

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors



EXECUTIVE EDUCATION DIGEST

*a leadership development resource for
forensic science laboratory directors and managers*

2013

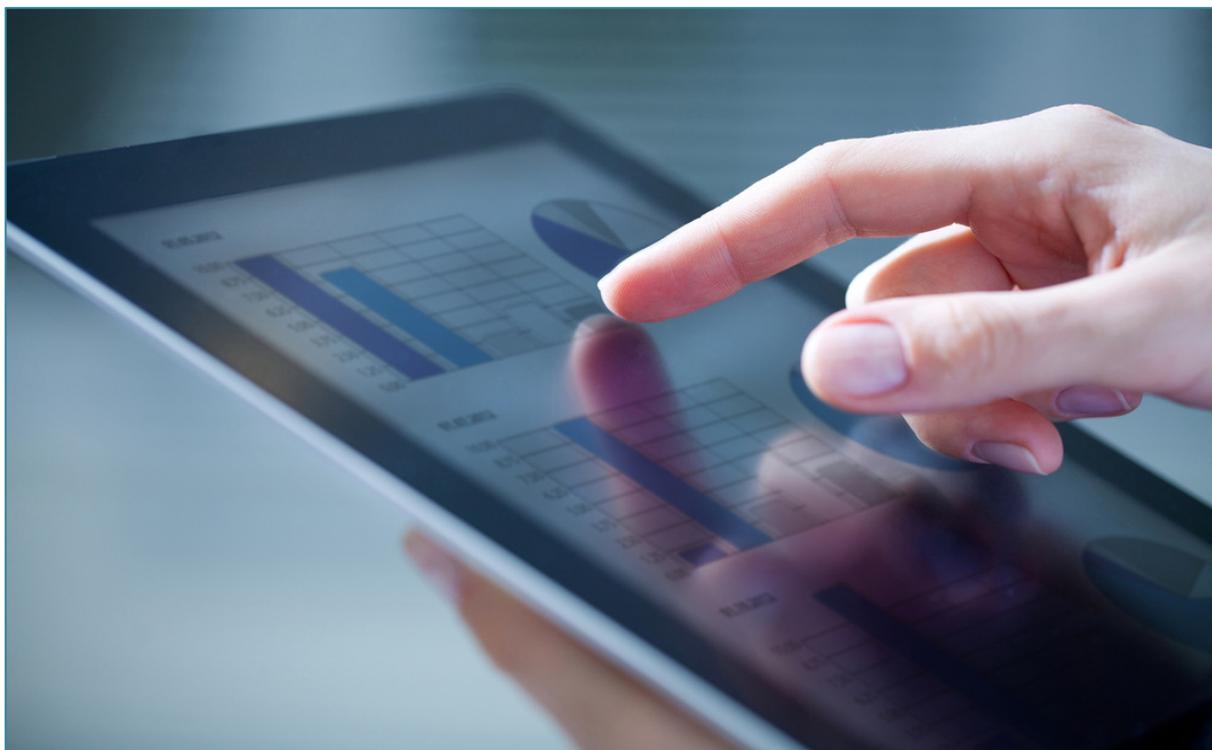


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The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors

"Excellence Through Leadership in Forensic Science Management"

A Message from our President

September 16, 2013

Dear ASCLD Members:

After a tremendous amount of work and effort by our Training and Education Committee, the ASCLD Board of Directors is excited to re-introduce an important resource for the members of our association. The 2013 Executive Education Digest is an annual publication that will be sent to our members. It is designed to supplement the cornerstones of our association by providing a bridge between the annual symposia on relevant topics of communication, training, accreditation and managerial leadership.



ASCLD President Jay Henry

As laboratory leaders, we're all busy and a goal in bringing this resource back is to provide a quick read for the manager or supervisor in the trenches so that a minimum investment of time can deliver some practical, real-world solutions to our unique challenges. Indeed, I recall a brief conversation with a colleague that ultimately resulted in a 54% reduction in controlled substance cases in our system and a huge decrease in our turnaround time with a commensurate increase in agency satisfaction (both the crime lab and our customers). How often have you had a similar conversation in passing with another member at a seminar that turned out to be more valuable than the actual conference itself?

Our membership has vast experience in dealing with forensic challenges and we must take advantage of that professional knowledge. If we can distill some of our best and most effective practices into a few takeaway bullet points and publish them in this resource, the Digest will be a valuable service to our members.

If you have a best practice or a commentary on a problem, I encourage you and your laboratory staff members to consider contributing articles or managerial notes for publication. We have an exciting year ahead of us and I look forward to learning from you.

See you in Scottsdale!

