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SEPTEMBER 2008

e-Business Innovation

Date/Time: Thursday, September 18, 2008, 11:45 AM - 1:00 PM
Speaker: David Marca, Adjunct Faculty at the University of Phoenix
Location: Rocky Rococo's Pizza, 7952 Tree Lane (Madison Beltline Hwy. at Mineral Pt. Rd.), 608.829.1444
Menu: Pizza buffet, salad and soft drinks (cost \$10.00, free for UW-Madison student members)
RSVP: by September 15th to Shazia Ahsan via e-mail (sahsan@ieee.org) or call 906.370.2958



Non-member guests are always welcome!

Innovation is an invention or an application of technologies or theories that can alter business and the economy. After 2009, the economy could decrease due to major world-wide forces. If this occurs, business might need to alter its offerings, operations and organization to survive. So, e-Business innovation might need to focus on combining internet, wireless, broadband, video, and speech recognition technologies to create extremely flexible front offices while simultaneously creating extremely efficient back offices.

David Marca is an Adjunct Faculty at the University of Phoenix. His six books and 24 papers cover e-Business, e-Commerce, business process reengineering, and software engineering. He holds a patent in workflow technology. His last book, entitled "Open Process Frameworks: Patterns for the Adaptive e-Enterprise," was published by the IEEE in 2006. David is a member of the IEEE, ACM and PMI.

Blue Sky Green Field Turbine Tour

SATURDAY, SEPT. 13



The Blue Sky Green Field Wind Energy Center, located in the towns of Calumet and Marshfield in northeast Fond du Lac County, is designed to generate 145 megawatts (MW) of electricity, and is capable of powering approximately 36,000 average residential homes. The site consists of 88 wind turbines.

Construction of the project began in June 2007. On May 19, 2008, Blue Sky Green Field was placed into commercial operation. The turbines are capable of generating more than 328 million emission-free kilowatt-hours annually.

Date: Saturday, Sept. 13

Time: 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Location: Blue Sky Green Field Office
N9470 County Highway W
Malone, WI 53049

Tours will be given approximately every 30 minutes. We invite you to stop by at your convenience during the tour hours listed above. No reservations required. The turbine is located a short walking distance from the parking area. Please wear sturdy shoes suitable for walking on a graveled surface.

If you have any questions, call Joan Herriges at 414-221-4264.

we-energies.com



New IEEE Madison Section Senior Member

Congratulations to IEEE Madison Section member Robert Turney who recently became a Senior Member of the IEEE.



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Eight Unusual Ways to Improve Your Soft Skills

by John R. Platt

Electrical engineers, computer scientists and other technology professionals need years of education to qualify for jobs in their fields. And yet, even with all of this training, many of these same people working in high-tech fields find themselves held back in the workplace because they lack business-critical interpersonal, writing and presentation skills.

So how do you rank? Can you write concise and understandable e-mails? If your boss's boss asks for a quick "elevator conversation" about your latest project, will you be able to give it to him? Can you introduce yourself to a room full of people?

Improving your so-called "soft" skills can not only improve your chances of communicating the things you need from your bosses and co-workers to do your job, they can also make you a more valuable employee. And the more valuable you are, the more likely you are to be rewarded in the long run.

With this in mind, here are several admittedly unusual ways you can improve your soft skills, and in the process, give your career a boost. And guess what — you just might have some fun in the process.

1. Take an acting class

Acting classes are a great way to break out of your comfort zone. They'll teach you to try new things, be comfortable in front of an audience, and to get into a character's head. This in particular is a great tool; role-playing helps you to understand the needs of your audience (a salesperson or your boss, for example), and the needs of the people you are trying to communicate with on your job.

Acting classes also teach you to use your voice and project it off-stage to an audience. While based in old-school theatrical forms, this can help you when it comes time to give a presentation, bringing confidence and authority to your voice. Learn to own the material and it won't own you.

Along similar lines, improv classes offer similar lessons, along with the extra bonus of getting you to think quickly and adapt on your feet. Again, a great tool for presentations, especially if you think anyone is going to ask questions.

2. Read and write poetry

There's nothing like poetry to give you a better understanding of language. Reading and writing poetry will give you a chance to learn about word play, timing, rhythm, pace and style. Writing verse also allows you to practice putting words together in a clear, concise manner — an especially valuable business tool.

