

PARALLEL LINES

The Newsletter of the Association for Challenge Course Technology, Inc.

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Why do we gather at our annual conference? What makes it *different*?

by Cynthia Paris, Conference Committee Chair

Recently, I was talking with hotel staff and event planners regarding location selection for one of our future conferences. To persuade me to choose their great locations, they shared examples from the plumber's union trade show and the medical imaging conferences. While I agreed that both of those groups likely had great events, I felt strongly that our event is different than most other annual association gatherings. Sure, like other conferences, we have workshops and an exhibit hall and meetings...*but it's different, very different.*

If you haven't yet attended, you need to! Hundreds of your peers, your vendors, your clients, and your mentors will be together for a few fantastic days of sharing, rejuvenating their love of the industry as they learn the latest technology, activities, and strategies. But it's even more than that. It's difficult to describe.

How can I describe what it's like to "come home" to a hotel filled with so many people with so much in common? You grab a cup of coffee between workshops and hear a hearty discussion on the best belay techniques. Another group talks about how to get youth to really listen. Others discuss the challenges of marketing their business.

Why do we gather? What makes this conference so unique? For me, it's the great mix of people: builders, facilitators, managers, train-
(see Gather on page 4)



Photo by Chris Kelly

**21st Annual International
Challenge Course Symposium
and Conference
February 3–6, 2011**

 **meet IN
minnesota**

Thanks to the sponsors of the Minneapolis conference:
Hibbs-Hallmark & Company *Outdoor Ventures/Bornack*
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From the Board Chair

by Erik Marter

Doing the right thing is never easy. In fact I am pretty sure that it is usually the harder thing in the moment, but as we all know, it is always better in the long term.

I was recently getting on a ferry boat in northern Washington at 0-dark-thirty when I slowed down, opened my window, and gave a heartfelt “thank you” to the lady standing in the rain, in the dark, directing traffic. She replied with a rather short and angry “WHAT!” I came to a stop and said, “Thank you,” one more time. “For what?” came the response. “For helping out,” I said. She took a moment to process this, and as I was just about to head onto the ferry to avoid any honking from the cars behind me, her whole demeanor changed, and she brightened up and said with a huge grin, “You just made my whole day!”

Anyone who knows me knows I like to stop and talk with random people and start up conversations about almost anything. Although my sons are quite used to this, it still embarrasses them a bit, but at least I don’t sing in public anymore. The feeling I was left with after talking to Kathy, who was directing traffic, in the ferry line was that one person saying thank you “made my whole day.” One of my traveling companions asked if it makes me feel good to make someone’s day by saying thank you. Amazingly enough, I was actually bothered by the whole interaction.

It worries me that one person saying thank you for a job well done can change someone’s day from bad to good. It seems to me that authentic appreciations should be more of the norm and less of a once-a-month occurrence that has such a great impact on others. I left wondering about all of the other days and interactions that she had that were not so good and how difficult it must be when one person saying thank you can be the thing that makes your day a good or a bad one.

I seldom listened to the advice given by my parents or teachers; I do not follow any organized religion; I certainly don’t agree with all of our laws; but I do take great pride in doing the right thing. People don’t all agree on what the right thing is. We have things that are considered right within certain cultures and within different families, communities, and religions, and my

From the Heart

guess is that as we grow into the future, we will, as a society, discover more realities about what is and should be the “right” thing to do.

I think we all have a moral compass housed deep in the ethical department of our engine room. When I do the right thing for the right reasons, a bit of energy comes out of this room and into the rest of my being. I know I am doing the right thing when I am doing it. Conversely, I certainly know when I am not walking with integrity or “doing the right thing,” as it quickly sucks some of the energy out of me.

I am always amazed at how hard it is for people to figure this out on their own. I do believe that each moral compass needs to be set by the person it navigates, and it takes years of practice to properly calibrate your internal moral compass. It seems that we try and take too many short cuts with this by telling people constantly what is right and wrong, how to live their lives, what religion to follow, what philosophies to have, and so forth. I have found for myself that the truths I hold onto in this world I have had to discover on my own. I like to think that I figured them out on my own. The reality is that I have had many people helping in all sorts of ways. But in the end the learning was mine and mine alone.

- I acknowledge all of the wrongs from my past where my actions caused pain or suffering to others. I am thankful to have learned from those mistakes and feel sad that my learning had to come at the expense of others.
- I acknowledge all of the people out there who have wronged me in the past and have learned from their mistakes. I am glad to have been a part of their learning process.
- I acknowledge all those who have held my hand and comforted me through times of difficulty and growth.
- I acknowledge all those who have been strong enough to ask for and accept help as they were working to calibrate their own moral compass.
- I recognize the need to learn and grow, and hope that my learning happens in a way that has the smallest negative impact on others while bringing the greatest good to the rest of us.

(see From the Heart on next page)

From the Executive Director The Patriarch

by James Borishade

As many of you know, the last few weeks have been very trying with the untimely passing of my father. I want to thank each of you for your thoughts, prayers, and support through this difficult time. Two things helped me make it through this tough time—the support of my ACCT family and the continuing outpouring of kind words about Dad from everyone who knew him.

