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IRWA California Inland Empire Chapter 57

June/July 2023
Volume 6, Issue 5

Presidents' Message

Membership Luncheon >>>

June 7, 2023
11:45 a.m to 1:15 p.m.

Speaker:

Darryl Root, JD, MBA, R/W-RAC
Director of Real Property Management and Development
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Topic:

Beating the High Cost of Bidding: How to Get Accurate Non-Residential Moving Cost Proposals

Place:

Riverside Convention Center
3637 5th Street
Riverside, California 92501

From Hector Casillas and Robbie Hechanova:

Chapter 57 IRWA Members…

Things have been busy this season. I saw some of you at our 1st picnic, I met new faces at the forum in Oakland, and I'm ready to meet some more at the education conference in Denver.

In exciting news, our Chapter is part of the 2024 Long Beach Education Conference Planning Committee. If you'd like to volunteer in this committee or fill any of the Board's vacant positions, plase see any Board member to get involved.

"I am excited for the upcoming term...and looking forward to serving the 'fun chapter' 57." Robbie H.

I'd like to wish you all a happy, fun, and safe summer.

I'll see you around,
Hector Casillas, SR/WA

For those I've not had the pleasure of meeting, I am Robbie Hechanova, your Chapter 57 President for 2023 and 2024. I started my right-of-way career in 2010 with Overland Pacific & Cutler in the Real Property Services Department, cutting grass, then becoming an Agent, and then a Project Manager. Currently, I work for SoCalGas supporting major projects. Looking back, I would not change the path I took to get here as it played a big part of becoming the person I am today. As a Relocaton Agent, I took my first IRWA course in Relocation where I felt like a fish out of water. Luckily, there were members taking this class for the credit and assured me that things would start to click. Sure enough, they did and I continued to grow my right-of-way experience from relocation to acquisition and now pipeline work. As I continued my journey in right-of-way, I was eventually invited to join the Board where I volunteered to become the Relocation Chair, and then voted in as Secretary for the Chapter. Over the past few years, I've had the honor of working and serving alongside long time members and learning from the best in the industry.

As we get back to what feels like a new normal, I look forward to seeing more of everyone at our board meetings and chapter luncheons. Our upcoming 2023 Education Conference in Denver is one of our major events, which many of us will be attending. For those of you who have already registered, I look forward to seeing you and for those who still have not registered, I encourage you to do so. At the conference we hope to get ideas and pick the brains of those who coordinated the event in preparation for the 2024 Education Conference since it'll be in our very own back yard, Long Beach.

I am excited for this upcoming term, working with the chapter leadership, and looking forward to serving the "fun chapter" 57.

Cheers!
Robbie

IRWA Courses – Regional 1

C409 Integrating Appraisal Standards, 6/7/23, Instructor-Led Virtual Class (Instrctor TBD)

C604 Environmental Due Diligence and Liability, 6/9/23, Virtual Class

C804 Skills of Expert Testimony, 6/12/23, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C701 Property/Asset Management: Leasing, 6/15/23, Virtual Class

C501 Residential Relocation Assistance, 7/12/23, San Diego, CA

C203 Alternative Dispute Resolution, 7/17/23, Virtual Class (Instrutor TBD)

C800 Principles of Real Estate Law, 7/18/23, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C431 Problems in the Valuation of Partial Acquisitions, 7/19/23, Virtual Class (instructor TBD)

C207 Practical Negotiations for U.S. Federal and Federally Assisted Projects, 7/20/23, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C421 The Valuations of Partial Acquisitions, 7/24/23, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C413 Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (Yellow Book), 7/24/23, Virtual Class

C105 The Uniform Act Executive Summary, 7/25/23, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

Additional courses are listed on IRWA's website at www.irwaonline.org

Are you interested in taking a free class? Contact Kelley Kelley, Timothy Green, or any of the Board members, to find out how you can become a coordinator.

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@Chapter 57 – Inland Empire – International Right of Way Association

IRWA Mission Statement

The International Right of Way Association will be the worldwide leader for innovation and excellence in the acquisition and management of right of way and public use.

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Leadership: Questioning – A Crucial Leadership Skill

Building strength as a leader through asking questions

By Yasmin L. Stump, Esq.

Several years ago, for my birthday, one of my clients gave me a tee shirt with the quippy slogan: "Talk is cheap until you hire a lawyer." It was one of my favorite tee shirts, and I wore it for many years until after countless washings took its toll on this item of apparel. Ultimately, the collar separated from the rest of the shirt, and I could no longer wear it.

