Serving the Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Industry Worldwide
The IKECA Journal is an industry publication for cleaners, fire marshals, insurance professionals, facility managers, vendors and other interested parties in the commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning and inspection industry.

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As your incoming President, first and foremost I hope that this finds all IKECA Members and their families healthy and safe, and that you are able to navigate through all the CDC guidelines and your businesses remain strong. Who would have ever imagined that a pandemic would infect the world and for a time, bring life as we know it to a halt. Travel restrictions within the US states, not being able to cross borders with ease, shortages of everyday essentials, Zoom a main means of communication, and anything you need delivered by Amazon in a box... who would have predicted 2020?

In the beginning of the new year, your Board of Directors and the Conference Committee were hard at work assembling another great Annual Conference for April, in Charlotte, NC. In early March, the pandemic had its grip on the US and the world, and the Board was faced with the decision to cancel. The Board made the responsible and appropriate decision but we all certainly miss having the camaraderie, networking, CEU education and all the things we value as IKECA Members.

We are now entering the virtual world, learning new ways to communicate, share information, stay connected, learn and educate ourselves to remain current. As I write this, it is with a heavy heart that because of the continued grip of the pandemic, we will not be meeting in person this fall.

I can assure you that your Association truly misses you, and we would all rather be together. Your Board of Directors and the Conference Committee are working hard to bring you an outstanding Virtual Fall Tech conference, with educational sessions, live Q&A sessions, roundtables, and all the things you value as IKECA Members.

Until we can be back together without restrictions and guidelines IKECA is always here and available to you, we are continually working hard to provide you with educational opportunities, information and best practices. Don’t hesitate to reach out to me or any of the Board of Directors – we are just a Zoom invite away!

Remember that IKECA is an Association of large and small service providers, operating in both major metropolitan centers and the most remote, rural areas, all around the world. All of us, working together, can continue to uphold our standards and continue to be leaders in the KEC industry.

♦
Through the uncertain first half of 2020, IKECA’s Board of Directors has taken some fairly unprecedented measures: cancelling the 2020 Annual Membership Meeting to protect the health and safety of our attendees and the public; pivoting to an all-Virtual 2020 Fall Tech event; extending dates for Membership and Certification renewals to allow KEC companies and their certificants more time to complete requirements; providing guidance to IKECA certification holders on CEU opportunities, and curating and delivering timely information about resources useful to KEC companies as they navigate through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you haven’t yet taken advantage of the COVID-19 Preparedness resources that we’ve put together just for the KEC industry, be sure to visit www.ikeca.org and learn more about CEU waivers and dues extensions, view our YouTube channel to hear important conversations among industry leaders about how they’ve approached and managed through the pandemic, find recent Guidances for business, and download the KEC Pandemic Preparedness Planning Guide (read the feature article on page 30).

The IKECA Board of Directors has been very proactive, practicing good governance in its decision-making on the important actions surrounding the pandemic. Before making any decisions it carefully weighed the safety, security, financial, and educational factors and made data-driven decisions while monitoring the impact to the organization and its stakeholders.

Now, IKECA is looking forward to the opportunities created by all this sudden and severe change in the normal activities and how we deliver value to the Members. We’ve begun to beta-test video roundtable sessions, which we hope will provide Members with some much-needed peer-to-peer networking in these times, even if virtually. We’re presenting a no-travel-required Fall Tech that allows us to expand our potential attendees to world-wide, rather than just those who would have traveled to Milwaukee in October. We’re creating more video content than ever before, which also can be shared with a global audience. In short, IKECA is poised to expand the network and promote best practices in the KEC profession, by looking at the pandemic and the opportunities that our decisions have presented. Sometimes it is hard to see the silver lining during times like these, but if you can see those slivers of light, often times something good follows.
Update from the Conference Committee

Randy Russo

The year 2020 has shown many changes for IKECA and the world. I am honored for the privilege to be the Conference Committee Chair, to work with SMG staff, and to secure great locations for our Annual and Fall Technical Conferences. I want to thank Kevin Pearson and the Committee Team for their support in my new role, and I will passionately continue to keep this Committee strong and move forward with the goal of successful conferences with the best results. As we head into the virtual Fall Technical Conference, I look forward to working with everyone.

I am 100% committed to IKECA and the Board of Directors to continue growing the association as a whole and launch forward further towards success. I aspire for our team, the best of the business community, to push together to achieve the same goals. This breeds true success—unity. The stability of the Conference Committee Team will continue to make improvements and grow our membership and the success of IKECA. I am confident that our growth with budgeting and planning will show how viable this association truly is to the Fire Life Safety of all our customers.

I thank everyone for this honorable opportunity and the chance to be hands on in working with our team in this crazy year of 2020.

Update from the Education Committee

Dane Bundy

The IKECA Education Committee has been working on new ways during these unprecedented pandemic conditions to get educational pieces out to the members and KEC professionals around the world.

Most recently we have been putting together video calls and interviews touching on various topics that happen daily throughout our industry from COVID-19 experiences and tips to pandemic plans and support for our IKECA members to help them through this uncharted time. There have been other topics including wool filters and proper wastewater PH levels before disposal as well as many others. We have been able to utilize our YouTube channel for easy access to watch these videos and get them out in a timely manner.

The Education Committee is currently working on continuing the educational videos as well as AHJ education and awareness.

If you haven’t already check out IKECA’s YouTube channel please do.

The Education Committee is looking for new members. If you would like to join the Committee or assist with projects, please email info@ikeca.org.

Update from the Membership Committee

Dennis Poulin

The Membership Committee serves the Executive Team and the Board of Directors contributing to tasks of special interest or deliberating topics that affect the status of membership related to the organization and to the members at large. This Committee parallels with the Marketing Committee efforts in growing the scope and numbers of membership. The coordinated effort makes for a stronger organization.

We have the privilege of announcing the membership counts by category at the spring and fall meetings. It is always gratifying to see growth in the different categories. Here is the most recent census count:

Active North American .............................................. 152
Active International .................................................... 31
Associate ................................................................. 28
Fire Marshal/ AHJ ....................................................... 541
Food Service Industry ............................................... 75
Risk Management... ................................................... 13

We can be very proud that IKECA has accomplished what no other Trade Organization has in terms of attracting members of the AHJ Community in joining the ranks of outside the Public Sector, third party, Code oriented, Life Safety Industry participants. A lot of that credit goes to the Certification Committee for their efforts engaging with the AHJs, supporting them with a working program that helps them achieve their goals of regulating the quality workmanship of the KEC.

Continues on page 07
Hood Cleaning Service Vehicle

Features:

- Cab and body are separate. Benefits to this are no chemical/fuel odors in cab, a reduction of noise and safety in an accident.
- Motor and burner are installed on a slide so the unit is outside of the body while operating.
- Because of the slide, the motor and burner are more accessible, making them easier to service and re-fuel.
- No exhaust hole needed in the roof.
- Available with 3 bar ladder rack or two bar drop down ladder rack
- Vehicle Specs:
  - Transit T250 Single Rear Wheel Cab Chassis
  - GVW 9,000 lbs
  - New bench seat option available

Kitchen System Install/Service Mid Roof

Features:

- Mid Roof Van has 69.5” of interior height
- 10’ conduit storage compartment
- (3) 7’ pipe storage compartments
- Vehicle Specs:
  - Transit T250 Mid Roof Cargo Van
  - GVW 9,000 lbs
  - New bench seat option available
- Options Available:
  - T350 with 9,500 GVW
  - High Roof Available with 79” interior height
  - 40,000 BTU rear heater
  - Shelving, storage bins and tool boxes (shown)
  - Also available with dry chemical fill system and workbench
Update from the Membership Committee, continued

Dennis Poulin

industry. The COVID-19 experience likely contributed to the loss of 31 Active North American members. However, the Food Service Industry almost doubled its representation and the Risk Management more than doubled.