Honor, integrity, faithful, always available, and a man of his word—these words or phrases were used consistently when describing Dad, but there was one word that was used that will forever be embedded in my mind—patriarch!

I looked up the definition of the word patriarch. It describes a man who leads his family well. I can remember thinking—what a perfect description. I often find myself reminiscing about the times when Dad was faced with tough decisions and how he would strategically make each decision with the primary goal of putting our family in a better position for the future.

While I didn't understand every decision, I can look back and see how each one was in the best interest of the entire family. This is the type of legacy I believe we

are in the process of creating here at ACCT. We have a chance to lead one of the greatest and fastest growing industries in the world.

Over the next few months we will be faced with making strategic choices that will shape the future of our association. It is important for you to ensure that your voice is heard as we look to lead an association at the forefront of this great industry. I encourage each of you to consider running for a board seat or joining a committee. Meet with your board representative or committee chairs and ask questions to ensure that you are informed about the direction of the association.

As an association we must lead with honor, integrity, and poise and do so knowing that we are creating a legacy for which we will be held accountable by the future generations of our industry.

I recently read a quote by Warren Bennis that states, "Managers are people who do things right; leaders are people who do the right thing." This is the essence of true leadership. When we focus our attention on leading with the overall health of the industry as our number one priority, then will we be seen as the patriarchs of the challenge course industry.

From the Heart

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I bring all of this up now because I want to take this time to thank all of you for the last six years of learning. In February 2011 my term as board chair will end. I have spent the last six years as a volunteer working hard to help our association as it grows into its next iteration. We have tackled many obstacles while creating new directions and vision for the future—all of this with the intention of creating an association that serves the industry we all work in; a place for us to learn and grow, make mistakes and receive guidance; and feel success, belong, and provide the best services we can to our clients around the world.

I have learned an immense amount from those who came before me. They provided a base for me from which to work and have given valuable guidance and feedback along the way.

I have learned from those with whom I currently work. I have forged new friendships that will last a

lifetime while learning, growing, and becoming a better person.

I have made mistakes that have helped to shape me for the next chapter in my life. I have brought people together and in some cases alienated others. I have created some good methods and models and have been a part of many solutions.

I remember my first board meeting as if it were yesterday—I was scared. I was scared I would not fit in. I was scared I would make mistakes. I was scared I was not good enough. I no longer feel scared. Now I feel proud of the work I have done.

With that—thank you all for helping to guide me and for providing opportunities for me to learn and grow while I continue my lifelong journey of calibrating my own moral compass.

Update from the Operations/ Certification Standards Committee

by Scott Andrews, Chair,
Operations/Certification Standards Committee

The Operations/Certification Standards Committee continues to support the ANSI review process. The committee is also interested in increasing the number of members on the committee and has a strong desire to add members with experience in the canopy/zip line tour industry. If you have an interest in joining this committee, find an application in the Leadership section on the committee page of the ACCT website, or e-mail James Borishade (james@acctinfo.org).

Register for the conference at the regular registration fee by January 7, 2011.

Gather

(continued from page 1)

ers, educators, and enthusiastic professionals together for a few days. Sure, we all have our own perspectives on things and that can make for interesting talks and debate. But what unites everyone is a genuine passion for the industry. This group is as genuine as it gets. Ask a question, and you will get real answers and opinions from people out in the field, doing the work. You can find people who have tried various methods and are quite willing to share what worked and what didn't. Exchange e-mails and new acquaintances soon become friends as they keep you updated on progress throughout the year. The camaraderie comes easily with this enthusiastic crowd!

This year we have an incredible number of talented people attending, presenting, and exhibiting. Whatever information you need, you can find it at this conference. By your requests, we have added a workshop track for canopy and zip line tours. Also by request, the facilitation and programming track is extensive, covering a wide range of group types. Operation and management topics are an excellent way to learn the most efficient and effective methods of course management. Professionals will also be presenting a variety of technical workshops that focus on building, inspecting, and equipment details. Our annual conference is also the best place to attend a session on the latest happenings in the industry.

Look at what will be offered at the Extended Learning Workshops on Sunday at the conference!

Consider attending a three-hour workshop at the ACCT conference on Sunday morning, February 6, 2011, for extended learning opportunities. Here are the three workshops that we currently have scheduled for that time. Preregistration is not necessary. Just show up that morning! Plan your departure times accordingly.

Ten Things About the Brain Every Outdoor Leader Should Know by Cris Kelly, Andy Stone, & Manda Severin
Brain research is all the rage these days, and the challenge course industry is not utilizing this amazing information to its full potential. In this workshop, we will mix lecture, discussion, and activities to better our ability at incorporating the latest brain research into our programs. We will specifically apply this special knowledge to concepts such as the comfort zone, the fear of heights, unconscious problem solving, and other common conversations facilitated by challenge courses and other team building venues.

Team Building Accessories Kit by Dave Mueller
Inexpensive, lightweight, and versatile—initiatives like Group Juggle, Blind Polygon, Worm Hole, and others will be presented. We will also provide a materials list and information on where to purchase the materials so that practitioners can assemble their own accessories kit.

