



# **New Voices Inspire the Field**

**ASTC Annual Conference**  
**Tuesday October 16, 2007**

# **New Voices Inspire the Field**

## **Welcome**

# Format for Discussion

## \* Inspire the Field and Inform the Future

*(Why do we do this and where are we going?)*

- Those closest to the front-lines remind us of the passion we bring to our work
- A vision for the field from the people who will influence that future
- Scheduled presenters describe their inspiration and their vision
- Audience briefly shares their thoughts

## \* Attract and Retain Talent

*(What can the field do to attract and retain the best and brightest staff?)*

- Recommendations for attracting high quality entry level staff and keeping them in the field
- Scheduled presenters and audience join in a facilitated discussion

## \* Additional Questions and Insights

# Introductions

- \* 5 of the New Voices you'll hear today:
  - Young and new to the field
  - All are attending their first, second or third ASTC conference
  - Collectively average 1 year 1 month in current position; 5 years in the field (including internships and P/T)
  - Their positions have included:
    - Educator
    - Demonstrator
    - Explainer/Interpreter
    - Outreach Presenter
    - Exhibit Developer
    - Planetarium Operator
    - Fundraiser
    - And more
- \* We will facilitate audience discussion, so please plan to share
- \* Session Leader: Alice Forbes, Senior Associate, David Heil & Associates, Inc. (Portland, OR)

# Presenters

- \* Megan Adams, Education Director, Don Harrington Discovery Center (Amarillo, TX)
- \* Nora McCartney, Assistant Director, TryScience, New York Hall of Science (Queens)
- \* Tuomas Olkku, Development Manager, Heureka, The Finnish Science Center (Vantaa, Finland)
- \* T. Woody Sobey, Education Director, Discovery Center of Idaho (Boise)
- \* Matthew Wenger, Graduate Associate, Flandrau: The University of Arizona Science Center (Tucson)

# Follow-up

- \* Slides and discussion notes will be posted at [www.davidheil.com](http://www.davidheil.com), click on “Happenings”

# Raw notes from discussion during 2007 session

## Topic: What Inspires Us in Our Work?

- \* Get kids excited to continue into science careers
- \* Great to experience the excitement that kids have because of an experience that you facilitated
- \* Share excitement with visitors
- \* Science centers have the potential to connect youth to “real” experiences and “real” science. Young, new staff in science centers aren’t bound by tradition/history and may be best positioned to facilitate these “authentic” experiences.
- \* A science center can go beyond the science standards that often limit formal educators and can provide experiences based on the interests of youth (“Endangered experiences”)
- \* A science center job is diverse, you get to be involved in: creativity, community engagement, education, technology
- \* If you don’t know any better, you may end up trying something that hasn’t been done before
- \* Lots of new and different content to keep job fun and interesting; in researching content for exhibits and programs, you get to learn so many cool new things
- \* Whatever your position is in your organization, you should spend time on the floor with the public
- \* Opportunity to connect to the community in a way that is relevant to them. Help community voices and knowledge emerge.
- \* Loved the local science center, went to work there
- \* Friends hear where you work and have fond memories because they love the science center, too

# Raw notes from discussion during 2007 session

## Topic: What is our vision for the future?

- \* Science centers have been places where visitors could go to experience technology, but now there are few of those experiences that are not common. Science centers today and in the future need to be about engaging the public in discourse about challenging science topics.
- \* Help the public understand science content and public policy.
- \* Create a science literate society with content rooted in what is relevant to the community and how it impacts the community.
- \* Relevancy to community. Museums can be community hubs and use technology to facilitate this in innovative, appealing ways.
- \* Technology can provide a means for engaging the community, but don't overlook the simple methods
- \* Engage your community/reach out to the community by providing what it is that they want.
- \* Engaging with content should be less about single interpretive outcome and more about process
- \* Let the content come from the community's knowledge and interests.
- \* Hand more control over to visitors.
- \* Provide more and better ways for visitors to control the experience. We have access to powerful, inexpensive digital tools and we need to figure out what we're going to do with them.
- \* Need to educate funders (they shouldn't be designing exhibits and programs)

# Raw notes from discussion during 2007 session

## Topic: How do we attract and retain talent?

**In exchange for lower pay, we can make science center work more appealing with:**

- \* Opportunity to share your ideas
- \* Flexible hours
- \* Telecommuting
- \* Interesting projects
- \* Career advancement opportunities
- \* Learning opportunities
- \* Personal growth opportunities
- \* International opportunities
- \* Control over own work
- \* Opportunities to work with interesting people with different expertise and backgrounds
- \* Opportunities to work with different corporations, universities, NGO's, etc.
- \* Fun and supportive work environment

### **Mentors**

- \* We want to learn from supportive "seasoned" professionals
- \* Pass on the tradition!
- \* There is a lot of silent knowledge in the field

# Raw notes from discussion during 2007 session

## Topic: How do we attract and retain talent? (cont)

### **Community and Civic Engagement**

- \* Value of good brand: for future employees, for current employees.
- \* Staff need to feel proud of where they work
- \* Position the science center as a place where youth want to go to work (ex – NY Hall Career Ladder program)
- \* Can science centers be a civic catalyst for creating a community where people want to live and work (in part in order to attract staff to work at your science center)
- \* We should all be asking, “How are we helping?”
- \* The science center should be relevant to its employees and to the community
- \* Strong sense of community within the organization
- \* Connection with community outside the organization

### **Passion, Innovation and “Activism”**


- \* Science centers should allow innovation
- \* A culture of innovation requires risk taking and forgiveness
- \* Are the young by default activists? Do young professionals need an organization where they can push the limits?
- \* Can you teach someone to be an activist?
- \* Need a manager who supports activism (your manager probably still considers him/herself an activist)
- \* If you are passionate, you will find support in the organization
- \* If you raise money to implement your idea, you’ll get more support!

