

PEO INSIDER[®]

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COVER STORY/THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

EXPERIENCES, ISSUES, & JOURNEYS

The Women of the NAPEO Board of Directors: Haley Crum, FrankCrum; Celeste Johnson, The Applied Companies; Pamela Evette, Lt. Governor of South Carolina; Christina Nelson, Pacific HR, Inc.; Jennifer Robinson, Risk Transfer Insurance Agency, LLC; Kristen Appleman, ADP TotalSource Inc.; and Lee Yarborough, Propel HR

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► **The Women of the NAPEO Board of Directors:** Haley Crum, FrankCrum; Celeste Johnson, The Applied Companies; Pamela Evette, Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina; Christina Nelson, Pacific HR, Inc.; Jennifer Robinson, Risk Transfer Insurance Agency, LLC; Kristen Appleman, ADP TotalSource Inc.; and Lee Yarborough, Propel HR

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People often assume I was placed in a leadership role. The truth is, my first job at FrankCrum was as a customer care representative while I was in college.

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I have always believed, first from my parents and second from my first PEO boss, that I could be successful if I worked hard.



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Beyond Definition

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WOMEN IN NAPEO

BY LEE C. YARBOROUGH

Five years ago, Wanda Silva invited me to a gathering of women at NAPEO's annual conference. Over drinks and appetizers, I had the opportunity to get to know other women, like me, who run PEOs and work in our industry. Not only did we discuss business, but we also learned about each other's children, spouses, and pets. The people Wanda invited that day were all in the PEO industry, and we also had the shared experience of being female in this industry. The shared experiences created a space to form new relationships and create dialogue. There was an instant connection because of our common interests, and over the years these friendships have grown.

As chair of NAPEO, my goal is to deepen our networks within the association and provide a space for everyone to feel welcome and heard. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines an affinity group as, "a group of people having a common interest or goal or acting together for a specific purpose." I knew

that starting a women's affinity group was the perfect place for me to begin.

I contacted Wanda, as well as some other women who I knew would be interested, and a steering committee was formed. We met over Zoom and brainstormed ideas, events, goals, and names. After narrowing it down, we decided to name this initiative, WIN: Women In NAPEO.

Our focus in 2021 will be on educational events and networking opportunities. The goals of WIN are to:

- **Empower** women within NAPEO's membership both professionally and personally;
- **Engage** as a community to share experiences, insights, best practices, and career advice; and
- **Encourage** women in our industry to be future leaders of NAPEO.

In December, Women in NAPEO was launched with its first event featuring keynote speaker Monica McCoy. It was a wonderful event with more than 135 women and allies on Zoom. Monica encouraged us to claim our own power, define our unique value proposition,



As chair of NAPEO, my goal is to deepen our networks within the association and provide a space for everyone to feel welcome and heard.

and find accountability partners. Participants were broken into small groups and made connections. I was very excited about the huge response and the success of the event.

Future events are being planned and I know this initiative will grow and evolve over the years. I am honored to be a part of its founding. I have been blessed with strong female influences in my life, and I feel strongly that we all need to make a difference where we can. With the start of WIN, I hope to **Empower** women in NAPEO, **Engage** as a community, and **Encourage** other women towards leadership.

I extend a huge thank you to the wonderful WIN Steering Committee:

- Kristen Appleman
- Teresa Carroll
- Tara Conger
- Haley Crum
- Monica Denler
- Celeste Johnson
- Wendy Katz
- Christina Nelson
- Wanda Silva ■



LEE C. YARBOROUGH

2020-2021 NAPEO Chair
President
Propel HR
Greenville, South Carolina



KUDOS

3 NAPEO MEMBER PEOS RECEIVE BEST OF HR SERVICE AWARDS

NAPEO member PEOs Integrity Outsource, Questco, and Xenium were winners of the third annual Best of HR Services award from ClearlyRated, a NAPEO associate member.

The award, presented in partnership with Indeed, recognizes client satisfaction in the outsourced HR services industry. Each firm must earn the award based exclusively on ratings provided by their clients and winners are selected based on their high levels of satisfaction compared to industry benchmarks.

2021 Best of HR Services award winners have net promoter® scores five times higher than the industry average.

LOL

HUMOR HELPS BUSINESS!

Who knew that laughter can be a ticket to your company's success? According to an article on the Business Know-How website, a sense of humor can help your business succeed in these ways:

- Many psychologists believe being able to laugh at yourself leads to resiliency, so people who do so make fewer mistakes and recover from mistakes faster;
- People who can laugh at themselves are not as harsh on others;
- Customers notice, want to engage with the company more, and spend more;
- It boosts employee morale and employees want to work harder; and
- Humor inspires others to be more productive and creative.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES

ENSURING SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT FIRST CONCERN

21 percent of business leaders in small and mid-sized U.S. companies recently surveyed say they are much more stressed this year and 54 percent say they are much more aware of their employees' stress levels than prior to COVID. The annual "Priorities for Business Leaders" survey of 300 business leaders by Oasis, a Paychex® Company, revealed that 36 percent of respondents say ensuring a safe work environment is their number-one priority. Other concerns include:

- Offering competitive compensation and benefits (including employee assistance programs): 31 percent;
- Developing employees and future leaders for succession: 29 percent;
- Attracting strong, competent management and dedicated, capable staff: 28 percent; and
- Maintaining ongoing regulatory compliance: 28 percent.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE TRENDS

TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN BUSINESS SUCCESS DURING COVID

Business that behave like tech companies will find success in 2021, according to a recent report from NEORIS, "The Challenge After the New Normal." This year is all about how companies can transform and leverage the opportunities and challenges in a constant transformation environment, to disrupt or be disrupted. Considerations for 2021 highlighted in the report include:

- The behavior shifts made as more efficient and time-saving routines were adopted will become permanent, meaning there is no going back to "normal."
- Businesses must always think one step ahead, adapting constantly rather than trying to catch up. This means pushing boundaries and embracing innovation as a core strategy.
- Digital tools are allowing companies to become closer to their customers as a result of social distancing. Ecommerce forced businesses to find new ways to build relationships and reach customers, often tailored to each customer.
- The rapid migration to digitalization during COVID created a huge amount of data, so huge that businesses need tools to process it. Data science and artificial intelligence are now necessities.
- Innovation isn't one-size-fits-all. Small changes behind the scenes can be transformative and every organization is different. ■

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EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN THE





EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN THE PEO INDUSTRY

RESILIENCE, UPS & DOWNS, & BEING SELF-TAUGHT IN THE PEO INDUSTRY

A COMPUTER GEEK WANTING TO MAKE A CHANGE & A DIFFERENCE

BY CHRISTINA K. NELSON, SHRM-SCP



Before starting Pacific HR, I was a systems analyst for a large defense contractor. In college, I studied computer science and added a minor in business administration. I was convinced that a successful career as a systems analyst was my calling. It didn't take long to learn that programming was not my passion. Before long, I knew I

needed to make a change—little did I know how big that change was going to be.

I had an acquaintance who operated a PEO on the east coast. I took advantage of this opportunity to learn about another career path by flying from California to the east coast and spending time with him and his staff. I was intrigued and excited, but

unsure if my background would provide the skills needed to operate a successful business, let alone one as complex as PEO.

Being a computer geek is not exactly the perfect background for starting a business in the benefits, human resources, payroll, and workers' compensation arena. I knew I needed to build new skills before starting on this new path.

My next step was to begin an education like no other I had experienced—the details of running a PEO. I began by

GETTING STARTED

Pacific HR, Inc, formerly Pacific Staff Management, Inc., was started in my home office in December of 1989. I was fortunate to have connections with several business owners in my community and was able to gain them as clients.

I was a computer nerd, not a salesperson, so I was thrilled when they trusted me to help them and even more thrilled when they started referring other business contacts who also became clients.

these pains was working alone and from home. This was beginning to prove to be overwhelming.

With an infant and a very active three-year-old at home, there was not enough time in the day to get to everything. The business of employment was getting more complex, and gaining more sophisticated clients required more care and service than I could give personally. I needed space and help. It was time to hire some staff, move to an office, and accept the fact that there was no way to do this all on my own. I hired staff, which added more challenges. As we grew, it became apparent that success in the PEO space required support from many sides.

Knowing someone in the PEO space was advantageous in the beginning, but our business philosophies often differed. The need to expand my professional network with other people in the PEO world was essential for success.

Pacific soon joined the National Staff Leasing Association (NSLA, the former name of NAPEO). Unfortunately, this didn't last long. When I attended conferences, I felt like a fish out of water; too young and too intimidated to approach successful PEO leaders to ask for advice.

EDUCATION AS A CORE VALUE

Growing up, I was always told that education is one of the most important gifts you can give yourself. Truer words have never been conveyed, especially in the PEO world. The PEO world is ever-changing, with new legislation, policies, employment issues, and client demands.

Pacific HR was growing—rapidly—and so was my education and the education

I have faced many challenges during my life in the PEO business & no doubt, there will be many more. I have learned that resilience is viewing difficulties as challenges, not paralyzing events. It is how we respond to these obstacles that helps us survive, grow, & succeed.

reading T. Joe Willy's book, "The Business of Employee Leasing," and attending his educational seminar. Between the experience at my acquaintances' PEO and independent research, I felt confident enough to start a PEO and operate it successfully.

I knew there would be challenges along the way, but I was determined to turn every mistake into another form of skill-building and keep working until I got it right.

I was excited that my clients valued my services and it was fulfilling to contribute to the community by helping entrepreneurs focus on their passions rather than all the administrative "stuff" that goes along with running a business, plus the complexities of being an employer.

GROWING PAINS

As a result of the enthusiastic response to Pacific, we began to grow and we experienced growing pains. Among

of my team. Through perseverance and a business that was thriving, we all gained confidence and skills as a team.

The lessons learned and the challenges overcome continued with each year—so did our growth. Pacific joined NAPEO in 2000 and I started meeting other PEO owners and forging many valued relationships. I faced challenges head on. When we were experiencing a high number of losses with our blue-collar clients, we hired a risk management consultant to review our processes and procedures and learned how to control losses and help our clients minimize claims.