A Recipe for Synergy: Cooking with Accessible and Universal Design by Don Rogers, PhD, CTRS
The session will review examples of accessible and Universal challenge course designs. New information will be shared about Universal design. Open and group discussions will explore the benefits of these and other specific ideas and applications. The goal of this session is to create an intuitive model for synergy that draws on features of accessible and Universal design.

As it gets closer, I can hardly wait to see my old friends and to make new ones. I am looking forward to seeing you in Minneapolis on February 3–6, 2011! And hey! Win a t-shirt! E-mail me with your thoughts as to why we gather and what makes our annual conference unique. E-mails will be entered in a drawing for an ACCT t-shirt.

Canopy and Zip Line Tours—Education Is Priceless!

By popular demand, this year's conference in Minneapolis will include a complete track of workshops related to the canopy and zip line tour industry. Here is a list of the workshops currently planned with abbreviated descriptions.

For complete descriptions of these workshops and for descriptions of others that will be presented at the conference, go to the ACCT website (www.acctinfo.org).

The Feasibility of Canopy Tours

What does it take to make a canopy tour financially successful in the long run? What do you need to know *before* you build?

Climbing Tropical Trees

This workshop is about how to better climb trees in the tropics. The idea is to share the techniques and practices that have served us in the past.

Design vs. Operation

This workshop is a discussion on how industry best practices in course design can optimize course flow, risk management, overall safety, ergonomics, participant experience, operational systems, and other factors that make canopy tours world class.



Photo by Jim Granely

Tree Assessment and Selection for Canopy Zip Lines and Walkways

This workshop will focus on assessing trees for selection as structural supports for canopy walkways and zip lines. We will discuss the different tools and techniques.

Legal Issues for the Zip Line Operator

The legal issues in operating a canopy and zip line tour are not the same as those operating a traditional challenge course. We will discuss the differences and more.



Are You Ready? Evaluating Your Emergency Action Plan

This workshop will help you to evaluate the emergency action plan and procedures for your canopy or zip line tour.

Zip Line Braking Systems

This workshop will address the history of the zip line braking system, and we will address the current ACCT standards for braking systems and other standards from around the globe.

Canopy Tour Managers Training

We will share several aspects of effective canopy tour management by asking the question, "What should be included in a training for canopy tour managers?"

Bolting or Wrapping: Tree Anchor Systems for Canopy Tours

The pros and cons of bolting and wrapping anchor systems based on case studies in tropical environments and how to decide which system to use.

Canopy/Zip Line Tour Insurance in Plain English

Learn about the various property and casualty risks associated with operating a zip line tour or adventure park.



Facilitator's Toolbox Importance of Sequencing

by Jennifer Stanchfield

(This article, with a few updates, originally appeared in the Winter 2007 Issue of Parallel Lines and was reprinted by request.)

Sequencing involves consciously and thoughtfully presenting activities in a specific order to maximize learning and the emotional and physical safety of the group. Being thoughtful, observant, and intentional in your planning, presentation, and evaluation of activities is one of the most important aspects of effective group facilitation and team building.

There is no specific formula or “correct way” to sequence programs, activities, or classroom lessons. Approach sequencing as a dynamic process that takes into careful consideration the group’s goals and agenda, participants’ emotional and physical safety, the personality and dynamics of the group, available activities, allotted time, and the physical environment.

Effective facilitators pay attention to the group development process and allow time for trust building. It is important to balance the level of the activity or the challenge presented and the participant’s ability to meet the challenge or activity. Leaders need to continually observe their group in order to be sure the activities they select fit the needs and goals of the group and the specific situation.

The time needed for participants to create relationships and build trust is different for every group. When interpersonal connections and sense of community is developed, groups will take learning further and get more benefit out of the group activities they engage in. Allow time for this to happen by choosing activities that build upon each other.

When sequencing activities, be sensitive to the time of day and the physical comfort and attention span of group members. Being flexible as a facilitator in dealing with the unexpected is key. Listen to your group, and be prepared to change your plan midstream in order to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the group and to take advantage of new opportunities for learning that emerge as a group works together.

I have found that even when working with different groups with similar characteristics in the same setting, with the same program goals, the actual lesson plan changes with each group in response to the group’s emerging unique personality and needs. Every group has a different personality and participates in activities in different ways.

Activities you carefully plan prior to a workshop or group session may be specifically relevant for one group’s personality and needs and not another’s. This is one of the exciting aspects of group facilitation. Group experiences vary, and opportunities to take advantage of teachable moments differ with each group. Facilitators develop the art of reading their group and adjusting activities in a creative way throughout group process to move learning and change forward.

Careful sequencing maximizes participation by allowing people to engage at a pace that works for them. Experiential group work can be very powerful. If groups are ready to engage in the process, great things can occur. Conversely, if a group is not emotionally or physically ready to encounter certain “learning adventures,” the experience could be damaging or inhibit growth and learning. An effective facilitator approaches activities with intention, thoughtfulness, and flexibility—continuously evaluating the group and refining the plan as needed.