Jay Henry
ASCLD President

ASCLD SELECTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

9/25/2013

After a thorough review and interview of several qualified applicants, I am pleased to announce the selection of Jean Stover as the next Executive Director for ASCLD.

Jean has worked for the Illinois State Police (ISP) for over 32 years. She started her career with ISP as a Forensic Scientist in the discipline of Drug Chemistry. She was later promoted to an Assistant Laboratory Director and then Laboratory Director in the Morton Forensic Science Laboratory which serves agencies from twenty counties in Central Illinois. She is currently a Bureau Chief and her duties include the oversight of 4 operational forensic laboratories in Central and Southern Illinois as well as the ISP Training and R&D Laboratories. She also has a long history of service with the ASCLD Board of Directors and is the current Treasurer of the organization.

Jean will retire from her current employer and is tentatively scheduled to assume employment with ASCLD on November 1. At that time, her duties as Treasurer will be transitioned to another board member.

Excited for the Future,

Jay Henry
ASCLD President

2014 ASCLD SYMPOSIUM

**May 4 – 8, 2014
Scottsdale, Arizona**

The 2014 annual symposium of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors will take place at the Doubletree by Hilton – Paradise Valley in Scottsdale, Arizona. Additional information about the symposium, as well as registration instructions, will be announced and posted at www.asclcd.org. Links to the hotel and a “save the date” brochure for venders can be found at the ASCLD website at this time.



Hotel Information

Located only minutes from downtown Scottsdale, Arizona and twelve miles from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, the DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Paradise Valley – Scottsdale offers a warm welcome and a comfortable stay, in tranquil surroundings. Relax and recharge in our beautifully landscaped property, surrounded by lavish courtyards, cactus and tropical palm trees.

Enjoy a wide range of amenities at our Scottsdale, AZ resort without any resort fees. Swim laps in one of the outdoor pools, work out in the health club or enjoy a game of tennis. Our Scottsdale, AZ hotel offers a prime location in the heart of the city. Venture just steps from the hotel for great dining, nightlife and shopping, or visit the adjacent spa for a day of relaxation. Our complimentary shuttle is great for exploring the local area.

Hotel Features

- Resort hotel only 1.5 miles from downtown Scottsdale and 20 minutes from Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport
- Tranquil environment with two large outdoor pools and fully-equipped health club with spa treatments
- Leisure amenities including nine-hole putting green, racquetball, basketball and tennis courts
- Well-equipped for business travelers with BusinessLink center and high-speed internet access
- 40,000 square feet of event space, spread across 23 unique meeting and function rooms

Notice to our Vendors

Please consider joining us as a vendor for the 41st Annual meeting of the American Society of Crime Lab Directors.

Be sure to not miss this opportunity! Many registrants will be seeking information about products and services necessary to ensure the on-going quality of their laboratories. They look to you for ideas, answers and resources.

Exhibiting at the ASCLD symposium will provide you with the access to the forensic laboratory decision makers and appropriations managers. These are the people that approve purchase requests within the laboratory.

Areas of interest include:

- Trace evidence
- Computer Applications
- Laboratory Management Systems (LIMS)
- Toxicology
- Microscopy
- Lab Design
- Document Examination
- Crime Scene Investigation
- Accreditation Programs
- Computer Forensics
- DNA Analysis
- Drug Testing
- Firearms & Tool Marks
- Laboratory Safety
- Fire Debris Analysis
- Latent Fingerprints
- Outsourcing Vendor Services
- Evidence Storage
- Data Storage
- Management Resources
- Imaging Technology
- Calibration Services
- Quality Assurance
- Books and Literature.





ASCLD 2014
May 4th thru May 8th, 2014
Scottsdale, AZ

Overview: The theme of this year’s symposium is “The Efficiency of Quality.” As crime lab management we are faced with lean budgets and an increased demand for our services. This "resource versus demand" issue presents a challenge for many of today’s crime laboratory leaders. With fewer resources, we must look for more efficient ways to maintain and improve quality, especially in light of new levels of scrutiny surrounding the crime laboratory. As the needs of our clients increase and as the technology changes, we must be able to meet these challenges and grow as leaders.

The symposium planning committee welcomes all submissions and would be especially excited to see presentations that demonstrate effective implementation of crime lab projects, tools that integrate efficiency and quality, and presentations on technological developments, especially those that will have demonstrated an impact on laboratory operations.

Training Seminar Abstract



Type your abstract within the box using the following format:

- Indicate for Poster or Plenary session or Workshop
- TITLE OF PAPER/PRESENTATION IN CAPITAL LETTERS
- Name, affiliation and address of author(s) in lower case letters
- Space between heading and text
- Text of abstract typed single space, lower case

Abstracts may be typed on this form, and submitted by e-mail as text attachments in MS Word format or .pdf. Please include your AV requirements and time allotment requested.