By the way, when reading poetry, try to do it out loud. You'll gain an even better understanding of the poem's inner rhythm.

3. Join Rotary, Lions or some other local club

Contrary to what you may believe, service organizations like the Rotary or Lions aren't just for older men. The clubs in your area are looking for bright, eager young members, too. And joining can provide a number of benefits.

For one thing, membership in a non-technology group puts you in front of people that are not in your field. This gives you a chance to learn to speak to people who aren't already intimately familiar with your subject, and for you to do the same. Every conversation is a learning experience and a chance to practice your interpersonal skills.

For another thing, service clubs provide great opportunities for volunteering, getting involved, organizing events, and individual growth. They offer leadership training without the pressure of a corporate promotion. You can then bring this leadership experience to your job when it's needed, and maybe surprise your boss in the process.

4. Speed dating = quick learning

Okay, this one might not work out too well if you are already married

or in a relationship. But speed dating offers you a great chance to perfect your “elevator pitch” — that description of who you are and what you do that will capture and captivate the person you’re speaking to in less than 30 seconds.

At the right event, you could end up speaking one-on-one to 10 or 20 people in an hour or two. Each person will hear your “pitch,” and will follow up with a series of unexpected questions for you to answer. Watch each person’s reaction and adapt your pitch when you move on to the next person.

Even if you don’t generate any “dates” from speed dating, what better opportunity do you have to speak to that many people in a row and get instant feedback?

5. Two engineers walk into a bar...

Similar to acting lessons, stand-up comedy can teach you timing, presence and, most importantly, how to make people laugh. Good stand-ups listen to their audience, learn from its reactions, and adapt their material. Understanding what makes people laugh is one step closer to understanding what makes them tick. A good sense of humor will always benefit you in your career, so find a local club with an open-mic night or take a class and see what happens.

Just stay away from jokes using George Carlin’s seven dirty words. They don’t play too well in a business environment.

6. Read ‘til your eyes bleed

If you want to write better, it helps to read. A lot. And not just science journals — everything you can get your hands on from all kinds of sources. Newspapers, magazines, comic books, novels, biographies, business newsletters, advertisements, etc., etc., etc.

While you’re reading, analyze how the writers accomplished what they did. How was the piece constructed? What tricks did the writers employ? How did one sentence build from the next? What worked and what didn’t?

The more you read, the more you absorb. The more you absorb, the better your own e-mails, reports and letters will read. And the more you’ll be noticed and trusted.

7. Videotape yourself

Just about every new laptop these days seems to come with a built-in webcam. So put it to good use. Point it at yourself and record your practice sessions. Then play them back and see how you look. You’ll be amazed what you notice when you look at yourself from the outside.

You can do this in front of a mirror, too, but the real learning comes during playback, so go high-tech if you can.

8. How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice...

You’re not the only one of your peers who needs help with his or her presentation or writing skills. So team up. Get a small group of your co-workers or friends together on your lunch hour or after work, and practice what you’re learning. Rehearse your presentations, practice your writing skills, try out each others’ handshakes, and run through your elevator conversations. Learn from each other. Then, after you’re done practicing, critique each other.

Be kind — a critique isn’t about destroying someone. It’s about providing constructive feedback. This creates a safe, comfortable place to practice, and it will allow your team to grow and try new things without fear of being judged.

That “not being judged” thing? It’s key. Because everything you do in the workplace will be judged by your bosses, so make sure to get some practice before they find something to really criticize you about.

John Platt is a marketing consultant and journalist living in Maine. He is a regular contributor to IEEE-USA Today’s Engineer. And yes, he’s tried all of the recommendations in this article. (Well, except for the speed dating. Honest.) Opinions expressed are the author’s.

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Lightning and HIRF Update

D.L.S. Electronic Systems, Inc. of Wheeling, IL has added to their already extensive lightning and HIRF capabilities. They can perform all indirect lightning effects testing for RTCA DO 160F and Mil Std 461F and have increased HIRF capabilities to 2000 V/M pulsed up to 18 GHz. D.L.S. is a NVLAP accredited EMC testing and consulting organization and recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. For more information contact Jack Black at 847-537-6400 or visit www.dlsemc.com.



Submitted by:
Marilyn Sweeney
D.L.S. Electronic Systems, Inc.



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