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Optimism Is Essential For a Better Future

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

The flickering neon sign read, "Everything is going to be alright." Given the country in which I was standing, I couldn't decide whether this sign was a form of propaganda, mind control, or only an expression of hope by a neon artist to his fellow citizens.

Now, I must admit I am a diehard optimist. I believe in success. I am hopeful. I am confident about the

future. I believe good will ultimately prevail over evil. Yet, somehow, I couldn't shake the odd juxtaposition of this 20foot neon sign with the policies and practices of the sovereign nation under foot. The disconnect between words, images and messages each of us receives daily can sometimes be disillusioning and shocking enough to shake our beliefs and prompt us to reconsider our thinking.

Water and electricity come to mind. The United States uses 322 billion gallons of water per day including 118 billion gallons for irrigation, 133 billion gallons for thermo-electric power, and 39 billion gallons in the public supply. The U.S. Geological Survey, which has tracked water use since 1950, reports overall declines in water use from 2010 to 2015. You've all seen the three states of water - solid, liquid and gas. You have seen water freeze and turn to ice. You've seen water evaporate and turn to gas - think fog and mist. The water cycle is a closed loop. About 90% of the moisture in the atmosphere comes from water evaporating from oceans, seas, lakes and rivers. This evaporation refuels the hydrosphere. Evaporation also removes heat from the environment, resulting in net cooling. One of the challenges is only about 10% of this evaporation falls to land as precipitation. But what if water and the evaporative effect are in short supply? You guessed it - hotter temperatures and drought.

America's proposed migration away from reliance on fossil fuels to reliance on electricity as our primary source of fuel creates its own challenges. **Russ Mitchell**, who covers cars for the Los Angeles Times, shared his experience piloting a Ford F150 Lightning EV on a 400-mile journey from Berkeley, California, to Long Beach, California. He's a big fan of electric cars. The public charging system for electric cars? Not so much. Mitchell's frustration about the disconnect (alright, bad pun) between the EV industry and the charging system is clear. Mismatched charging plug-ins, poor charger maintenance, dismal reliability, awkward placement, inaccessible EV chargers, and incompatible payment systems combine to make EV charging a serious challenge on the best of days. Still, there is reason for cautious optimism. Recipients of the billions of dollars in federal grants and other subsidies for EV charging stations will be required to maintain 97% reliability.

Which raises the question – where will all this electricity come from? Wind? Nuclear? Solar? Yes, to all. For the past century, we've burned fossil fuels emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, where it impacts the global climate. In 1951, the Experimental Breeder Reactor 1 illuminated four lightbulbs by producing electric power from nuclear energy. The Atoms for Peace program, proposed in 1953 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, set the focus on civil nuclear energy development. Eisenhower's vision gave rise to the nuclear energy industry spearheaded by Westinghouse and the 1960 start-up of Yankee Rowe in Rowe, Massachusetts. Ultimately, 98 nuclear reactors were built, powering tens of millions of homes. Yankee Rowe, decommissioned in 2007, has spent fuel assemblies remaining entombed on its site, where they await permanent storage in a facility for spent nuclear reactor fuel. Therein lies the rub. What do we do with the spent nuclear reactor fuel?

According to the American Clean Power Association (ACPA), clean power is moving quickly to become a significant source of energy in America. Specifically, ACPA says wind and solar, coupled with battery storage capabilities, are leading to a shift in power sources. Currently, 211,406 megawatts of operating wind, solar and energy storage capacity, comprising roughly 14% of all electricity in the U.S., is being produced by clean power. America's first offshore

Register for PMI22 To Enjoy a Worthwhile, Fun Program

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Haven't registered yet for the Oct. 24-27 PMI22 Manufacturing Success Conference in Louisville? There's still time to claim your place and enjoy a fun, valuable program.

And for only \$99 more – at the discounted bundle rate – you can register for both PMI22 and the Oct. 24 PMI Aspiring Leaders Program at the Muhammad Ali Center at <u>tinyurl.</u> <u>com/46evr6y5</u>.