Sequencing Suggestions

- Be ready with a continuum of activities. It is important to have a repertoire of activities that build upon each other. Having activities in your “back pocket” allows you to be ready to deal with changes in direction and learning opportunities that arise in an ever-changing group.
- Be flexible enough to throw out or let go of that well-developed plan if the group needs are different than expected.
- “Indicator” activities are helpful. Know some activities that help you read and evaluate the group. For example, before facilitating on a challenge course and teaching safety systems, I facilitate a fun, partnered tag activity that involves moving around in a small space, introducing the idea of appropriate touch in a simple tag game in close personal space, which is important to the spotting techniques necessary on the challenge course. It also helps me evaluate whether the group is engaged and ready to take the responsibility of balancing fun with safe, focused behavior.

(see Sequencing on next page)

PR/Marketing Committee Choosing New Logo Design

by Lindsay Wiseman James, Chair,
PR/Marketing Committee

The PR/Marketing Committee has most recently taken a different direction to select and finalize the new ACCT logo. We started a contest on Hatchwise.com in late October with the purpose of engaging a wide range of graphic designers, who then submitted a variety of new logo options to our committee. The response was tremendous with over 350 entries. As a committee we chose our top selections, which will be presented to the board. We are hopeful that a new logo will be determined soon, and we can then unveil the design and supportive marketing materials to our members and great community. Once the early rebranding phase is behind us, we look forward to working with James to begin designing a new website for ACCT.



Sequencing

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- Let students know what is expected of them and the type of activities they will be participating in.
- When informing the group about the upcoming activities, you don't have to give away the novelty of your approach. Also, if difficult and reluctant students make a choice not to participate, at least they know what opportunities they might be missing.
- Continually observe your group and reevaluate your plan.
- Be sensitive to the time of day and physical environment when presenting activities.
- Take time to build relationships and trust between group members
- Be prepared for the unexpected.
- Take advantage of teachable moments.
- Choose activities that build upon each other.

- Be willing to let go of your agenda to meet the needs of the group.

Many times I have carefully planned out activities and prepared supplies for a group in advance only to completely let that plan go after the group has shown me that they had very different needs than I expected. Each individual class always varies in their response to activities as well, gleaned different insights and lessons from the experience. That is the beauty of what we do in experiential facilitation. We meet people where they are and nurture spontaneity of experience to take advantage of teachable moments.

Join me and other facilitators for a session of fun and sharing in the session, "Facilitator's Toolbox Live," at the upcoming ACCT conference. Bring a favorite opening or closing activity, team initiative, or processing tool and leave with new ideas to add to your facilitation repertoire. See you in Minneapolis! (Contact me at jen@experientialtools.com.)



Photos by Jim Grady

You will find evidence of sequences in many aspects of our lives. Tom Zartman and his wife, Kathy, demonstrate.



Builder's Toolbox

by Adam Bondeson

Work Horse

Many specialized tools on the market can be used in the installation or inspection of a challenge course or related structure. Many of these tools are well designed but also carry a hefty price tag. When I look at or evaluate tools, I tend to favor objects that are simple or that have many uses. I am drawn to simple solutions and tools that serve multiple purposes and help make the average work day a little smoother.

Recently I came across a great idea, The Clydesdale™ work platform. These are basically giant tinker toys for the job site. The frames are cast aluminum, which make them light and strong, and have many pockets and slots, which create “pinch points” that clasp standard dimensional lumber in place. No fasteners are needed, and the possibilities seem almost endless, based on how much lumber you have lying around. The frames are quick and easy to set up and take up very little space when transporting them. I have seen variations on this theme from other companies, but frankly I have never seen anything quite so useful with so many options. The company lists raised work platform, offloading ramp, and picnic table as just a few uses on top of the basic sawhorse.

The Clydesdale can be ordered directly from the manufacturer by contacting www.the-clydesdale.com. Regularly \$325 a pair, they're now on sale for \$295 with free shipping when you use Savings Code CC01210.



The Clydesdale becomes instant scaffolding.

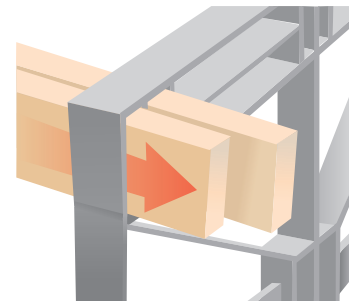


Add lumber and a pair of The Clydesdales become instant work tables, sawhorses, any kind of work platform



The Clydesdales can be work platform or loading ramp.

Photos used with permission.



Slide dimensional lumber into any of the 20 pockets and slots. Pinch Points lock the lumber in place without fasteners.

ACCT Challenge Course & Canopy/Zip Line Tours Standards

The Seventh Edition of the ACCT Challenge Course and Canopy/Zip Line Tour Standards is available from the ACCT Membership Office. Individual copies are \$60 US, plus shipping. Discounts are available for multiple copies. Order online or use the order form which is posted online and available from the ACCT office. Contact the ACCT office to order more than 5 copies.

