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News



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Florida Chapter of APPA

College Planning and Management: It's About Our People

By: Michael G. Steger

At the Florida Chapter of APPA's 2015 Annual Educational Conference, E. Lander Medlin, APPA's Executive Vice President, presented our Keynote address. Among the many important points Lander spoke about, central to the conversation was that we are ultimately about people. We get our jobs done and support the mission of our institution through the work of our people. I've said many times before that "I am only as successful as my people make me!" I don't think I've ever once thought that "I'm only as successful as my systems/computer/network/program/app makes me."

Lander told story upon story of real life situations where the building custodian or maintenance person was somehow central in a student, faculty or staff member's life. Many times we become the first to detect a problem with a student, or the one that a student will reach out to in time of need or trouble. We may also be that first person to encourage a student through their studies, where many students come back and credit their success to that one person or situation. If we look around we can all certainly attest to this level of ownership and relationship with those whom we work with and around.

Oh sure, we need systems, computers, networks, programs and applications to help operate our campuses like never before. Technology has truly become an integral part of our operations and without it we would not enjoy the level of sophistication and efficiency we enjoy. Heck, I even saw a machine that uses electricity to create an interaction with plain tap water to create a cleaning solution. However, at the end of the day, all that technology is for naught without a person to program, implement, operate and maintain.

As facilities managers, technology is often easier to manage than our people. I've never had my building management system call in sick or need to take time off for a family emergency. However, because we do get our jobs done through our employees, we should slow down a bit in our techno-centric world and put the focus back on those individuals that help make us (the collective us...our departments and organizations) successful.

Has technology changed the way we think about and manage our people? You bet! However, we should never put technology over people! In a smaller organization it is relatively easy to know your employees and 'take their temperature' from time to time. By that I mean to be sure to regularly check in with them and make sure that all is well with them, both at work and away from work. In larger organizations, as leaders we must encourage our front line managers and supervisors to follow that same train of thought. While maintaining some sort of relationship with

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our employees seems like a common sense thing, we must continue to remind ourselves, and those that help us lead, to be intentional about the working relationships we maintain. When things get heated between employees I often remind them that I am not asking them to enjoy Sunday supper together each week, but that while we are on the job, it is imperative that we like each other enough to maintain a courteous working relationship! None of us are the same; each of us have a slightly different view of the world and a solid leader will be flexible enough to meet each of those folks somewhere in the middle when it comes to our working relationships.

By failing to
prepare, you are
preparing to fail.
~ Benjamin Franklin

I won't get into the many different 'types' of employees we have on our teams, but simply encourage us to encourage each of them in their specific jobs and work to build up their skills and abilities. The more confident our employees are in what they do, the more engaged they will be in how they do it, and therefore more engaged in the total operation of the facilities. When they are confident, they will pay closer attention to the work they do and those with whom they do it.

Custodians will readily turn in maintenance work orders or even make a minor repair, maintenance personnel will take a moment to pick up litter on campus or clean up a spill (or perhaps even clean up after themselves once they've completed a job!). Ultimately, this will result in the myriad examples Lander gave of facilities personnel connecting in positive ways with our students, faculty and staff!

Remember folks, it's not just maintenance! There is so much more to what we do and keeping tabs on our people first and our technology second will help ensure a fully successful operation!

From the President's Desk...

We are searching for a location for our 2017 Conference. Please contact us at info@flappa.org, if you can assist with our search.

Hope you all enjoyed your summer!

Ken Kropp

Hurricane Preparedness



We are a couple of months into Hurricane season and we still have a few months left. August is also back to school month, to say that we are busy is an understatement. It's a good time to remind ourselves that we need to be prepared in case of an emergency. The [Department of Homeland Security](#) and the [State of Florida](#) have many resources for us to use.

Don't forget your plan and share it with others.