



NACOP Newsletter

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Message from the Senior Co-Chair

By Sherri Buxton, MWA



This will be the last time I will be co-writing this column as the Senior Co-Chair of the National Council for Office Professionals (NACOP). I will be rotating off the Council at the end of our June meeting and will be serving for an additional year as an Ex-Officio member to assist Debra Duckworth and her new Co-Chair with the transition. I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on my experiences with the NACOP.

I have been a member of the Council for three years, last year serving as Junior Co-Chair with Barbie Ballengee, and this year serving as Senior Co-Chair with Debra Duckworth. I have seen the Council grow tremendously during this time due to the outstanding contributions of our members. It has been truly rewarding to work with such a professional, dedicated group. The past three years have been a wonderful experience for me with an opportunity for growth both personally and professionally.

In reflecting over the years, I would like to mention some of the highlights of the Council I've had the pleasure of working with. The first year was dedicated to organizing and planning our second national conference, "Quest to be the

Best: Striving for Professional Excellence." I was awed by the amount of teamwork that was displayed not only by the NACOP but by the local councils through their contributions to the conference. The booths were once again outstanding and reflected the commitment of the office professional to the mission of the Agricultural Research Service. At the end of the conference, your evaluations confirmed that the meeting was a success, and the conference provided the participant with a wonderful learning experience, as well as a great opportunity to network with peers and management.

The second year, the Council made a commitment to reinvent our organization and make ourselves more visible to the public. The Council identified numerous goals to facilitate this. The first priority was to get our website back up and running. The second was to reinstitute a quarterly newsletter that would provide the office professional with useful hints and helpful tools to do their job effectively. The third was to develop a brochure for distribution that describes the history and achievements of the Council. Our final priority was to develop a mobile display booth to market ourselves. The Council accomplished every one of these goals and more. In June 2004, the Council celebrated their 10-year anniversary. To commemorate this event, a NACOP 10-year anniversary pin

was designed by the members and distributed to every office professional in the Agency. The Council invited all previous Council members to attend their annual meeting to reflect on the past and to look to the future. This meeting provided the groundwork for the years to come.

This year has been as eventful as the past two. The Council has undertaken several initiatives and completed them for your use. The newsletter has been enhanced; the webpage updated with new information; the mentoring program has been reviewed and enhanced; and a new section has been added to the webpage called, "Resource Assistance." Several other initiatives are still pending and anticipated to be released shortly.

As you can see, it has been an exciting, rewarding time to be a part of the NACOP. A special thanks to the members that I have had the opportunity to work with. And, I would be remiss without acknowledging the outstanding assistance I have experienced through the advice of our technical advisors, Toni Walls, Clarice Carter, Cathy Lonaberger, and Rhonda Horton, as well as the support of our sponsor, James Bradley.

In closing, I would like to encourage each of you to become an active member in your local council's activities. Take a chance, step out of the box, and be willing to step up to new challenges. And, if you are asked at some time in your career to be a part of the National Council, I encourage you to do so. I'm sure you will feel, as I do, a sincere sense of pride and accomplishment through working with this group.

Correspondence

By Cathy Lonaberger, OA

Following are examples of commonly misused words.

See how many you may have come across.



Affect, Effect

"Affect" is a verb. It means "to change" or "to influence." "Effect" can be a verb or a noun. As a verb, it means "to cause;" as a noun, it means "a result."

Allude, Elude

You "allude" to "make reference to" a book; you "elude" or "run away from" someone who is chasing you.

Alot

An "alot" is a camel. One thing we do not need in the office is a lot of "alots."

And/Or

A shortcut that looks and reads bad can lead to confusion or ambiguity. Avoid using "and/or" whenever possible.

Anybody, Anyone

"Anybody" is written as one word when it refers to "any person." "Any body" as two words means "any corpse" or "any group." The same is true for "everybody," "nobody," and "somebody." "Anyone" means anybody; "any one" means "any single person" or "any single thing."

Assure, Ensure, Insure

To "assure" is to "speak confidently" about something; "ensure" is "to make sure" or "to make certain;" "to insure" is "to protect something against loss or damage with an insurance policy."

Being

"Being" is not needed after "regard" in sentences such as, "he was regarded as being the best." A better way of phrasing this thought is, "he was regarded as the best."

Can, May

"Can" means "able to;" "may" means "permit." "Can I leave work early?" means --- "Am I able to leave work early?" --- "Is all my work done?"

--- “Are my legs strong enough to carry me away?” “May I leave work early?” means “May I have permission to go home?”

Data

Like “media” and “phenomena,” “data” is plural. It refers to more than one fact or piece of evidence.

Disability, Handicap

A “disability” is a physical or emotional impairment. A “handicap” occurs when a person cannot overcome his/her disability.

