IEEE Madison Section Newsletter

Telepresence and Other Interesting Technologies

CISCO

Date/Time: Thursday, November 20, 2008, 11:45 AM - 1:00 PM
Speaker: Andy Feest, Solutions Architect, Cisco Systems
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 November 17th to Shazia Ahsan via e-mail (sahsan@ieee.org) or call 906.370.2958

Non-member guests are always welcome!

Andy Feest has been in the Networking/Telecommunications industry for 20 years, the last 12 of them with Cisco Systems. For 9 of those years he has focused on Voice and Video communications systems. He will talk about some of the new and interesting stuff Cisco has been working on in the field of collaboration technologies including Telepresence. Cisco TelePresence combines high-quality audio, high-definition video, and interactive elements to deliver an in-person meeting experience over your network.

IEEE Madison Section Elections

At the December 2008 monthly meeting, the IEEE Madison Section will conduct its annual officer elections prior to the technical presentation. The positions include chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, and multiple member-at-large positions. Job descriptions can be found online at < http://www.ieee.org/web/geo_activities/ units/Resources/Officer_Training/job-desc.html>. Nominations may be made via e-mail to the one of the nominating committee members: Sandy Rotter, rotter@ieee.org or Clark Johnson, clarkjohn-son@cpinternet.com. Additional candidate nominations are welcome and encouraged for all positions.

Your help is needed!
Remember that this is a volunteer organization. Being an officer does not require a large time commitment but some of us are ready to retire after many years of service!

The nominations to date include:

Chair:	Ken Hartman
Vice-Chair:	Dennis Bahr
Secretary:	David Marca
Treasurer:	Shazia Ahsan
Mem. at Large:	Clark Johnson
Mem. at Large:	Sandy Rotter
Mem. at Large:	Mitchell Bradt

IEEE Seeks Volunteers for Humanitarian Technology Challenge

The Humanitarian Technology Challenge (HTC) is a partnership between IEEE and the United Nations Foundation designed to bring together technical professionals and humanitarians to develop technological solutions for pressing challenges facing humanity.

A small number of IEEE members are needed to help shape the early stages of the program, working with humanitarians to further detail challenge definitions and outline a solution process. This is a unique opportunity for IEEE volunteers experienced in systems engineering to work directly with prominent humanitarian volunteers.

The following initial challenges were identified by focus groups composed of representatives from ten humanitarian organizations:

• Reliable Electricity – Availability of power for electronic devices

• Data Connectivity of Rural District Health Offices -- Capability of exchanging data among remote field offices and central health facilities

• Local Management and Tracking of Supply Distribution – Ensure that supplies are getting to the people that need them in order to maximize the impact of assistance

• Incident Tracking – Determine locations and extent of medical problems in order to focus resources

- Patient ID and Tie to Health Records – Maintain consistent patient records, including when patients visit different clinics and when they relocate.

IEEE volunteers should be experienced in the application of technology to solve humanitarian issues and be willing to commit approximately two to four hours per week to the project. A conference call/webcast for early stage volunteers is scheduled to take place in late November, 2008. This will be followed by an in-person conference scheduled for the first quarter of 2009, where additional volunteers will be needed.

For more information, visit the HTC Web site (http://www.ieee.org/go/htc). Interested volunteers should contact Harold Tepper, IEEE HTC Project Manager, at h.tepper@ieee.org.

A Bad Boss Can Send You to an Early Grave

by Travis Bradberry, Ph.D.

