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The President's Brown Bag Luncheon Series: A Progress Report



When Barry Melancon became President of the Institute, one of the first things he did was to establish a mechanism by which he can regularly meet with staff members to discuss their concerns and understand obstacles they face in their work. This mechanism, the Brown Bag Luncheon series, is a series of informal roundtable meetings during which a no-holds-barred dialogue takes place between Barry Melancon and a random cross section of Team AICPA. *News and views* wanted to know if this series has brought about any significant change in Team AICPA's working environment and whether the participants in these meetings felt that their concerns had been addressed.

When asked what he feels about the Brown Bag Luncheon series, Barry Melancon gives it high marks. "I think the Brown Bag Lunches have helped me immensely to get to know the issues of our staff and to help put those issues into our planning strategy. I think it's a great tool for our staff to get to know me a little bit better, and, more importantly, for me to get to know them. I have repeatedly

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said that our staff of the Institute is the key to delivering our vision of service to our members and positioning ourselves as the premiere association in the country. We can't achieve that unless I know what issues our staff has and find

ways to help make their work more effective in delivering those services."

As a result of the dialogue at the Brown Bag Lunches, some ideas of Team AICPA members have been put into action.

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Brown Bag 5 Rescheduled

Due to unfortunate but unavoidable conflicts in Mr. Melancon's schedule, the fifth brown bag luncheon, originally scheduled for Friday, January 5, was postponed until Monday, February 26 at the Harborside office in Conference Room 1, starting at 11:30 am. Listed below are the Team AICPA members who are scheduled to attend. Anyone who would like to have a particular issue addressed by the President should contact one of these people before the day of the luncheon.

Denise Graham	Credit and Collections
Josh Perlett	Communications/Public Relations
Doug Kadow	Telecommunications
Michael Montez	Materials Assembly & Distribution
Palma Mongello	Production Services
Joseph Todd	CPE Production
Irving Valentine	Distribution Services
Yvonne Steele	Examinations
Celeste Booth	Software Development
Cynthia Hiris	Library Services
Beth Appelbaum	Meetings & Travel
Rita Novick	Membership Administration
Gary Morales	Facilities Management
Katherine Rangoon	Production-Periodicals
Ben Shubov	Information Services

Brown Bag, *continued*

Because someone brought it up at a Brown Bag Lunch, Team AICPA members are eligible for four weeks of vacation annually after fifteen years of service. The tuition reimbursement policy of the Institute has been made more generous. The joint New York-New Jersey Office Holiday Party at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza was a result of the Brown Bag Luncheon conversations. The Flexible Spending Account Program came out of the Brown Bag Lunches, too. Because Team AICPA members at Brown Bag Lunches repeatedly asked for better communication and more training, both have been made top priorities at the Institute. Other issues frequently mentioned at Brown Bag Lunches include the need for better information technology and a better compensation plan; Operation ACCESS is currently working to improve the information technology Team AICPA utilizes, and the Alignment Team is looking at new compensation strategies that reward hard work and innovation.

Walling Almonte, who attended a Brown Bag Lunch, gives the series a thumbs up. "I think the idea behind it is good. [Melancon] was caring to our needs, to our suggestions. I gave him about twenty suggestions. What he couldn't answer right away, he promised to follow up on."

What Have the Brown Bag Lunches Done For Us So Far?

A few important improvements in the work environment at the Institute have been made because Team AICPA members spoke up at Brown Bag Lunches. They include:

- A joint New York-New Jersey holiday party at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza
- Casual business dress Fridays all year long, with the addition of jeans as acceptable casual business attire
- Team AICPA members become eligible for four weeks vacation after fifteen years of service
- The Flexible Spending Account Program
- A more generous tuition reimbursement policy
- More training programs made available to Team AICPA
- This publication was changed to a four-page format with photographs

Elaine LiMandri, who attended another one of the lunches, also felt Melancon was definitely listening to her. She thinks that through the Brown Bag Lunches, "He gets to see the little things that even directors and managers don't know. He gets a better idea of our attitude."

After the lunch, LiMandri was moved to send Melancon a thank you note because as she put it, she was "impressed that someone finally cared enough."



Cinema Trivia

Remember that because of snow days and distribution delays, the deadline for entry in Sports Trivia Contest #2 has been extended to Wednesday, January 31. Here, in the mean time, are the answers to those cinema trivia questions from last issue. The winner will win a movie-related prize.

1) Katherine Hepburn and Carey Grant both starred in the movies *Bringing Up Baby* and *Holiday*. Who directed these films?

George Cukor directed both these films.