Farther, Further

“Farther” has to do with distance. “Further” can be used to indicate distance, and it can also mean “to promote” or “to advocate.”

Fewer, Less

“Fewer” refers to numbers. “Less” refers to quantity.

Finalize

“Finalize” can mean either “to terminate” or “to put into final form.” Try to avoid using “finalize” since it is overused and pretentious. Instead, use “finish” or “complete.”

Hopefully

“Hopefully” used to mean “with hope;” now it means “I hope,” and it drives grammarians into fits of rage. They reason that if you write “hopefully, you will write your proposal on time,” then you do not know whether you hope to write your proposal on time or you will write an optimistic proposal.

I, Me

When our parents heard us say “Bob and me played baseball,” they told us to say “Bob and I.” To determine which is appropriate, read the sentence without the other person’s name.

Imply, Infer

“To imply” is “to suggest or indicate without expressing exactly what you want to say.” For example, “he implied that we were going to get a raise.” “To infer” is “to reach a conclusion from the evidence at hand.” For example, “based on what he said, we can infer that a raise will be coming.”

Irregardless

“Irregardless” is not a word. The correct word to use is “regardless.”

Its, It’s

“Its” is the possessive form of the word “it.” It means something belongs to the particular place or thing “it” stands for. For example, “this car is more expensive because its upholstery is leather.” “It’s” is the contraction for “it is.” For example, “it’s a dark colored leather.”

Like, As

Except as a term of affection, “like” has to do with comparison. For example, “that was not like him.” “As” can be used in comparisons. For example, “the two were equally as efficient.”

Secondly, Thirdly

You would not say ‘firstly.’ Therefore, use “first,” “second,” and “third.”



The Fine Art of Persuasion

By Melissa Stiefel, MWA

As ARS support staff, we rely on scientists, technicians, research leaders, location administrative officers, and others to provide accurate information with which we can use to successfully perform our duties within given deadlines. Sometimes it may be challenging to obtain the information we need. By learning effective persuasion techniques, we not only

make our work lives easier, but may also make our personal lives simpler as well.

Many people see persuasion as manipulative and devious or even beating someone over the head until they acquiesce. Here are just a few misconceptions that are commonly held regarding what persuasion is or should be.

Misconception #1: Powerfully stating your position at the beginning and then relentlessly pushing your idea until your colleagues change their minds. Misconception #2: Never compromise; it's a sign of weakness.

Misconception #3: The argument alone will win approval. Misconception #4: You have only one shot to present your argument and it had better be good or nobody will accept it.

Persuasion is not an act of coercion—it's an opportunity for both parties to learn about each other's needs, wants, and expectations. Because each party learns about the other, persuasion is also a powerful negotiating tool. Effective persuaders learn to test and revise their ideas, taking into considerations their colleague's concerns and expectations. More importantly, an effective persuader will always be open-minded to consider others' ideas and possibly incorporate the new ideas into the original plan. Persuasion involves some basic steps that are outlined below, and learning to master these steps will take time and patience.

Establish your own credibility. In order to be an effective persuader, you must first establish your own credibility. For example, if my dermatologist told me I needed heart bypass surgery, would I find him or her credible—knowledgeable of the subject at hand? I don't think so. Credibility is established two ways: your expertise regarding subject at hand and your relationship(s) with your audience. In order to increase your expertise, you need to prove yourself knowledgeable and well-informed on the subject, and display a history of good judgment when using this knowledge. By

establishing your credibility, your audience will see you as trustworthy and helpful.

Identify mutual benefits and interests. Your position must appeal to your audience by showing the benefits they can derive by supporting you. In order to appeal to your audience, you need to know them—what they want or what they expect. Ask them questions; learn what makes them tick. After all, who would go along with an idea if it would cause more grief than good!

Reinforce by providing evidence for your position. Ordinary evidence will not suffice when presenting your idea. Stories and colorful language can captivate of your audience, and research shows that listeners react more positively to what they perceive as compelling evidence.

Demonstrate an emotional connection with your audience. Good persuaders will connect with their audiences in two ways: 1) they show their own emotional commitment to the position, and 2) they are in tune with the audience's emotions. Too much emotion, however, will leave the audience questioning your rationality. As any good speaker does, adjust your actions (tone of voice, hand gestures, etc.) to the audience at hand—a roomful of executives from Fortune 500 companies will connect to a bold voice, forceful hand gestures, etc. Quite the opposite is true if the audience is a knitting club at the community retirement center!

Remember that persuasion is not a hard-sell presentation; if you view it as an experience in learning and negotiating, you will realize just how persuasive you can be!