One of things IKECA is moving toward is undertaking a demographic study of the KEC industry at large to gain better knowledge of who is out there so we can better appeal to them to join IKECA. We know there could be as many as 7,000 KEC operators in the US, we represent too few of them. With greater numbers our economy of scale improves and the potential for reducing membership cost becomes far more possible.

Update from the Certification Committee

DJ Nowack

The IKECA Certification Committee has been hard at work to streamline and improve the credentialing process. We have taken on several projects in the last few months:

• Helping candidates to secure a proctor during the COVID-19 related shut downs and public health orders. If you are having an issue locating a testing site or finding a proctor, email us at info@ikeca.org. We may be able to help!
• Creating online applications for each certification program. The applications can be filled out online and payment made with a credit card. Apply online today at https://ikeca.org/certification/
• Creation of free, downloadable Certification Handbooks for the CECT, CECS and CESI. These Handbooks include information on IKECA policies and procedures, the application process, subject matter covered in the examinations, how to study for the exam and renewal requirements. Any and all interested candidates should download and read the Handbooks in their entirety. They can be found online: https://ikeca.org/certification/
• Created Examination Content graphics to help candidates understand the breakdown of what is on each examination. These can be found in each Certification Handbook.

Update from the AHJ Committee

Frank Matarotonda, Sr.

It is my pleasure to serve as the new chair for the IKECA Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) Committee. As all of us in the IKECA world know, having productive, mutually beneficial relationships with the AHJ community, based on the constant exchange of education and best practices, is critical to life and property safety.

Going forward, as are all other IKECA committees, the AHJ Committee will be a membership-driven group that realizes its positive impact on IKECA because of the work of all committee members. As fellow business owners and executives, no doubt all of us understand that great results are not the effort of one or two individuals, but rather, a cohesive group of leaders who collaborate to get the job done!

The main goal of the AHJ Committee as we move toward our next conference in is to ensure IKECA recruits AHJs from throughout the country to join us and provide outstanding insights into what is relevant and useful from their perspective. The AHJ Committee looks forward to working with IKECA's Conference and Marketing Committees to build a robust AHJ program and conference agenda.

IKECA's AHJ Committee is also fortunate to have Don Pfleiderer serving as a key member of the committee. No doubt we will rely upon Don’s years of experience in the commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning community and call upon him to capitalize upon his extensive network of AHJs nationwide.

My door, as they say, is always open. Please feel free to contact me at frankm@chieffire.com and let me know how we can work together with the AHJ community for the benefit of IKECA members!

I look forward to the work ahead!
It is hard to believe summer is almost over, COVID remains part of our lives, and the fall Virtual Technical Seminar is quickly approaching. It is now over six months of dealing with our “New” way of doing business and living our lives. We can only hope and pray things will return to a new, more aware way of normal but still closer to normal than we currently are all experiencing.

Jim, I, Sara, and the entire Technical Committee wish you all safety and prosperity during these troubling times.

It is our job to deliver the message to all that will listen, IKECA members are businesses supporting essential business operations and our services must not be overlooked or “skipped” in order to support a cost savings due to the Virus or for any other reason. Uninterrupted service and maintenance of fire safety equipment must continue if a business is to remain open in any fashion. Skipping these essential service requirements will only put more lives and property at risk. Tradeoffs for service or delays in service must not be accepted by our industry or the Fire Service industry and we must persevere in the pursuit of doing so with every client or prospect. For those yet to see the publication from the National Fire Protection Association titled “Corona Virus Reopening Business Checklist” the document can be downloaded directly from the NFPA website www.nfpa.org. This document supports the ongoing service and maintenance of all life safety equipment in occupancy buildings.

Since our last communication, the technical committee is focused on continued projects and standards development on behalf of the IKECA membership. Below is a brief update of those activities for your view.

The first news is extremely exciting as we completed our ANSI Audit on the C10 and I10 standards and have received notification of our official reaccreditation from ANSI. With the support of our management company and Sara Duginske, IKECA’s Director of Certification & Standards, the transition mid-stream on the audit hand-off could not have gone better. We owe Sara a debt of gratitude for taking this on and excelling at learning and becoming familiar with the ANSI Essential Requirements!

During our last virtual meeting, the committee voted in two new members to the committee expanding our knowledge base in the insurance and fire investigation expert categories. Both new members, Scott Futrell and Bruce Torrey, join our committee with a tremendous amount of credentials, knowledge, and experience. As we continue for balance on the committee, we are still actively seeking AHJs to join the ranks and support the community of fire officials in the writing and understanding of our standards.

The I10 Standard for the Methodology of Inspection of Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems was completed and gained the necessary ANSI approvals. It is available for publication. The 2020 Standard in print form will be available by the end of August to early September 2020 and copies and can be ordered on the IKECA and ANSI websites.

We completed final paperwork on the M10 Standard as required by ANSI, also gaining final ANSI approvals.

We are currently in the Report on Comments phase of the C10 Standard; 2021 publication. Our meeting will be held virtually this October for completion of this standard’s revision cycle and submitted to ANSI with intentions on availability early in 2021.

Our sub-committees continue to monitor their respective jurisdictions and watch for new technology introductions as well as opportunities within the fire codes for adoption of our trio of ANSI Accredited Standards. Nelson Dilg and Frank Mitarotonda, members of our technical committee and current Principal and Alternates representing IKECA, continue to monitor NFPA 96 for any developments and to support adoption of our Standards into the body of the NFPA documents.

Following completion of the C10 Standard for 2021 we do have a little hiatus as we enter the maintenance phases of our trio of ANSI Standards. Our standards are on a 5-year cycle so 2024 is our next target completion date or beginning in January of 2023 when we open the standards up once again for proposals and public comment. In the meantime, feel free to send in your commentary. We are eager for your feedback.

If there is another standard that will support our industry that the membership is interested in, we would love to hear what that might be. ♦
CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE
CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

CECT = 10 hours (1.0 CEUs) every 24 months
CECS = 20 hours (1.5 CEUs) every 12 months
CESI = 40 hours (3.0 CEUs) every 24 months

Proof of appropriate number of CEUs completed must accompany your IKECA Certification Renewal. **Payment of the renewal fee alone is not sufficient to renew your certification.**

- **Attendance at the IKECA Annual Meeting or Fall Technical Seminar**
  Up to 2.0 CEUs
  Up to 20 hours of content available per meeting

- **Presenting at the IKECA Annual Meeting, Fall Technical Seminar OR other industry-related events**
  0.5 CEUs
  Approximately 5 hours of content development and presentation

- **Submission of a technical article for The IKECA Journal**
  0.3 CEUs
  Approximately 3 hours of content per article

- **Attendance at an industry-related conference, meeting or seminar**
  Up to 1.0 CEUs
  Eligible for a maximum of 1.0 CEUs per meeting

- **Presenting to local AHJs within your jurisdiction**
  0.5 CEUs
  Must submit official documentation signed by an AHJ on their letterhead indicating date, location and time of presentation

- **Attendance at in-house training seminar, or one at another facility**
  0.1 CEUs per hour of content

- **Online educational training programs**
  0.1 CEUs per hour of content

- **Develop online assessment content with affiliate industry organizations**
  0.5 CEUs
  Approximately 5 hours of content development

- **Technical Code Committee Work (NFPA, SHRAE, ANSI Consensus Body)**
  1.0 CEUs/Day

- **Active Participation in an IKECA Committee**
  0.1 CEU per committee meeting

- **College courses - general and business management courses by accredited universities**
  0.1 CEUs/Meeting
  Only 25% of CEUs per renewal cycle may come from college courses

- **Develop online assessment content with affiliate industry organizations**
  0.5 CEU
  Approximately 5 hours of content development

PLEASE NOTE: If you rely on attending IKECA meetings or conferences to obtain the required CEUs, attendance is tracked, and certificates of attendance issued based on actual attendance.