*Checks, money orders, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and purchase orders (U.S. only) are accepted. A copy of the purchase order must accompany any order.

ACCT Membership

Associate Membership

This level is open to all interested individuals and organizations. Associate Membership benefits include a copy of the ACCT Challenge Course and Canopy/Zip Line Tour Standards at the time of joining; a subscription to our newsletter, *Parallel Lines*, that is published three times a year; a discount for the annual ACCT conference; and access to the ACCT-sponsored insurance company coverage for challenge course programs.

Membership period: 1 year

Annual Membership dues: \$85 USD

Institutional Membership

This level is open to any interested organization. Institutional membership benefits include four copies of the Standards at the time of joining; four copies of *Parallel Lines*; and discounted rates for four employees to attend the annual conference.

Membership period: 1 year

Annual Membership dues: \$275 USD

Professional Vendor Member (PVM)

Professional Vendor Members are challenge course service providers who have successfully completed the ACCT PVM accreditation process, accumulated the required number of days of experience, and who provide challenge course and/or canopy/zip line tour installation and inspections, and/or practitioner training and certification services. Contact the Professional Services manager for additional information.

Membership period: 1 year

Annual Membership dues: \$1,800 USD

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FAQs from the Installations Standards Committee

Please send any questions that you would like to have answered in this format
to the Installation Standards Committee, c/o Rich Klajnscek, Chair; rich@seafoxconsulting.com

Grandfather and Two Ferrules

What older designs and techniques can be “grandfathered”?

Due to the fact that challenge courses have been around for about 40 years, it is clear that many of the courses still being used were built using techniques that are not found anywhere in the current standards book, and the variety of what the inspector might see out there is pretty large. With this in mind, inspectors are asked to evaluate a wide variety of designs, installation materials, and methods and judge if they meet the ACCT standards and even the standards of their company. Ultimately, the choice one makes about whether to pass or fail an element on inspection is based on what you (representing your company) are willing to “buy” for the next year. Whether you like it or not, you are hitching yourself to your client from an insurance perspective, so you’d better be comfortable with your choice. Obviously, many of the things you see out there won’t meet all of the current installation standards, especially those standards that are specific enough to include certain materials and techniques. The question is, of course, what can be passed and what is no longer acceptable. When you read the current inspection standards, you’ll notice that when it comes to standards of strength and quality/reliability, we have referred you back to the related Installation Standard—you are obliged to comply with the current standards for strength and reliability. Examples are B2.2.1 *Critical Guys*, C1 *Belay Cables*, C2 *Belay Beams*, C3 *Personal Protection Anchors*, D2 *Critical Cables (Activity Support Systems)*, and E3 *Critical Cable Terminations*. If the element passes the strength and quality test, you should then ask yourself if the system in question will last another year with an acceptably low probability of failure. If both answers are yes, then you may give it a green light for another year.

Do I need two copper ferrules on each end of a cable tether for a primary belay ground anchor?

Section E3 of the Installation Standards addresses the issue of ferrules on cables in critical applications. What it says is the following:

“On critical belay, GUY, and activity support cables as determined in Appendix B—Critical Applications

- Swaged fittings using ferrules (oval sleeves) of copper, zinc-plated copper, and stainless steel (for stainless steel wire rope) that conform to Military Standard MS-51844 SHALL be used to fabricate eyes or splices in wire rope. The swaged fittings SHALL be installed according to the manufacturer’s recommendations for compressions.
- One additional clip or ferrule from the manufacturer’s recommended number SHALL be employed.”

Notice that this standard applies to belay, guy, and activity support cables. The definition of *BELAY CABLE* in the standards is “a horizontal or vertical *LIFELINE* made from flexible wire rope with termination hardware for securing it between appropriate anchors at each end. Zip line cables are considered *BELAY CABLES* in this standard.” This standard also requires that ferrules are to be made from copper according the Mil. Spec. cited. There is no Mil. Spec. for aluminum ferrules, so there is nothing we can “hang our hat on.” Unless you are in parts of the world where aluminum ferrules have a quality specification equivalent to the Mil. Spec. in the United States, copper is the material required in these applications.

By this definition, cables that are used as tethers to connect a belay device to a participant are not considered *BELAY CABLES* and therefore do not require an additional ferrule. Each of these cables are used in *CRITICAL APPLICATIONS* because they are relied upon to keep the participant in the air, so you are still held to Standard C5 *Verification of Critical Cable and*

(see Ferrules on next page)

Join, Plus Volunteer and Attend—Why?

by Scott Andrews, Chair of Operations/Certification Standards Committee

Recently a staff member asked me what I get out of being a member of ACCT. I answered that I enjoy the people I meet, and I learn a great deal from being part of the larger community of challenge course and canopy/zip line folks. Seemed simple enough.

Later as I drove home, I got to thinking about that answer, and I realized I had not done it justice. I get a great deal more out of my membership and volunteering. Like most things in my life, I get out what I put in. Here is a more complete list of what I get out of my membership in and volunteering with ACCT.