Include in the abstract:

- 1) Objectives of the presentation
- 2) Why a lab director/manager would want to attend
- 3) What will the attendee walk away with
- 4) General Conclusions
- 5) Brief Biography of presenter

Audio Visual requirements:

- Computer to run presentation will be available _____
- LCD projector for my computer _____
- VHS tape player _____
- Other (specify) _____

NOTE: THERE IS NO MINIMUM TIME REQUIREMENT FOR PRESENTATIONS. SHORTER PAPERS WILL BE INCORPORATED IN THE GENERAL SESSION/POSTER SESSION, AS WELL AS PLACED ON A BACKUP LIST IN THE EVENT THAT THE PROGRAM IS RUNNING AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

TIME REQUESTED: _____ MIN

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

For Program Committee Use Only

Rec'd _____ Confirmed _____ Scheduled _____

E-mail abstract to:

Brady W Mills

ASCLD-President Elect
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DUE DATE: December 16, 2013

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2013 MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Contemporary Leadership Issues and Topics

By John M. Collins Jr. MA, SPHR
RTI International Center for Forensic Sciences

Conflicting Employee Emotions Improve Decision Making

A recent study by the University of Michigan Ross School of Business found that ambivalent employees – those who manage a blend of positive and negative emotions – tend to make more accurate decisions. Researchers evaluated the emotional states and life experiences of 600 people and asked them to make predictions of various sorts. Those individuals who tended to struggle with conflicting emotions were more likely to make accurate predictions. The findings were published in the May issue of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. The message for supervisors is to understand that all employees are continuously challenged by a variety of life experiences that ultimately result in wisdom. Although this is not exactly a profound revelation, managers who tend to micromanage employees and control employee emotion, for better or worse, should respect some degree of variation in employee moods and prioritize “mentoring over managing” whenever possible.

Protecting Crime Laboratories from Unpaid Intern Controversy

A series of labor lawsuits have challenged conventional corporate wisdom regarding the use of unpaid interns in the workplace. In one instance, an intern working for PBS’s *The Charlie Rose Show* alleged that PBS violated New York state labor laws by requiring the intern to conduct research and assemble press packets. There seems to be a common thread, however, among those employers most at risk. First, they tend to use unpaid interns to perform work that almost exclusively benefits the employer, particularly if that same work would also be performed by paid employees in the absence of the intern. Second, at-risk employers have poorly documented programs, if at all, that would otherwise control how interns are used and the types of work they can perform. The rule of thumb is this – work performed by unpaid interns must be for the educational or developmental benefit of the intern.

Networking with “Boomerang” Employees Can Pay Off

Good employees who leave your crime laboratory may also be part of your future workforce. Boomerang employees are those who resign but return at some point in the future. A study published in the April 2013 issue of *Personnel Psychology* found that 85% of boomerang employees returned within 3 years. Although most managers have employees they wish would leave, when good employees walk away from the job it hurts the organization. If a valued and respected employee leaves your laboratory, maintaining periodic contact may give you an opportunity to bring him/her back at a later time, but with some additional experience and perspective that may be helpful to you. Also, make sure your exit interview process is competent and thoughtful. A good employee is more likely to return if they feel they were treated with respect while departing for what may have been a better opportunity.

Women Perceive STEM Jobs as Male Dominated

Earlier this year, a joint study conducted by Montana State University and the University of Oregon showed that women regard science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jobs as not only being male dominated, but also requiring more effort from women to succeed. This perceived “effort imbalance” was shown to directly discourage adequately qualified women for STEM positions. But according to Jessi Smith, an associate professor of psychology at Montana State University, the perception is not entirely accurate. “Men are working just as hard as women,” Smith explained to Dori Meinert reporting for the May 2013 issue of *HR Magazine*. “The problem is that men have gotten very good at hiding it.” Although STEM positions continue to be male dominated, the study suggests that women value employment where everyone is committed and expending the requisite energy to succeed. Furthermore, organizations with STEM positions must do away with cultural attitudes that are still disrespectful of women. When STEM employers celebrate hard work and engagement, regardless of gender, “the culture of these disciplines starts to change,” says Smith.

Crime Lab Directors Should Monitor FMLA Leave Requests

The Integrated Benefits Institute recently conducted a study of 161 companies and 520,000 employees to determine if FMLA leave requests signaled an increased likelihood of short- and long-term disability claims. The data showed that early intervention and better explanation of benefits to employees requesting FMLA leave, whether granted or not, tended to reduce the number and duration of disability absences. By responding more effectively and proactively to FMLA leave requests, employers can reduce the duration of subsequent disability claims by over 13%. Because forensic science is so specialized and therefore difficult to fill the shoes of an employee on disability, using FMLA leave requests as a warning sign can sometimes benefit both the laboratory and the employee. The study also refuted common suspicions that sporadic FMLA requests are more frequent on Mondays and Fridays than any other day of the week. They are not, nor did they correlate with any increased or decreased frequency of the leave being for a full workday.