However, the loss of my director of HR was substantial. Although, I knew enough about HR to deal with many of our clients' HR issues. California's complex employment laws made it imperative to take the discipline of HR knowledge to another level. I decided to study for the Society for Human Resource Management Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) certification.

Earning the SHRM-SCP gave me a huge body of knowledge and the tools to assist my HR team and clients. My mission has always been constant improvement in leadership skills as an entrepreneur and CEO.

It is personally important to me that our clients know that Pacific HR places great value on education so we can better serve them.

Pacific also joined the American Payroll Association (APA), and we require all payroll professionals to obtain Certified Payroll Professional (CPP) status. I tackled my insecurities about sales and attended sales training and retained a key advisor.

HELPING OUR CLIENTS THROUGH COVID

Then COVID hit. We used education to arm ourselves and, with the enormous

help of NAPEO, put processes in place to help our clients weather the uncertainties of the COVID storm.

We helped our clients to get Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans, talked them through and assisted them with furloughs and layoffs, and, at times, just sat and cried with them in our conference room. The last 12 months have been both exhausting and rewarding.

We are ready and we will be there for our clients again, as many will apply for round two PPP loans and loan forgiveness.

I have faced many challenges during my life in the PEO business, and no doubt there will be many more. I have

learned that resilience is viewing difficulties as challenges, not paralyzing events. It is how we respond to these obstacles that helps us survive, grow, and succeed.

Recently I was asked what advice I would give to young female entrepreneurs. My answer is: Focus, commit to your team, commit to your clients, dedicate yourself to continuous education, and never quit—and you will succeed through the toughest of times. ■

CHRISTINA K. NELSON, SHRM-SCP

President
Pacific HR, Inc.
Solvang, California



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COURAGE

COURAGE IS KEY

NAVIGATING THE PEO INDUSTRY AS A FEMALE

BY CELESTE JOHNSON, MBA, PHR

I never really thought of myself as a courageous person. I grew up, played sports, drove a tractor from time to time, and loved social events, but I did not race dirt bikes or jump out of airplanes. Courage comes in a lot of forms, apparently. I recently took a behavioral profile called Simmons and discovered my courage profile is actually very high. In conversations about my behavioral results, I realized it took a tremendous amount of courage to buy a company. With March being Women's History Month, it is a relevant time for businesswomen to share our stories of obstacles, opportunities, and owning our own success.

PERSEVERANCE & GRIT

Two and a half years ago, I purchased the PEO and staffing company that I had been working in since 2004. The purchase process was more than a year long and it took patience, perseverance, and grit. The experience was both rewarding and frustrating. By that time, I had been in the PEO industry for 14 years and was often the sole female in literally hundreds of meetings.

Business development included face-to-face meetings with mostly male owners, along with my boss, a male business owner. While this was not wholly a bad thing, it was a notable dynamic. The same held true as I navigated the purchase process. While the goal was for the retiring owner to sell to me, he still engaged in private equity conversations to make the most prudent decision for all involved. I too participated in the exploratory meetings and, of the four different private equity firms interested, not one had a single female partner. In fact, there was no diversity at all, except for age. Fortunately, the prior owner was always a mentor to me, but the industry and my path to business ownership did not offer any specific female mentorship or leadership.

Knowing what you don't know is more important than brilliance.

—Charlie Munger

Several years ago, I realized I was lacking the expertise in the financial aspect of operating a business. Fortunately, I had a wonderful boss who held me accountable to certain financial metrics, but I lacked the foundational training. Because I recognized what I did not know, I could resolve it by getting my MBA (which was no easy task with three teenagers at home). Without the full big picture of a company purchase completely in sight, I knew I was navigating toward something bigger. That realization and ultimate accomplishment proved to be key when negotiating with sellers, bankers, and other businesspeople. Understanding not only your strengths, but also the gaps in your knowledge, is not a weakness, but better defined as courage.

Fear can prevent movement forward. Without female leadership to model, I had to extract what I could from proven

leadership attributes and fill in the blanks on my own with the rest. One tactic that reduces fear for me is preparation. It is usually obvious when someone is not prepared and instead uses his or her position and platform to pontificate without any substance. Each opportunity that comes my way offers me an opportu-

clarifying questions. The result is inverse charisma, which invokes inclusion. Because I am inherently curious and authentically enjoy asking questions, this skill has played to my strengths while also proving very valuable in navigating professional conversations. It is a non-threatening way to leadership and

If I am facing something contentious, I will do a mental pre-game & scenario plan. This particular action has proved valuable to me.

nity to commit my time and energy, and fully invest. If I am facing something contentious, I will do a mental pre-game and scenario plan. This particular action has proved valuable to me.

CHANGE WHAT IS UNDER YOUR PERSONAL CONTROL

Whether we want to accept the reality of certain social norms or not, unconscious bias does come into play. The realities of life for women and other minorities include the inability to change other people. The converse action is to change what is under personal control, continue to development new skills, and remain teachable. Over the years, I was a member of an executive development group called Vistage. The foundational tenant is training yourself to communicate in business conversations through asking

trust with colleagues and it builds alliances beyond cultural norms or biases.

How does this all come together for Women's History Month? It is a small window into a couple of intentional actions that have worked for me. It is a realization that knowing what I don't know is in fact courageous and a big step in any career path. I encourage all women, in any industry, to do the work, maximize your resources, and truly learn—and continue to learn—self-actualization tools to reach your levels of desired success. Relying on others is not a well-founded course of action and it is much more rewarding to know the path has been forged by your own brilliance. ■

CELESTE JOHNSON, MBA, PHR

CEO
The Applied Companies
Reno, Nevada

A portrait of Ashley H. Kaplan, Esq., a woman with long, wavy, reddish-brown hair, wearing a dark pinstriped blazer over a white top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera.

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ISSUE IMP

BREAKING STEREOTYPES

RECOGNIZE YOUR VALUE, STRENGTHS, & SKILLS

BY LEE C. YARBOROUGH

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. Girls aren’t supposed to be good at math and science—you are good at English and history.”

These are the words my sixth-grade teacher said to me after I performed poorly on a math test. Instead of encouraging me and teaching me the formulas, she just wrote off the subject as not something girls need to worry about. As an 11-year-old, I believed her. Her words impacted me. I avoided higher level math and science courses in high school and college. I was a history major at Vanderbilt and steered clear of business classes because I was worried about the math element.

My teacher was just trying to make me feel better, but her message made me question myself based on outdated and limiting stereotypes. Of course, these stereotypical messages were verbalized to children more in the 1970s and 1980s,



AS IMPORTANT TO WOMEN

and as a young girl, I received many such messages. Whether it was from teachers, the media, or toy manufacturers, the message was clear: Girls need to focus on family instead of career, marrying rich instead of creating their own fortunes, and beauty instead of strength.

Yet, I was lucky. In my home, I had a father who pushed me to excel, a mother who set an example as a strong and independent woman, and an older brother who I was fiercely competitive against. The messages I received at home led me to believe I could do anything, regardless of my gender. These messages ultimately outweighed the messages I received elsewhere, and I

credit that positive environment to my success as a business leader.

STEREOTYPES IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

I was 25 years old when I entered the PEO world and began working in my father's company. Being young, female, and the boss's daughter was difficult. There were preconceived ideas about me and I had to work twice as hard to defy those stereotypes. After a little more than a year of working for him, my father sold that company and together we started Propel HR. We began with one client, too little capital, and the entrepreneurial spirit to make it work. I was named president and my father's expectation was that I would rise to that title. I felt tremendous

pressure to be successful and prove that I was more than what people perceived.

I will never forget being in a meeting early on where I was the only female and the only person under 55. This was common in most meetings and, truthfully, it was often uncomfortable and intimidating. At this particular meeting, the businessmen were talking to my father and trying to sell him an insurance product we were considering. It was as if I was not even in the room. No one paid attention to me and even if I asked questions, the men present would reply to my father. Finally, my father spoke up. He looked at the men, sat further back in his chair, and said, "I don't know why you keep looking at me, because my daughter

We have all been victims of stereotyping and we have all been guilty of stereotyping others. Some generalizations seem harmless, such as ‘blondes have more fun’ or ‘real men don’t eat quiche,’ while others are more blatantly discriminatory.

is the one who will be making the decision.” At that moment, all heads turned toward me, and I remember feeling terrified. I sat up straighter, gathered my wits about me, and realized the gift that my father was giving me. His message to everyone that day was that it did not matter that I was young, female, or his daughter—I deserved to be there and I deserved to be heard.

Stereotypes are over-simplified and over-generalized beliefs about particular categories of people. We have all been victims of stereotyping and we have all been guilty of stereotyping others. Some generalizations seem harmless, such as “blondes have more fun” or “real men don’t eat quiche,” while others are more blatantly discriminatory. It is important to remember

A promotional banner for the PrismHR LIVE 2021 event. The background is a night-time aerial view of the Las Vegas Strip, showing brightly lit hotels and casinos. In the foreground, there is a large blue circle containing a white logo of a stylized 'P' and the text 'LIVE 2021 Las Vegas'. To the right of the circle, the event title 'PrismHR LIVE 2021' is written in large white letters. Below the title, the dates 'OCTOBER 18-20' and the location 'Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas' are listed. A teal button in the center contains the text 'REGISTER NOW' and the website 'PrismHRLIVE.com'.

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that even stereotypes that appear harmless are bad. Stereotypes are not accurate reflections and can have limiting, even damaging, effects on individuals.

THE STEREOTYPE PARADOX

Today's misconceptions may be more nuanced than when I was a child. Teachers may no longer tell young girls they cannot be good at math, but there are still gender stereotypes that prevail, especially in the workplace. Women leaders are often judged based on their gender, not their abilities. A woman who is decisive is often labeled as bossy. A woman who speaks up is seen as aggressive. A woman who shows compassion is viewed as too soft, while a woman who is more reserved is seen as icy.

Stereotypes are also seen in the assumed duties around an office. Women, regardless of their titles, are expected to serve as hostess in the workplace by cleaning the break room and organizing office parties. At meetings, women most often serve as the secretary and take the notes. The traditional care-taking roles bleed into the office and take time and attention away from women's expected performance.

