



Society for Design Administration
An Affiliate of The American Institute of Architects

Orange County Chapter

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THE COMMENTARY

January 2009 Edition

A Newsletter of the Society For Design Administration
Orange County Chapter

President's Corner

By Natalie Newman, SDA



It's a new year and we are all asking the same questions: What is the forecast for 2009? What will 2009 bring to each of us and the companies we work for? Will I be able to keep my job or will I be laid off with the many others? Will the new President and incoming administration bring a new set of economic and tax policies that will affect the finances of Americans for the better? How long will this recession last?

With all these questions running around in our minds, I know one thing. We are all hoping for a return to prosperity and better fortune. Inspiration and skill are the key factors for professional success in 2009. So my new year's resolution for 2009 is to be optimistic. Definition: op-ti-mis-tic - disposed to take a favorable view of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome.

The power of optimism can be a factor in success, personal growth and development. Optimism allows you to see the positive aspects of any situation and enables you to capitalize on each possibility. Optimism is one of the remedies to help you prevent getting stressed easily because it is an expression of positive energy. When you feel upbeat, it affects your behavior and actions in affirmative ways.

So how can we develop an optimistic attitude when life looks grim?

- Direct your brain to think positive thoughts and create constructive mental pictures. If we constantly look at the negative, it will limit our successes.
- Use words that boost confidence.
- Put your focus on the things that you can control instead of on the things that aren't working or on people who are uncooperative and energy drainers.
- Expect the best from every situation and every one that you meet. This can inspire and create better outcomes.
- Look for role models. Read an autobiography of someone who has overcome challenges and learn how their views can help motivate you. Put this new knowledge into action.

Continued on Page 3

Upcoming Events

January 2009

- January 8 Business Meeting 5:30 pm**
Meeting will be hosted by Steven Langford Architects.
- January 15 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am**
"Turning Knowledge Into Action - The Science Behind Peak Performance"—Speaker from Anthony Robbins
Wyndham Hotel, Costa Mesa.

February 2009

- February 5 Business Meeting 5:30 pm**
Meeting will be hosted by Bassenian Lagoni.
- February 19 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am**
HR and New Labor Laws for 2009—Presented by Stu Lerner
Wyndham Hotel, Costa Mesa.

March 2009

- March 5 Business Meeting 5:30 pm**
Meeting will be hosted by Jeffrey Berkus Architects.
- March 19 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am**
"Bankruptcy 101" - Presented By Mark Bradshaw, Esq.
Wyndham Hotel, Costa Mesa

Resource Library

Resource Library: Books available for members to check out include *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell, *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz, and *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves* by Lynne Truss. Contact Janet Caprario by e-mail (jcaprario@jzmkpartners.com).

Job Board: Did you know that SDA maintains a Job Board? This includes persons looking for work as well as firms looking for qualified personnel in the A/E industry. Most of the positions are for administrative staff, as AIA maintains its own job board for licensed architects. If your firm is looking for a person with certain qualifications or if you know someone who is looking for a position in an A/E firm, please contact Betsy Nickless by calling (949) 833-9066 or by e-mail at betsy@sladesign.com.



January 13	Susan Crook
February 16	Ellen Mogasemi
February 17	Kristy Jordan
February 23	Connie McKenna
February 25	Cindy Loomer
February 27	Jill Wood
March 2	Joey Pitcher
March 19	Ginger Castillo
March 25	Lori Stodd

President's Corner

(Continued)

Continued from Page 1

Optimism and being a member of SDA will help bring you to your highest level of expertise and make you indispensable in the A/E/C field. Education and training in this specialized field is an investment in yourself and your career, especially in this tight market. Good habits of being a high-quality employee will serve you well where you are or where you go next.

The Orange County Chapter already has some great programs scheduled in 2009. In January, we will be hearing from a motivational speaker from Anthony Robbins. We will also be present-

ing a program on Bankruptcy - how it affects our industry and steps to protect ourselves. There will also be a presentation on LEED— Accreditation vs. Certification. Next will be a program on Project Administration – a look from prospective job to project completion. So don't forget to go online and renew your SDA membership for 2009. Renewal reminders **will not** be mailed to you.

Here's to a successful year for the SDA/OC, and wishing you and yours a happy and fabulous 2009!

Happy New Year!