*Acceptable organizations include: NADCA, ASHRAE, NAFA, NFPA, NAFED, RFMA, NASFM. For all others, please contact IKECA to confirm eligibility.

**Must be taught by 3rd party instructor or certified to train the subject matter. (Qualifying topics include but are not limited to: ladder safety, PPE, fall protection, hood/system service, near miss reporting, defensive driving, etc.) Before pursuing a course, contact IKECA to ensure the course qualifies.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE WHO RECENTLY ACHIEVED THEIR DESIGNATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS!

**CECS Certified Exhaust Cleaning Specialist**
- Richard Velazquez / Fleetwash, INC.
- D. Ryan Magno / Orange Crew Services
- Anthony Brendis / A-1 Northern Air Vents, LLC

**BCCS Boston Certified Cleaning Specialist**
- Paul Zammuto / One Call Ventilation, Inc.
- David Paradis / One Call Ventilation, Inc.
- Justin Lucas / One Call Ventilation, Inc.

**CESI Certified Exhaust Systems Inspector**
- Cody Codiani / Fleetwash, INC.
- Daniel Coyle / Fleetwash, INC.
- Marcus Martinez / Fleetwash, INC.
- Sean Gresham / Fleetwash, INC.

**New Members**

**Active Individual**
- Fortay Johnson / MCC Industries, Inc. DBA KMS Air Duct Cleaning
- Marcus Martinez / Fleetwash, Inc. DBA Trans-Clean
- Joseph Nehi / Elite IAQ & Life Safety Services
- Karissa Anderson / Elite IAQ & Life Safety Services
- Carlos Roque / Elite IAQ & Life Safety Services
- Sean Gresham / Fleetwash, Inc. DBA Trans-Clean
- George Ulley / All Safe Fire Exhaust Services
- Anthony Grassi / A and R Pressure Washing
- Jeff Boykin / A and R Pressure Washing
- Alex Torrey / A and R Pressure Washing
- Preston Ring / A and R Pressure Washing
- Tien Nguyen / Air Cleaning Technology
- Mercedes Helton / Air Flo Cleaning Systems
- Gabriel Rath / Air Flo Cleaning Systems
- Alan Brundage / Chief Fire Prevention
- Amy Creamer / Kitchen Hoods Express
- Ray Wells / HOODZ of Atlanta and Central GA
- Alexander Arencibia / Kescor Fire Protection
- Teisha Eiler / Silver Lining Hood Cleaners, Inc.
- Jose Melesio / Airways Systems, Inc.
- Jim Bolger / R. Carter and Associates
- Jim Murray / Providet Service Associates Inc.
- Joseph Murray / Providet Service Associates Inc.
- Victor Moreno / Enviromatic Corporation of America
- Collins Idoro / Enviromatic Corporation of America
- Christopher Rodriguez / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Fort Lauderdale)
- Zachery Fowler / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Kansas City)
- Patrick Noble / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Dallas)
- Elias Arana / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Houston)
- Jose Marinelarena / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Chicago)
- Skyster Smith / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Atlanta)
- Gustavo Fernandez / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Atlanta)
- LaRoy Harris / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Orlando)
- Victor Salgado / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Chicago)
- Frank Estrada / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Chicago)
- Nicolas Swope / Enviromatic Corporation of America (Kansas City)

**Active International**
- Ellen Innes / Grease Cleaners

**Active North America**
- Carlos Roque / Elite IAQ & Life Safety Services
- Maxwell Hislop / Foothills Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning

**AHJ**
- Theron Adkins / Middletown Fire Department-Bureau of Fire Prevention
- Len Papp / St Catharines Fire Service

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New Members

- Benjamin Turnberg / Chicopee Fire Dept
- Josh Bradley / Springfield Township Fire Department
- Carlton Reaves / Greenfield Township Fire Department
- Adam Free / Altoona Fire Department
- Derek Fraser / Municipality of Clarington - Emergency and Fire Services
- James Brown / New Lenox Fire District
- Daniel Riordan / Tinley Park Fire Department
- John Janozik / Oak Forest Fire Department
- Samuel Klemek / City of Salinas Fire Department
- Charles Wilson / Maynardville Fire Department
- David Tiller / Office of The Fire Marshal and Emergency Management
- Adam Young / Vallejo Fire Dept

Associate Individual
- Brock Boone / Linxup GPS Tracking
- Derek Breedlove / Linxup GPS Tracking
- Kim Tarrence / DPW Sales & Service
- Jim Roberts / DPW Sales & Service

Food Service Industry
- Francisco Pena / Denny’s - Las Cruces, NM
- Theresa Matthews / Bloomin’ Brands, INC.

Insurance and Risk Management Professionals
- Elnur Nagdailev / FMG - Baku, AZ
- Francisco Pena / Denny’s - Las Cruces, NM
- Patrick Graham / Cornell University

International Active Individual
- Moses Younis / Lotus Filters Pty. Ltd.
- Kelvin Bruce / EPSCO Industrial Services Philippines Inc.
- Fahad Rashid / Advanced Tech Solutions (ATS)
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Featured Articles

We May Not Have Glamour but We’re Big on Purpose
Dennis Poulin / R & G Vent Cleaning

We may be the best kept secret in the food service industry. There’s almost no chance you’ll bump into the rich and famous while we’re in the act of our KEC effort. When you think about it, not many restaurant managers are all that excited when we show up to do our thing. After all, what we do does not improve the food, service or reputation of the establishment. Yet, when well executed, we revitalize much of the kitchen’s stainless steel with a shine that enhances the kitchen environment for the culinary professionals. It’s almost like an extension of a crisp clean uniform. Sadly, we are often judged on the cosmetic aspect of the job, which represents about 10% of what we actually do. It’s kind of like looking at an iceberg and seeing only a fraction of its total mass - 90% of what we do is out of sight.

As professionals in our industry, what we do and how we do it are common denominators we all relate to, but why we do it separates those that have greater appreciation for purpose of our efforts. The process is cleaning, but the purpose is to assist the food service operators achieve fire safe operations by satisfying their fire code maintenance requirements. This puts us under the umbrella of the life-safety industry.

Small details of our diligence lead to big results. Something as simple as good filter cleaning to achieve the grease extraction filters are engineered for, and properly cleaning filter tracks so they don’t impede the grease flow into collection cups are small yet essential steps that yield a quality exhaust system performance. As duct work design becomes more complex, the need for reasonable and safe access increases as well. KEC operators who make excuses that they are not responsible for inaccessible areas fall short of fulfilling their role as life safety professionals. It starts with confronting the issue. The solution may be beyond the scope of what you can do, but avoiding the issue does not eliminate the liability.

Do you remember the lesson presented to us at the 2019 Las Vegas Annual Conference by Mr. Gallagher? He challenged us to ask ourselves; What do you know? When did you learn about it? What did you do about it?

The AHJ Community has become a great partner willing to assist in the effort to improve the state of non-compliant code issues. Get involved with your local Fire Marshals Associations. You won’t regret developing a positive relationship with them. Don’t be afraid to embrace third party reporting entities like The Compliance Engine. Many times they have become the catalyst that motivates the food service operator to upgrade facilities making our job doable. Taking advantage of the support made available from outside the KEC industry is just good business, and it helps build credibility for the “Why we do it?” that demonstrates that we have purpose in our efforts.

IKECA has contributed to code development for years, specifically on issues that enhance the ability of KEC operators to accomplish a higher standard of service with a greater degree of safety.