The Top Three Executive Challenges for this Decade

The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) surveyed 487 members to identify what executives were citing as the most pressing leadership issues of this decade. The results were:

- Retaining and rewarding top employees
- Developing the next generation of leaders
- Creating a culture that attracts top talent

The widespread loss of Baby Boomers from the American workforce is relevant to these findings. Although the Millennial generation (Generation Y), loosely defined as those born between 1980 and 2000, is the largest generation in the history of the United States, most are just starting their careers. As a result, they will not be in a position to refresh the leadership loss caused by the retiring Boomers. Experts predict that this will place heavy pressure on Generation X, or those born between 1960 and 1980. Although several researchers have generally regarded Generation X as demonstrating strong leadership characteristics, it is a generation remarkably smaller than both the Baby Boomers and Gen-Y. Workplace flexibility and healthy organizational cultures that focus on employee development are keys to managing these demographic trends.

Measurement Traceability – Lessons Learned Along the Way

By Laurell Farrell

Instructor

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board

Students in the Measurement Confidence Level 100 and Level 200 Courses are identifying some consistent issues as they evaluate compliance with requirements to establish measurement traceability.

Becoming an educated consumer is more than half the battle! Here are some lessons that students have learned:

Scenario 1: The laboratory purchased a calibration service from a supplier that is accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 by a recognized accrediting body for the type of calibration service purchased (e.g., balance calibration). However, the calibration certificate does not include all the information required (e.g., accrediting body logo, uncertainty of measurement or compliance with a specification, etc.).

- **Lesson 1:** *Understand that many calibration service suppliers offer a “menu” of services. Similar to a restaurant where one can purchase a hamburger with many options so too can a customer purchase a calibration service with many options. The supplier may offer both “accredited services” and “non-accredited services”. It is common practice for a calibration laboratory to only have a few of their services ‘accredited’ unlike an ASCLD/LAB accredited lab which is required to have all their disciplines (tests) accredited [with the exception of crime scene and breath alcohol calibration].*

Scenario 2: The laboratory purchased a consumable from a Reference Material Producer (RMP) accredited to ISO Guide 34: 2009 by a recognized accrediting body but found out that the product was not a Certified Reference Material (CRM) as desired by the laboratory.

- **Lesson 2:** *The supplier may offer both “accredited services” and “non-accredited services”. An accredited Reference Material Producer may produce both CRMs and RMs and the distinction may not be clear in the catalog.*

Scenario 3: The laboratory purchased a calibration service from a supplier who was accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 by a recognized accrediting body but the service purchased was not listed on the supplier’s scope of accreditation.

- **Lesson 3:** *A calibration supplier is not required to have all services assessed and included in a scope of accreditation. Example: A supplier may be accredited to calibrate pipettes but only at the calibration laboratory and not “in the field” (in your laboratory = field calibration) and yet the*

supplier will provide this service. A careful review of the supplier's scope of accreditation from the accrediting body's web-site prior to purchase of the service can provide the needed information.

Scenario 4: The laboratory purchased a calibration service from a supplier who was accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 by a recognized accrediting body but the calibration certificate does not include the uncertainty of the calibration.

- **Lesson 4:** *ISO/IEC 17025:2005 allows a calibration laboratory to provide the uncertainty or compliance with a specification. Ensure that purchasing documents are specific regarding both the type of calibration service required and the information required on the calibration certificate.*

Scenario 5: During an internal audit it was identified that not all equipment that has a significant impact on sampling or the accuracy of a test result or calibration result or on the total uncertainty of the test result was considered or calibrated as required.

- **Lesson 5:** *All staff should be included in evaluating how the measurement process is performed and how the traceability for the measurement process will be established.*

Final Lesson

Certificates may be issued that are not certificates of calibration. Often these are certificates indicating compliance with a manufacturing process specification (e.g., glassware, ruler, balance, etc.). At times, these certificates contain wording that implies measurement traceability but upon closer inspection the certificate does not provide measurement traceability.

Words to watch out for include, but are not limited to:

“ISO 17025 Compliant” ≠ Accredited service supplier

“Compared against” ≠ measurement traceability

 ≠ Accredited service supplier

“ NIST number” - for reference only, ≠ measurement traceability

It is hoped that readers will find these examples helpful and illuminating. ASCLD/LAB has published and posted guidance documents on our Board Interpretations webpage which you may find helpful as you continue down the path of compliance with measurement traceability requirements.