SDA Receives AIACC Presidential Citation Award

On November 13, 2008, our Chapter President, Natalie Newman, and our Chapter Vice-President, Betsy Nickless, were invited to attend the American Institute of Architects California Council (AIACC) Awards and Installation Ceremony in San Diego, California.

Jeffrey Gill, 2008 AIACC President, awarded the Presidential Citation Award to the SDA: "In recognition of extraordinary service to the profession of architecture. For over 50 years, the Society for Design Administration (SDA) has been the recognized leader in education for best practices in design firm management and administration. Many issues critical to firm management and emerging professionals have been embraced and advanced by SDA. The Intern Development Program (IDP), emerging technologies, and the challenges of "Green" design, are only a couple of examples where SDA members, and the demonstrated value they bring to the practice and prosperity of the architectural profession, has created a legacy of excellence that is deeply respected and appreciated."

Natalie accepted the award on behalf of the SDA.



John Grounds, AIACC 2009 President (right) ,
Natalie Newman, President OC/SDA, and Nicholas Docous,
AIACC First Vice President / President-Elect (left)

Congratulations 2009 Officers

Natalie Newman has worked in the architectural field since 2000 and has been employed as an Accounting & Executive Assistant at RNM Design, Inc. since October 2005.



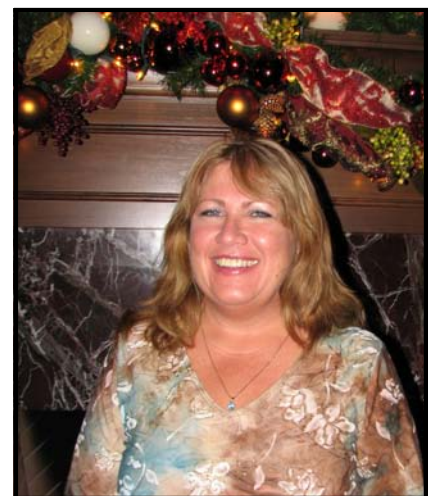
**Natalie Newman, SDA
President**

Natalie has been an active SDA member since October 2002. She has written 'Member Profiles' and other articles for the chapter newsletter, volunteered for different SDA and AIA/OC events, has attended four National Conventions, three Western States Regional Conferences and two Leadership Conferences. In 2004, she presided as Corresponding Secretary. In 2006, Natalie presided as Co-Vice President and assisted in planning a memorable Host Chapter Party for the SDA National Convention in Los Angeles at the Hollywood Entertainment Museum. In 2007, Natalie chaired the Western States Regional Conference in Orange County, and in 2008, she was co-chair for the 1st Annual Construction Design/Build Competition, which brought in over 26 tons of food for the OC Food Bank. Natalie will be serving her third consecutive term as Chapter President in 2009. The best part of SDA for Natalie is *"the education I have received. What I've learned from being a member of the SDA has enriched my career remarkably."*

Natalie has been married to Jason Newman for almost 8 years, and they love to spend their weekends playing Texas Hold'Em. Her two favorite people in the world are her son Drew, 24, and her daughter Brittney, 23. They make her happy just thinking about them.

Tammy Bennar has worked for Conceptual Design and Planning Company (CDPC) for over five years as the Business/HR Manager. CDPC specializes in landscape design and master planning. CDPC is Tammy's first opportunity to work in the A&E industry. Her background is in construction, working for owner's reps and subcontractors. Over the past year she has become more involved with SDA. She was able to attend the National Convention in May 2008 and has gained so much from SDA and the people involved in the Orange County Chapter. She also participates on the local Board, monthly seminars, and committees.

Tammy enjoys being active whether it's biking, hiking, camping, dancing, or just spending time her friends and family.



**Tammy Bennar, SDA
Corresponding Secretary**

Congratulations 2009 Officers



**Betsy Nickless, SDA/C
Co-Vice President**

Betsy was the 2008 recipient of SDA's National Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor bestowed by the society. She has held positions on committees for the National SDA, as well as served as an officer of the Orange County Chapter continuously since the Chapter was founded. Currently, she serves as the National Bylaws / Governance chair and on the National Publications Committee. She also proof-reads all SDA/OC Chapter publications and announcements for correct grammar and punctuation, attends all Board Meetings and SDA Conventions, and provides all of the SDA/OC members with background and historical information that only a founding member of our Chapter would know.

Betsy has been in the Design Profession for more than 25 years, and her current position with Steven Langford Architects has spanned the last 19 years.