Each time I walk into a conference, I feel like I am not alone. Lots of others “run around” in the woods encouraging people to walk on cables and to share their feelings, advancing the practices of their teams. Even though I work in a strong community here in the Pacific Northwest, I need the assurance that I am not alone. Just seeing people who have similar interests makes me more comfortable.

Ferrules

(continued from previous page)

Anchor Integrity. If a single cable is being asked to perform this duty on its own, it is a critical cable. The fact that the tether cable does not fit into the category of belay, guy, or activity support cables could be considered a loophole that allows you to use aluminum ferrules. However, our intention is that aluminum ferrules are not acceptable terminations on these critical cables.

Each time I attend a workshop and hear other practitioners talk about their work or hear builders talk about a new technique, I get smarter. I expand the boundaries of what I know—the light of my knowledge casts a slightly larger circle onto the things I do not know. Sometimes I get a glimpse of just how little I know from that expanse of knowledge out there. That glimpse is like standing on the shore and for just a moment seeing the light of a distant ship. In an instant, I understand that the sea is vast, and I want the adventure of going out there.

I meet people from many places and many different kinds of programs, and I get great new ideas from them. I mull over these ideas, and they color and inform my work. Someone presents a workshop on belay devices, and I consider what I use and why. Is there a better method or tool? Why am I using this particular method? Could I use a better tool or a better technique? I may not change

what I do, but because I ask the questions, my practice is better.

I have been an ACCT volunteer for many years. I think volunteering is the most rewarding. I do tough work with some of the smartest people around. I listen to them, and I try hard to contribute. My ideas are challenged, and I learn. I grow in my appreciation and commitment to what we do. My respect for the people who do what we do increases. This is all good. It is not, however, the most important thing. When I volunteer, I make a statement—“What we do matters, and I show it with the way I spend my precious time on this earth. It is the contribution I make.”

So if you are asking, “Why should I be a member?” or “Should I attend the conference in February?”, I challenge you to step out to find out, to expand your knowledge, and to see all those others who are doing the same. If you are very brave and want great rewards, join, participate, and volunteer.

What Important Work Does the Association Do that Benefits Me as a Member?

Here are some activities in which ACCT is involved:

- Sets standards for installation, maintenance, and management of challenge courses and canopy/zip line tours
- Conducts forums for education and professional development
- Monitors legislation that affects challenge courses and canopy/zip line tours
- Lobbies for improved legislation and regulation, as appropriate
- Provides networking opportunities for programmers, managers, owners, entrepreneurs, builders, educators, and others
- Notifies members of product recalls from inside the industry
- Negotiates availability of discounted insurance for members

Poetry Works!

by Faith Evans and David Markwardt

You've Got to Stink

My teacher says,
You've got to stink first.

I tell her, I don't have time to stink—
At 64 years old
I go directly to perfection
Or I go nowhere.

Perfection is nowhere,
she says, So stink.
Stink like a beginner,
stink like decaying flesh,
old blood,
cold sweat,
she says,
I know a woman who's eighty-six,
Last year she learned to dive.

—Lisa Colt

Used with permission from the author

Stinking in any form, at any time, is not something most adults are willing to do. We want to begin in the middle or at the end of learning something new. We strategically avoid looking like, or acting like, a beginner or running the risk of “stinking”—which is shorthand for failing or flopping or appearing less than perfect.

It's curious to remember that we all started life stinking...dirty diapers were, and still are, a fact of life for a newborn. Not one of us was born potty trained! Yet with time, patience, and in many cases, perseverance, those annoying, stinky diapers faded into childhood obscurity along with skinned knees and bloody noses, predictable and instructive hallmarks of beginner's mind and body.

With all safety parameters in place, the challenge course or rock climbing environment is an ideal opportunity for participants to stink, even to *fail forward*, and to apply their learnings from a stinky first attempt to a second or third attempt. Perfection, a goal in its own good time, has little value for the beginner if it limits action or paralyzes creativity. In Colt's poem, the dramatic example of an 86-year-old learning to dive leaves the distinct impression that some “stinking” had to happen.

So, add two more words to your battle cry of “Let's do it” and shout, “Let's stink!” People will wonder what you're up to!!

Faith Evans is the owner of PlayFully, Inc. (faithevans@aol.com); and David Markwardt is the Teamwork in Action Director at Santa Fe Community College (davidmarkwardt@comcast.net).

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An article in the series, "Things We Learned the Hard Way"

Sticks and Stones

by Adam Bondeson

The challenge program at the University of Extended Higher Learning ran a low challenge program for teams and groups on campus. The course was built in a small wooded area near the coast. The area had lots of mature trees that provided the support for many of the elements as well as shade and a unique environment away from the main part of campus.

On a recent fall day Larry, the Low Ropes guy, was setting up the course for a small group of students who were going to use it. There had been some thunderstorms earlier in the week, so Larry had to clear some debris from around some of the elements.

Larry was about halfway through his four-hour program when the group came to the Nitro Crossing. The group struggled through the element, having to send several people back again. Larry sensed a learning opportunity and asked his group to circle up next to the element. The group began to talk about what worked and what didn't, and a great conversation ensued about how the group could adapt and change some things back in the real world based on their experience. As the conversation was wrapping up, there was a crashing sound behind the group. Everyone turned, and several people darted away, not knowing what had happened.

