

## Promote Yourself and Your Profession

**W**I had the pleasure of delivering the keynote address at the Florida Biomedical Symposium, I shared lessons I've learned during the last 24 years in this industry. I focused on three issues: proactive participation in the profession, the value of being a united entity, and traits that I believe are critical attributes to personal success.

I reminded attendees of the value of participating in an organization like the Florida Biomedical Society (FBS), and how these events create an opportunity for all of us to participate and share in the continued evolution of our profession.

Active participants give up numerous hours—on top of their commitments to work and family—to give others an opportunity to expand their knowledge base. They recognize that gathering as a group helps us all grow as individuals and as a profession. The time they dedicate is without pay. But they are compensated by increasing their self worth and knowledge, and hopefully feel rewarded by peer recognition. Their participation is a clear example of leadership in a group whose interest lies in the advancement of others as well as themselves.

Our profession benefits tremendously from the proactive involvement of these members. I believe that by following their example and becoming more involved within our profession, each of us will keep our knowledge base current, be respected and looked up to by peers, and be more readily sought after when someone is looking for a leader in the industry.

Participation can take on many forms within our organization: mentor, teacher, and active member of a local or regional biomedical professional group or society. There are at least 36 local biomedical societies across the country. Organizations such as AAMI, the American College of Clinical Engineering (ACCE), Medical Equipment & Technology Association (META), American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE), and Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) offer opportunities to promote professional growth. AAMI's new Technology Management Council, of which I am a member, is helping

to advance the interests and benefits to our community. By joining biomedical groups, not only do we actively participate, but we reduce the fragmentation that exists among us.

During my presentation, I used a famous quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "I have a dream." My dream is that one day biomedical/ clinical engineering will utilize a structure similar to the nursing profession. Our profession is doing itself a disservice by the division and competition within it. People both inside and outside the industry see independent service organizations (ISOs), original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), and in-house clinical engineering departments as different entities.

Even as a whole, we could not present ourselves as a profession with overwhelming strength in numbers given

the small size of our field. When broken into separate groups, we make it impossible to generate support to affect changes that should be made in the industry (i.e. regulatory

standards). It would be difficult to find anyone who doesn't know what a nurse does. As a nursing professional, you can be specialized and yet governed by the same standards across all aspects of the profession.

We need to institute that same level of unity within biomedical/clinical engineering. Some of us have chosen to specialize in general biomed, radiology, laboratory, etc. in various settings such as an ISO, OEM, or hospital-based in-house. However, there are situations where biomedical equipment technicians are compared to and separated from certified BMETs or certified clinical engineers, and separated from those who service lab or imaging systems. These stratifications are often divisive and unproductive, and carry little significance in the realm of service excellence. We are all working toward a mutual goal—maintaining safe medical equipment in a cost-effective manner. We must also work toward standardization and consistency.

I have played virtually every role within the profession of medical equipment asset management, from entry-level technician to upper-level management, and continually ask myself what the key attributes are to be successful in our field. My associates have coined the term



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“Daveisms” to describe what I feel to be essential criteria for achieving excellence in clinical engineering. These are respect, know-ledge, communi-cation, presentation, and flexibility.

The first four strategies can be applied to many professions. It is important that we recognize the appropriate quantity and quality needed of each of these four traits. From an entry-level position to an executive, we are professionals and should convey this to peers and to our customers.

Respect and knowledge are not mutually exclusive. In fact, you cannot have one without the other. You have to demonstrate knowledge to your customer or peers before they show you respect. Likewise, if you do not respect your customer or peers, you will lose opportunities to gain more knowledge. A respectful delivery is just as important as the knowledge you seek to convey or receive.

Communication is essential to any customer service industry. It is important to develop your technical expertise; however, the “hands-on” abilities will only get you so far. If you are unable to communicate effectively and respectfully, others will not recognize the value you represent to them. At every level during your professional career, it is imperative to get your point across and still listen to your customers’ needs. It is a superb talent when you can work with another person, communicating not only what they have done wrong but what they have done right. It is essential to maintain mutual openness to feedback. The testament to the value of solid communication is increased efficiency, productivity, and satisfaction.

Presentation is a key aspect in this business, even though its importance is not always evident. You must dress for success. If you are going to work with professionals, you must appear professional. Personal hygiene goes without saying. Attire should be appropriate for the situation. If you are meeting with administration, you should dress accordingly. It is much easier to remove a suit coat and tie than it is to not have one in the first place.

Flexibility, the final criterion, is not essential to one’s career. However, for those who can utilize it, our profession will allow them to receive great rewards more quickly and more abundantly. The willingness to travel from Monday to Sunday or move to another location as the opportunities arise is rare in our industry. One of the major issues we have today is professionals who are not willing to relocate to other areas of the country that are in

need of our services. The declining number of training schools has forced a concentration of clinical engineers in certain areas, and led to a critical shortage in the field. Those who possess talent and flexibility will have the best opportunity for advancement. This comes at a price, but I believe that those who can afford it will find the benefits outweigh the cost.

Through unity, a consolidated effort, and development of standards, we can make great strides toward making biomedical/clinical engineering a highly recognized, respected, and sought after profession.

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Views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect AAMI’s position. If you would like to share your thoughts, send them to [mpiotrowski@aami.org](mailto:mpiotrowski@aami.org).