Betsy enjoys Five Crowns, Bistango, and A Restaurant for dining, and her favorite music is Contemporary Christian. She met her husband, Steve, of 26 years at the car races where she was in charge of timing and scoring and he was doing PR work for one of the teams. They have two grown children.

Karen Henderson is the Marketing Manager for the general contractor, Snyder Langston. Except for a two-year hiatus in the mid-1990s, she has been a SDA/OC member since 1988 and has served as Secretary, a three-term Presidency, and now a two-term Vice President. *"To me the Society for Design Administration is a valuable organization, both professionally and personally."*



**Karen Henderson, SDA
Co-Vice President**

Congratulations 2009 Officers



Cheryl Mathes has worked in the A&E industry for 21 years. Currently she is the Branch Controller for HRP Studio, a Landscape Architecture and Planning firm located in Santa Ana, CA. HRP Studio is a branch of the ValleyCrest Design Group which performs standalone landscape architectural services, and integrated design-build services. The Landscape Architects, installation crews and maintenance professionals at ValleyCrest collaborate on all aspects of a project, from inception all the way through installation and maintenance.

Over the years the SDA has been an integral part in her professional career. The programs offered by the SDA give her the opportunity to meet other administrative design professionals and glean vital information. She has attended National and Regional conventions, as well as participated on the local Board, monthly seminars, and committees.

Cheryl enjoys being active whether it's kayaking, wine tasting, dancing, or just spending time with her amazing parrots.

Cheryl is a proud supporter of the SDA and enjoys participating in all that the SDA has to offer.

Gina has been a member of the SDA for eight years. For six years she was the office manager at DHP Architects. She found her present job over three years ago as office manager at Jeffrey Berkus Architects with the help of the SDA. When the SDA President found she was looking for a job, she took the time to call the owners of JBA and tell them that she had the right person for the job and the rest is history.

Gina feels that that membership in the SDA is a necessity for anyone in the Design field. Aside from the valuable information presented during the monthly meetings and support from the local chapter members, you have access to a discussion forum which allows you to post questions and get answers from people all across the nation.

Gina met her husband George on an airplane 39 years ago. They have one daughter and son-in-law who blessed them with a two year old and a four-week-old grandson. After babysitting the grandkids, Gina's favorite thing to do is travel to beaches with seashells and great snorkeling.



Project Playhouse 2008

Thanks to all of our SDA volunteers for helping during Project Playhouse 2008. The following is a letter from HomeAid Orange County which sums up the results:

Dear Committee, Builders, Board of Directors and Volunteers:

The Project Playhouse Auction Party of Saturday night was a HUGE success! We had over 400 people in attendance, lot's of great energy and grossed over \$210,000 that night! The playhouse sales were over and above what we could have ever expected - two were bought and donated back to the auction block and the total was just over \$180,000! We even had two successful bids live on-line through the internet bidding site and the other live auction items and our great line-up of silent auction items brought in nearly \$23,500!

Thank you so much for participating as a volunteer for HomeAid's Project Playhouse. We are so blessed to have great team members that do whatever it takes to help us with our mission. We are truly appreciative for everything you have done for homeless families and individuals in Orange County. The final numbers are being tallied from the event overall and I will forward that total to you soon.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Gina

Gina Cunningham, Director of Development
HomeAid Orange County

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Irvine, CA 92614

P. 949.553.9510

F. 949.224.1855

www.homeaidoc.org

"To build dignified housing where homeless families and individuals can rebuild their lives"



Holiday Party and Installation Of Officers 2008



**AIAOC Executive Director,
Cheryl Steele, Installed our Officers**



**Our gracious hosts,
Dale and Judy Merrill**



**Member of the Year
Wendy Woolsey, SDA/C**



This and That

IRS Mileage Rates for 2009

The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2009 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

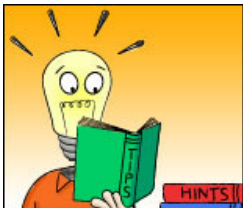
Beginning on January 1, 2009, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 55 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 24 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

The new rates for business, medical and moving purposes are slightly lower than rates for the second half of 2008 that were raised by a special adjustment mid-year in response to a spike in gasoline prices. The rate for charitable purposes is set by law and is unchanged from 2008.