A Review of the Top Ten Nonconformities

By Anja Einseln

Training Manager

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Laboratory managers can be prepared and be proactive if they know what others have encountered during past assessments. Does this guarantee success? Not necessarily, but you can learn through the experience of others. The following is a list of non-conformances encountered during ASCLD/LAB-International (American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, Laboratory Accreditation Board) assessments for testing labs during the timeframe of July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. This population consists of 85 forensic laboratories of varying size and services offered. Where the citation provided list 'Supplemental' this refers to the ASCLD/LAB-International Supplemental Requirement for Testing Laboratories (2011 Edition).

- **Number 10 – ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) 5.5.5.g (18 instances)**
We occasionally find labs may not have equipment maintenance plans or maybe they have a plan, but they don't follow the plan. So how does a lab address this? Check to determine a) do you have maintenance plans? And b) is it being followed by laboratory personnel?
- **Number 9 – Supplemental 5.2.1.3 (18 instances)**
Some training programs (initial employee training) do not address all three elements required in this clause: ethical practices in forensic science; general knowledge of forensic science; and applicable criminal and civil law and procedures
- **Number 8 – Supplemental 5.10.3.7 (19 instances)**
“The results are inconclusive” (end, period, no further explanation). Here we are asking you to answer your customer's unasked question: “why are the results inconclusive?” (e.g. no latent prints of value could be developed on the submitted item; the item was degraded; no DNA could be extracted; insufficient sample size to perform complete analysis, etc.) Help your customers understand why they are not receiving definitive results.
- **Number 7 – Supplemental 5.2.1.1 (20 instances)**
The training programs may not be detailed enough to ensure the analysts/technicians have the requisite ‘knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the testing.’ This may be found during the review of the training program itself or during the review of case records, the review of training records and/or proficiency tests.
- **Number 6 – ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) 5.5.5 (24 instances)**
Insufficient records for equipment and instruments. Rather self-explanatory.

- **Number 5 – ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) 5.4.1 (28 instances)**
Not using appropriate methods; not enough detail in the instructions to ensure the quality of the work; instructions were not available to personnel and deviations have not been recorded and/or authorized.
- **Number 4 – ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) 5.10.1 (29 instances)**
Results not being reported ‘accurately, clearly, unambiguously and objectively.’ Please remember that the test reports are written for our customers – not technical peers. Information from training course attendees indicates that the average percentage of cases an analyst testifies on ranges from 2 to 3%. This means that 97 to 98% of the time the ONLY information your customer receives is the test report. Laboratory analysts/examiners have an obligation to clearly communicate with their customers and the test report is the most frequent mechanism for this communication.
- **Number 3 – Supplemental 5.8.1.1 (32 instances)**
Incomplete chain of custody records. Typically this is for transfer to and from storage. Example: person A places the evidence in the storage cage at 4 pm on Thursday (with the intent of a different person removing it from this storage cage) and person B removes the evidence on 8 am Friday BUT the chain of custody reflects a transfer from person A to person B at 8 am on Friday. We may discover this during interviews and process review.
- **Number 2 – ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) 4.13.2.1 (38 instances)**
Insufficient technical records to establish an audit trail. Often found during case file review when the test report results are either not supported by sufficient technical records or the records do not identify which instrument was used, which batch of reagents was used or who performed the analysis. ASCLD/LAB does have an Audit Trail worksheet which is used to review at least one case file per discipline during each assessment. This form tracks a case from the time it arrives in the lab until it is either disposed or returned to the customer. Any gaps in this trail would cause a non-conformance to be cited.
- **And Finally, Number 1 – ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) 4.2.1 (56 instances – wow!)**
Laboratory personnel not aware of and/or following their own lab procedures. The last sentence of 4.2.1 requires ‘documentation shall (must) be communicated to, understood by, available to and implemented (followed) by appropriate personnel.’ Remember the difference between documents (policies, procedures, instructions) vs. records (objective evidence that you did what you are asked/directed to do). This clause is also used when there is not enough detail in a procedure/instruction ‘to assure the quality of the test result’ – specifically for more administrative of quality, whereas 5.4.1 is used for technical procedures.

The key to success after reading this list is continuous improvement. We hope you add this information to that learned from your internal audits, from your proficiency tests, from your technical reviews, from your management reviews, from your corrective actions and many other quality activities. Clause 4.10 in ISO/IEC 17025 (2005) encourages lab personnel to leverage and take advantage of the useful and valuable information collected during these activities rather than

just filing yet another report. The lesson you will hopefully take away after reviewing this Top 10 list is ‘engage, evolve and endeavor.’