So if you are up to your elbows in grease, make the difference in taking exhaust systems to a fire safe standard, take pride in knowing that it’s not that “others can’t” when you can, it’s that others won’t when “you will”! We all want to be successful and earn a good living, so make a plan to separate your business from the “rag and taggers”. Whether the intent is an end result of improved life safety for the public at large or for making the job achievable for the solitary crew that works through the night, we do have purpose buried in all we do as KEC professionals.

Dennis Poulin graduated from Arizona State University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and Marketing. He worked for J. C. Penny Company for 15 years advancing to a Senior Merchandising Manager before leaving to pursue a career in the automotive sales and leasing industry, most of that time as an independent broker, for 22 years. He got into the KEC industry by default when he was unsuccessful in helping a friend and associate find a stand-in manager while he took 3 years off to fulfill a commitment to serve a leadership position with Rotary International to do volunteer work in the community. In 2015 he joined the Arizona Fire Marshals Association. In 2018 he joined the IKECA Board of Directors.
Top 10 Things Learned from a Career in KEC
Mike Gronlund / Enviromatic Corporation of America

1. **Be honest.** So much easier to get through your day when you deal with your mistakes and short comings straight on. “Fess up and Fix” as soon as you do, the problem starts going away. Also with honesty, don’t BS your customers or employees. Too hard to remember your lies. And when respect is lost, it is nearly impossible to regain.

2. **“You can't get back yesterday”.** This was my old boss's motto. All jobs can be pushed off for another day but the bottom line suffers when the day is gone without reward, you can not do the day over. And all can be lost when the day is done. So get today’s work done instead of waiting till tomorrow, because then tomorrow you can add more new work. Which of course increases your profit and operating funds. Number one priority find away to finish your work.

3. **Make time for family.** Working opposite hours of most people, this job is very hard on our loved ones. Too easy to get caught up in catching up! It takes a strong spouse to support this crazy life. Appreciate them for their sacrifices and make extra effort to enjoy time with them. Divorce rate of KEC workers is higher than normal, for sure.

4. **You must exceed all the rules you place on others.** Practice what you preach. Employees will use your words against you every chance they get. They also will respect you for your involvement. If it’s good enough for you, it is good enough for them.

5. **Be a mentor.** As time goes by, I seem to be mentoring people more then ever. This is very rewarding. I take great pride in helping younger people with life’s challenges. Whether it is financial, goal orientations, or life lessons. Seems many younger people did not have the parental directions that some of us old dinosaurs received, it's a different world, and we can help fill in a few gaps if we are aware of their needs.

6. **Don’t count on accolades.** Not all deeds are rewarded! This type of work seems to find complaints easier than compliments. People have no idea what it takes to do this work properly. You must be in it for the long run and attaboy’s may have to last a long time before the next one comes.

7. **Take nothing for granted!** Appreciate the ability you have to earn a great living and perform to the best of your ability every day. Most of the world is less fortunate. And make an attempt to give back when you can. Everything you have can be gone in a flash.

8. **Wind down the day before you get home,** analyze your accomplishments and failures and teach yourself how to improve on your personal tomorrow. Never take problems home with you!

9. **Realize that you have no idea what is going on in other people’s lives.** Cut others as much slack as you can, and try your hardest to not judge and improve your patience with people. After all, the world is smaller than it used to be. We are all kind of like one big family.

10. **Know when to say no!** Our careers can be very rewarding, and we strive to do all we can. Know your limits, and get back to your family as quick as possible. You gotta do it all over again tomorrow... until the last tomorrow comes.

11. **Couple more, I never could follow rules.** Be safe. I often look back at the foolish chances I took when younger and I realize how ill advised those actions were. Nothing is worth getting injured. Some injuries will last a life time and effect us negatively till the day we die. We certainly are not as invincible as we used to pretend to be.

12. **Never discount your services.** Some customers are hell bent on getting a discount, a lower price or a special deal. I have always refused that direction. I feel if you are proud of your work, confident of your price structure and have trained your staff effectively, each bid given is fair consideration and I let quality speak for itself. I have been known to ask that deal seeking customer if they needed open heart surgery would they want the cheapest surgeon working on them? Of course not! Always go with the best.

Well I guess I did not abide by the rule of 10. But these are a dozen things I carry with me every day.

*Mike Gronlund is the national operations and safety manager for Enviromatic Corporation of America. The only company he has worked for in his adult life. With over 40 years in KEC, not much in the field of grease is foreign. And claims he will only quit when he stops learning. Which so far, is not in sight. Mike also contributes to the KEC industry through his involvement on the IKECA Certification Committee.*
**Fire Safety Management is a “System”**
R.T. Leicht / Delaware State Fire Marshal

“How often is a fire in a restaurant kitchen likely to lead to tragedy?” Fire Officials, Fire Marshals, and Fire Inspectors are no stranger to this question. The only correct answer is “too often”. Although a majority of commercial kitchen fires have little impact on the cooking operation, that’s only because a small fire stayed small. Some will give the credit for that to the quick extinguishment of the fire; be it automatic or manual. Others will say this is a result of a good design in laying out approved equipment and adequate kitchen exhaust ventilation. I personally feel that the honor goes to a management committed to an attitude of fire safety. That commitment involves the original installation being “code compliant”, adherence to good operational practices, proper equipment maintenance, smart cleaning schedules, and appropriately trained employees.

Management should embrace all of these elements. A fire safe management “system” is an approach that encompasses all the following elements jointly.

For instance, if a fire starts under a hood where the exhaust fan is not running but the exhaust ducts are grease-free and the suppression system operates as intended, the chances of a devastating fire is lessened. Likewise, if the fire occurred under a hood where grease has been allowed to accumulate on surfaces and in ductwork, but reasonable clearances were provided during installation, the suppression system activates, and competent personnel takes the correct emergency action in a timely manner, it is again less likely that the fire will be catastrophic. The number of other comparable scenarios are endless but all with similar outcomes.

But the best way to reduce the chances of a fire becoming a disaster is to see that all the elements of the “system” are employed. That is, see that all the following elements are in place.

1. **Adequate clearance is provided** from combustibles to fired equipment, hoods, and exhaust ducts. The test of time has shown that the minimal distances prescribed by the “Standard” (NFPA 96) prevents heat to radiate from hot surfaces to exposed combustible materials by creating open space for air circulation allowing excess heat to dissipate. When
Fire Safety Management is a “System,” continued
R.T. Leicht / Delaware State Fire Marshal

adequate space cannot be achieved or does not exist, “listed” materials or methods, when used in accordance to its listing, can provide an acceptable alternative.

2. **Hoods are properly sized** to cover all the fired appliances. A durable hood of sufficient metal gauge must be large enough to enable all the cooking equipment to be placed beneath it. It should also be of such depth so as to create a cavity large enough to contain any and all otherwise unrestrained grease particulates.

3. **Approved grease filters or grease removal devices** are in place when equipment is in use. The total purpose of a hood is to capture a high percentage of the grease-laden vapors generated and reroute the captured grease to a safe location. It therefore should go without saying that operating cooking equipment with filters missing or not installed correctly are of little benefit. Also, most of the mesh filters encountered in the field are only listed as air filters and not as grease filters. Indeed, these mesh filters may very well capture the grease particulates, but they don’t do much to divert the grease. To the contrary, they allow the grease to accumulate in the filter, creating an even more dangerous situation. Those few mesh filters on the market that are listed are actually “pre-filters” designed to be used in front of conventionally listed primary grease filters.