As a woman in business, I see that progress has been made, but there is still much to do. We need to continue questioning stereotypes and recognize individuals based on their own talents and unique personalities. We need to be allies to each other by providing opportunities and mentorship to the younger

generation. We need to evaluate our own biases and be more intentional with our speech and actions. Most importantly, we need to be ourselves and find our authentic voices of leadership, not be influenced by outside generalizations.

I have learned so much during my 25 years in this industry, but most importantly, I have recognized my value, my strengths, and my unique skillsets. The messages of empowerment in my life far outweighed the limiting expectations of others. I realize I am smarter than my teacher thought, and I am pretty good at math! Mrs. Poster would be impressed! ■

LEE C. YARBOROUGH

President
Propel HR
Greenville, South Carolina



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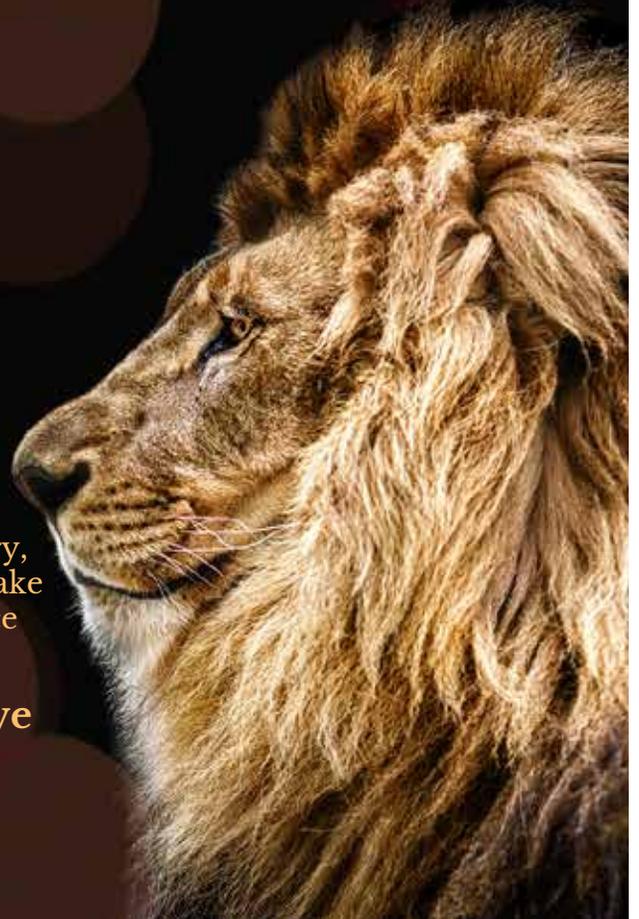
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SUPPORT & MENTORING

SUPPORTING & MENTORING WOMEN

JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

BY KRISTEN J. APPLEMAN,
CEBS, SHRM-SCP, CPP

When I look back on my career journey, there is a common thread that is undeniable at each step: incredible people.

Reminiscing to the time, even before I finished college—and ventured into the dream of being a working professional who could do *big* things in a *big* world—there were people in my life who transformed how I approached the business world.

These wise individuals—my mentors, sponsors, and advocates—have guided me through the highs and lows, served as sounding boards, dared me to reach higher, and fanned the flame inside of me.

They filled my cup, and now it's my responsibility to pay it forward.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Let's begin at home. My mom and dad both worked and worked *hard*. As a child, I saw my mother conquer professional leadership roles while simultaneously navigating the incredibly hard task of balancing work and life. She shattered the proverbial ceiling. To this day, my mom still breaks the status quo and constantly “lifts as she climbs.”

Not only did she ensure I was surrounded by role models—particularly

OR



strong women—who I could learn from, she worked to provide consistent points of inspiration. This not only shaped me personally, it laid the foundation for the importance of paving the path for others through mentoring and participating in business resource groups (BRGs).

To be honest, early in my business career, the word “mentor” sounded fancy and a little complicated. Perhaps at times, I even thought that working with a mentor meant I was doing something wrong. Did I have a flaw that needed to be addressed? Probably. Fortunately, over time, I began to see mentoring and networking as opportunities to grow and share my experience with others. I’ve also discovered the two key traits that have meant the most to me in mentoring relationships: supporting conscious decisions and being honest and genuine, even when it is hard to hear.

SUPPORTING CONSCIOUS DECISIONS

Mentoring women does not have to be a fancy process with formal dos and don’ts. It’s not about helping someone craft a sophisticated five-year plan with all the driving directions like a navigation system. It’s about a genuine desire to help and support a journey to those conscious decisions that become “on ramps” to success.

Let’s begin at home. My mom & dad both worked & worked *hard*. As a child, I saw my mother conquer professional leadership roles while simultaneously navigating the incredibly hard task of balancing work & life.

Fortunately, a female mentor taught me about conscious decisions early in my ADP career. She introduced me to key individuals and fostered ways that I could embrace the culture and team. She encouraged me to identify how to build my network while complementing my passions. This further fed my hunger to bolster women and girls, and ultimately led me to my involvement in a non-profit I adore, Girls Inc.

From the moment I was first introduced to Girls Inc., I was obsessed with how their vision and mission integrated with ADP’s values of giving back to the community and supporting employability for future females in the workplace.

Those conscious choices and actions provided me the opportunity to engage with other women in ADP, alongside Girls Inc., with the common goal of supporting girls to be strong, smart, and bold. At the same time, I have been able to develop and expose other women to this great cause as we participate in events and activities with Girls Inc. Fast forward 10 years, and I’m proud to say I am a Girls Inc. of Greater Atlanta board member and the co-chairman for ADP’s Women in Leadership Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.

BEING HONEST & GENUINE

Hearing the truth—especially when it’s the exact opposite of what you want or expect—can sting like a bee! It can also transform you. Some of the toughest feedback and advice has the power to create the *greatest* change in yourself. I remember when a mentor challenged me in how I was observed in meetings. It felt like a knife to the heart hearing that my intention did not match her perception. She was honest and shared, “Assume all eyes are on you at all times,” and wow, that has stuck with me.

She genuinely wanted me to up my game, and her guidance was rooted in what I could accomplish. She wanted the best for me and that consistently came through in all our discussions. As a result, I pay greater attention to the role I play in meetings, my reactions, and non-verbal cues. As a female in leadership, this sage advice has become even more important as the roles and responsibilities—and impact—are greater. I can still be authentic and true to who I am, while representing and showing up in the best possible way.

RESOURCE GROUPS: BRINGING WOMEN TOGETHER

Business resource groups, also referred to as employee resource groups (ERGs), are a place for employees to come together and develop themselves personally and professionally. These groups provide learning and volunteer opportunities, networking experiences, and connection points with community-based organizations. At ADP, we specifically have one called the International Women's Inclusion Network (iWIN). iWIN's purpose is to engage, equip, and empower women to achieve personal and professional

success and to drive ADP's business results.

iWIN not only helps its members in their own personal development, but also with the goal of promoting the value of diversity and cultural awareness, talent acquisition and retention, and relationships within our communities. BRGs provide an opportunity to apply skills that are different from the normal day-to-day. I have personally benefited from the experiences by leading initiatives and encouraging other women to join our cause.

Incredible people, conscious decisions, being honest and true, and BRGs

are building upon the foundation and driving my career. Moreover, they are offering clear and definite ways I can provide a smoother path for women to grow and succeed.

It's been a beautiful journey and one I relish. I challenge you to intentionally foster relationships, capitalize on opportunities, and share your experiences. Paving the way for others is the best way to ensure you leave a powerful legacy. ■

KRISTEN J. APPLEMAN, CEBS, SHRM-SCP, CPP

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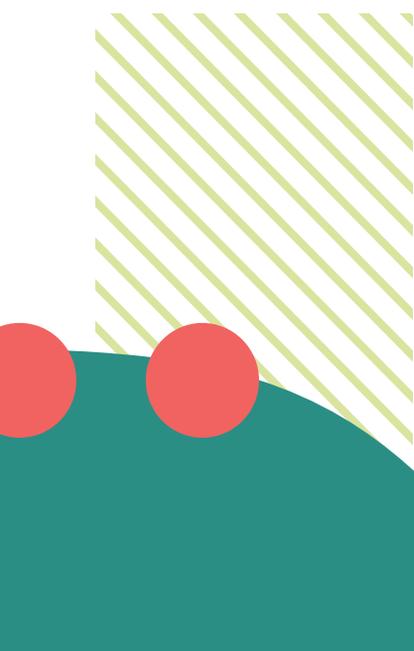
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LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS

PURSUING THE AMERICAN DREAM FROM PEO TO PUBLIC SERVICE

BY PAMELA S. EVETTE



I've been fortunate to make many amazing friends over my 30-plus years in the PEO industry. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that my husband David and I founded Quality Business Solutions (QBS) more than 20 years ago, and it's even harder (at times) to believe that I made the huge leap into public service just over three years ago, having now served two years in office. The journey to get here has not been easy—it's taken grit, and it's also taken a lot of faith and support from my family and friends.

David and I started QBS in our home and, for more than 19 years, we ran it side-by-side and grew it from a start-up to an almost \$1.5 billion dollar company that serves people and companies in 49 states. Oftentimes, we find people are struck by the level of growth we experi-

enced in just 20 short years, but the secret to our success was, and still is, very simple—we always remember where we came from and who we work for. I've said it many times and it still rings true: God dreamed a bigger dream for us than we could have ever dreamed for ourselves.

BIGGER DREAMS

As a second-generation American whose grandparents emigrated here from Poland in the early 1900s, I learned early on the true meaning of the American dream. My grandparents took a significant risk and made a long journey because of the promise of something greater. They learned the language, worked hard, and looked out for others in their community. They built a strong foundation for us, and later on, I was blessed to grow up in a

multi-generational household as the youngest of four children with three older brothers.