2) What song drowned out the Nazis in *Casablanca*? **The patrons at Rick's drowned out the Nazis with a rousing rendition of the French national anthem, "La Marseillaise."**

3) We all remember Vivian Leigh's last line in *Gone with the Wind*, "Tomorrow is another day." But in what movie was her exit line, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers"?

She said this on her way to the psychiatric ward in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

4) Richard Gere starred in the 1980's remake of *Breathless*. Who starred in the original? Who directed it?

The original *Breathless* starred Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg. Jean-Luc Goddard directed it, and it was considered one of the first masterpieces of the French new wave in cinema.

5) Which character told Dustin Hoffman's character in *The Graduate* that the future was in plastics? **This piece of advice was offered to him by Mr. Robinson.**

6) In which Hollywood musical does Cyd Charisse take off Gene Kelley's glasses and twirl them around? **Cyd Charisse strutted around Gene Kelley and mussed up his otherwise tidy appearance in a fantasy sequence in *Singing in the Rain*.**

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What Do I Have to Lose?

By Susan Frohlich,
Personal Financial Planning Team

You invite some friends over for your retirement party. Everything is perfectly planned. But on the way to the party a guest trips over the garden hose you left lying on the walkway. She breaks a hip, is hospitalized, needs extensive therapy, and can't work. The next thing you know, instead of relaxing at the golf course, you are giving depositions, paying lawyers, and hoping this doesn't wipe you out. What can you do?

Beside putting away the garden hose, you need to look at these unexpected possibilities when planning your financial future. While saving and investing is an important part of financial planning, you have to be sure you have covered all the bases. What about insurance? You probably have many different types of insurance (health, disability, etc.). But one often overlooked area is personal liability insurance.

Personal liability insurance protects you against damages when another person claims that you caused their injury. The possible scenarios are endless, but consider what might happen if someone is bitten by your dog, falls in your driveway, home, or apartment, is injured in your car, or is somehow hurt by some action you took or failed to take. What will this cost in damage awards and legal fees if you are sued? Considering the size of damage awards and legal fees, it is not unthinkable that you would need \$1 million in coverage. Claims against you could include compensation for physical injury, monetary damage (loss of income), emotional stress, property damage, even slander and loss of cohabitation.

Although personal liability insurance is usually a part of homeowners and automobile policies (and may even be required in some states), you still need to answer some important questions, beginning with the question Is my coverage adequate to protect me and my property in the event of a lawsuit? For example, if the maximum amount of personal liability coverage available on your homeowners policy is \$300,000 and you decide you need \$1 million, you may want to obtain an umbrella policy, a separate contract which picks up where a homeowners or automobile policy leaves off.

You may also want to find out whether your personal liability policy covers intentional acts, such as slander, libel, and invasion of privacy. Your policy

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles contributed by the Personal Financial Planning Team that will appear periodically in *News & views*.

will probably not cover claims arising out of business pursuits, and you may want to consider adding such coverage. Read your policy to see exactly what is covered and what exclusions the policy has, and consider if you need coverage to fill in the gaps.

Finally, one group of people who often fail to obtain adequate personal liability insurance is renters. As a renter, you may not see the need for insurance, but if someone is injured in your apartment or a flood in your apartment damages other people's property you could end up footing the bill. Renters can purchase a renters policy and umbrella insurance also.

Another situation where you may not be covered is when you rent a car. Find out if your insurance policy covers you when you rent. If you don't have auto insurance, or if it doesn't cover you, you need to get coverage, either by adding it to your current policy or buying coverage from the car rental company.

Remember, without personal liability coverage, you are risking your financial future. No one likes to prepare for an accident, but planning for that possibility is also a part of your financial security.

A Word About Monthly Work Reports From the General Accounting Team

By Marc Simon, *General Accounting Team*

The Monthly Work Reports you submit each month are very important to the Institute. The information on these reports is used to allocate almost \$60 million of the Institute's expenses to its activities. This \$60 million of expenses, which covers salaries, personnel costs and occupancy, represents almost half of the Institute's total expenses. A timely, accurate allocation of these expenses is essential to our determining and analyzing the financial results of each of the Institute's activities.

As stated in the instructions on the back of each work report, the completed work report should be received by the Financial Analysis & Budget team no later than the 3rd working day of the month. Adherence to this deadline is essential to allow time for input of the several hundred reports as well as resolution of any problems on the reports. Non-compliance with the deadline has resulted in hours of time spent each month following up on missing reports.

If you would like more information or have any questions regarding Monthly Work Reports, please contact Marc Simon (x3818) or Eva Lem (x3237).