4. **Properly sized and constructed exhaust ducts terminate safely** to either above the roof or through an exterior wall. The termination of the duct outside should be to a location with ample clearance and in a manner where the exhaust air cannot possibly migrate back into a building. The “Standard” mandates that a duct system be of a design and of materials of sufficient strength so its integrity is not compromised should a fire occur within the duct. The design is also intended to accommodate inspection and maintenance of the duct system.

5. **Fans exhausting ample volumes and velocity** of air are provided and operating whenever cooking equipment is generating heat. It is important to recognize that the size of the fan(s) is an important criterion. It is typically driven by the size and shape of the hood and specified in building and mechanical codes. Air velocity, which is affected by the fan size and the shape and cross-sectional area of the duct, has an impact on the amount of grease deposits that can accumulate. Even though the air velocity should be at least 500 feet per minute (fpm), it has been shown that velocities of 1000 fpm and higher actually have increased grease deposit accumulations.

6. **Approved automatic and manual fire extinguishing equipment** is installed and periodically inspected and maintained. Automatic fire extinguishing equipment, by definition, is that which, without any human involvement or intervention can stand ready, detect a fire, activate the system, suppress the fire, and often times alert emergency personnel, be it in-house staff or public fire department. Usually the system is a fixed system listed to suppress the fire. These systems, when properly maintained, are quite effective. But automatic sprinkler systems are also acceptable as they too are listed to control a fire. One advantage that sprinkler systems have is their relatively inexhaustible supply of extinguishant. Additionally, the use of portable extinguishers and the manual system activation device by trained staff can help accomplish the goal of keeping a small fire small.

7. **Cooking equipment operating as intended** and only by competent persons. These persons verify that the cooking equipment is operated in the approved manner and is not altered or modified. They also note that the equipment is situated in the position as the original design to assure the effectiveness of the fixed extinguishing system. Another safety feature includes separation between the shortening surface of deep fat fryers and flames from adjacent appliances. Besides its adjustable operating temperature control, deep fat fryers are also equipped with a high temperature limit switch whose objective is to shut down the fryer prior to reaching the shortening’s autoignition temperature. However, if the shortening is not exchanged frequently, the repetitive heating, cooling, and reheating will cause its autoignition temperature to deteriorate to a point below the setting of the high temperature limit.

8. **Periodic inspection** of cooking equipment, hoods, and exhaust system by approved persons for excessive grease accumulations. This equipment, by its very nature will be subject to accumulations of renegade grease. Even though a layperson may notice these buildups, they are not trained to recognize when the amount exceeds the danger

*Continues on page 17*
Fire Safety Management is a “System,” continued

R.T. Leicht / Delaware State Fire Marshal

threshold. Of course, only properly trained and qualified persons possess the skills and knowledge necessary to appraise the conditions in the exhaust hood, the plenum and in the exhaust duct.

9. Cleaning of cooking equipment, hoods, and exhaust system by approved persons as needed. Restaurant owners are most likely capable of cleaning floors and kitchen surfaces, but they should not be renting a power washer and haphazardly taking indiscriminate aim at the remainder of the exhaust system. This is why the cleaning contractor is required to be “approved” by the authority having jurisdiction. There are requisite skills and experience necessary to assess, prepare, pre-treat, scrape, pressure wash, and evaluate the end product; not to mention proper disposal of the residue.

10. Personnel trained to perform tasks to reduce hazards and trained to perform during an emergency. That means more than just having designated staff members know how and when to use a portable fire extinguisher or manually activate a fixed system. Monitoring wear and tear on appliances, recognizing deficiencies, good housekeeping guidelines, establishing routine maintenance schedules are aspects that should be included in a management action plan.

In summary, if a business owner starts with a restaurant with a code compliant installation including proper clearances, provides adequate protection and reasonable training, maintains safety and operational controls, and strives toward a grease free kitchen, especially a routinely cleaned kitchen exhaust system; then the chances of a cooking related fire will be uncommon. Even in the rare occasion that a fire does occur, by keeping a small fire small, the likelihood of it becoming disastrous will be significantly reduced.

Employed by the Delaware’s State Fire Marshal’s Office since 1998, R.T. Leicht is currently the Chief of Fire Protection, heading up the division that addresses all technical, plan review, and code related issues. R.T. Leicht received his Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Protection in Michigan and a Master of Science degree in Public Safety from St. Joseph’s University. He has been involved in fire protection in some way for the past 51 years. He is a Life Member of the National Fire Protection Association where he is very active, serving on several of their Technical Committees including NFPA 96 (Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations) and also serves as a Subject Matter Expert on the Advisory Committee for Certified Fire Inspectors. He has been a member of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers since 1978. He is also a past president of the International Fire Marshals Association and recipient of their Meritorious Service Medal.
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was covered in grease, I knew as an inspector student, this was due to grease laden vapors not being properly exhausted from their system due to lack of required maintenance. I contacted the manager, explained these findings in addition to many more code violations I found during my visit. I explained to him this was a practice inspection to satisfy the requirements of my course, however he could rest assured, as soon as my certification became valid, I would be back to discuss the many code violations he had at his restaurant. The next day, I compiled my paperwork, sent it to NFPA and approximately 2 weeks later received my certification. The very same day, I contacted the restaurant manager and arranged an official fire code inspection for the following Monday...this was on Friday. Well...I did not inspect the restaurant on Monday. On Saturday, some employees were attempting to self-repair a natural gas line behind a commercial fryer when a spark caused a flash fire igniting the grease covered kitchen causing a fire resulting in a permanent closure of the business. The building itself sat empty for over two years.

This incident caused me to become keenly aware of the benefits of prevention as it relates to proper inspection and enforcement of fire codes as it relates to all occupancies, but especially commercial kitchen exhaust systems. As I developed as a fire inspector, and as our department devoted more resources to our Bureau of Fire Inspection by creating a full time dayshift position of Fire Marshal, regular inspections and other proactive prevention efforts are implemented throughout our city in an effort to prevent commercial kitchen fires.

As I gained more experience in commercial kitchen inspections, I noticed that business owners were not the only challenge when it came to a proper cleaning and maintenance schedule. The commercial kitchen equipment cleaning and maintenance companies themselves are routinely part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

Let me give a couple examples: I had a new Mexican restaurant move into an existing restaurant. As a
new inspector, I simply performed my inspection and ordered them to have a commercial kitchen cleaning and maintenance company come in to inspect their equipment and ensure it was in good working order. They did as requested, however I received a complaint from the local health department about a smoky haze in the dining area. Upon arrival, it was observed they had removed the filters from the hood system to help evacuate grease laden vapors. Grease was dripping from the hood, and from the outside fan. Upon close inspection, they had a fan designed for rooftop installation mounted on an exterior wall. Issues were further exacerbated from the small fan that was inadequate to evacuate grease laden vapors. I informed the business owners this was unacceptable. They told me they had it inspected and was told everything was in good working order by the commercial kitchen cleaning and maintenance company they contracted with. When I called this company, I talked directly to the owner who not only admitted to not thoroughly inspecting the unit but admitted to pencil whipping the required checklist because the restaurant owner had not paid him in full. When I asked him if he inspected and maintained equipment according to NFPA 96 standards...he told me he had never heard of NFPA 96 and asked if I could SEND IT TO HIM!

During another incident, I had a company place a “PASS” tag on a suppression system that was inoperable due to missing fusible links and missing discharge nozzles. When questioned about the “PASS” tag, the owner told me he “just figured a pass tag was better than a fail tag”...seriously...that is what he said.

During my short three years of learning how to be a good fire inspector, and realizing I have a long way to go and a lot more to learn, I have become acutely aware that a proper fire code inspection program implemented and enforced by the AHJ is critically important to protect businesses from catastrophic fire hazards, protect firefighters from potential injury or death, save cost associated with the task of fighting commercial kitchen fires, and prevent a larger economic loss when a place of business is taken out of the local economy for months, years, or sometimes indefinitely. These costs are not necessarily seen on a city financial statement but nevertheless are there.