My father was a tool and die maker, and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. I was always very close to my dad. He was always there to listen and offer great advice, but mostly he led by example. He taught us the importance of faith, family, and personal accountability and he worked hard each and every day so that my brothers and I could go to college. He always told us that we could do whatever we set our minds to, as long as we worked hard enough, and I set my mind to doing just that.

able to work closely with the industry's founder, T. Joe Willy.

While traveling the country as a consultant, I met my husband David, and we decided that if we ever started a company, we would do it together. Of course, a few years later, that's just what we did. We built QBS from the ground up and built our family and our lives in tandem. We worked hard, we made sacrifices, but we also made sure to keep family a priority.

At QBS, we hired like-minded people—hard-workers dedicated to excellence and focused on relationships. We also prioritized keeping our word, giving 110 percent, and constantly looking for new

hard to earn—to put food on their tables and keep roofs over their heads.

ADVOCACY & PUBLIC SERVICE

Prior to becoming lieutenant governor, as a business owner and a member of the South Carolina Small Business Regulatory Committee, I relentlessly pursued advocacy efforts related to creating and fostering the kind of business climate in which companies are free to grow and thrive. In truth, it was my work and experience within the PEO industry that fueled my desire to enter the world of public service. In all my years at QBS, and before as a consultant, I saw firsthand the harm that can be done to people when

It was my work & experience within the PEO industry that fueled my desire to enter the world of public service. In all my years at QBS, & before as a consultant, I saw firsthand the harm that can be done to people when government oversteps its bounds.

After college, I worked as a CPA and then a comptroller for a family conglomerate in Ohio. It was through this opportunity that I got involved on the ground floor of the PEO industry and was

and better ways of doing things. Most importantly, we never lost sight of the fact that thousands of people across the country depended on us to ensure they got their paychecks—money they worked

government oversteps its bounds. I also saw the benefits of smart economic and regulatory policies.

Shortly after the 2019 inauguration, David took the helm at QBS. He stepped into the role of president, which allowed me to fully step into my new role as lieutenant governor of South Carolina. Leaving the day-to-day operations of the business was more difficult than I had imagined, after having lived and breathed it for so many years. QBS had almost become like a fourth child and letting it go, just one year before the company's 20th anniversary, was bittersweet.

Still, I was ready to take all the energy, passion, and knowledge I'd used to build QBS along with all that I'd learned working alongside clients in the PEO industry, and put it to work for the people, the businesses, and the state of South Carolina. From the beginning, I've been fully committed to making a real difference and leaving the Palmetto State much better than I found it—for this generation and generations to come.

THE LONE FEMALE IN THE ROOM

As a female leader, both in business and as a public servant, it's difficult to ignore the fact that I am often the lone female in a room full of men. But I've never let this deter me from speaking up, sharing an opposing view, doing what I know to be

within my abilities, or making necessary (oftentimes difficult) decisions. I've never been afraid of who I am, and I've never been concerned with who I'm not.

When it comes to sharing my journey from childhood to now, I often speak about being fearless and the need for fearlessness—taking big risks and not being afraid to fail. I've always told my employees, and now my staff, that there are very few mistakes that are too big to recover from, and it is actually these failures that help us grow and make us better.

While it may seem simple enough, it is the *willingness* to be the only female, or having the courage to be the *first* to take on a certain role or position that requires real grit, determination, and belief in oneself, because if you want others to

believe in you, you must first believe in yourself and your own abilities. Once you do, no one can stop you from achieving anything you know to be possible.

As I look ahead to all the possibilities of what God has planned for my life, it is my hope that women in business and those who have a desire to serve others will give themselves the room to discover what is possible. I hope you will have the courage to take that next step. Consider this your invitation, because we need you at the table. Be strong, be fearless, and aim higher. ■

PAMELA S. EVETTE

Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina
Co-Founder
Quality Business Solutions, Inc.
Travelers Rest, South Carolina

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LEADERS

WHAT I'VE LEARNED ABOUT LEADERSHIP

BY HALEY D. CRUM, J.D.

My dad and his father started a business four decades ago. Over time, that company grew and expanded to become FrankCrum. I'm a third-generation owner of the organization, blessed with professional opportunities, but also faced with challenges along the way.

Because my name is Crum, people often assume I was placed in a leadership role. The truth is, my first job at FrankCrum was as a customer care representative while I was in college. I worked my way up the ladder to an executive position over time. My father was a wonderful role model, and I had a great male mentor to show me the ropes, but, ultimately, I've forged my own path as a female leader in a male-dominated industry.

Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal. The concept seems basic, but there are unlimited ways to lead. I've learned a lot by watching others, working on my skills, and from my mistakes. Below are just a few leadership lessons I wish I'd learned sooner.

IT'S OKAY TO FAIL

Calculated risk and occasional failure are necessary for long-term success. This has been a tough concept for me to embrace. Like many of you, I tend to overthink and stress over

small errors. I can fall into negative self-talk and take things too personally. Plus, working in a family business, I know that my actions reflect upon my loved ones. The stakes are high, but so too are the potential rewards. Courageous leaders understand that failure is a necessary part of growth, and they master the ability to face it head-on.

When I realized this was a barrier to my success, I wanted to overcome it, so I focused on developing my skill set and building confidence. I try to pay close attention when negative thoughts start creeping in and quickly stamp them out. As a leader, I also try to show grace to my team members when they make mistakes. Building an environment where people feel safe to take on challenges (and sometimes fail) is essential.

AUDIT YOUR PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS

Leadership requires time and focus, but it's easy to be overwhelmed by endless obligations. I used to feel bad saying "no" when asked to join a committee or board or when invited to an event. The busier I was, the more precious time became. I wanted to succeed at work and contribute to my community, but I also valued quality time with my family. Something had to give.

HIP



Several years ago, I began doing an annual audit of my professional commitments. I considered each activity and questioned whether my contribution was valuable and what I gained from the experience. Through this process, I've been able to prioritize the activities that are the most meaningful. Because situations change over time, I do an evaluation once a year to ensure I'm spending my precious time in a way that most benefits myself and others.

STRIVE FOR HUMILITY

One of the greatest lessons I learned from my dad about leadership is the importance of humility. Instead of trying and failing to be good at every-

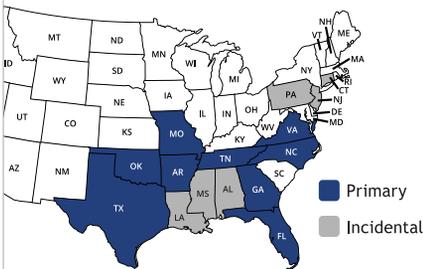
Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal. The concept seems basic, but there are unlimited ways to lead. I've learned a lot by watching others, working on my skills, & from my mistakes.

thing, I surround myself with great people. My superpower is identifying strengths in others, providing them with resources and training, and then letting them shine.

As a leader, I strive to set my ego aside. With this mindset, it's easier to avoid micromanaging people and instead empower them to learn and grow. I think of myself as a coach, removing barriers

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ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF

From the moment you enter your career, you begin to define your worth. One obvious place to demonstrate value is by negotiating a fair salary, especially when you're starting out. This can be tough when you're inexperienced, but it's an important skill to master.

Imagine this: Two people take identical jobs at the same company. One negotiates a salary that is 10 percent higher than the other. As the two receive raises over time, the initial wage gap persists and creates increased inequity.

When you fail to advocate for yourself, the consequences can be serious and long-lasting. Successful leaders learn to be a champion for themselves and their teams.

FIND A MENTOR

Let's face it, navigating the workplace is challenging. When I think back on my journey, I remember feeling clueless at times. Fortunately, I had a mentor who was willing to invest his time in me.

The need for mentorship—speaking to someone candidly who has the insight to provide guidance—never ends. As I've grown in my career, my needs have changed, and so has my mentor. I've recently connected with a woman who I greatly admire, and our mentor/mentee relationship grew from there. At this point in my life, I appreciate gaining a female's perspective and professional guidance.

Bottom line: Look for someone you respect and click with professionally. Whether formal or ad hoc,

mentorship can provide invaluable insights that help you grow. Don't forget to pay it forward and mentor others, too. ■

HALEY D. CRUM, J.D.

Co-President
FrankCrum
Clearwater, Florida

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SUCCESSING IN THE MALE-DOMINATED INSURANCE INDUSTRY

BY JENNIFER S. ROBINSON



ACCEEDING

I was fortunate to grow up in upstate New York. My parents, who owned a seasonal restaurant, always taught me that I could be whatever I wanted to be. I do not know if it was by design or if it was me just truly not understanding that most women at the time—30 plus years ago—did not normally attain the level of success in business that men did.

I was born in Vermont. When I was in second grade, we moved to Lake George, New York, where my family's restaurant employed more than 100 people in its heyday. I started work when I was very young and my parents continually reinforced how important a good education and working hard are.

INTRODUCTION TO PEO

I graduated from college and came back to Lake George to work at the restaurant one last summer before I was to get a job that would use my four-year degree and pay off my student loans. A friend of the family and a long-time customer, a husband-and-wife team, owned a 5,000-worksite-employee "employee leasing" firm. They offered me a job and I jumped at it. I will never forget them explaining to me how employee leasing worked.

My parents had signed a contract with the firm that spring and they were thrilled with the results. The services allowed my father's long-term bookkeeper to help him focus more on the cost of goods versus the payroll, tax, and insurance that she always seemed keen to not let go. My father determined that they saved 3 percent of food costs that season due to the great job the employee leasing firm did for them to make things more cost effective and streamlined.

I went to work for that firm, my first PEO, in 1991, which means this summer I will be celebrating being in the PEO industry in some way, shape, or

form for 30 years. I have always believed, first from my parents and second from my first PEO boss, that I could be successful if I worked hard. I found a tremendous passion early on for the PEO industry.

The second PEO I worked for was a publicly traded payroll company that had gotten into PEO and had locations in many areas of the country. This PEO saw my potential and sent me to do some difficult terminations at a very young age in another area of the country, where I had never had the pleasure of visiting prior to that assignment, the deep south. It was a difficult assignment, but it taught me that I could do almost anything.