As it turns out, the storms earlier in the week had knocked a dead branch out of one of the support trees for the Nitro Crossing. The dead limb was hanging suspended over the element while the group was on it. The swaying action of the trees dislodged the branch, and fortunately for the group, it did not fall until after they had moved away. Only luck kept the branch from doing more than just raising their blood pressure.

Most challenge course trainings cover some type of quick daily assessment of the equipment to be used. Because this was a low ropes course, Larry walked around and looked at ground level to see if the course had changed or if there were any new hazards. In this case the element was connected to the trees (or *under* the trees), so the entire area, up and down, should be checked. Therefore, when doing a daily assessment of a challenge course, it is important to look at the entire system for any potential problems.

Nominations Wanted for the Board of Directors

Four board positions are open for this next year. Professional Vendor Members will elect individuals for *three* positions. For ballot inclusion, nominees for this position must submit a statement by December 21, 2010. The Associate and Institutional members will elect an individual for *one* position. Nominees for this position must submit a statement by December 11, 2010, to be listed in the online voting.

For information on voting procedures, please visit www.acctinfo.org.

Support. Serve. Lend a hand. Pitch in.

If you are interested in assisting the conference committee, send an e-mail to the ACCT office (info@acctinfo.org) or to Cynthia Paris (cparisconsulting@gmail.com).

HELP WANTED

If you are interested in serving on an ACCT committee, you can find an application in the Leadership section on the committee page of the ACCT website, or e-mail James Borishade (james@acctinfo.org) for an application. Openings are available for

PR/Marketing Committee—two openings
Operations/Certification Standards Committee

Creating a Culture for Assessment—Part 2

Liz Speelman & Dr. Jude Hirsch



In the original article “Creating a Culture for Assessment” (see *Parallel Lines*, Fall 2009), the theme was to encourage practitioners to record detail about programs to contribute to ongoing assessment practice. Examples of the depth and breadth of detail included details about the program such as intended and actual activities and duration; about participants such as age, gender, clinical assessment, or outcome-related characteristics; about the purpose of the program such as individual, group, or agency goals; about the location of the program such as its physical characteristics and environmental factors; and about program leadership such as level of experience, training, age, and employment status. In summary, ask yourself if your program could be replicated based on information in the program file. Ensuring that your organization is capturing as much detail as possible is critical for creating and sustaining a culture of assessment; however, it is one step on a continuum of activities that enhance good assessment practice, regardless of context or how the results are used.

It is important to know where your organization is on this continuum so that you can plan to move forward at a pace that fits your assessment goals and resources. A good exercise is to describe in detail the information that you currently and consistently gather throughout the process of designing and implementing a program. Invite coworkers to do the same and see if the lists match. Then collaborate to develop a list of information that you could or should collect in the spirit of assessment. The combination is a good indication of where you want to be and is a good opportunity to discuss assessment practices that don’t necessarily require an expert.

Next, place the items in one of three categories: program evaluation (items that are focused on program quality), outcome assessment (items that are focused on program goals and objectives), and markers (items that focus on participant and staff demographics and program delivery and context). Markers define a program and the participants. This is the type of information that was mentioned in the first article. By its nature, this is the “easy” information to collect. These are your “knowns”—but only if you record them! They are used to separate data into categories that will provide insight into specific

program data and permit comparison across programs. For example, you may want to know if the impact of your program is different for younger or older participants, or if it differs for low challenge course versus high challenge course programs, or if the duration of the program affects the impact. This is the data that will create categories that permit you to answer these types of questions.

Outcome assessment... is about asking, “Did the programming have an impact on a particular outcome?”

Program evaluation is information related to participant or sponsor satisfaction with program elements that your organization believes to be important. Did they enjoy the food? Were the facilities clean and accessible? Were the facilitators supportive and knowledgeable? Did the activities meet the goals of the group? A range of possibilities and strategies are

used to evaluate programs. Some are short and address the basics, and others are quite long and detailed. Most often program evaluation strategies are organization specific and part of a more comprehensive marketing plan. While the categories may be generic, the data often is not generalizable across types of programs within an organization or to other organizations.

Outcome assessment is about the impact of a program or specific strategy on individuals or groups. It is about asking the question, “Did the ‘treatment’ (programming) have an impact on a particular outcome or group of outcomes—was there a change that can be attributed to programming?” Normally outcome assessment is accomplished by using an instrument that has been tested to ensure that it is reliable. These measures include self-efficacy, depression, locus of control, team development, and literally hundreds of other categories. The key is to match this measure with the needs of the group. For example, a group that comes into a program with a high level of self-efficacy may not show a large amount of change over the course of the program, but that does not mean that other changes are not occurring.