Equally as important as a robust fire code inspection program, is a proper credentialing and certification program for companies who want to service and maintain the complex commercial kitchen exhaust and suppression systems. Currently in my area there are extraordinarily little requirements for these companies which lead to examples like the ones of wrote about in this article. I wish I could say the two examples I mentioned here are the only bad experiences I have had with companies who service and maintain commercial kitchen equipment in my area. I wish I could say these were the most severe examples, but they are not. I believe we desperately need a certification requirement in place for companies to market themselves as commercial kitchen exhaust maintenance/installation contractors. I believe similar to electrical contractors, commercial kitchen equipment contractors should be required to demonstrate a minimum knowledge and skill level prior to being permitted to install or maintain these critical systems in areas of high hazard in buildings which the public has access to and congregate in large numbers, not to mention bare a huge financial impact for the communities and cities they serve. The systems used to evacuate grease-laden vapors and suppress potential grease fires are too complex to be left to amateurs.

Chris Collins has been a professional firefighter for the City of Saint Albans Fire Department for 8 years. The past two years he has been in the role of Municipal Fire Marshal. His duties include fire code inspections, fire investigations, fire code enforcement, public safety awareness, and implementation of community risk reduction programs. He holds an NFPA CFI-1 certification, EMT-B certification, successful completion of the WV State Fire Marshal Academy, and is a certified Fire and EMS Instructor. He also serves on the Saint Albans Housing Authority as commissioner and Roane County Emergency Squad Board of Directors.
IKECA is back in action and back in person for the 2021 Annual Meeting! Now is the time to save the date for an event you won’t want to miss. Wednesday March 31 - Saturday April 3, 2021 Hilton Charlotte University Place, Charlotte, NC.

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If there is more than one child in the family there is a high probability they are significantly different. Their demeanor, intellect and perhaps athletic ability differ, often a lot. When it comes to handling money, the differences are readily apparent. It’s their birthday. Each receives five dollars from an uncle or aunt. One child immediately places the money in their piggy bank. The other child waits, perhaps five minutes, before requesting someone take them to the store so they can buy something with their new found wealth. Neither is a big deal, until it’s time to go on the family vacation. During the vacation both children find items they wish to purchase. One has the money, and one does not!

Entrepreneurs are like children, in some ways. Let’s look at two of them. Each had an idea and started their own business. Both are successful. Entrepreneur #1 is wise and builds their business on the rock. He, or she, takes a minimum salary and saves profit back in order to reinvest in the company as it grows. This person uses discipline, and limits their debt with the mindset of becoming totally debt free as soon as possible.

Entrepreneur #2 builds their business on the sand. Any extra money they make is immediately sucked out of the company via increasing their salary, buying toys (boat, place on the lake, etc.) and/or buying that larger house in the better neighborhood. Buying trucks and equipment is a snap. The owner simply calls the banker who immediately approves the loan. Oops, things slow down a bit so cash flow is tight. It’s time to draw on that line of credit again...until finally it’s maxed out. Then there’s those pesky suppliers. They are always wanting to be paid. Hey, we are only 60 days behind, so what’s the big deal?

Both businesses look good to the passer by. They are growing, have great reputations for doing quality work and the owners are well respected in the community.

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One day it begins to rain. Rain can come in many forms in the business world. Sometimes it’s literally raining, day after day, and production gets behind. Sometimes the bank the company has used for fifteen years gets bought out and the new bank requests (requires) you pay off the line of credit within thirty days. Sometimes huge rain storms come in the form of national economic collapse like 2008 and 2009. And guess what? Sometimes the storm comes in the form of a virus!

Storms will come in one form or another. The question is not whether the storms will come, that is a given. The real question is whether your business is built on a rock, or sand. One will survive the storm, the other may not. No matter what form the storm may take the way out is ALWAYS paved with cash. No cash, no path!

Think about a mouse trap for a moment. The mouse trap represents cash flow in your company. Cheese represents real cash. The mouse is the company owner. Cash flow issues, no matter the cause, are always lurking just waiting for the company to run out of money. The trap is set, ready to be sprung.

Remember, cash is the cheese. As long as the cheese (money) isn’t touched the trap will not be sprung. Cash flow is held at bay.

The owner is the mouse. As long as the mouse leaves the cheese (profits of the company) alone all is well. Cash flow problems lurk but they are not causing a real problem as long as the cheese is not touched.

Now let’s assume the mouse can’t fight temptation. However, he has read the instructions on the mouse trap and realizes the trap is safe as long as it is not significantly moved. The mouse really wants some cheese (it’s a small boat and the family will love it or perhaps it just another small withdrawal on the line of credit). The mouse is very careful not to overly upset the trap. Wow, that cheese tastes pretty good and besides there weren’t any serious consequences to the additional debt (just a small bit of cheese). The mouse takes another bit, and then another more and before long the trap is sprung!!!! Boom, cash flow becomes critical and the cheese is gone.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying the fruit of your labor. You should, you worked hard to get to that point. The lesson is to not eat too much of the cheese. Realize the cash flow trap is ALAWYS set. Eating too much cheese will string the trap and once the trap is fully sprung...few mice survive!

Tom Grandy has over 50 years of experience in industry and small business. He has worked as the General Manager of a service company, was Regional Director of Company Development for the DIAL ONE franchise and is the Founder of Grandy & Associates.
Path to Apparency: Communicating Criticism Within Your Teams

Brian Smith / IA Business Advisors

There are two things in life that I feel are apparent: Be kind and be respectful. Regardless of who you are or what your responsibilities consist of, you should be able to be kind and respectful and remember the influence you have on others. However, the path to apparency, when it comes to communicating criticism within your team, is a little more complicated. The path to apparency looks a little like this: Slow down + listen + be kind + be respectful + be mindful.

Unfortunately, when it comes to delivering constructive criticism, the path to apparency can quickly be forgotten as emotions tend to take over even the most down-to-earth individuals. The path to apparency is fraught with roadblocks, but with a little effort, habit-creation, and mindfulness, we can all better prepare ourselves to help our team grow through constructive criticism.

We start with slowing down. While your emotions may make you feel like you need to speed up, respond quickly, and move on to the next issue, that’s not always the best way to handle things. Especially with today’s technology and communication barriers, going too fast can lead to more problems rather than fixing them. But, before we dive into understanding your own communication for the sake of constructive criticism, we need to take a look at how we listen.

Listening to your team is much more important than speaking to them. If you don’t listen fully, or don’t understand what your team is trying to convey, how would your response lend anything constructive? By not fully understanding a situation, you can’t contribute to that situation in any kind of constructive way. To be an effective leader, you need to hear your team. You need to understand how and why they do what they do.

There have been several instances in my career when I have witnessed a “leader” make a statement like, “I don’t want to hear your excuses,” or, “It does not matter what you think.” Any statement by a leader that shuts down their team’s ability to share why or how something occurred, even if the reasoning is frivolous, takes away that leader’s ability to understand not only their team but why and how the issue occurred. More importantly, you cripple your own perspective by denying yourself an understanding of the perspective of your team.

Only you have the power to remain engaged in listening, if you choose to slow yourself down. Take the time to allow the conversation to happen and exhaust yourself of asking questions until you are certain you have a clear understanding of your team’s mindset. That means refraining from formulating opinions until you have exhausted your questions and gained a full understanding of the situation. Only once you have a firm understanding can you begin to give your team constructive feedback that will help them grow. But before you give them any feedback, you must also understand your own method of communication.