I worked with that PEO for about two years, during which time I met a life-long friend in the PEO insurance business, Michael Ortoll, who taught me a ton about PEOs and workers' compensation for PEOs. After I left that PEO, I started a small PEO consulting firm. It never occurred to me then that I could not have success in the PEO industry, or later in the insurance industry, because I was not male.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

While preparing to write this article, and now being involved with the Women in NAPEO (WIN) group, I truly for one of the first times in my life sat down and had to think about if and/or when I ever felt deterred because I was a female.

I knew this existed in the workplace. I had scores of friends and relatives who encountered it in their workplaces. I had numerous close friends from college who went on to work at large financial, banking, and insurance firms who told me that while there were plenty of women in these types of firms, their places at the top—in C-suite roles—were few and far between.

While at my consulting firm, I was fortunate to meet a client who was in the process of selling his PEO to the firm I was consulting for. During that transaction, I met Paul Hughes, who was the insurance agent for the PEO being purchased. We hit it off right away, and he taught me many of my tough lessons during this transaction. The one that comes to mind the most was having the workers' compensation carrier get downgraded to a B+ from an A- rating on Christmas Eve of 1999. We not only had to contend with the fear of Y2K, but also had to deal with the implications of numerous clients needing A-rated insurance papers in the next six days. Paul always instilled in me that I could do and be anything if I worked hard and was a "student of the game." It was never, "You cannot have success as an insurance agent because you are a female." Quite the



contrary. I always felt as if the people we worked with—carriers, clients, team members, stakeholders—treated me as “one of the guys,” or more importantly, treated me equally. I became a consultant for Risk Transfer in 2000, the year the company began, and became an employee in July 2002. Paul and I worked together at Risk Transfer until 2015.

A McKinsey study, “Closing the Gap: Leadership Perspectives in Promoting Women in Financial Sectors,” 9/28/18, shows just how significantly underrepresented women are in the insurance industry in leadership roles. Multiple surveys in the last few years show that while the insurance industry is seeing improvement in women in these roles, it still has a long way to go.

While preparing to write this article, & now being involved with the Women in NAPEO group, I truly for one of the first times in my life sat down & had to think about if and/or when I ever felt deterred because I was a female.

Was I fortunate, naïve, or stubborn? Those who know me well most likely know the answer, and maybe it was a great combination of all three that propelled me to where I am now in the industry. I feel very fortunate to have a successful career

in insurance, but more importantly, in the PEO industry that I love. ■

JENNIFER S. ROBINSON

*EVP/COO
Risk Transfer Insurance Agency, LLC
Queensbury, New York*

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MICHAELINE DOYLE'S LEGACY

PAVING THE WAY FOR WOMEN LEADERS IN THE PEO INDUSTRY

BY GREG PACKER

In the late 1980s I was fortunate to meet Michaeline Doyle. That was more than 30 years ago, so I decided to reach out to some of my long-time industry friends to help my memory as I wrote this article. Initially, I was concerned that I would unlock so much information that I wouldn't be able to condense it into an article of reasonable length. After all, our industry's most prestigious award is named after Michaeline. I'm sorry to report that there isn't much to share, and frankly I'm not surprised. I'm sure that those who knew her won't be surprised, either. Michaeline was the consummate behind-the-scenes advocate and leader: She did what she did to advance her industry and ours, without any concern for or interest in personal recognition.

I 'NEEDED TO BE THERE'

So, back to the late '80s. I received a call from Michaeline, although we had never

met. She told me I "needed" to be in Chicago the next week for a Midwest National Staff Leasing Association (NSLA, later to become NAPEO) meeting. I wasn't even aware that such a group existed.

"Oh, by the way," she said, "bring Dick Light from Vincam with you as well." I'm not sure why, but Dick and I flew to Chicago that next week and met Michaeline outside O'Hare airport. She whisked us off, and we learned this was the very first Midwest Chapter meeting of the NSLA. Late the next day, she dropped us back at O'Hare. We were then members of the Midwest Chapter board of directors. I later learned that Michaeline was the driving force that created the chapter system within the association that was to become NAPEO. She traveled the country setting up chapters in Florida, Texas, California, and more.

Michaeline never seemed to have a personal agenda, except to find common ground as competitors that would advance our industry. She always



As I read through the NAPEO archives, I discovered how many women played pivotal roles in the early evolution of our industry.

believed a rising tide lifts all boats. She genuinely fostered collaboration among competitors, constantly challenging everyone in the room to focus on what was best for our industry. In 1990, Michaeline was elected to the NSLA Board of Directors. She served with many of our industry's early iconic figures: Gordie Brown, Morgan Hall, Carlos Saladrigas, Fran Morrissey, Rick Fish, and Mike Gatsas, most of whom served as NSLA or NAPEO chairs.

MICHAELINE'S LEGACY

Unfortunately, we lost Michaeline to cancer. I couldn't locate the actual date of her passing during my research. There was no Internet at the time and no social media to memorialize things. There is not much beyond the Midwest Chapter archives to memorialize the contributions Michaeline made to the PEO industry. She made a difference and drafted many others to serve as volunteers in NAPEO. A group led by Fran Morrissey pushed to create the award in her name, and I'm proud to have been a part of it. Many of our most impactful industry leaders have

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO WOMEN STARTING OUT IN THE PEO INDUSTRY?

My primary advice to women starting out in the PEO industry is to focus first on learning the industry and developing the skills you need to succeed. Although I was an experienced manager when I started my PEO journey, I knew very little about the industry. I started out on the front lines, answering client calls and entering payroll. To other women starting their PEO journeys, I would say, "Dig in and stick with it." Understand your role, do it to the best of your ability, choose good mentors, and always be confident enough to hire and train your replacement so you can excel to the next level.

Most of this has very little to do with being a woman—it's just good business. It's not about being a woman or a man, but

about being a business leader and focusing on what's best for the customer and best for your team—and ultimately follows the vision of the company. I wouldn't tell a woman to ignore her gender, but 25 years of experience has shown me that the industry responds to strong leaders who are service- and knowledge-oriented. While we still tend to see males in leadership roles and women in the support roles across the market, there isn't anything preventing women from excelling and being successful. So, good luck and get to work!



JANICE LEGTERS

*Chief Executive Officer
Prosperity PEO LLC
Bradenton, Florida*

been honored as recipients of the Michaeline Doyle award over the years. I'm sure that makes her smile.

A funny thing happened as I dug around preparing for this article, trying to find what I could about Michaeline. When I was NAPEO chair in 2016-2017, I recall leading a discussion about making greater diversity on our NAPEO board a priority. I'm happy to see Lee Yarborough, our gifted and talented 2020-2021 chair, leading that effort today. So back to that funny thing. As I read through the NAPEO archives, I discovered how many women played pivotal roles in the early evolution of our industry.

In 1989, Irene Cohen served as our secretary, with Gordy Brown as president and Morgan Hall as vice president. Wendy Hartmann, Fran Morrissey, and Michaeline Doyle chaired key committees. Becky Outlaw played a role in those early days, and by 1991 Fran and Michaeline were board members. I recall several others in those early days: Claire Fowler ran a small PEO near Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Marcia Sartori operated near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I believe. In the early days of our industry, before technology became such an important component, it was about taking care of clients and many of these early women leaders had a very natural knack for that.

PAVING THE WAY

These early female leaders paved the way for a number of important contributors in more recent years. Several of our most important achievements would not have been possible without the significant, often behind-the-scenes contributions of women. Kathleen Hillegas worked on just about every state and federal legislative effort in the past 15 or more years. Wendy Wolfe was also heavily engaged. I served as chair of the Federal Government Affairs Committee for several years, including during the passage of the Small Business Efficiency Act (SBEA), which created the IRS Certified PEO (CPEO) program. I can assure you that we would not have achieved that success without the efforts of these two women and their ability to leverage the resources of their respective organizations in a collaborative manner. I witnessed it firsthand and I am forever grateful for their efforts.

As we recognize and honor the contributions of women in our industry, I glad I was asked to write a little something about Michaeline. She would have been extremely proud of the successes that women have had in our industry—from Fran Morrissey, our first female chair, to Lee Yarborough, our current chair. I know Michaeline would also be incredibly proud of the success our industry has enjoyed. Once again, a rising tide lifts all boats. We are fortunate as an industry to have benefited from the contributions of the amazing women recognized here, but so many others as well. Most, like Michaeline was, are happy to make their contributions with little fanfare or recognition. I thank every one of them! ■



GREG PACKER

*President
AccessPoint
Farmington Hills, Michigan*

WOMEN PEO GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

THE JOURNEY

BY KATHLEEN A. HILLEGAS, ESQ.

When I was asked to write an article discussing my experience as a woman in government affairs from the early days of the industry up to the present day, I immediately agreed. *PEO Insider*® Editor Stephanie Oetjen will tell you that is unusual for me. The topic struck a chord. But then, as I thought about what to write, I had to take some time to sort through the emotions of what my experiences have been in order to step back and view the last 24 years (yup, that's a long time) from something of an objective perspective, while still speaking truth.

Government affairs professionals come from varied tracks—former legislators, former legislative staff, attorneys with subject matter expertise

and/or public policy expertise, and political engagement. The research numbers provide testament that, not unlike many other professions, there are significantly more male lobbyists than female—about 40 percent of federal lobbyists are women, with about 60 percent being men. That male-dominated disparity is more prevalent at the state level. Why? The pipelines mentioned above also tend to be male-dominated. So, it logically follows that men would be more represented in the profession than women. That's not unusual for many professions, but does it matter?

DOMINANT FORCES

I think it does matter. Like so many professions, the norms of success are typically established by the dominant

forces in the profession. Because of that, the same male stereotypes that permeate many other professions also permeate government affairs. We all know them—men are often described as strong, forceful, in control, in command, as having a presence, etc. Women who succeed as lobbyists often do so by being the smartest, most prepared people in the room in order to close the perception gap. It's reasonable to say that fairly describes my early days in the industry.

I was fortunate to work for a company (then Administaff, now Insperity) and in an industry/association environment in which that preparation was valued and established worth. That worth contributed to the passage of numerous state statutes establishing important statutory and regulatory PEO frameworks and the passage of a federal law that finally recognized PEOs. In any organization, that which is considered worthy is determined by the organization's leaders. I am fortunate that Insperity places considerable value on the commitment and contributions of its government affairs team; an appreciation that is not gender dependent. My industry/association experience (and that of other women government affairs professionals in the industry with whom I consulted) has been more uneven and possibly more gender reflective.