Clearly, strong communication skills are imperative for attorneys, particularly litigators. Solid communications skills are obviously equally significant for other members of the right of way industry, particularly buyers and appraisers. Outwardly, well-honed communication skills seem less essential for certain right of way professionals, such as engineers and surveyors, although it is certainly debatable. But, irrespective of the profession in the right of way industry, highly developed communication skills are crucial for successful leaders, and certainly, more than one article could be devoted to the value of effective communication in leadership. Since communication is a broad topic, the focus of this article is one aspect of communication, which is asking questions.

Asking Questions is Second Nature for Some Leaders

Unquestionably (no pun intended), like other skills, asking questions comes more naturally and easily to some people. The talent for asking questions may be evident early in life. Think about highly curious children who habitually exasperate adults with unrelentless questioning about basically everything. These inquisitive youngsters typically blossom into adults who are ferocious learners and ask questions to satiate their need to understand new things.

Others grow up in households where asking questions is part of their families' cultures, and they are so intent on their questioning that the larger culture may find their inquisitiveness intrusive. The other day I was at a salon, where I observed a customer question the salon owner about a recent event in her life. The individuals were from different cultures, and my sense was that the customer was well-intentioned with her questions, but the salon owner was clearly uncomfortable with the inquisition.

For others, the ability to formulate and ask profound questions is part of their educational curriculum or otherwise taught because it is essential to their professions, like journalism or law. In college, I majored in journalism during an epoch when laptop computers were a faraway vision in the future. My fellow journalism students and I used manual typewriters. But the lack of technological sophistication aside, our professors taught us to procure valuable information through the skill of asking thoughtful questions. If a journalist is unable to ask profound questions during an interview, he or she would be unable to effectively report to his or her readers.

Why is Asking Questions a Crucial Leadership Skill?

My experience has been that leaders often hesitate to ask questions for a couple of reasons. First, it is often easier and more efficient for leaders to tell team members what they think and what to do. But leaders who avoid asking

Continues on Page 5

Did you know? >>>

Fun Real Estate Trivia

RE/MAX (Real Estate Maximums) is known for its hot air balloon logo.

Let's welcome our new member!

Paul C. Mim Mack

Did you enjoy the last venue? We would appreciate any feedback you'd like to give. Please reach out to any Board member.

We'd love to hear from you!

Would you like the Chapter to host a luncheon on your favorite topic? Do you know anyone who would like to speak at an upcoming luncheon? If so, please contact Robbie Hechanova R/W-RAC, President-Elect, at (909) 503-6639, or via e-mail at rhechano@socalgas.com.

Have comments or suggestions for the newsletter?

We value your opinion and welcome your input! If you have any comments or recommendations for the newsletter, please contact Sheryn Smay, SR/WA, Newsletter Chair, at (951) 826-5343 or via e-mail at ssmay@riversideca.gov.

About RWIEF

The Right of Way International Education Foundation was established for the prupose of funding right of way education initiatives. The Foundation focuses on generating financial contributions and determines how must to allocate those funds for the betterment of right of way education. Over the last few years, funds have been allocated for educational summits, creation of new courses, upgrades of existing courses, conversion to on-line delivery methods, and leadership programs. Cutting-edge education and professional development are essential to the growth and advancement of our profession and to each of us as professionals in this fast-paced, ever-changing industry.

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team members questions in the interests of expediency miss important chances to assist their team members with professional development and potentially discover another view or manner to accomplish assignments. An October 2022 article on **skillabilly.com** states, "Effective questioning can identify and exploit new opportunities and challenges that would otherwise go unnoticed." Second, leaders avoid asking questions because they fear it may make them appear as if they are unknowledgeable. However, this fear should be dismissed because, as an October 29, 2020, COO Alliance article noted, "If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room." The article further observed, "Growth is an on-going process." Ultimately, leaders who ask important questions contribute to the growth of both their teams, as well as themselves.

So, why should a leader ask probing questions? Joan Cheverie addresses this question in her 2017 article for the Educause Review. "[A]sking questions effectively is a major component of any manager or leader's job, and asking good questions often distinguishes outstanding leaders and managers from average ones (or worse, poor ones)." Reasons other than growth exist for asking pertinent questions as a leader. A **skillabilly.com** article said, "[It] can improve communication, build consensus and increase collaboration." This article further added, "One of the most important reasons to use questioning is to improve your decision-making skills. It can help you understand others' motives. It's important to know what motivates others."

Additionally, aside from building comradery among team members on work assignments and projects, asking questions also helps to strengthen your relationships with your individual team members. A leader can ask questions about a team member's life, interests and future aspirations. When the leader does so, he or she is taking a personal interest in the team member and makes the team member feel that he or she and his or her life is important. All employees appreciate garnering their bosses' attention and having their bosses take an interest in them.

