

PAICR Newport Conference Wrap Up

June 26, 2000

The 2000 West Coast Conference “Enhancing Client Service & Marketing through Technology,” took place against the unseasonably sultry but no less scenic backdrop of the Hyatt Newporter in Newport Beach, CA. The participants’ arrival created an ostensible energy and enthusiasm in eager anticipation of a wonderfully rewarding and educational PAICR event.

After a lively introduction from President Janet Acheatel, participants delved in to introducing themselves and their firms, and addressing their greatest technological challenges.

The Keynote Address, delivered by industry expert, Pete Johnson, Partner and Head of Institutional Marketing at Nicholas-Applegate Capital Management in San Diego, CA., probed the evolutionary dynamics of the technology sector, discussed the affects of bubbles and manias, transitioned into past and current trends and concluded with the technological advances of tomorrow. What I found particularly enlightening was the discussion of manias where Pete discussed some of the great companies that have been born of this creativity and innovation (e.g., Henry Ford’s discovery of the assembly line revolutionizing the automobile industry).

Pete concluded with the advances in Bandwidth and Wireless Communications that are predicating the future of Internet technology. The impact of these innovations will be “Techno Stress” and the constant demands of “24/7” business; however, we are the benefactors of voice recognition, an eye directed mouse, autopilot in our cars, smart clothes, and eBooks. Although, I think the benefits of “Dr. Toilet” remain to be proven!

Dr. Michelle Weil led a distinguished list of panelists and presenters for the second day of the conference. Dr. Weil educated us on alleviating “Techno Stress,” defined as a discomfort caused by our relationships with technology. Dr. Weil’s focus is on protecting our “Humanware,” and, upon providing background on accepting and reacting to technology, she afforded suggestions and solutions for the technology that permeates our industry and lives:

- Practice technological communication etiquette, concentrate on how you will be perceived by your communications
- When leaving a voicemail, leave your name/number first, then your message
- Avoid technology tag by offering clear contact info
- Be complete, read/listen thoroughly

- Match modes of communication
- Maintain perspective

Exhibitors at the conference were, Scott Parry from Nelson's and Arpan Patal from eFrontiers. Scott Parry highlighted the organizational changes due to the acquisition by Thomson Financial in 1998 as well as new developments from Nelson's marketplace including a retail mutual fund database. Arpan Patal delivered an introduction to eFrontiers, which focuses on scaled down choices for greater ease of use and efficiency.

Farouki Majeed from the Orange County Employees Retirement System and Sylva Saak from the Times Mirror Corporation constituted the Consultant Panel. The consensus was plan sponsors expect the investment managers to be concise and go above and beyond when delivering service and education. In terms of selecting managers, both panelists emphasized a clearly defined process and disciplined risk management.

Following lunch, former President Chela Mitchell introduced the consultant panel: Yvette Lee, Frank Russell and Company, Robinson Cluck, Canterbury Consulting and Arpan Patal, eFrontiers, Inc. Yvette Lee enriched the participants with tips for web site development including: employing questionnaires and surveys as a powerful means by which to gain feedback on your web site. Bob Cluck and Arpan Patal presented overviews of their firms' services, and a dichotomy in use of technology by consultants.

As the day drew to a close, the Roundtable Breakout Sessions ensued. Participants were divided up into categories that they had chosen prior to the conference. Categories ranged from Web site development to Analytics.

The conference closed with Richard Shaughnessy's, Nicholas-Applegate, presentation on "Managing Bad News and Blasting Good News." Rick focused on having a clearly defined PR role within the firm, building good relationships with reporters, being prepared and remaining cool under fire.

Healthy attendance and high energy levels set the tone for a successful conference. The Newport Conference produced an enclave of professionals thoroughly immersed in the benefits and effects of technology, a plethora of educational information, a valuable networking opportunity and a chance to renew old friendships and establish new ones.