Turn your leadership aspirations into reality by learning a visualization technique Ali used to become "The Greatest" boxer of all time. The Aspiring Leaders Program is open to all PMI member company employees looking to elevate their leadership skills.

If you've already registered for the conference, contact **Jodi Stuhrberg** at jstuhrberg@safeplumbing.org to upgrade and take advantage of the Aspiring Leaders Program's discounted rate.

A 'net positive' experience you won't want to miss

From WaterSense to business sense, from digital transformation to toilet reinvention, PMI22 promises to be a "Net Positive" experience providing you with information about trade and tariffs, advocacy and government affairs, packaging and producer responsibility, technical topics, and much more! See a list of all scheduled activities on PMI's website (tinyurl.com/5b57d9te).

Andrew

Winston and Chad Pregracke will deliver keynote presentations, addressing the necessity of

the necessity of environmental responsibility in achieving business success in



Andrew Winston

the 21st century. The co-author of "Net

Positive: How Courageous Companies Thrive by Giving More than They Take," Winston is a globally recognized expert on megatrends and how to build



Chad Pregracke

companies that thrive by serving the world. Pregracke is the founder of Living Lands & Waters, a nonprofit river cleanup organization.



New speakers continue being added to the PMI22 agenda, including **Austin Kissinger**, an associate at Foley & Lardner LLP, who will discuss "Ad-

Austin Kissinger

dressing Inflation and Supply Chain Disruptions." He'll share ways businesses can solidify their costs and supply chains, allowing for smooth operations despite present economic challenges.

Kissinger, who works in the firm's transactions practice group, will discuss how businesses can analyze their current contracts to find flexibility in fulfilling their resource needs. He'll also cover provisions businesses should consider when negotiating new agreements to guard against future changes in price levels and supply issues.

Michael Thompson, international trade specialist with the U.S. Department of Commerce, will discuss "U.S. Trade



Michael Thompson

Policy Agenda and Federal Assistance Programs." His presentation will cover President **Joe Biden's** bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the U.S. trade policy agenda, the U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, and federal programs that support U.S. business. He'll also discuss U.S. plumbing and building product exports.

Rich Glaze,

partner at Barnes & Thornburg LLP, will provide an "Overview of March 2022 SEC Climate Disclosure Rule and Implications for SEC



Rich Glaze

Regulated and Non-Regulated Businesses." He leads the firm's environmental, social and governance team. Glaze's practice includes a broad scope of environmental law matters, including civil, criminal and administrative enforcement defense and the defense of other actions brought by federal and state governments.

PMI advocacy/government affairs consultants **Jerry Desmond** and **Stephanie Salmon** will deliver updates on California and federal legislation that affects plumbing manufacturers.

Don't miss the fun Louisville Slugger Museum Reception and Dinner, where you'll get a behind-the-scenes look at how bats are made, see bats used by your favorite all-stars, and have a chance to take a few swings in a batting cage.

Join the growing list of sponsors to showcase your company, support your industry

Don't miss the chance to showcase your company and support the plumbing manufacturing industry by sponsoring PMI22. Platinum, Gold, Silver and Event Sponsorships are still available, but each event is limited to one sponsor only – so don't delay!

Each Platinum, Gold and Silver Sponsorship comes with one or more complimentary conference registrations — giving your company a box seat to learn about the latest industry trends and insights. Your company will achieve visibility through table exhibits, podium recognition, email blasts, social media posts, and Ripple Effect ads. The sponsorships highlight your name and logo to both live conference participants and those reviewing presentations afterward.

Event Sponsorships are available for keynote speakers, conference lunches, cocktail receptions, registration, and AM/PM coffee breaks. All these activities will provide attendees with chances to interact with each other and build relationships, thanks to the sponsors' generous support of our industry.