Getting Started with Social Media

*By Christine Vivian
Communications Manager
National Forensic Science Technology Center*

“But I don’t care what you had for breakfast...” is a common response people give when asked why they don’t have social media pages. Many busy professionals are not involved in social media, or put off getting involved, based on three mistaken beliefs: there is no significant resource to access or benefit to derive; it will take too much time; and it cannot assist in reaching personal or professional goals. Nothing could be further from the truth and, what’s more, social media is not going away. Time to sign up and jump in.

Some facts¹:

- 72% of online adults use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, etc.)
- Members of LinkedIn come from more than 200 countries and represent every continent.
- People in New York City received tweets about the August 2011 earthquake in Mineral, Virginia 30 seconds before they felt it.
- If Twitter was a country, it would have the 12th largest population in the world.

So, what is social media? Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. There are hundreds of sites, or platforms, to choose from, many of them targeted to specific interests or slices of the community. For purposes of this article, we will focus on two of the largest and most strategically useful communities for laboratory managers and directors: LinkedIn and Facebook.



LinkedIn: Located at www.linkedin.com, this site provides a place for professionals of every type to connect, share news and information, build networks and meet new people. LinkedIn has become the single largest recruiting tool on the Internet, allowing companies to target their talent searches directly to experienced individuals, and vice versa. Users can set up groups allowing members to discuss problems, ideas and news with colleagues in the next office or around the world.



Facebook: Located at www.facebook.com, this site provides many of the same benefits as LinkedIn, but is more casual and personal in nature. Many companies and products also use Facebook to communicate and interact with their customers and introduce products and promotions.

¹ <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/Resources/FunFacts.aspx>

A way to distinguish between how to use the two is that you might post a picture of your dog on Facebook, but you would never do that on LinkedIn. You may be connected with lab directors across the country on LinkedIn, but since you want to keep certain relationships purely professional, you may not have them all as ‘friends’ on Facebook.

Benefits for the professional

Participating on social media can provide a number of benefits:

- Convenient access to colleagues and other business contacts
- Get fast feedback from your network – especially useful in discussing how to address professional issues
- Agencies can augment community outreach and communicate emergencies and criminal activities to users regardless of location (mobile)

So where to start? Many online users maintain profiles on multiple sites, but it is best to start with one and become familiar with it. Try not to sign up for multiple sites at once as you may feel overwhelmed about what to do next, never mind remembering all the passwords. Once comfortable on one site, you will find it much easier to select and use other sites.

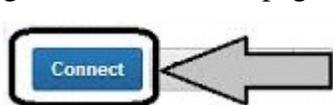
How to get started on LinkedIn (or improve your profile if you have not visited in a while).

The stronger and more complete your profile is, the better LinkedIn will work to connect you to the people you want to communicate with. Create an account (it’s free) at www.linkedin.com, using these tips:

1. When signing up, users must set up a profile. This is akin to a resume and can contain everything from your title and contact information to previous positions, degrees and certificates, volunteer commitments, honors, awards and even projects. Already have a profile? Add more to it, if it’s a little skinny.
2. Use your full name. If you are known by a name professionally, then that is the name to use.
3. Always include a good picture on your profile. It does not have to be a professional headshot but avoid photos with pets, alcohol, other people, full body shots, avatars, etc. This is a professional site and a picture of your face helps others recognize you when connecting.

Your profile is set up, now you need connections.

After you create a profile, LinkedIn will search your data and automatically begin suggesting people to connect with based on your workplaces, location and schools, and will present them to you on the right hand side of the page under ‘People You May Know’.

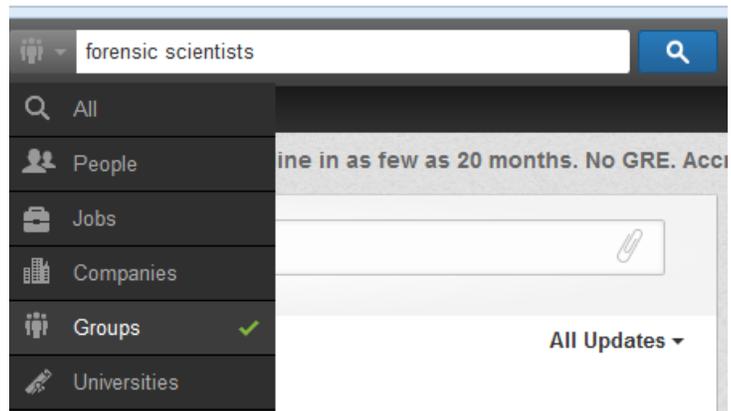


To connect with them, simply press the ‘connect’ button under their name and fill out the short form about how you know the person. You can even customize the invitation to connect (recommended).