Verbal communication (face-to-face) is delivered differently than electronic/written communication (email and text). There are two huge components of verbal communication that are missing from electronic communication: tone and body language. Even with verbal communication like phone calls or video chat, body language is almost non-existent and tone can be skewed. Therefore, the words we choose to communicate with are imperative, especially in electronic communication where we can’t control for tone or body language.

I want to make one thing perfectly clear before we continue: Conversations that include constructive criticism should always be done with direct, verbal communication. Here’s why: No matter how eloquent you are with words, there is always room for misinterpretations. Text and email communications lack properly conveyed tones, and therefore leave the tone up to the reader of the message. While we may feel that we can properly convey our tone in electronic communication, because we read our writing in our own mind, it’s not always received that way.

When you send an email or text to someone about an area for improvement or with constructive criticism, the emotion is completely controlled by the receiving person’s state of mind. Without visual and tonal cues, your team can decide for themselves what the tone of the writing is, placing the emotion of the writing in the hands of the receiver. This is why communicating our constructive criticism is done best with direct, verbal communication. It leaves less room for user error and ensures you get your point across the way you intend for it to come across.
Giving someone constructive criticism is already difficult enough without the possible errors of tone. Additionally, when giving constructive criticism, you must follow the remaining path to apparency: be kind + be respectful + be mindful. The heat of the moment can increase emotions and leaders can come across as rude or condescending in their replies. When emotion plays a role in how we lead, even the best word choices can be destroyed by a lost tone. We must be mindful of how we deliver constructive criticism so that we do not negate our advice through delivery.

If you feel that it will help you to write down your constructive criticism in the heat of the moment, write it! Review it later, when you are feeling more mindful, for clarity. Ensure it serves a purpose rather than your outlet for your emotions. Your goal as a leader when delivering constructive criticism to your team should be to help your team grow, learn, and move forward. This requires you to be mindful, even if you’re feeling emotional. If there is urgency in the moment, solicit a peer to review your constructive criticism to ensure it is, in fact, constructive.

Conversely, even if your words are perfect and constructive, if your tone and body language do not support a mindful, kind, and respectful approach, then the likelihood that your constructive criticism will be received as constructive goes down. Leaders that don’t have full control over every aspect of their delivery (words, tone, and body language) run the risk of their criticism being seen as destructive. If you remain on the path to apparency, you set your team up to learn and grow from you rather than fear or ignore you.

The final part of delivering constructive criticism to your team in a positive manner is ensuring your team understands that your criticism is stemming from a place of care. You most likely care about that team member and their performance as their performance benefits your team. However, getting your team comfortable with criticism can be difficult. When any of us learn that we have done something wrong or not up to par, most of us have emotions ranging from remorse to fear or regret. These emotions can trigger our “fight or flight response” which often impedes on our ability to learn and grow.

Since emotions get in the way of us learning from constructive criticism, we must be mindful of not only how we set up that one conversation, but how we set up our entire company culture. If you have a culture of giving and receiving constructive criticism that is positive for everyone involved, you set that expectation for all team members, new and old. If we can guarantee that the experience of receiving criticism is not negative but rather an opportunity for learning and growth, then your team will be 1) more receptive and 2) more likely to learn moving forward.

Creating this culture all starts with the leaders. It starts with slowing down. Slow down the conversation and your own emotional response. Listen to what happened, ask questions, and be mindful to gain a clear understanding of the issue before proceeding. Then, before you engage in any kind of constructive feedback, ask yourself, “Am I neutral? Am I ready to be mindful, kind, and respectful? Am I ready to help my team member learn and grow by giving them positive, constructive feedback?” Only when you answer yes to all of these questions are you ready to engage your team member in a positive discussion.

The end result should be a clear goal for your team member. Give them something that will help them be better. Then, you can help alleviate any immediate issues and manage the consequences (if you haven’t already). As a team, you need to gain a complete understanding of the issues that occurred, so you don’t repeat any of those things again in the future. In order to ensure that those things don’t occur in the future, you need to give your team the tools to learn and grow from the current experience. While mistakes do happen, the better your constructive criticism and the more your team applies themselves, the better chance you and your team have of not repeating those issues again.

Brian Smith, Ph.D. is the author of The “I” in Team Series who’s first book Individual Advantages, Find the “I” in Team has sold over 40,000 copies since its release in 2018 and who’s newest book Individual Advantages: Be the “I” in Team is being released in 2020. Brian has been helping business owners and managers since 1988. His company, IA Business Advisors (a DBA of Individual Advantages), Elgin, Illinois, has helped over 18,000 clients worldwide since 1996.
Since March, the facility service contracting industry has been reeling from the impacts of COVID-19. Everyone had a feeling about how much their business was impacted, but feelings can fool so we turned to ServiceTrade usage data to measure the effects of the COVID-19 services slowdown in more than 550 commercial service companies in the US and Canada.

Service Appointment Volume
We learned that appointment volume dropped 29% in March and flatlined in April across the US and Canada. There was, however, a glimmer of hope that a recovery was on the way. Despite the severe dip in business, quote approvals were on the rise. These quote approvals turned out to be a leading indicator of a recovery. Here’s what appointment volume looks like now:

As the chart above shows, the recovery stalled through June around the same time that new COVID-19 cases were back on the rise. Fortunately, after the July 4th holiday week, appointment volume increased again, despite a spike in newly reported cases. By July 19 – 25, appointment volume was above pre-pandemic levels by 9%.

While this is promising news, it’s important to note that we expect a seasonal increase in appointment volume during the summer months. Also, recovery varies significantly by the type of work you do and your geographical area. For example, when we compare the trend for different industries, we see that some are recovering faster than others:

Services You Provide
Contractors that service restaurants, like kitchen exhaust cleaners, were especially hard-hit by the initial outbreak and are still 11% away from pre-pandemic appointment volumes. Many kitchen exhaust cleaners have pivoted to building sanitization services because demand for exhaust cleaning is still very low.

Interestingly, fire protection contractors have returned to 100% of pre-pandemic appointment volume despite restaurant facilities being an important part of their overall customer portfolio.

Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing contractors (MEP), on the other hand, are above pre-pandemic levels. However, as seen in Figure 2 above represented by the dotted blue line, mechanical contractors typically see a seasonal increase in appointment volume during this time of the year, due to temperature increases that cause HVAC and refrigeration systems to fail. This industry is still about 20% behind the appointment volume compared to last year. For a more in-depth analysis of the MEP recovery, check out this industry report.

Continues on page 27
Measuring the Impact of COVID-19 on Commercial Service Contractors, March - July 2020, continued
Shawn Mims / ServiceTrade

Geography
Regionally, the initial impacts of COVID-19 and following recovery have varied. In Figure 3 below, the first value column shows the initial decline in appointment volume from 100% of the pre-pandemic levels. The second value column shows the appointment volume as of the week of July 19 – 25 as a percent of pre-pandemic levels. In other words, the second value column shows how close each area is to a complete recovery in appointment volume:

Appointment Volume Decline and Recovery by Geographic Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Initial Decline</th>
<th>July 19-25 Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
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<td>100.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West North Central</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>99.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US Northeast</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>103.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New England</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
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<td>57.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US South</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East South Central</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>100.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Atlantic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West South Central</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>105.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US West</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Pacific</td>
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<td>112.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>112.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>105.0%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Regions with insufficient appointment volume were excluded from this analysis so as not to draw conclusions from data that is not statistically significant)

For reference:
- Canadian Regional Map
- US Regional Map

Unsurprisingly, the US Northeast was hardest hit by the initial impacts of the pandemic as it was the biggest epicenter of the outbreak in the US. Recovery seems to be tracking closely with seasonal temperatures. Areas with warmer weather are seeing increased appointment volume, likely due to an increase in seasonal MEP work, and northern regions are experiencing less seasonal work as would be expected.