The PEO association has been male-dominated since its inception. That's not a surprise, because the PEO industry is a very entrepreneurial one and entrepreneurship has historically been fairly male-dominated (though not exclusively) for many reasons, including access to capital and cultural conditioning that leads to being a risk taker or being risk adverse.

BECOMING A GA PROFESSIONAL

My journey to becoming a government affairs professional in the PEO industry began in my role as general counsel of a medium-sized PEO. I immersed myself in the potential regulatory and statutory



BE A PART OF NAPEO'S PEO INDUSTRY ADVOCACY EFFORTS

NAPEO's government affairs mission is to create and cultivate a legislative and regulatory climate at the federal level and in all 50 states that recognizes the key role PEOs play in supporting small and mid-size businesses and positions the PEO industry for continued growth. Our proactive and aggressive government affairs activities are frequently cited as NAPEO's single most important member service: delivering statutory recognition and legal certainty to the industry while protecting it from overreaching regulations or laws.

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challenges to the legal foundation and delivery of PEO services. There were many. Some of the most significant challenges were those that involved employee benefits (401(k) and health plans) sponsored by PEOs for the benefit of PEO worksite employees. My legal experience in employee benefits (Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA)) and insurance law made me uniquely qualified to assess the challenges, propose regulatory and statutory solutions, and work with industry

members, regulators, and legislators to effect those solutions. I became a government affairs professional.

Those were the days when the PEO association leadership, PEO representatives, and staff were desperate for solutions. The commitment to working to



I am fortunate that Insperity places considerable value on the commitment and contributions of its government affairs team; an appreciation that is not gender dependent.

propose and enact solutions was welcomed. My leadership experiences in association government affairs initiatives led to being elected as the second female chair of NAPEO's Board of Directors. Fran Morrissey was the first. Fran is a tremendous lady and businesswoman. We would compare notes about our experiences as female leaders in the association—men on the board rephrasing our input as their own, our proposed initiatives being challenged in a manner not previously experienced by other chairs, etc. However, all in all, we enjoyed the support of our peers and, hopefully, achieved some positive results.

ACCESS TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

At some point in the association's leadership, there was a shift. Being the smartest, most prepared people in the

room (the avenue that fosters the careers of many women government affairs professionals) was no longer afforded the value it had been previously. It actually seemed to be viewed as potentially threatening. There was a new focus on C-level participation on the board. In an industry that is very male-dominated, that translates to fewer women in leadership positions. That development was particularly disturbing given the fact that only a few PEOs employed government affairs professionals, and the majority of those were women. The expertise that had helped the industry evolve and grow was no longer afforded the same level of value. Many of the industry government affairs professionals viewed that as a negative development for the industry because it is an industry dependent on a solid statutory and regulatory foundation. As with any examination of gender bias or gender inequity, it is not clear there was an intent to devalue the significant contributions of the several female PEO industry government professionals, but it likely made the devaluation easier.

Such developments occur in numerous professions and are further complicated by the inequitable access to the informal networking opportunities and access to leadership. Again, intent is not always present, but it is also not required to establish an environment in which the contributions of women professionals, including government affairs professionals, face an uphill journey. 2020-2021 NAPEO Chair Lee Yarborough is to be applauded for her leadership in advancing these important discussions. ■

KATHLEEN A. HILLEGAS, ESQ.

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EEO-1 REPORTING UPDATE

BY GORDON M. BERGER, ESQ.

In case 2020 was not weird enough, the annual EEO-1 reporting has been disrupted, too. Ordinarily, an employer with 100 or more employees (and federal contractors with 50 or more employees) must file an annual EEO-1 report with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), typically by the end of the following March. The primary purpose of the EEO-1 report is for a covered employer to provide the EEOC with data by establishment location, gender, race/ethnicity, and job category. However, on May 7, 2020 the EEOC published on its website (see <https://bit.ly/3oW3frK>) that due to COVID-19, the 2019 EEO-1 Component 1 (Employer Information Report), the 2020 EEO-3 (Local Report), and the 2020 EEO-5 (Elementary-Secondary Staff Information Report) filings were delayed until 2021. Specifically, the EEOC stated, “The EEOC recognizes the impact that the current public health emergency is having on workplaces across America and the challenges that both employers and employees alike are now facing,” so, “delaying the collections until 2021 will ensure that EEO filers are better positioned to provide accurate, valid, and reliable data in a timely manner.”

As previously reported in *PEO Insider*,[®] the EEOC attempted to expand the EEO-1 reporting by including an obligation for employers to provide compensation data (the so-called Component 2); however, after legal challenges, the EEOC rescinded the Component 2 reporting obligation, partially because it grossly underestimated the time and burden on employers in compiling the compensation data. Ultimately, the EEOC announced that employers would have to report Component 2 data from 2017 and

2018 payrolls by Sept. 30, 2019—but not thereafter. PEOs in particular would have been burdened by a continued obligation to report Component 2, as many PEOs assist clients with EEO-1 filings. However, note that NAPEO has been seeking clarification with the EEOC that clients are ultimately responsible for filing annual EEO-1 Forms.

FILING DELAY MEANS FILING TWO REPORTS

What does this filing delay mean? It means that in 2021, covered employers must file two EEO-1 reports, one for 2019

and one for 2020. Without getting too technical, the process of getting approval to open the EEO-1 filing portal entails the EEOC submitting the EEO-1 Component 1 information collection to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act. The OMB gave its approval to the EEOC on June 12, 2020, so the EEOC expects to begin collecting both 2019 EEO-1 data and 2020 EEO-1 data in March 2021.

The delay does not impact the normal reporting period, which is any payroll period from October through December.

The EEOC has further stated that “[t]he opening of the 2019 and 2020 EEO-1 Component 1 Data Collections, as well as



FROM THE EEOC WEBSITE: NEW SCHEDULED OPENING OF 2019 & 2020 EEO-1 COMPONENT 1 DATA COLLECTION

After delaying the opening of the 2019 EEO-1 Component 1 Data Collection scheduled for May 8, 2020, in light of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the EEOC is pleased to announce that the 2019 as well as the 2020 EEO-1 Component 1 Data Collection is now on schedule to open in April 2021. Filers should begin preparing to submit data.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) will announce the precise opening date on its home page at www.eeoc.gov, as well as on the new dedicated website for the EEOC's data collections at <https://EEOCdata.org>. As in previous years, a notification letter will be sent to eligible filers. Please visit <https://EEOCdata.org> for updates on the data collections and resources to assist filers with submissions when the data collections open. The EEOC Filer Support Team will be available to respond to filer inquiries and to provide additional filing assistance.

the new deadline date, will be announced by posting a notice on the EEOC home page at www.eeoc.gov and sending a notification letter to eligible EEO-1 filers.”

PEOs that assist clients with EEO-1 reporting may face challenges with having to file 2019 data this year. The challenges include:



In 2021, covered employers must file two EEO-1 reports, one for 2019 and one for 2020.

- Whether the PEO is contractually required to prepare or file the 2019 EEO-1 even if the client has left the PEO;
- Obtaining client cooperation to properly prepare and compile the EEO-1 reports; and
- Determining whether a client is a covered employer, as a client with multiple companies owned or affiliated with one another, or under a centralized ownership, control, or management (such as central control of personnel policies and labor relations) may constitute a single enterprise that must be combined so that the entire enterprise employs a total of 100 or more employees. In some cases, the PEO may only have as a client one of the multiple companies and may be wholly unaware of the other entities or a need to look at aggregating “the client” with the “non-client” entities.

Of course, given the challenges, it is advisable to begin preparing for the EEO-1 report filings as soon as possible. ■

▼
This article is designed to give general and timely information about the subjects covered. It is not intended as legal advice or assistance with individual problems. Readers should consult competent counsel of their own choosing about how the matters relate to their own affairs.



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A WOMAN ON THE FRONTIER OF A NEW INDUSTRY

SETTING STANDARDS FOR GOOD BUSINESS & ESTABLISHING THE HR VALUE PROPOSITION

BY FRAN MORRISSEY

I first learned of employee leasing from an article I read in 1983. I knew almost immediately that it could be a fascinating business and companion to the accounting firm that my husband, John, had been operating since 1972. We founded Staff Management, Inc. later that year.

We were more formally introduced to this industry in 1986 when John and I attended the second meeting of the National Staff Leasing Association (NSLA, now NAPEO), hoping to learn

more about how to sell our services, expand our offerings, and grow our business. There we found a small number of companies, each doing the same things we were, asking the same questions, and overcoming the same challenges.

One of those early challenges was a change in pension laws that could meaningfully affect our businesses. We all believed in and recognized the value of the services we were providing, so we put our heads together to see how we could still thrive in a new environment. Still

well before rebranding as professional employers, and ahead of the significant growth of a brand-new industry, we simply recognized that we could (and must) help one another in order to more firmly establish our businesses and make a difference for our clients.



I believed then, and now, in the importance of human resource management as a core part of PEO services.

NURTURING A NEW INDUSTRY

We also believed early on that we must protect this new industry, setting standards for good business. Knowing that I wanted to be involved in the association, NSLA President Kent Ahlswede asked me to chair the Standards Committee. John and I and a few others worked through and drafted the initial Standards of the Industry. It was fun, but also critically important to ensure our industry was recognized as the important service it was.

It was also important that regulators recognized us as ethical and professional business leaders. We made several presentations to different government organizations those first few years. We spoke with representatives from Congress, the Department of Labor, the IRS, and more. We frequently met with resistance, or at least a lack of understanding, but we forged ahead, knowing that legislative clarity was critical to our businesses. Years later, when the Institute for the Accreditation of Professional Employer Organizations (IAPEO) was established, I was named

secretary of that organization, continuing my involvement in establishing and monitoring the core financial and ethical standards of our industry. IAPEO was later renamed the Employer Services Assurance Corporation (ESAC).