# Raw notes from discussion during 2007 session

## Topic: How do we attract and retain talent? (cont)

### Large vs. Small Science Centers

- \* Need an industry-wide internship program to try working at small science centers
- \* Is there a risk in getting stereotyped as being a large science center person or a small science center person?
- \* There seem to be more opportunities at large science centers, but there also seems to be the opportunity to wear more different hats at a small science center. In a large science center you run the risk or, or experience the benefit of, being more specialized.
- \* Science centers need to be much more active in using technology and less afraid of increasingly commonplace technology and media. Staff in science centers risk falling behind in their skill set. Young staff may leave when they realize they aren't exposed to as much as they would be in other corporate or educational settings.
- \* Jump around: work in a large science center, then work in a small science center (or the other way around) – each have lessons to learn
- \* Reasons to stay in one place – relationship with community, depth of knowledge of organization, ability to try lots of different things and build skills in different areas with one organization



*ASTC Oct 16, 2007*

*New Voices Inspire the Field*

*David Heil & Associates, Inc.*



# **New Voices Inspire the Field**

**ASTC Annual Conference**  
**Saturday October 28, 2006**

# Introductions

- \* 10 of the New Voices you'll hear today:
  - Young and new to the field
  - 8 are attending their first ASTC conference
  - Collectively average 1+ year in current position; 4.5 years in the field (many P/T for some of those years)
  - Their positions have included:
    - Educator
    - Demonstrator
    - Explainer/Interpreter
    - Outreach Presenter
    - Exhibit Developer
    - Bus Greeter
    - And more
- \* We will facilitate audience discussion, so please plan to share
- \* Session Leader: Alice Forbes, Senior Associate, David Heil & Associates, Inc. (Portland, OR)

# Inspire the Field: Presenters

- \* Dawn Kirchner, Museum Educator, U of Kansas Natural History Museum (Lawrence)
- \* Staci Radford-Vincent, Program Manager, Wonderlab Museum of Science, Health and Technology (Bloomington, IN)
- \* Alex Gallegos, Education Coordinator, Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago)
- \* Jonathan Bijur, Education Coordinator, MIT Museum (Cambridge, MA)
- \* Mercedes Hurd, Exhibits & Programs Associate, Connecticut Science Center (Hartford)

# Retain Talent: Presenters

- \* Georgette Williams, Science Instructor, New York Hall of Science (Queens)
- \* Karen Brown, Education Facilitator, Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago)
- \* Scott Pattison, Exhibit Developer, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (Portland)
- \* Ben Dickow, Manager of Program Development and Training, California Science Center (Los Angeles)
- \* Nina Simon, Experience Development Specialist, International Spy Museum (DC)

# Raw notes from discussion during 2006 session

## Topic: Inspiration/What Inspires Us in Our Work?

- \* Inform next generation – develop new generations of informed citizens
- \* Parents learn, too! They get more involved in their kids' educational experiences
- \* Lots of new and different content to keep job fun and interesting
- \* Share excitement with visitors
- \* “I love my job” (share enthusiasm)
- \* Looking for effective ways to connect with and interest visitors
- \* Improve science education – compensate for formal education setting
- \* Listen to youth; *empower* youth
- \* Quality mentors
- \* Bring elements of traditional interpretive techniques to science centers
- \* Help visitors understand impact of science on their lives and their impact on science

# Raw notes from discussion during 2006 session

## Topic: How do we attract and retain talent?

- \* 21<sup>st</sup> century museum professionals grant = NY Hall disseminating career ladder program nationwide
- \* Treat staff as professionals/colleagues
- \* Introduce and expose staff to the depth and dimensions of science centers that aren't always obvious, culture of the organization has to support this
- \* Invest in young staff
- \* Recognize school and other aspects of an employee's life that need to be addressed
- \* Remember what attracted you to the museum
- \* Science centers are a cool place to work
- \* Is there value to grad school?
- \* Treat front line staff with respect; see them as future employees, too
- \* Why are front line positions the lowest paid and require the least experience?
- \* Does management know how good or bad front line experiences are?
- \* National Park Service has career explainers, why don't science centers?
- \* Go to a small museum: the staff do it all! and stay connected to visitors
- \* Introduce staff to appropriate opportunities and new positions

# Raw notes from discussion during 2006 session

## Topic: How do we attract and retain talent? (cont.)

- \* “Date, don’t marry, an institution.” (Jump from place to place to see where you fit.)
- \* Once “married”, how can you stay? Are there opportunities? What is the logical career path?
- \* Succession planning
- \* Need for dual track:
  - 1) “IBM Management track”
  - 2) “Creative professional track”
- \* Create opportunities for staff at large museums to diversify their job tasks
- \* How can we upgrade the explainer position
- \* How to recognize and reward: Explainers as creators of infectious ideas, of engaging ways of involving visitors and inviting them to explore; as performers and writers (like actors and screenwriters)
- \* Where and how do explainers get to public and to project and share their innovations to others beyond their own science center?
- \* Senior leaders do more than exhibit development and education
- \* Front line positions are hard and you can burn out
- \* Does rotating front line staff keep the floor fresh?
- \* How do we facilitate discussions for those not at ASTC