A big thank you goes to the PMI22 sponsors that have signed up so far. Gold sponsors include CSA Group, ICC & ICC-ES and LIXIL, and Silver sponsors are IAPMO, Contractor, PHCPPros, and Plumbing & Mechanical/Supply House Times.

All sponsorship levels place your company at the top of the standings — and send a strong signal to the rest of the industry that your team is an important part of our mutual success. Learn more about the various sponsorship levels and make your commitment today by visiting the PMI website at <u>tinyurl.</u> <u>com/3z8tbu4e</u>.

For more information, please contact PMI Director of Programs and Administration **Jodi Stuhrberg** at jstuhrberg@ safeplumbing.org or 847-481-5500 ext. 107.



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Walking in Washington's Shoes Links History with Leadership

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

George Washington's leadership lessons are as fresh and insightful today as they were over 200 years ago. A group of Plumbing Manufacturers International members recently had the chance to "Be Washington" for a day, learning his decision-making skills to help solve challenges facing their companies and the industry.

Held at the George Washington Leadership Institute at historic Mount Vernon, Virginia, the PMI CEO Thinking Forum allowed participants to immerse themselves in Washington's intellect and ethics while providing time to explore new leadership strategies and learn creative ways to inspire others.

The group moved between discussions of Washington's strategy and leadership experiences, sessions on "Leading with Character" and "Leading in Times of Today's Crises," private tours of his estate and rare documents room and library, and an interactive session to apply their lessons.

Many of the participants described the forum as a unique experience that opened their eyes to how ahead of his time Washington was – as he faced extraordinary challenges in his military and political career.

"I really enjoyed being George for a day. Until now, I didn't truly appreciate how worldly he was and what a strong businessperson he became, which was inspirational," said **Todd Teter**, president, House of Rohl, Water Innovations EMEAA, and PMI's immediate past president.

"This was the most intimate leadership forum I've ever attended, which led to great



Participants discussed how the plumbing manufacturing industry could benefit from the lessons learned at the PMI CEO Thinking Forum.

conversations and an opportunity for everyone to be heard," said **Kelly Safis**, leader of sales, LIXIL Americas, a PMI member. "I've never seen this type of format to teach lessons in leadership, ethics and integrity using real-life situations."

Applying patience, agility and listening to others

The forum focused on Washington's ability to successfully incorporate agility and patience while seeking the advice of others.

Washington understood the importance of surrounding himself with a diverse group of trusted advisors and friends for guidance. "They all had very different ideas and he was able to listen to them, weigh all the options, and come up

> with the right answers. That's what a strong leader does," Safis said. "You won't get solid debate and ideas from people who agree with you and think you're always right."

Tweaking strategy when necessary, or strategic agility, was one approach Washington mastered. Participants discussed ways strategic agility might be applied to the plumbing manufacturing industry.

"Our ability to be agile as an industry is especially important in times of crisis, such as with the pandemic. Seeing Washington apply strategic agility as he led our fledgling country confirmed what a critical and practical concept it is for success," Teter said.

Strategic patience, another leadership approach at which Washington excelled, essentially means stepping back, watching and pausing for the right opportunity to plan your next move, explained PMI's CEO/Executive Director Kerry Stackpole. As an example, he recalled how Washington won the Whiskey Rebellion by waiting to see if public unrest would calm down over a tax on whiskey. Instead of calling in the military immediately, Washington pivoted by first sending a peace envoy in an attempt to quell the rebellion before creating and leading a large multi-state militia to stop the violent rebels.

Testing decision-making skills using digital interactions

The group applied the day's lessons to test their decision-making acumen by stepping into the leadership role of



A group of PMI member executives met at the George Washington Leadership Institute at Mount Vernon, Virginia.



The PMI CEO Thinking Forum focused on Washington's ability to successfully incorporate agility and patience while seeking the advice of others.

Washington using Mount Vernon's digital interactive experience. Faced with the same information and choices as Washington, participants applied their own judgment to decide how to handle two different situations.

