and join us! Stay tuned to the CSMA website (www.csma.info, "Events" tab) for details on these and all CSMA events, as they become available.

Current (FY 05) CSMA members will receive their first workshop at no cost. Subsequent workshops for members will be priced at \$15 each, or \$40 for the entire series. Non-members will pay \$25 for their first workshop. That fee can be applied to a CSMA membership, so that the member rate applies for subsequent workshops. If you want to renew your membership or join CSMA, an on-line FY 05 application, as well as a printable version, are available on the website ("Membership" tab), and credit cards are accepted. Annual membership remains a bargain at \$25.

CSMA is committed to continuing this popular series for FY 06. It's never too early to plan! If you would like to offer some input on the FY 06 workshops, sign up to be a host site, or suggest a presenter, please contact one of the Workshop Committee members: **Tim Hand**, **Marie Valenzuela**, **Barbara McBride** or **Ken Doby** (see the back cover for contact information).

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Colorado State Managers' Association Upcoming Events



January 13, 2005

CSMA Legislative Luncheon

Immediately after the Governor's State of the State Address
Brown Palace Hotel,

Speakers and registration details TBA in early December.

February 17, 2005

CFMA Brown Bag Workshop

Stacy Worthington, Department of Law

"Corrective & Disciplinary Actions", 12:00-1:30 p.m.

720 So. Colorado Blvd., Galleria Bldg., Basement Conf. Rm.

March 17, 2005

CFMA Brown Bag Workshop

Joanna Miller, CDLE, "Family Medical Leave Act"

Denver Public Library

MONTHLY GOVERNING BOARD MEETINGS

All meetings run from Noon until 1:15 p.m.

December 1, 2004

New Location: Simms Landing Restaurant, Lakewood

Check with board member or CSMA Office for information

January 5, 2005

Human Services (Fort Logan Campus)

3350 W. Oxford Avenue, Denver

February 2, 2005

Public Safety,

700 Kipling #1000, Lakewood

CSMA members are welcome to attend the Board's monthly meetings!

Please check the CSMA website or contact a board member (listed on the back page of this publication) for details. If your department does not have a board representative (see list on back cover) and you are interested (or know someone who would be interested) in serving, please contact one of the officers or board members.

If you are a CSMA member, we are always on the lookout for time, talent and enthusiasm. Get involved and make a difference!



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