The Next Step: Formulating Meaningful Questions

Questioning is an indispensable leadership skill, but how do leaders formulate effective questions, particularly if it is not an innate talent or ability that has been taught to them through education or other training? My own experience has been that formulating critical questions involves thoughtful planning. Before the conversation, leaders need to first contemplate what is needed to be more productive or to address an issue. In doing so, they need consider the specific information to elicit from their team members to reach the goal of being more productive or addressing an issue. The questions crafted should be open-ended rather than close-ended. Close-ended questions are those that suggest a certain answer, usually "yes" or "no." Trial lawyers use close-ended questions on cross examination. For instance, "Isn't true Mrs. Smith that you own the property located at 1234 Easy Street?" Conversely, open-ended questions do not imply a certain response and allow the individual answering the question to explain the answer or provide a narrative response.

When using questions, leaders should be mindful to create a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Team members should be placed at ease during the question-and-answer dialogue to ensure that they are comfortable to provide complete and thorough answers. The questioning process should not be one where they feel they are being blamed or criticized. Certainly, the experience should not be one that seems like an inquisition. Rather, the objective through questioning is for a leader to elicit information through important discussion as part of teamwork for an organization's benefit.

"When using questions, leaders should be mindful to create a nonjudgmenal atmosphere."

The close companion to effective questioning is actively listening. It is not enough to ask intelligent questions; effective leaders must also carefully listen to the answers to their questions. After the answers to questions have been provided, follow-up questions should be asked to further understand and expand the topic of discussion. As a trial lawyer, one too many times I have listened to another lawyer with a script of questions at a deposition, hearing or trial and fail to listen to the witness' answer to a question. Instead of asking a follow-up question based on the witness' answer, the lawyer just moves on to the next question in the script. At times, it is painful to hear. Not only does the lawyer appear to be inexperienced and inattentive, but he or she misses an opportunity to meaningfully develop the line of questioning. Closely listening to the answers to questions is vital. As Cheverie admitted in her Educause Review article, "[I]t slowly dawned on me that I was learning by asking questions and listening. The more I listened, the better my questions became and the more I learned."

One additional note on asking follow-up questions: ensure that specificity is provided in an answer rather than a subjective answer or one that requires interpretation. For instance, if a leader asks a team member when he or she will have an assignment completed, and the team member responds, "sometime soon," follow-up is imperative because "sometime soon" can be interpreted differently by different people. A follow-up question to drill down on a specific answer could be, "By sometime soon, what do mean specifically, one week, 15 days or some other time?"

Asking thoughtful questions is not just beneficial with leaders' teams but also with your clients and in professional development. With clients, questioning can be used to ascertain their expectations of your firm or company, projects and their deadlines. Using questions to understand expectations and deadlines avoids misunderstandings in the future and negative perceptions. In professional development, questions are an excellent tool to learn more about one's colleagues, their businesses, skills and interests and build relationships. This article will be published immediately prior to the 69th Annual IRWA International Education Conference in Denver, which will create an excellent opportunity to get to know other right of way professionals through asking questions.

Yasmin L. Stump, Esq. is an IRWA Chapter 10 past president and founder of Yasmin L. Stump Law Group, PC in Indiana and has practiced in real estate transactions and litigation, as well as been a member of the right of way industry for more than 30 years. Yasmin has 40 years of leadership experience with business and nonprofit organizations and is authoring this colun, Leadership.

Reprinted from IRWA's Right of Way Magazine: The Voice of the Right of way Profession, Leadership: Questioning – A Crucial Leadership Skill, May/June 2023

Member Spotlight!!

Hello my fellow Chapter 57 members!

In this issue, we are debuting our new "Member Spotlight!!" column. Each issue will highlight a member of our Chapter as a way of getting to know our fellow members.

I am excited to present to some, and introduce to others, our very own Chapter 57 incoming President, Robbie Hechanova. Robbie has been associated with IRWA since 2013. He says that [IRWA] has given him "the opportunity to meet people, network, collaborate…, and pick the brains of the best people in the industry."

When asked about his biggest professional achievement, Robbie said, "In right-of-way, I've had the opportunity to work on large and small projects, with federal and local agencies, and large firms and small firms. Each has provided me with different experiences, scenarios, what to do and not do do, and to me these are more valuable than the personal accolades."

His professional goal is to grow with his current employer, SoCalGas. "They have a great culture of teamwork and encouraging their staff not to settle."

Robbie's biggest career challenge has been to overcome his "transition from the banking industry to right-of-way". He says he had to start all over, from being the "subject matter expert" to being the newbie.

Robbie enjoys being with his family. Especially when they are out on the water.

"If you see me in a fight with a bear, pray for the bear" – Kobe Bryant. This is Robbie's favorite quote because "it serves as a reminder to fight for what you want and to keep fighting for what you have."