"It was a powerful way of learning. We used the skills we had just learned throughout the day to place ourselves in situations he had experienced, listen to the same advice from his advisors, and make our own decisions," said Teter.

Participants noted the lively discussions and analyses that took place throughout the day and after the simulations. "This program was fundamentally different from other leadership programs I've attended. It wasn't only one-way information shared in an auditorium setting. Instead, it encouraged interaction, discussion and debate," said **Martin Knieps**, senior director of operational excellence at PMI member Viega and president of the PMI Board of Directors.

Moving past mistakes, having the courage to lead

"Washington never let his mistakes define him. That's a good lesson for us all," Safis said. "I need to be a little gentler with myself and my team in this regard." The forum was her first PMI event after joining LIXIL earlier this year.

Participants discussed how the plumbing manufacturing industry could benefit from the lessons learned at the forum. "Washington's courage was a huge takeaway. As a leader within my business and PMI, it means find-

ing the courage to go to places where others might not – and lead people to those places," Teter said.

Knieps said he admired how Washington gave more than what he expected from others. "He led by example, always putting himself on the front lines – with the same expectations for his people. It's how he secured their loyalty," he added.

Safis sees an urgent opportunity for the industry to take a leadership role in solving the skilled labor shortage. "We all agree there's a need for solving the shortage and that diversifying our workforce, particularly with women, will help," she said. "How can we come together to make our industry more viable and attractive?"

The program wrapped up with a tour and demonstration of how Washington's distillery and gristmill operated. It was yet another example of how America's first president always pushed himself to learn and grow, adding innovative business leadership to his long list of skills.

"Everything about this program was about making participants feel welcomed and ready to learn while steeping them in America's rich history. It was a beautiful, private and exclusive setting that allowed everyone to easily share their viewpoints and experiences," said **Jodi Stuhrberg**, director of PMI programs and administration, who helped organize the event.

PMI plans to continue hosting the annual PMI CEO Thinking Forum and "raising the bar on offering world-class leadership experiences" for its members, Stackpole noted. More photos from the event can be viewed at <u>safeplumbing</u>. <u>org/events/event-photos</u>.



The program wrapped up with a tour and demonstration of how Washington's distillery and gristmill operated.

Aspiring Leaders Learn Simple Ways to Unlock Creativity

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Many believe that only certain professionals, such as artists and dancers, are naturally creative. However, with the right method, anyone can master creativity – a vital skill for solving business challenges and consistently delivering innovation.

Creativity expert **Nir Bashan** taught Plumbing Manufacturers International members a repeatable and predictable method of tapping into innovation called "The Trinity of Creativity" during the Aug. 31 PMI Aspiring Leaders Workshop.

"Creativity and innovation are life tools. They are elemental to everything we do and the very nature of our survival," said Bashan, who has taught Hollywood and music stars such as Woody Harrelson and Rod Stewart, and thousands of business leaders, how to harness the power of creativity.

However, he noted that myths about creativity stop people from honing their creative skills. They say to themselves: "I'm not an artist," "I won't be taken seriously," and "Creativity comes in a flash of insight."

One participant recalled winning a creativity ribbon in grammar school for designing a poster about pollution. "But I've always thought that I don't have any creativity," she said. Bashan said that all kids are creative and creativity gets stifled in school, on the job, or somewhere else.

"You can get it back. Creativity is not an art. You're going to learn how to make it happen today," he added.

Delivering an endless stream of ideas adds value

"You want to be the person at your company who produces an endless stream of ideas. That makes you valuable," Bashan said. He noted that his system of fostering creativity can be



used to solve problems and generate ideas at any time and for any situation.

His three-part method starts with "execution" then moves to "ideas" and finishes with "concepts." Bashan described execution as the most specific part of a problem – the close-up view seen through an "electron microscope." To decide on your execution, he suggested asking the following questions: What is broken? What is the problem? Why is there a problem?