The business mileage rate was 50.5 cents in the first half of 2008 and 58.5 cents in the second half. The medical and moving rate was 19 cents in the first half and 27 cents in the second half.

The mileage rates for 2009 reflect generally higher transportation costs compared to a year ago, but the rates also factor in the recent reversal of rising gasoline prices. While gasoline is a significant factor in the mileage rate, other fixed and variable costs, such as depreciation, enter the calculation.



Using Shapes in Power Point

**TIP OF THE WEEK FROM
MICROSOFT.COM**

Working with shapes in PowerPoint: Use the More AutoShapes command (click the AutoShapes button on the Drawing toolbar) to display the Clip Art task pane, where you can search for and insert clip art.

Quick Tips

Quick Tip: Have you ever received a .DOCX, .PPTX, or .XLSX document and had no idea what they were or how to open them? These documents were created in the 2007 versions of Office and not openable with the 2003 or earlier versions without a compatibility pack from Microsoft. However, you can easily go to the Microsoft page and [download the compatibility pack](#) for free. This may only pose a problem if you don't have administrative privileges to install files.

Quick Tip: SHIFT + F11 will insert a new worksheet in Excel.

Quick Tip: Holding down CTRL while using the mouse wheel will zoom you in and out of just about any document. This works with Word, Excel, PowerPoint, WordPad, web pages and PDFs. It will not work with .TXT documents.

Quick tips found at <http://www.kan.org/tips/quicktips.php>

Lie versus Lay

Lie or Lie Down is something a person does (intransitive verb).

- The baby is lying on the couch.
- She lies down for a nap on the couch everyday.
- I lay down on the couch to get rid of my headache last night. (Past tense)
- I have lain here for an hour waiting for my headache to go away.

Lay is something a person does to something or someone (transitive verb).

- I am laying the baby down for a nap.
- I lay the baby down for her nap at noon everyday.
- I laid the book on the table a minute ago. (Past tense)
- I have just laid her down for a nap.
- I will lay the plans out for you.

10 Ways to Deal With a Slow Economy

1. **Do not over-react**—One of the worst things management can do in a slowing economy is to over-react. It seems clear that for most firms, 2008 was not as good as 2007 and 2009 will not be as good as 2008. Make sure your decisions to reduce staff and cut other expenses are measured and appropriate to the situation.
2. **Invest in Your Future**—When your business is operating at 110% of capacity you simply don't have the time to invest in training, technology upgrades and developing standard processes. When business is slower, it is the ideal time to make investments that will pay dividends in the future.
3. **Deal with the Dead Wood**—Over the last 5 years many A/E firms were in a hiring frenzy. In our eagerness to expand our workforce and meet our project deadlines, many firms have dramatically lowered their hiring standards. A slowing economy is an opportunity to raise our performance expectations and transition our under-achievers to other employment opportunities.
4. **Use More Video Conferencing**—Video conferencing technology has come a long way. For a relatively cheap investment, you can dramatically reduce the need for visiting your clients or branch offices in person. Even if most of your travel is reimbursed by your clients, they will appreciate your efforts to keep costs under control. Of course reducing travel has the added benefit of being environmentally responsible.
5. **Review Your Compensation Strategies**—A slowing economy is an opportunity to rethink your compensation and bonus program and make some long overdue adjustments. Think long and hard about moving to incentive based compensation. Adopt a plan that rewards financial results, not seniority and effort, and you will create a company that can not only survive – but thrive in any economy.
6. **Have Employees Use Their Vacation Time**—It doesn't make any sense to have employees carry time forward to next year. If they haven't used all of their vacation time, consider making it mandatory before year-end. It is better they use it now rather than waiting until business picks up again.
7. **Cut Unnecessary Spending**—Substantial sales volume can cover-up a multitude of sins. Cost controls can get sloppy and overhead can spin out of control. Use this opportunity to review where you are over-spending and cut costs now.
8. **Upgrade Your Staff** - For years, every A/E firm in North America has been complaining about the lack of qualified employees. Well—now is your chance. With the slowing economy, quality people are now available. This is your opportunity to upgrade the quality of your staff and solidify your position for long term success.
9. **Update your Strategic Plan**— Successful firms retain a facilitator exclusive to the A/E industry and take the time (2-3 days every year) to develop a simple plan of where they want to go and how to get there. The result of the session is a simple action plan that articulates the company's goals, assigns responsibility, assigns deadlines for action, and has a mechanism for follow-up. In this economy, there has never been a better time to have a strategic planning session.
10. **Reduce Your Professional Fees**—A prime area to save money would be your professional fees. Most A/E firms are over-charged and under-served by their CPA firm. Take this opportunity to ask your CPA for a 20% reduction in their fees. If they don't go for it, solicit quotes from other firms.

