

NETWORKING: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL

Quoting an ancient but still timely proverb, Greg May, CHESP, an AHE board member, recently suggested that "iron sharpens iron." Over the last several weeks I have been reflecting on the truths of that comment, noting in particular its applicability to networking. Interestingly enough, when broken down to its bare components, you'll discover that networking is actually a type of informal learning.

It's true that a great deal of learning is formal. Programs such as online instruction, webinars, and virtual events are formal and over time help learners build skills and knowledge. But *informal* learning, such as networking, helps build skills and knowledge very quickly and also offers a number of other benefits such as:

- **Information.** When you network you are almost guaranteed to gain new information about topics most important to you, such as *staffing and productivity*, for example. Other examples might include *HCAHPS, infection prevention, technology advancements* or just healthcare in general. In addition, you'll learn new and emerging ideas and innovations, industry tips, and insider trends.
- **Power.** The more knowledgeable you are the more power you have. Networking helps you expand your knowledge and puts you in the position to help others. With the right knowledge you can safeguard your job and make yourself virtually 'unfire-able' in tough economic times.

A strong correlation exists between networking, learning, and successful leadership. Why? Because iron sharpens iron. There is mutual benefit in the rubbing together of two iron blades... the edges become sharper making the blades more efficient in cutting and slicing. Likewise through networking, professionals can sharpen one another—especially in terms of sharing information, exchanging ideas, building knowledge, and through other interactions as well. By networking, you contribute to your peers' learning and they contribute to yours. You help make them

stronger and more knowledgeable and they, in turn, do the same for you. This of course makes each person a stronger, better, and more effective leader.

I encourage each of us to begin to network more. You may be surprised to learn that networking opportunities abound. Try getting connected to others in EVS and healthcare through MyAHE, an active and thriving community of EVS professionals. There, you'll always find informative discussions and posts that you can contribute to. Also offering excellent networking opportunities is LinkedIn. It's very easy to join LinkedIn and begin participating in industry-relevant discussions.

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And of course the premier learning event for EVS professionals is EXCHANGE, which provides ample networking opportunities. In fact, networking is a huge part of EXCHANGE 2013. EXCHANGE provides the best venue to address workplace issues and challenges, share best practices, and put things in motion to further develop and enrich your career. There is great value in learning from your peers and also from sharing your knowledge with them. So go ahead, network... and sharpen some iron in the process!



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About AHE

AHE is the professional organization of choice for 2,000 directors and managers caring for the patient and resident care environment across all care settings.

AHE represents, defines, and advances the professionals responsible for care of the healthcare environment to ensure quality outcomes and healthy communities.

- **Mission:** To ensure all healthcare environments contribute to quality outcomes and healthy communities.
- **Vision:** To be the global authority on caring for the healthcare environment.