Your idea is the next level up from execution – the "street view" where you can see some detail, he explained. To brainstorm ideas behind your execution, Bashan suggested asking: Why does it matter? Who cares about it?

The process ends with your concepts, which are the most difficult to pin down because they are the highest-level view of your product, career or whatever you're problem-solving for, he said. "Concepts are yours alone. They should be the reason you get out of bed in the morning and what gets you excited to go to work – or why you pursued your career in the first place."

To illustrate his creativity method, Bashan provided an example of a supply chain issue with a faucet at a fictional company. He described the execution, or the problem, as a shortage of faucet model X. The idea behind that model – answering why it matters – was to create a high-end product with a special finish that no one else offers. Finally, he discussed the concept behind that particular finish – the company wanted to be seen as a luxury brand of the highest quality.



"Can you substitute a different material since you can't get the original finish because of supply chain issues? That's not an option," he said. "This is where we make creativity and innovation happen." Instead, the company realized it had a prototype luxury-finish faucet in development that they could quickly produce in the same category – avoiding the supply chain issues altogether.

One participant noted how Bashan's method helped her look at challenges from a different angle and how she was eager to apply the same steps to solving personal and career issues. "It feels like you've just flipped me upside down because I've always looked at solving problems the other way – starting with the big helicopter view and then working down to the details," she said.

Access workshop materials

To access the workshop materials, and to learn more tips about honing creativity skills, PMI members can visit <u>safeplumbing.org/members/webinars-</u><u>videos</u>. And there's still time to register for the PMI Aspiring Leaders Program, to be held on Oct. 24 as part of the Oct. 24-27 PMI22 Manufacturing Success Conference in Louisville.

New COVID Boosters, Flu Shots Can Protect Workers

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

U.S. health officials are forecasting continuing COVID cases, as well as an uptick in the flu compared to the past two years. To keep workers prepared and safe, many companies, including some Plumbing Manufacturers International members, are planning to offer onsite COVID and flu vaccine clinics.

With mask mandates lifted and the highly transmissible COVID Omicron subvariants causing the majority of COVID cases, businesses are working to keep their employees healthy and minimize disruptions caused by illness.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and health experts suggest the best way to head off a COVID surge this fall and winter is for all Americans to either receive one of the new COVID boosters if they've been vaccinated – or to get vaccinated if they haven't already done so.

The CDC approved updated COVID booster shots that were made available to all Americans ages 12 and older in early September. The new boosters protect against the new Omicron subvariant BA.5, which makes up 88% of all COVID cases in the U.S., according to the CDC.

Some companies mandate vaccines, others leave it to personal choice

Many businesses struggle with the decision on whether to mandate COVID vaccines, while others require vaccinations as a condition of employment. Several PMI members said they strongly encourage workers to get vaccinated but leave the final decision up to each individual.

About 40% of employers have imposed COVID vaccine mandates for their employees, according to a recent Bloomberg Law article citing a survey by Littler Mendelson P.C. Management consulting experts suggest incentives over mandates to avoid alienating workers, reported a recent Korn Ferry Insights article.

"We don't mandate but encourage employees to get the COVID vaccine," said **Amy Eaton**, director of human resources at Gerber Plumbing Fixtures, a PMI member. "We also respect employees who want to continue wearing a mask. We want them to feel comfortable. This is a judgment-free zone."

Gerber was hoping to host a COVID booster and flu vaccine clinic this fall, but couldn't find a pharmacy that would offer both, she said. Instead, the company will offer its regular onsite flu vaccines and continue sharing its COVID safety guidelines with employees. The guidelines urge workers to stay home if they're sick – regardless of whether they have COVID, the flu, or another type of infection, Eaton added.

"We tell employees to weigh your risks when it comes to the COVID vaccine and make that call for yourself," said **Diane Rudy**, vice president of human resources at PMI member Bradley Corp. "However, we try to remove as many barriers as possible to either offer the vaccines onsite or provide information about where to get them. We also suggest they talk with their doctors."

