



Message from the Chair



I recently participated in a meeting of the PEO's Eastern Central Region Congress. It was a long meeting, which took up almost the entire day. Chapter chairs and vice-chairs from various

Toronto-area chapters, along with PEO councillors and staff, listened to chapter reports, and reports about the PEO council. We also discussed the following item:

- Ongoing issues at the chapter level of PEO
- Successes of the various chapters of PEO
- PEO's government liaison program
- PEO's new Voluntary Annual Reporting system, which will allow PEO members to update their personal, educational and professional information via computer
- Proposed changes to chapter boundaries

The latter issue is of special interest. I personally opposed the proposed changes to the Willowdale-Thornhill PEO chapter, made by the Boundary Task Force. The proposal called for integrating the Thornhill portion of our chapter with the York chapter. Additionally, Willowdale-Thornhill would gain a smaller area south of Highway 401. I cannot and will not accept decreasing the size of our chapter and losing close to 1,000 members.

I am happy to report that after vigorously fighting the proposal, we concluded the meeting with Willowdale-Thornhill's boundaries intact. There will be no changes made to our chapter.

After the meeting, despite being tired, I put the get-together in perspective – the meeting, its merits and the issues resolved. I was satisfied that we tackled a number of issues; it was a productive meeting overall.

However, one thing remained clear and in focus at the meeting: membership participation is important.

We must further help ourselves by obtaining maximum participation from our members. A stronger PEO means the government will listen to us and not step on our toes. A stronger PEO means creating more opportunities for professional engineers. A stronger PEO also means advising the government on various technical issues such as power generation, infrastructure, and the environment.

It is important that we take the initiative and accept the leadership role that is rightfully ours. We should no longer accept leaving the fate of our profession and technology in the hands of lawyers and politicians.

I would invite you, the members of Willowdale-Thornhill, to serve on committees such as the government liaison committee, headed by Nanda Lwin, P.Eng., our education committee, headed by Mario Boetto, P.Eng., or the certificate presentation committee, headed by Bogdan Damjanovic, P.Eng.

We hope that you will respond to our invitation and join our dynamic group of volunteers.

N. Takessian, P.Eng.
Chair
Willowdale-Thornhill PEO chapter

Quit with Class: How to Jump Ship without Sinking Professionalism

By Bogdan Damjanović, P.Eng.

Engineers quit their jobs for a variety of reasons – hopes of better pay, a shorter commute, or greater opportunities for growth – but no matter what your reason, it is wise to exit gracefully.

Before beginning a job search, carefully consider whether you really want to quit your current job. Jobs at other companies may seem like they are more desirable than your own but that may not be the reality. Find out as much information as possible about the organizations you are applying with to determine whether a move would be advantageous.

The cardinal rule to remember when changing jobs is to wait until you find another job before quitting your current job. Not only does keeping your present job ensure continued income, it also reduces the likelihood of developing difficult-to-explain gaps in your work history. As excited as you may be about your employment prospects, keep things quiet until the details are certain and you've shared the news with your supervisor. You don't want to risk the information leaking to your boss before you've had a chance to explain the situation.

Once you've been formally offered another position, it's time to sit down with your supervisor and share the news. In addition to meeting with supervisors in person, write a letter of resignation including the reason for your departure, your last day of employment and your appreciation for the opportunities the company has provided you. For most positions, two weeks' notice is sufficient; however, more senior-level engineers should offer up to one month of notice.

During your last few weeks, make sure you work just as hard as you always have at maintaining your professional reputation. You don't want to negate years of image-building in the last two weeks of employment by slacking off and being negative. Resist the temptation to brag to co-workers about

how much better your new job will be than your current one. Those you leave behind won't appreciate having their employer or situation criticized. And maintaining your professional relationships is an integral part of future career success.

Once you know you're leaving, make a list of all the projects you need to wrap up before your departure. Let your supervisor and co-workers know where you have saved and filed documents that they will need to access in the future. Written instructions on how to perform certain complicated aspects of your job will be very helpful to your replacement and those who will pick up the slack before the new person is at full speed. You should also anticipate training your replacement, and allow enough time in your last days to complete assignments and answer the new employee's questions.

According to Workforce Management magazine, 95% of employers conduct exit interviews, but only about 30% take any action based on the information they learn. So, chances are your employer will want to conduct an exit interview with you to officially log your reasons for leaving. Keep in mind though that the information you share may not make a big difference in the way the company operates. When answering questions about your reasons for leaving, always use tact and restraint. The exit interview is not the time to air every grievance and injury you feel you've suffered at the hands of your employer. Unless sharing the information will benefit you or the company, keep it to yourself.

It should be obvious that taking company property upon departure is wrong but it may be less apparent that any project you worked on while on the clock or using company equipment is the property of your employer. That means you cannot copy reports, files or other proprietary information and use it for your or your future employer's gain. Another exiting mistake is destroying com-

pany property; this includes deleting or shredding files and vandalizing or throwing away equipment. These are criminal offenses that can result in hefty fines or jail time.