During those early years, I was running Staff Management, Inc. while John ran the accounting firm. It was immensely helpful that we were involved in each other's businesses, planning, and discussing along the way, but those early years had additional challenges for a woman in business. While I had been actively working in our accounting firm for many years, I had not before been tasked with driving the business strategy and making the key decisions. While I found it enjoyable, it was also clear that, particularly as a woman in business, I needed to gain confidence and acceptance. I had not previously traveled alone, nor registered to stay alone in a hotel overnight. These were all new experiences for me and not always the most comfortable! As with any other challenge, I continued to put one foot in front of the other, received great encouragement, and grew in both confidence and capability.

ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT

While tending to our own businesses, I also remained very involved in the association, serving on the board of directors and several committees. We all wore several hats at that time. When I was asked by fellow members to accept the position as president in 1995, I readily agreed!

Through the 1990s, while the industry had taken shape, it was clear that we needed to continue to educate our members and their staffs. I viewed this very much as a continuation of the work to establish industry standards. For our industry to eventually gain acceptance in legislation, it was important that we worked to sing from the same song sheet.

HR AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE PEO VALUE PROPOSITION

The findings released in NAPEO's 2019 white paper, "The ROI of Using a PEO," not only showed that the return on investment (for cost-savings alone) of using a PEO is 27.2 percent, but also noted additional sources of value PEOs deliver to their clients:

- There is notably lower employee turnover (both voluntary and involuntary) among PEO clients;
- There are higher rates of both employee growth and business revenue growth among PEO clients;
- Fewer PEO clients expressed moderate or major concern about hiring, retaining, and motivating employees; and
- New PEO clients often add a variety of new benefits for their employees, with life insurance, retirement plans, and health benefits the categories most frequently added by new PEO clients.



Industry education was key, and so was born PEO University and the call-for-papers that helped to define its early years. This was also a way to welcome newcomers to the industry who were looking for the basics and encouragement.

I believed then, and now, in the importance of human resource management as a core part of PEO services. Some saw our industry as a means for insurance and pension solutions. We saw, however, in the experiences of our accounting firm clients, the business improvements that could come from capable HR management services. Especially with the significant increase we have seen in the regulation of employers, HR management services rounds out nicely the suite of compliance and benefit offerings and helped to fulfill, for us, one of the key reasons we were drawn to the PEO business.

Staff Management, Inc. was among the first 25 PEOs in existence and likely the first in the Midwest. We were pleased to join the efforts to design the landscape and standards influencing the evolution

of this tremendous industry. We still pinch ourselves when we realize what pioneers we all were and how the industry has grown. In 1986, it was but a distant dream that we would be recognized in legislation as we are now!

This year we celebrate 50 years of business in our John Morrissey Accounting firm and 38 years in our PEO business, Staff Management, Inc. As John and I spend more time in Florida, we have passed the management of our businesses to our son John J. Morrissey, CEO of Staff Management, Inc. and our daughter Mary Beth Clausen, VP of client relations. We are blessed and proud to be a family business and a PEO. We are thrilled with, and grateful for, the experiences and tremendous relationships with so many friends, clients, and staff. ■



FRAN MORRISSEY

1996-1997 NAPEO President
Senior Vice President & Secretary
Staff Management, Inc.
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INTEGRATION CONSIDERATIONS WHEN EVALUATING YOUR TECH STACK

BY MIKE ROY

As the business world continues to embrace new technologies, organizations are increasingly turning to tech solutions to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations. From digital payroll solutions to online learning management systems (LMS), PEOs are adopting technology now more than ever before.

To ensure you are maximizing your investment in technology, it is vital that the various solutions your business has adopted integrate, or “talk with one another.” This integration provides a streamlined user experience and eliminates manual tasks and duplicate entry.

On the tech side, the ability for various systems, regardless of the developer of the technology, to connect is referred to as “open architecture.”

Open platforms enable data to be exchanged between systems in an easy, automated way and are an essential factor in creating and maintaining an efficient tech stack with longevity. For example, during the lifecycle of selling and setting up a new employer, data would ideally flow seamlessly between the core HR and payroll systems, the customer relationship management (CRM) system, underwriting, enrollment, and the employer/employee portals.

THINK HOLISTICALLY

If your company is like most, you have added various tech solutions over time as your priorities have shifted or new digital tools have entered the market. While these point solutions fixed a unique problem at the time, the process may have also left you with disparate, disconnected, or, in some cases, duplicative solutions across multiple vendors. This is why it’s important to take a step back every so often to evaluate which tools you really use and need, and which could be eliminated or substituted.

Think about your tech needs as a whole and consider consolidation. Are there key vendors that can best address multiple or even all of your requirements?



Open platforms enable data to be exchanged between systems in an easy, automated way and are an essential factor in creating and maintaining an efficient tech stack with longevity.

Furthermore, don’t just look to solve your current need, but be sure to evaluate tech needs now and in the future so you can evaluate them holistically instead of on a one-off basis. This process can drastically increase efficiencies within your organization, creating time savings—and potentially cost savings, as well.

UNDERSTAND INTEGRATIONS

When evaluating tech, it's important to understand the different types of integrations and which ones apply to the solution under consideration. For example, does the integration only pass data from one system to another, or does data flow freely between both systems, helping to improve numerous workflows?

Is data updated live or on-demand in one system once it is updated in another, or does the data periodically sync, which could impact workflow efficiencies? Are you looking at an

integration—a pre-built connection between two or more systems—or an application programming interface (API), which is more of a guidebook that enables developers to build and integrate to other systems?

It's equally important to fully understand if and how well the new solution under consideration integrates with your current tech stack, as well as how committed the provider is to building connections between systems.

Using LMS as an example, say you have clients who are in a state, such as California,

that requires sexual harassment prevention training. You might assume a simple use case for an integration would be to pass all of your client employee data into the LMS and automatically assign specific, required courses by title to employees or managers, respectively, when they are added to your core payroll system.

But what happens if you add someone who is a vice president in title but who does not have any direct reports and is thus classified as an employee instead of a manager? This person may end up being assigned the wrong training.

In this example, ideally, the data from your source of truth should have an added field that notes if the person is an employee who manages others or is an employee. That field would impact how the data would be passed to the LMS to assign the correct courses.

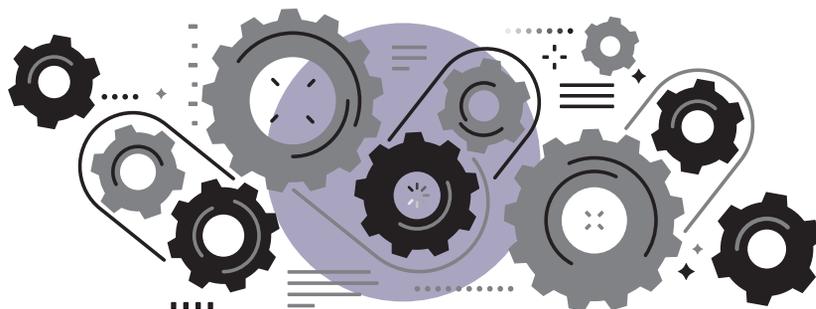
These are the types of challenges you may face with integrations and are important conversations you should be having with your vendors. Together, you should be collaborating on the business case and scalability of the solution. Most things with technology are possible, but they require a level of thoughtfulness between both parties to be successful.

As the digital transformation continues to alter the way we all do business, integrated technology is a must-have for any organization to thrive. While reputable tech vendors should help you navigate integrations, the responsibility lies in your hands. By doing your due diligence up front, you will set yourself up for the best possible technology experience in the years to come. ■



MIKE ROY

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THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Believe it or not, the underlying technology for the digital revolution included a never-completed analytical engine proposed in 1837 and the telegraph, the earliest version of which in widespread use was invented in the late 18th century. Other steps toward today's digital revolution, as outlined by Wikipedia, are:

- The foundations of digitalization were described in the 1948 article by Bell Labs mathematician Claude Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication."
- The effectiveness of silicon as a semiconductor material in the late 1950s, leading to the mass production of silicon semiconductor devices.
- The development of metal oxide semiconductor (MOS) integrated circuit chips in the early 1960s, which led to the microcomputer revolution that began in the 1970s.
- A message sent over the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) in 1969 introduced the concept of the Internet and the development of protocols.
- The availability of the home computer, time-sharing computers, the video game console, and coin-operated video games in the 1970s.
- The replacement of analog format vinyl records and cassette tapes with the digital format of optical compact discs for music in the 1980s.
- The public accessibility of the World Wide Web in 1991.

MARKETING AGAINST NEW COMPETITION DURING COVID PRICING SENSITIVITY

BY HEATHER KEEFER SAULSBURY

One sentiment remains consistent during conversations with PEO colleagues: The current market is tight and competition is fierce. The need to maximize revenue and revisit value propositions on a granular level has had a rebirth since COVID hit. A solid marketing approach always considers what's happening in the industry, new technologies being used, and how customer priorities are shifting. Change brings opportunities for new players to emerge and appeal to the new priorities of PEO consumers. The prevalence of this is heightened in our present COVID economy.

NEW COMPETITION

PEO options continue to grow with the expansion of self-access software

providers. In addition, insurance brokers are looking to get in on the action as they attempt to supplement insurance policy services with HR consultation. While these options bring new providers into the PEO industry, small business owners may not understand that the business model from provider to provider will vary drastically. Sometimes it may not be true PEO at all.

Pricing sensitivities dictate our current market. Companies boasting great software with the availability to “pay for what you use” with HR is appealing and seemingly may hit all the PEO buckets of service. However, these solutions require substantial consumer involvement, particularly when it comes to the knowledge and diligence with implementation of compliance strategies. The consumer is liable and at risk for payroll, tax, risk, and



Do not alter your core values to stay competitive. In fact, reinforcing and emphasizing those values will keep you relevant.

HR vulnerabilities. Insulation is limited, if existent at all.

The PEO brokerage landscape is also shifting. Benefits brokers and property and casualty brokers attempt to circumvent our PEO brokers and even the PEO. We see more insurance brokers competing with PEOs by outsourcing payroll and human resource relationships to consultants, defeating the single-source solution, co-employment relationship that a true PEO represents.