Bradley has planned two COVID booster and flu vaccine clinics for employees in October, timed so all shift and office workers can participate, Rudy said.

Measures to protect immunocompromised employees

Both Eaton and Rudy said their companies handle immunocompromised employees with heightened COVID concerns on a case-by-case basis. Gerber asks employees with health issues or concerns to work with human resources, Eaton said. Fortunately, most employees can work from home, she added. "We want everyone to feel comfortable, so we will do whatever is practical," Rudy stated. She explained that the



company has created safety measures, following CDC guidelines, for both prevention and treatment. Preventative measures involve regularly sanitizing offices and manufacturing facilities. When a worker becomes ill, Bradley offers support and information about COVID testing locations and guidance on when to return to work. "CDC guidelines are my bible, and we follow them to a T," Eaton said.

About 68% of Americans have been fully vaccinated against COVID and 33% have received a COVID booster, according to a recent New York Times article. As of Sept. 29, the daily average of CO-VID deaths was 407, an 11% decrease from 14 days earlier, the article stated.

The unvaccinated are at a much greater risk of death from COVID. During July 2022, unvaccinated individuals aged 50 and older had a 12 times greater risk of death than fully vaccinated people with two or more COVID booster doses, according to the CDC. From April through July 2022, unvaccinated individuals aged 6 months and older had a five times greater risk of death than those who were vaccinated, the CDC said.

The boosters "can help restore protection that has waned since previous vaccination and were designed to provide broader protection," said CDC director **Dr. Rochelle Walensky** in a media statement.

To find providers offering COVID vaccines and the new boosters, visit vaccines.gov.

Expert Shares Ways to Attract Skilled Workers

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

The struggle to find skilled talent continues for plumbing and other manufacturers. By better understanding the needs and motivations of hourly employees, manufacturing companies can more successfully attract, engage and retain these critical workers.

Kylene Zenk, director of manufacturing at UKG – an innovative workforce management company – shared creative practices, tools and policies to help PMI members get a leg up on finding talent during the PMI webinar, "Manufacturing a Winning Talent Management Strategy," on Sept. 28.

She shared the job elements most important to blue-collar workers, with good pay topping the list, followed by job security, a preferable shift and schedule, and COVID-19 safety precautions, according to an EmployBridge 2021 Voice of the Blue-Collar Worker survey. Workers also want to be treated fairly, have opportunities to advance, work flexible schedules, and receive good benefits.

Based on those preferences, Zenk discussed innovative ways to use pay, benefits, scheduling, technology and other tools and programs to create a positive **pmi P** Webinars

job experience for frontline workers. For example, she suggested providing sameday or earned wage access as a benefit, which allows employees to immediately collect their day's wages regardless of a company's pay cycle. Zenk also suggested minimizing mandatory overtime to avoid burnout and making it easy for shift workers to swap shifts to better accommodate personal responsibilities.

Look for workers by widening your talent pool, she advised. Focus on local military veterans' groups and organizations that help the disabled, and consider hiring previously incarcerated individuals looking for a second chance, Zenk added.

To watch the webinar video and learn more tips, including how to use technology to help employees enroll in benefits and communicate new health and safety protocols, visit PMI's website (safeplumbing.org/members/webinarsvideos).

Optimism Is Essential (Contd.)

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wind farm, off the coast of Block Island, uses 10% of its 30-megawatt output to power 100% of Block Island's power consumption, with the rest exported to mainland Rhode Island. It's likely we'll see more wind farms in our future as the pursuit of clean energy and electricity demand grows exponentially.

One cannot help but be optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead to address climate change and fashion meaningful solutions that address our future water and energy nexus. Considering the wide-ranging and clever innovations taking place in the plumbing fixture and fittings business, the world of smart water devices, and our ability to capture and contain energy from a variety of clean power sources leads me right back to that neon artist. Everything is going to be alright. Let's get busy.

2022 PMI LEADERSHIP

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