To search for an individual, simply enter their name in the search bar at the top of the LinkedIn page. If that person has a profile, they should show up in the results. You may have to scroll past others with the same or similar names.

To **find groups to join** (or universities or companies to follow), select 'groups' from the drop down menu and enter the name of the group or the topic of interest. Click the search button and the results will give you opportunities that are available, including the number of members in the group. Ask to join the groups you are interested in. Here are a few groups that may be of interest:

- Forensic Science (4,700 members)
- Forensic Scientists Online (14,000 members)
- [International Association of Chiefs of Police: Official Site \(IACP\)](#) (5,000 members)
- [LiMS forum - Laboratory Informatics Institute user's group for LIMS, Scientific & Health Informatics](#) (47,000 members)



In just a few minutes, you can connect with a wide range of professionals and you are on your way.

LinkedIn tips:

1. Already on Facebook or Twitter? Don't link these accounts to your LinkedIn profile, especially at first. LinkedIn is a professional site and the vast majority of users want to keep it that way.
2. When you come back from meetings or conferences, take all those business cards you collected and try to connect on LinkedIn (or do it on your mobile device while you're there). You'll always have their most current contact info and it won't get lost in that drawer. You know the one.
3. Schedule yourself to log in at least once a week. Visit your groups, add more connections, read updates from others, answer messages and accept invitations. It does not have to take long, but 15 minutes once a week will help you become comfortable with the system.
4. Share news and information. Did you read a particularly good article you think your network may be interested in? Place the link in your update bar with a comment about why you think it is important or helpful. Others will appreciate it. (This is exactly the same as putting a good journal article on a colleague's desk.)

Facebook

You may or may not be interested in participating on Facebook personally, but you should know that a large and growing percentage of law enforcement agencies and communities are very active on Facebook. As a matter of fact, a recent survey by the IACP showed that 92% of US police departments use social media (for investigations and/or outreach) and 74% responded that social media had helped their agency solve a crime.

If your agency is active, it is important that you are aware of what is being posted on the agency Facebook page, just as you would be aware of what is on the agency website. The good news is that you do not have to create a profile on Facebook if you just want to visit most agency or company pages. You will not be able to do anything on the page (like, comment, share), but you will be able to see all the news being posted.

Crime labs and forensic science are of great interest to the general public. Contact your Public Information Officer to find out who manages the agency's page and how you can contribute ideas for the page.

What can the lab contribute to the overall agency's social media strategy? You can help build community understanding without compromising confidential information or investigation data. Think about what would be interesting to the community:

- Announce promotions, award recipients or publications
- Did you use a grant to get new equipment or train analysts? People love to know that their crime lab is active, competent and keeping up with technology.
- Was your laboratory awarded grant funding? How will the community benefit?
- Promote local events where scientists are speaking or participating.

You can be your own 'good news' room. Just know your agency's policies and participate appropriately.

A word about online safety

Social media sites have privacy settings that allow you to determine who can see your information, photos and news updates and users should become familiar with them. Unfortunately, 25% of Facebook users do not bother with any kind of privacy control and it would not be a stretch to assume similar levels for other platforms. Each site updates features and changes policies occasionally, so you should check your privacy settings regularly. Even with privacy settings, here are some basic things to know:

- Never assume anything you post is personal or private.
 - Note: Profile pictures are NEVER private
- Settings can be separate for pictures, feeds, etc., and can differ by where you live.
- Privacy can be broken if someone who can see your information shares a post in their own updates (where your settings don't apply). If you don't want that to happen, don't post the item in question.
- Protect identities: Do not post full birthdates, full names of children, addresses, SSI, etc.
- Pictures taken on GPS-enabled devices contain a great deal of information. If you want to use photos from your phone online, use an app that 'cleans' the photo of data or turn the camera's GPS enabler off.
- Remember what your mom said about politics and religion.

There is a lot to learn about social media, but it is easy to get started. IACP has one of the very best social media resources for you and your agency:

<http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/GettingStarted.aspx>

Additional Resources:

<http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/professional-linkedin-profile/>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/learnvest/2013/03/04/8-mistakes-you-should-never-make-on-linkedin/>

<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/linkedin.htm>

<http://www.extension.harvard.edu/hub/blog/extension-blog/optimizing-your-linkedin-profile-checklist>

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Enough Already with Strategic Planning!

By John M. Collins MA, SPHR
Forensic Science Policy & Management Advisor
RTI International

Let's develop a strategic plan! It seems like everybody is doing it these days, so why not? Planning is good, right?

Of course it is. Road maps are good if you are taking a trip from one place to another, so strategic plans must be good when attempting to take an organization from one state of existence to the next.