Now that you have a general sense of where you are as an organization, the next question is where do you want to go? What is it that you currently do with all the information that is on your list? Does it go in a file, get placed on a shelf, and get forgotten about? Does this phrase sound familiar?— “We record all the information about our

(see *Culture on next page*)

Regulatory Issues Addressed

by Gregory Allen, Chair, Government Relations Committee

Since our last report, we (the Government Relations Committee and a host of other ACCT professional staff members) have spent countless hours and a great deal of energy in trying to deal with the many regulatory issues that have popped up on the radar screen over the course of the last six months.

The biggest project we have taken on (with the gracious help of a special advisory group) is the creation of a regulatory position paper that follows the association's mission and vision and will set the stage for how we deal with past, present, and future regulatory issues. This position paper is in its final stages and will face

board review prior to its acceptance as the official ACCT Position on Government Regulation.

One of the largest victories in the past six months for our industry came in Maryland, where an "aerial ropes course" there was found (by one of the Assistant Attorney Generals for the Division of Labor & Industry at the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation) to be "not a facility that falls within the definition of an amusement ride, and is therefore not subject to the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation." The information went on further to say, "The Department's determi-

nation is based on several factors, among them being that because this ropes/challenge course is not 'mechanized' and not designed to convey individuals over a fixed course," they do not feel that this meets the definition of a "structure" that is defined to give thrills. This was a milestone case and one we should hear more about in the near future.

If you have any questions or information regarding specific regulations in or around your area, please contact your professional vendor member immediately, or contact me at greg@visionaryadventure.com. We will attempt to keep you as informed as possible.

Culture

(continued from previous page)

those possible needs for your organization? Certainly from a risk management standpoint, it is critical to record data related to your program. The information that is collected can also serve to highlight trends in an organization. When viewed in isolation of a single program, this data might seem insignificant, but if the same results continue to occur, it is valuable to try to understand why they might be occurring—both from a positive and negative perspective. While you might want to change something that is producing negative results, it is important to be able to articulate and capture what contributes to the positive impacts as well. This eventually might lead to the realization that you could be collecting other data that would further define your outcomes. Assessment and evaluation are part of a process, not the end product.

To maintain a positive culture for assessment for any individual or organization, some value has to be related to the collection of all types of data. If a facilitator is under the impression that all of their program notes simply go in a box never to be seen again, the quality of those notes will eventually decrease. If an organization does not have a clear reason for collecting their data, the information

programs so that if we ever need it in the future we will have it." What are some of

that is collected may not match with valuable outcomes related to the participant's or organization's needs. A critical question to ask is "What would happen if it were lost?" Who and what would be impacted if you did not have the information that you are currently collecting? It is certainly true that you don't know what you have until it's gone. Taking time to know and understand what you have is a valuable process. Inviting all levels of staff into the assessment process also creates an understanding of the value for the organization and the role that staff play in that process.

Your challenge is this. Now that you have an understanding of your current position on the assessment continuum, what does your ideal place on that continuum look like? Where do you as an organization want to go? Most importantly, what are one or two action steps that can put you on the path to get closer to that ideal? Keep the big picture in mind, but don't let it get in the way of creating a positive and healthy environment for assessment.

Liz Speelman is the Director of the Outdoor Center at Georgia College & State University and teaches challenge course facilitation and management in the outdoor education program.

Jude Hirsch, Ed.D., is the Chair of the Department of Outdoor Education and a professor of Outdoor Education at Georgia College & State University.

Announcements

All conference information will be posted on the website as it becomes available (www.acctinfo.org).

ACCT is testing an online version of Parallel Lines. If you are interested in receiving a printed copy, please contact the ACCT office at 800-991-0286, ext. 912, or at info@acctinfo.org.

ACCT is pleased to welcome Outdoor Specialist Pte Ltd (Tony Yap Chong Tian & Colin Caines), our newest Professional Vendor Member as of October 19, 2010.

The Winter PVM Symposium will be on February 1–2 in Minneapolis. New goals include more educational workshops and professional development opportunities. Go to the website to register. If needed, call Sonny for help.

Please note new phone numbers for the ACCT office and staff (see page 9).



Looking for a job? Need to hire someone for a job? Check the Jobs Listing on the ACCT website (www.acctinfo.org).

Calendar of Events

Date	Event
December 11, 2010	Deadline for Associate & Institutional nominations for Board of Directors
December 16, 2010	Associate & Institutional members vote online until January 16, 2011 for board member
December 21, 2010	Ballot inclusion deadline for nominations for position on Board of Directors to be elected by PVMS
January 7, 2011	Deadline to register for conference at the regular registration fee
January 31, 2011	Board Meeting—Minneapolis
February 1–2, 2011	PVM Symposium—Minneapolis
February 3–6, 2011	ACCT Conference—Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 6, 2011	Board Meeting—Minneapolis
March 15, 2011	Parallel Lines Spring Issue deadline
April 15, 2011	Parallel Lines Spring Issue published
February 9–12, 2012	ACCT Conference—Boston, Massachusetts



Photo by Janice Gravely

While networking during the final dinner at last year's conference in Atlanta, Jim Gravely and Mady Öztas, Sonny's daughter, learned a critical skill, which they demonstrate here. Attend the conference in Minneapolis to see what you can learn and who you can meet.



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