Helpful resources:

- Influence Without Authority by Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford
- Say What You Mean Get What You Want by Judith C. Tingley

- Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In by Roger Fisher, et al
- The Anatomy of Persuasion by Norbert Aubuchon

Adobe Acrobat Reader and Adobe Acrobat 6.0, What Are These Programs Good For?



By Lucienne Savell, MSA

First of all, if you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer, then it is highly

recommended that you have your computer IT personnel install this freeware onto your computer. (Adobe Acrobat Reader is not needed if you already have the full version Adobe program.) Many communications are now being sent as .pdf files and can be read by Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you need to get this free program, please visit <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. Tip: The reader program is necessary for anyone doing travel in the NFC system, as all print files are sent as .pdf.

What is .pdf? The tag, “.pdf” means that the file is in the “portable document format.” When the file is opened, it looks like it was scanned and saved to the computer. The Adobe Reader is the program that opens the .pdf file, and once opened, it can be printed. Please note that the file has been saved and cannot be edited or altered using Adobe Reader.

Another program that is very helpful to use and will allow persons to create a ".pdf" file, is Adobe Acrobat 6.0. Creating a .pdf file is very easy using this program. This program will read the .pdf files as well as allow you to create .pdf files. To make the file you are working on a .pdf file, go to File, Print, select Adobe PDF (or if you are using an older version of Adobe, select acrobat distiller). Once this is selected and you select OK, the computer will ask for a

name for the file. The "tag" should always be .pdf. If you save it as a different tag, then you might experience problems when trying to open or read the file. Once the program has been executed, the new file will open up in a new window. Once you look at the file, you can decide whether or not it is the way you want it to look. If you do not like what you see, you can delete it and start all over again. Remember that if you see a correction that has to be made, you will have to edit it in the word processor you created it in and then reprint it to the appropriate printer.

Resource Assistance Link

By Madeline Hall, MSA

The National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP) is in the process of working on a wide range of issues relevant to ARS office professionals and their duties. The Council has identified the need to provide a tool which will enable a person to receive immediate help covering a broad scope of subject matters, such as Travel, Case Write-ups, OSQR, CATS, Grants, ARIS, Agreements, and many others.



We are proud to announce the Council has addressed this need with the introduction of the Resource Assistance List. You can find this new web page at the NACOP website, www.arsnet.usda.gov/nacop/, located in the left hand column.

The Resource Assistance List is comprised of experienced ARS employees, along with their phone numbers, fax, and e-mail addresses. Immediate and confidential assistance is now available weekdays during core working hours.

Federal Women's Program at the Eastern Regional Research Center (ERRC) Celebrates Women's History Month

By Phyllis Davis, NAA

Since March is Women's History Month and in August, Women's Equality Day is celebrated, I thought you might be interested in knowing about some of the various programs that occur at ERRC. These have included guest speakers, videos and training. Notices are sent to the entire staff and there is always a good representation of both men and women. The Federal Women's Program manager and her committee, have hosted seminars presented by the following: Captain Rosa Ferrer-Myers, Women's Health Coordinator for Health and Human Services; Dana Devon, director, Web Programs, (the new) National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA; Lynne Abraham, Esq., Philadelphia District Attorney (who arrived with her bodyguard); Shelley Rosen, PFS Investment Services, with a seminar on "Smart Women Finish Rich" (I should have paid better attention to that one!); speakers from the EEOC; speakers on women's health issues; a high ranking [female] in the military, a very famous newscaster, and others too numerous to mention. They were a very diverse, informative, inspirational, and humorous group of women in which we can all take pride.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton said "I encourage all Americans to observe Women's History Month, to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies and activities and to remember throughout the year the many contributions of courageous women who have made our Nation strong."

Let's celebrate our accomplishments during the month of March!



Mailing Label Timesaver

By Olivia Pedraza, SPA

Recently, I had to mail out brochures for an organic conference we were co-sponsoring. I was sent a list of names and addresses on an Excel Spreadsheet. I wondered how I was going to type all 1500+ names and addresses into mailing labels, or if Microsoft Word had a feature that could do that for me. Surely with all this modern technology...well, Microsoft does have a feature to do this, and I would like to share it with you. There are six (6) steps to this tip.

Click on Tools – Letters & Mailings – Mail Merge Wizard

On Select Document Type – select Labels

Step 1: Click Next: Starting Document – Click on label options – select label size

Step 2: Click Next: Select Recipients
Select Use an Existing List
Click on Browse to find and select your list

Step 3: Click Next: Arrange Your Labels
Click on Address Book
Check recipient's name format
Click on Match Fields and specify address field components
Click OK – Click OK

Step 4: Click Next: Preview Your Labels

Step 5: Click Next: Complete the Merger

Step 6: Print

What a time saver!