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Herbert M. Cannon, President of AEC Management Solutions, Inc. and Publisher of AEC Managing Partner Newsletter, is a management consultant, seminar provider and speaker exclusive to the A/E Industry. He is available to speak at company meetings and conferences. For more information contact Herb via e-mail: hcannon@aecmanagementsolutions.com. Or visit his website at www.aecmanagementsolutions.com.

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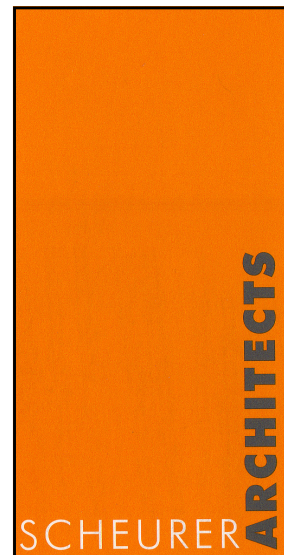


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President

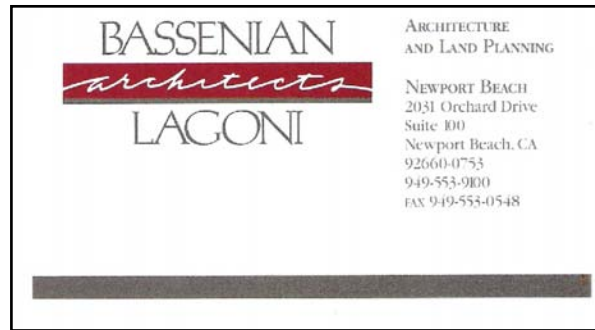
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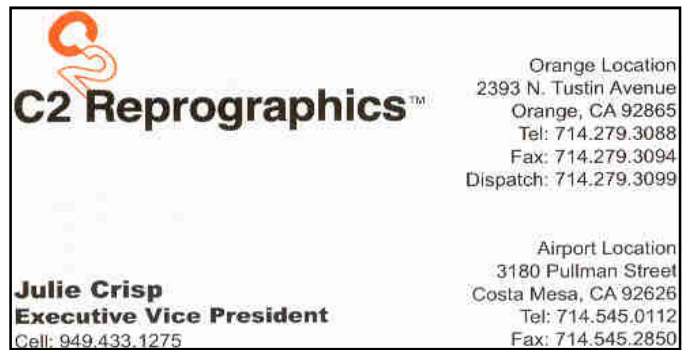
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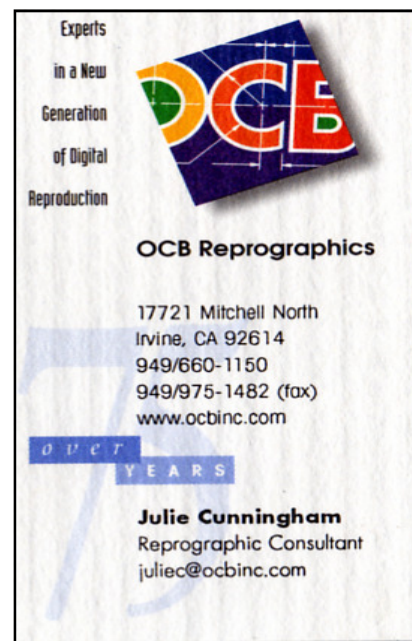
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TRAVELERS





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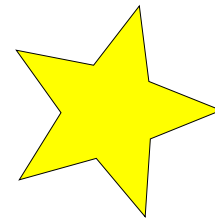
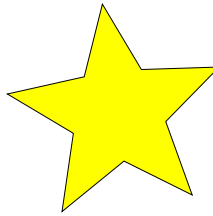
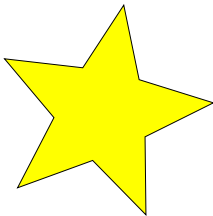
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and photographer,
Betsy Nickless!



The Commentary

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SDA's Mission:

To promote the
exchange of ideas and
educate its members
in the related
disciplines of design
firm administration.