Robbie's advice for new members is to "be a sponge and soak everything up. Our industry is full of experiences that you can tap into during day one of your career and into the later stages." According to Robbie, "it all comes down to building relationships."

I hope you have enjoyed this brief look into the life of Robbie Hechanova.

Signing off for now,
Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
Chapter 57 Newsletter Chair

Congratulations are in order!

A great big "Atta Boy!" goes to:
Mr. Joshua Dramitinos, RWA for completing the requirements for his Right of Way Agent certification!

Ms. Darcy Mendoza for obtaining her SR/WA!

Ms. Patti Zendajas-Feist, SR/WA, RAC for completing the requirements for her Relocation Assistance certification!

Newsletter Title Contest!!!

Ok Gang! Time to get your creative juices flowing!

The Communicator has served Chapter 57 for 20+ years. Over the years, the layout has changed, the editor has changed, and so has the content. Through all of its many revisions, the name has remained the same.

Until today…

I am looking for a new name for our beloved newsletter. Something that will grab your attention. Something that will encapsulate the heartbeat of our chapter. Something that says, "education, network, fun".

Do you think you have the right title?

Please send me your inspiration. Your creation. Your masterpiece. The winning submission will receive a special prize from the chapter.

Entries will be accepted until July 31, 2023! Good luck!

Sheryn ☺ ssmay@riversideca.gov

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CHAPTER 57

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Secretary	Ramie Dawit
Advisors to the Board	
Immediate Past-President, 2021-22 Parliamentarian and Advisor to the Board	Matt Nusenow, P.E.
Advisors to the Board	
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Past President 2019-20	Kim Bibolet, SR/WA, R/W-NAC
Past President 2018-19	Christine Santolucito, R/W-RAC
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Education Co-Chair	Kelley Kelley, SR/WA
Education Co-Chair	Timothy Green
Membership	Griffin Wayne
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Professional Development (1st Year)	Kim Bibolet, SR/WA, R/W-NAC
Professional Development (2nd Year)	Mike Romo, SR/WA
Professional Development (3rd Year)	Patti Zendejas-Feist, SR/WA
Chapter Committees	
Communications	Emily L. Madueno
Events	Darcy Mendoza
Legal Issues	Mark Easter, Esq.
Newsletter	Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
Young Professional (YP)	Hector Casillas, SR/WA
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Electric & Utilities	Vacant
Environment	Matt Nusenow, P.E.
Oil & Gas Pipeline	Vacant
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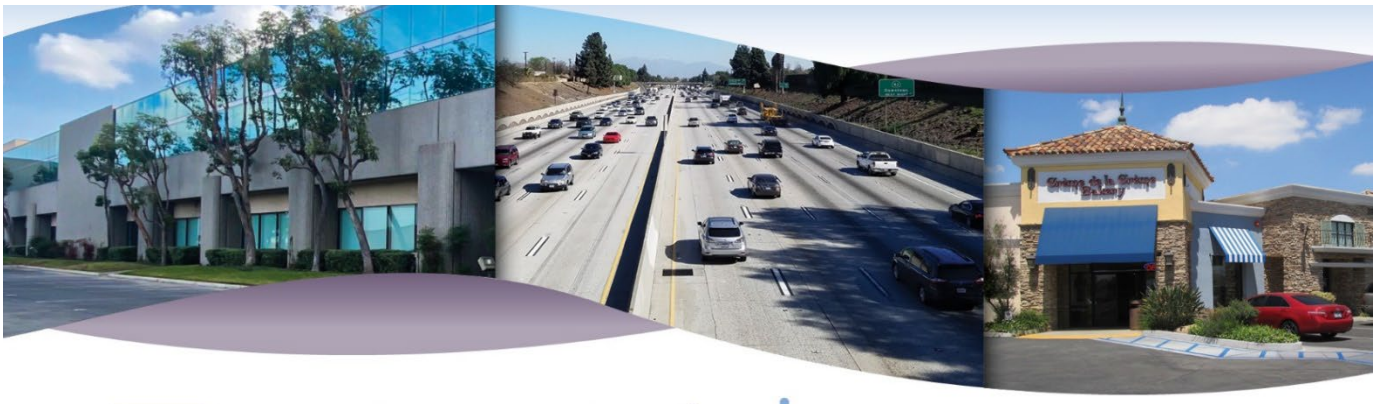
Relocation	Vacant
Survey	William Estepa
Transportation	Vacant
Valuation	Randall Blaesi, ASA, MRICS



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IRWA EDUCATION CONFERENCE
JUNE 25-28, 2023
DENVER, COLORADO

NEWSLETTER TITLE CONTEST
SUBMITTALS DUE BY 7/31/23
SEE PAGE 6