While it may seem impossible for PEOs to keep up with these changes, communication between marketing and sales teams will protect your PEO's branding mission and help you stay the course. Sales and marketing must continue to keep their competitive edge and attract clients who need comprehensive solutions that deliver the ROI and business improvements they need—the very solutions you provide with your PEO.

KEEPING YOUR FOOHOLD IN OUR EVER-CHANGING SPACE

Focus on Your Core Values & Mission Statement

Do not alter your core values to stay competitive. In fact, reinforcing and emphasizing those values will keep you relevant. While you may need to adapt to new technologies or trends, your values and mission statement will always reflect why your PEO is unique. They showcase your strengths and specialties. Even in a shifting climate, stay true to who you are, what you do, and why you do it. You strengthen your reputation and validate

your credibility within PEO competitive situations when customers see the consistency in mission and branding.

Focus on Your Target Market

When change occurs in the market, it opens opportunities for reassessment. Although our mission and values should not change, nor our overall message, what does change is how we convey our value propositions. A price-sensitive market does not equate to lowering of value—it simply requires redesigning how you communicate value in a manner that resonates with a bottom-line business owner.

Consider why prospects would choose to work with your PEO over another. Evaluate how your PEO’s unique service and product model will meet their needs. What do pricing concerns really mean to business owners? Focus on understanding your target market’s hot buttons and appeal to those needs.

Be Consistent with Valuable Content

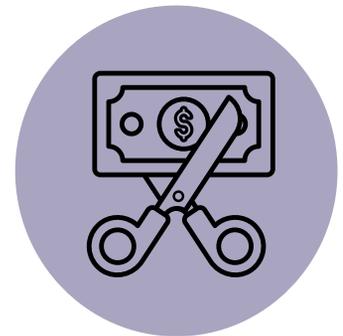
Marketing may represent higher stakes with these new developments; however, your message and commitment to highlighting your value must not change. Consistency is key to developing and maintaining trust with your audiences, customers, prospects, and referral sources. These attributes may be harder to assess in the newer PEO models, at least for new clients. Although these services are a wonderful solution for some, many look for more insulation with compliance and engagement.

Emphasize the Known Benefits of our Industry

NAPEO research has shown the tremendous impact of working with PEOs. When you’re marketing to your audiences, inspire them with these statistics:

- Small businesses grow 7 to 9 percent faster when they use a PEO

CLIENT PRICE REDUCTION REQUESTS DURING COVID



Although most PEOs participating in NAPEO’s fifth COVID-19 Survey, conducted in late December 2020/ early January 2021, had not experienced client requests for price reductions last March, a significant number did, and that percentage grew from 38.8 percent in March to 44.4 percent in December.

However, by December, 55.6 % of PEOs participating in the survey reported that they had not received requests for price reductions from clients.

The highest level of clients requesting cost reductions was in the July 2020 survey, with 47.5 percent of PEOs reporting they had received such requests.

Have any clients requested price reductions for your services?

	March 2020– All PEOs	April 2020– All PEOs	May 2020– All PEOs	July 2020– All PEOs	December 2020– All PEOs
Yes	38.8%	42.9%	46.4%	47.5%	44.4%
No	61.2%	57.1%	53.6%	52.5%	55.6%

and are 50 percent less likely to go out of business;

- Employee turnover is 10 to 14 percent lower; and
- 98 percent of PEO clients would recommend using one to another small business.

Other value points include:

- PEOs help companies attract and retain employees;
- They free up time for business leaders to focus on important business tasks outside of HR;
- They help companies realize revenue growth;
- Employees feel more satisfied with better benefits offerings that PEOs can bring to the table;
- They help businesses decrease HR costs; and
- The average ROI from using a PEO is 27.2 percent, and that is just on cost savings alone.

PEOs will not stop adapting to trends in the market, new technology, or the needs of our clients. PEOs, ASOs, and hybrids will continue to develop and provide solid solutions for the many faces of small business needs.

However, stay current and true to the mission of your PEO. Emphasize the substantial and ongoing value of your PEO in your marketing efforts; consequently, sales efforts will benefit from the back-to-basics approach. These focus points will help you stay competitive and attract post-COVID clients looking for valuable and effective solutions to meet the complexities of their needs. ■



HEATHER KEEFER SAULSBURY
 VP, Sales & Marketing
 StaffLink Outsourcing, Inc.
 Sunrise, Florida

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Boldface type indicates NAPEO Medallion Partner



Remember, when you are in the NAPEO portal, you can specify to have your copy of PEO Insider sent to your home or office!



Make the Most of Your Membership

NAPEO's powerful business resources are designed to help you increase your awareness of PEO-specific topics, grow your PEO, advance your professional development, and be the best compliance resource for your clients. To learn how to make the most of your membership—and create your unique user account at napeo.org to access these tools—go to napeo.org/membership/member-orientation.

Membership in NAPEO is company-wide, meaning everyone at your PEO can create an individual account and access these resources.

Go to napeo.org/peo-resources to start exploring your valuable benefits. (Hint: You can hover your cursor over *PEO Resources* to expose the full menu of options.) A few highlights from this section are listed here:

Events	PEO Resources	Membership	Inc. Magazine on PEOs
	Resources by Topic Marketing your PEO Opportunity, Diversity & Inclusion Regulations and Compliance Legal Reviews and Insights PEO University IRS PEO Certification Resources Payroll Fraud	Tools NAPEO Forum Regulatory Database Webinars PEO Professional Performance Practices Find a Service Partner eCAL Electronic Calendaring & Alerts PEO Pulse Survey	Publications & Products PEO Insider Online Store
			Get Involved NAPEO Member Committees Women in NAPEO NAPEO Gives Back Event Sponsorship Exhibits Speaker Opportunities Topic Suggestions Continuing Education Credits

Under *Resources by Topic* you will see *Marketing your PEO*, where you will find our robust library of marketing materials, including research papers, videos, social media ads and content, and infographics that will help you effectively communicate and distill the value of PEOs to your target audience.

Under this heading you can also find resources to protect your PEO from fraud attempts and the PEO University series of short

videos to help you expand your knowledge of PEO operations and help your new hires get up to speed.

Under *Tools* you will find NAPEO's Regulatory Database, which contains everything you need to know about PEO state licensing, registration, corporate taxes, and the myriad of regulations focused on workers' comp, UI, health, and benefits in one central location.

The Webinar Archive contains on-demand access to a variety of topics, including accounting, finance, government affairs, legal, and sales.

Check out the NAPEO Forum at forum.napeo.org/home, your members-only online environment where you can connect with your counterparts from across the country to network, ask questions directly, share issues and solutions, and build relationships.

Finally, be sure to follow NAPEO on Facebook and Twitter at facebook.com/napeo/ and twitter.com/napeo.

We're so glad to have you as a member of NAPEO, and we hope you find these resources relevant and valuable to your role in the industry. For more information about how to access these resources online and make the most of your membership, email info@napeo.org, or call 703/836-0466.

www.napeo.org

PEOS & WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

BY PAT CLEARY

It is no secret that the economic toll of the pandemic has disproportionately landed on small business, the constituency that PEOs serve, their “sweet spot.” Yet PEO clients have fared better than small businesses overall through this challenge. Our white paper research from last summer shows that PEO clients were:

- 119 percent more likely to have received Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans;
- 72 percent more likely to have received PPP loans in Round 1;
- 91 percent less likely to still be temporarily closed; and
- 60 percent less likely to have permanently closed.

In our most recent market research—unveiled during a webinar in February (you can find it at www.napeo.org/marketresearch)—we found that only 28 percent of small businesses that don't use PEOs said they experienced growth in 2020. Yet 68 percent of small business PEO clients experienced growth in 2020. That is an astonishing difference. This month, our renewals are coming in—with their 941s—and we are seeing that most are holding steady and many are showing growth. Again, that is astounding when you realize that we inhabit the

sector that was hardest hit by the pandemic. I joked with our marketing guru, Kerry Carruthers, “Maybe all the stuff we've been saying is true!”

Indeed, it is.

PEO clients have fared better because they had the guidance and support of their PEOs and because they could focus on keeping their businesses alive, while their PEOs focused on everything else. They accessed PPP funds earlier and faster, while their competition tried to muddle through on their own. In short, PEO clients focused on survival and growth, and survive and grow they did. I've said before that this thing isn't behind us yet, but so far (knock on wood) PEOs are proving their value every day. Even in a pandemic.

Now that I've gotten that out of the way, let me focus on the topic of this month's magazine, “Women's Leadership: Experiences, Issues, and Journeys.” We celebrate it throughout this issue, starting with our seven women board members—including our chair—on the cover. The NAPEO staff is predominantly female—12 of 18—at all levels, including our Queen of Meetings Robin Schlesinger, recently promoted to vice president. NAPEO Chair Lee Yarborough's new initiative, Women in NAPEO (WIN), is in keeping with two key strategic plan goals—increasing diversity at all levels and identifying and engaging the

next level of leaders in our industry. The first WIN event was a home run and the second one is on track to be the same, with more than 322 people—men and women—signed up. Its LinkedIn group numbers 248.

This initiative is about education and networking. We all inhabit the HR space. There is something here for men and women. The March event featured Oasis, a Paychex® Company President of PEO Teresa Carroll discussing a book that has had a big impact on her, “How Women Rise.” I have read it and if you are an HR professional, it holds some very important insights for you. Your clients look to you as a resource. Educating yourself about these issues enhances your value to them. Along



Women in NAPEO is in keeping with two key strategic plan goals—increasing diversity at all levels and identifying and engaging the next level of leaders in our industry.

the way, it's also an important education and networking opportunity. We clearly have hit a seam with this initiative and the turnout and feedback have been great. If you haven't participated in any of these events, I hope you will, and I hope you'll join our LinkedIn group too.

Hats off to the women in our membership and leadership. These are your friends and colleagues. I hope you enjoy reading about their experiences, issues, and journeys. ■



PAT CLEARY
President & CEO
NAPEO
Alexandria, Virginia

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