Quitting your job doesn't have to be a terrible experience. Exhibit the same professionalism while departing your current employer that you plan to display at your new job. If you handle the process well, your department may even throw you a going away

party or give you a departing gift. Just remember that the engineering field is a small world and having a former employer or co-worker on your side can be a valuable asset in your professional life.

Bogdan Damjanović is an owner of Express Personnel Services, an ISO certified staffing solutions company with a focus on technical, administrative, and industrial positions.

Practicing Safe Computing for the High Speed Connected Home or Home Business

By Mark Freidberg, P.Eng.

Although having a full time I/T department to support and protect the computers in your home or small business may be desirable, it is not usually practical. I believe that the following list of practices for safe computing should reduce your I/T security risks significantly.

Home Router

- Change the default password/user-ID on the router as soon as you set it up for the first time.
- On wireless routers, enable and set wireless security settings including encryption.
- Avoid use of the DMZ.

Your PC (ideally from the moment you first set it up)

- Install a good regularly updated anti-virus program.
- Set the virus scan to check emails.
- Install and run one or more addware or spyware programs such as Spybot and Ad-Aware regularly on all PC's.
- Install a personal firewall on all PC's (Zone alarm has free version).
- On Windows PC's, update your Windows operating system regularly from the Microsoft Windows Update site.

Internet

- If the message or pop-up on a web page looks suspicious, use the "X" in the upper right of the window to close it. Do not respond to the "Yes" or "No" buttons.

- Do not accept any offers of a free toolbar or any other type of download you are not familiar with. Nothing is free. Many contain viruses, spyware, Trojans or other malicious payloads.

E-mail

- If an e-mail or its title looks suspicious, delete it immediately preferably without opening it first.
- NEVER open suspicious attachments.
- Never respond to spam. This includes the invitation to respond if you wish to be removed from their distribution list. Just delete it.
- Scan all e-mail attachments, CD's and diskettes for viruses before opening contained files or accepting them on to your hard drive.
- Online credit card Internet purchases should only be made from well-known companies and only over an encrypted connection. Otherwise use a trusted payment system such as Paypal.
- Beware of phishing. This is a type of fraud where the instigator entices you to release some private information such as your Social Insurance Number, credit card number, user ID's, passwords or anything else they can use to run up charges in your name, empty your bank account, steal your identity, or worse. As a general rule, never reveal any private information in any dialog (in person, by mail, telephone, web, or Internet) that you did not initiate.



The Chronicle

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The Chronicle publishes articles of interest to the membership of Willowdale-Thornhill Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO). The content of this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the council of PEO, nor does the PEO assume responsibility for the opinions expressed herein.

ENGINEERING NOTES by Nanda Lwin, P.Eng.

An Accident Waiting to Happen

Tragedy seems to always have a compelling way of making us reflect and focus. Twenty-five years ago last July, one of the worst structural failures in history occurred. On the evening of July 17, 1981, two suspending walkways at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri, U.S., collapsed, killing 114 people and injuring almost 200 others. It was particularly unfortunate given that it was a rather busy Friday night with a well-attended celebration taking place below in the lobby.

The original architectural plans called for single vertical rods, attached securely to the ceiling, to carry two walkways. One walkway, at the fourth level, was suspended 10 m above the second-level walkway. The walkways, which hung over the hotel's atrium, gave the lobby a sense of openness, a very attractive feature from an architectural point of view.

However, in a last-minute attempt to facilitate construction, the single vertical rods were replaced with two rods at each point of support, one connected to the ceiling and the fourth-level walkway and the other connected to both the second- and fourth-level walkways. And at each of the levels, an assortment of washers, nuts and bolts attached the rods to the walkways.

Post-collapse tests and investigations show that the original design, and presumably the final one, were both vastly under-designed. The original design is said to have a mere 60% of the required strength as set out in the Kansas City Building Code at the time, although it is said that it probably still would have held, due to the safety margins added in the writing of the Code.

However, the real cause of collapse lies in the details. The self-weight of the top pedestrian bridge, plus the weight of the party-goers dancing, walking and running on top, proved too much for the washers, nuts and bolts. They broke free from the beams that were carrying the fourth-level walkway. With the walkway falling to the ground, the second level gave way too.

It is estimated that almost half of the population of Kansas City was effected by the disaster in one way or another. And even though 25 years have passed and I am nowhere close by, it too has had an effect on me. To me, what happened on that fateful day in 1981 is more than just another structural failure. It is a stark reminder that good design matters and that competence and precision in engineering is paramount.

Nanda Lwin, P.Eng., is a professor of civil engineering technology at Seneca College, the author of eight books, and a newspaper columnist.