It seems there's always a steady supply of sympathy available for anyone stuck working under a bad boss. Most everyone I know has been there at one time or another, working under a tyrant who somehow manages to survive in this world without people skills. If you haven't had a boss like this, you should consider buying a lottery ticket — and I mean soon. You are that lucky.
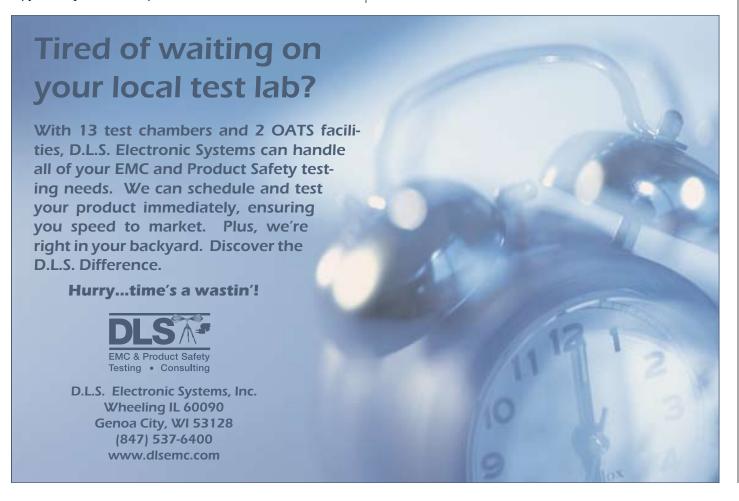
According to a recent study published in Human Resource Executive magazine, a third of U.S. workers spend a minimum of twenty hours per month at work complaining about their boss. The Gallup Poll estimates U.S. corporations lose 360 billion dollars annually due to lost productivity from employees who are dissatisfied with — you guessed it — their boss. And if there's but one hard truth the Gallup Polls have taught U.S. Corporations in the last decade, it's that people may join companies, but they will leave bosses.

In the days of a strong dollar, bulging tech bubble and robust housing market, people working for a bad boss had options. Careers were mobile and talent was in short supply. It was a snap to pack up and leave. But nowadays, things are decidedly different. Jobs are scarce and the prudent worker stays put, even if he or she is working under the worst type of boss imaginable — the seagull manager.

The roots of seagull management can be traced back to the days when "micromanager" was the worst non-expletive you could utter behind your boss' back. Managers' fear of this label grew so intense that they learned to keep their distance from employees, assuming a "good" boss is one who spends as little time as possible breathing down people's necks. And most do. They give people room to breath until the moment a problem flares up. Then — instead of getting the facts straight and working alongside their staff to realize a viable solution — seagull managers come swooping in at the last minute, they squawk orders at everybody, and deposit steaming piles of formulaic advice before abruptly taking off.

Seagull managers interact with their employees only when there's a fire to put out. Even then, they move in and out so hastily — and put so little thought into their approach — that they make bad situations worse by frustrating and alienating those who need them the most. Today, seagull managers are breeding like wildfire. As companies flatten in response to the struggling economy, they are gutting management layers and leaving behind managers with more autonomy, greater responsibility, and more people to manage. That means they have less time and less accountability for focusing on the primary purpose of their job — managing people.

As it turns out, seagull managers aren't just a U.S. phenomenon. After reading a study that found employees have lower blood pressure on the days they worked for a supervisor they think is fair, researchers from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health decided to take a closer look at this phenomenon. They followed British civil servants for a period of fifteen years to see if the type of boss one works for has any impact upon long-term, physical health.

The researcher's findings cast a grave shadow upon anyone working for a seagull manager. The team from Helsinki found that seagull-type managerial behaviors lead to a much higher incidence of employee coronary heart disease. Employees working for a seagull manager were 30 percent more likely to develop coronary heart disease than those who were not. What's more, the incidence of coronary heart disease — the #1 killer in Western societies — was measured after the researchers had removed the influence of typical risk factors, such as age, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, socioeconomic position, cholesterol level, obesity, hypertension, smoking, alcohol consumption, and physical activity.

No one influences an employee's morale and productivity more than his or her supervisor. It's that simple. Yet, as common as this knowledge may seem, it clearly hasn't been enough to change the way that managers and organizations treat people. Few companies recognize the degree to which managers are the vessels of a company's culture, and even fewer work diligently to ensure that their vessels hold the knowledge and skills that motivate employees to perform, feel satisfied, and love their jobs. The very individuals with the authority to alter the course of company culture lack the facts that would impel them to do so.

With the stoic pragmatism that one might expect from a Finnish University professor, Dr. Mika Kivimäki, the director of the study, had this to say about the study's findings, "Most people care deeply about just treatment by authorities."

Indeed we do, Dr. Kivimäki. Indeed we do.

Dr. Travis Bradberry is the president of think tank and consultancy TalentSmart. His new book, Squawk! How to Stop Making Noise and Start Getting Results, addresses the problem of seagull managers in the workplace and is published by HarperCollins.

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2790 S. Fish Hatchery
Madison, WI 53711