So, what does the data suggest that you can do to speed up your company’s recovery? For that, we can look to quote approval rates. When we measure, by week, the number of quotes approved divided by the number of quotes submitted to customers in that same week, we can chart a normalized quote approval rate over time:

For all quotes, we saw a dip in the normalized quote approval rate in March during the initial impacts of the pandemic. The normalized approval rate mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels in April, May, and the first half of June. However, there is a noticeable difference between quotes above and below $5k. Historically, quotes over this value are approved at a lower rate, but they are not seeing a recovery to pre-pandemic approval rates like those under that threshold. Just like you, your customers are still recovering and likely sensitive to price. ♦
Fleet management is far from easy. As problems arise, it becomes difficult to find solutions to every issue. The larger the fleet, the more management tasks have a strain on your day-to-day efficiency. Let’s make your job easier. Here are eight of the most common problems within fleet management, and some solutions to improve your business and the service you provide to your customers.

**Driver Safety and Distracted Driving**
Keeping in touch with your employees while they’re out on the job is a common way to see how they’re progressing throughout the day. Many employees often feel the need to reply to their managers right away, even when driving. In a news release from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 40 percent of all workplace fatalities three years ago were due to transportation incidents. To keep driver safety as a priority, encourage your employees to keep phone use on the road to a minimum and implement a fleet safety policy to establish the procedures required to maintain a safe work environment.

**A fleet safety policy can include:**
- Providing rules and guidelines for safe conduct and vehicle operation both on and off the clock.
- Outlining disciplinary procedures for unsafe driving, as well as reward programs for proven safe driving.
- Defining post-accident or collision protocol.
- Giving drivers the confidence of knowing that their employer is committed to their safety and the safety of other motorists.

**Lack of Route Optimization**
Getting to a job site as fast as possible is key when running a business efficiently. If you find that your company routes are not optimized, you’ll notice that you could find faster, easier routes for your employees to reach a job site. Taking the time to manually figure out the best routes tends to not be ideal when managing a fleet. GPS tracking allows you to make efficient routes for your crew so they can get to the customer in a timely manner.

*Continues on page 29*
Unauthorized Use of Company Assets
Most company-owned vehicles or equipment have parameters on when employees can use them. Unauthorized use of company assets can be a common problem within fleet management. Setting up rules and regulations for company equipment may not guarantee that vehicles/equipment are used during the correct times or by those who have the authority to use them. Many GPS tracking systems have the ability to alert you when a company vehicle is being used outside company hours from the time of the first ignition.

Handling Wear and Tear of Vehicles
Vehicles will naturally wear out over time with the use that fleet vehicles need on a daily basis. Being able to track each vehicle’s maintenance requirements and when the services are needed is crucial. Of the top concerns within fleet management that were expressed, 44 percent have had concerns with an aging fleet and the budget to replace those vehicles. Keeping up with maintenance requirements is made easy with telematics and allows fleet managers to get ahead of the problem before it occurs.

Varying Fuel Costs
Gas prices only increase over time, so it’s best to get the most out of your fuel as you can without wasting it. Reducing idling and integrating the most efficient routes will keep fuel waste low, allowing money to stay within your business. Other ways to save on fuel costs include:

- Eliminating wasteful driving habits, such as speeding
- Checking tire pressure
- Using cruise control

Good Drivers v. Bad Drivers
When you’re not able to check the safety of your drivers when they’re out on the road, it’s hard to tell the good from the bad. It’s always a good idea to ensure your employees are being safe drivers when going to and from specific jobs. These safe driving habits can include following the speed limit, having no rapid accelerations, or preventing harsh braking.

Finding Specific Fleet Information within Larger Fleets
The larger the fleet, the harder it is to pinpoint certain issues or information, leading to frustrated employers and wasted time. With a greater amount of fleets being on the bigger end, there’s a need to incorporate technology to find exactly which vehicle or driver may be having an issue at any given time.

Overwhelming Amounts of Information
Besides having trouble finding out specific information about your fleet, there’s also a vast amount of information to filter through. As stated by Kevin Kelley, VP of Enterprise Fleet Management, in a Fleet Financials article, “as the amount of data available continues to grow, fleets need to work on organizing the data to help them plan and execute both in the short-term and the long-term.” The amount of information is overwhelming to sort through efficiently.

Fleet telematics can be a useful tool for in 2020, integrating into multiple levels within managing your fleet and having a wide range of usefulness. Monitor where your employees are throughout a typical work day while knowing the maintenance details of each vehicle. Fleet managers have reduced fuel costs by 20% by using digital solutions like GPS tracking. You can eliminate wasteful habits that could be costing you money and optimize every aspect of your business at the same time.

Sources:

Janine Brownridge is a Content Strategist for Agilis Systems, a leading provider of fleet tracking solutions for small to mid-sized service companies. She received her Bachelor of Journalism degree from the University of Missouri and has written articles and case studies about GPS tracking technology for the past three years. ♦
Pandemic Planning Resources for the KEC Industry

Shortly after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic in early March 2020, IKECA launched a curated list of resources and information for KEC business owners and operators on www.ikeca.org. IKECA continues to maintain and update these resources, which are available to IKECA Members and the public.

At a time when small business owners are trying to understand loan and grant programs that could help them keep their employees paid, IKECA provides links and updates on important news and resources for KEC companies. Information is available on the CARES Act, the Paycheck Protection Program, and COVID-19-related SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans. Also, you'll find guidance from Brian Smith of IA Business Solutions on how to handle customers seeking to cancel services, and we served up webinar information regarding public and private contracting processes. There are free tips on managing cash flow in times of crisis and leading your team and customers through the many changes these times have required.

One of the most useful tools, available to all at no charge, is the template-style *KEC Pandemic Preparedness Planning Guide*.

**How ready is your KEC company for the “new normal”?**
As states in the US and countries across the globe begin to reopen, business leaders need a plan to ensure safety of staff and customers and compliance with all guidelines. To assist KEC industry leaders and business owners in planning, IKECA volunteers assembled three template documents, based on CDC guidance, OSHA requirements, and available for free download to IKECA Members to implement in addition to current KEC safety protocols and programs:

- **Pandemic Preparedness Plan template**: a project protocol, specifically for pandemic conditions, which outlines your company’s plan for protecting staff, customers and the public, and for monitoring, observing and enforcing practices that serve these purposes. Includes detailed plans for Wellness Check-Ins, Disinfection and Recovery, and Training practices.
- **Technician Procedures template**: procedure list for technicians to follow before, during, and after services are provided to each customer.
- **Wellness Form template**: a procedure and questionnaire for technicians to present to customers before any service work will be performed.

These template documents are all provided in downloadable Microsoft Word® format, enabling a KEC company to easily customize with specific company information and reproduce for staff and customers.

Want to find out more from the creators of the Planning Guide? Visit IKECA's YouTube Channel “International Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning Association” and view the video “IKECA - KEC Pandemic Preparedness” to hear Dane Bundy, Eric Scolari, and IKECA President Randy Conforti discuss implementation of the Guide’s procedures and documentation. Special thanks to Eric Scolari for his work in assembling these resources.

*Editors Note: The KEC Pandemic Preparedness Planning Guide is provided as a guide and template for a re-opening plan for your U.S.-based business. The materials in the KEC Pandemic Preparedness Planning Guide are solely for the information of IKECA Members. It does not constitute legal or medical advice. IKECA makes no warranties, express or implied, regarding the Program or Program materials, including warranty of fitness for use. Each member must make its own decisions regarding appropriate COVID-19 practices and protocols, at all times guided by Federal, State, and local requirements applicable to that member. IKECA disclaims any liability that may arise from the use of the Program materials.*
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