But here's the rub. Strategic plans accomplish nothing, and some of the best business minds in America have understood this for some time now.

The mistake made by well-intentioned leaders is to believe that strategic plans somehow replace the need for good old-fashioned leadership, effective communication, and paying attention to progress. Plans do not manage companies, leaders do.

In his 1994 article published by Harvard Business Review, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, Henry Mintzberg criticizes strategic planning as a crutch used by leaders who lack the ability to envision the future. "When strategic planning arrived on the scene in the mid-1960s," Mintzberg argues, "corporate leaders embraced it as 'the one best way' to devise and implement strategies that would enhance the competitiveness of business units."

As Mintzberg explains, "the most successful strategies are visions, not plans."

This critique of what always seemed like a sensible approach to business is playing out in real life. Some renowned business leaders, including those who've made a cottage industry of helping companies establish their strategic plans, will admit that most wind up in the trash can. Worse, they become fodder for cynical employees who view failed plans as evidence of their employers' incompetence and lack of focus.

What makes organizations successful over the long term is strategic *thinking* not strategic *planning*. To think strategically, one must be able to predict trends, identify opportunities and threats, assess strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate options for how the organization can navigate itself into the future with minimal risk. Furthermore, strong organizations promote the kind of communication and brainstorming that allow pertinent facts to emerge for consideration. Leaders who think strategically and stay engaged in the mechanics and culture of the organization don't need strategic plans.

"The goal of those who promote planning is to reduce [subordinate] managers' power over strategy making," Mintzberg suspects. When this happens, employees face barriers to innovation and feel limited in their capacity to influence the future of their organization – because, after all, there is a

strategic plan. Consequently, strategic planning becomes a convenient tool for simply keeping things under control.

It is true that strategic planning can be successful and has been in the past. But when a strategic plan works well, it usually means that it was created by strategic *thinkers* who ensured that the plan would be representative of their existing vision and would be made an integral part of their business approach. As a result, the strategic plan remains relevant simply because it was born of the same energy and vision that was leading the organization in the first place.

Organizational leaders who do not think strategically and have limited vision, however, are not necessarily bad at what they do. Sometimes bad visionaries are great decision makers. What this means is that their time will be much better spent on facilitating communication than planning. Leaders without strong visioning skills will generally fail at strategic planning so they should focus on keeping employees talking, thinking, and communicating with each other so that the organization can quickly identify changes to its strategic environment and react accordingly.

An outstanding book for those interested in learning about what really makes organizations successful should check out Lessons from the Top: The Search for America's Best Business Leaders by Thomas Neff and James Citrin. As they explain, "different kinds of leaders and leadership styles are appropriate for different circumstances." This should be encouraging to the diversity of managers leading America's crime laboratories. Regardless of their natural leadership tendencies, some degree of success is always possible. As Neff and Citrin explain, "When leaders succeed in doing the right things – both personally and within their organizations – the traditional measures of success inevitably follow."

Strategic planning by strategic thinkers is effective. Strategic planning by everyone else is a fad.

Especially if you are new to organizational management, here are some things to think about to ensure that your organization can function strategically with or without a plan:

- Aggressively facilitate constructive communication of all sorts and pay attention to what emerges – even if it is controversial.
- Continually ask questions about what employees think and observe.
- Maintain a current understanding of your strategic environment.
- Know when it is time to make a decision then make it. Don't waffle – the good decision made immediately is often much better than the perfect decision made late.
- Speak firmly and authoritatively about what you know is important to your organization. If you don't have confidence in something – no matter how small – then you can't lead.

Strategic thinking and understanding the strategic environment are what drive successful organizations. For too long, strategic planning was portrayed as a mandatory part of good business.

It isn't. And quite frankly, it never was.

LABORATORY OPERATIONS

Coordinating a Statewide Approach to Crime Laboratory Backlog Reduction

Brian J. Gestring

Director, Office of Forensic Services

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

As law enforcement agencies are becoming more aware of the value of latent print and DNA evidence on a broader subset of crimes, and more evidence is being submitted to laboratories on major crimes, laboratories are finding themselves inundated with evidence and new cases. Between 2006 and 2011 New York State's Labs have experienced over a 20% increase in the number of cases submitted for analysis [1], and like forensic laboratories across the country, they are having a hard time keeping pace with the increased demand for services.

This growing amount of evidence, that is either untested or bogged down somewhere in the testing process, is a real threat to public safety. Delayed exculpatory evidence can result in wrongful incarceration. Delayed incriminating evidence can allow the true offenders to remain at large, able to commit additional crimes. The true paradox of the situation is that for laboratories to do more, they must do less. Laboratories must work smarter and find ways to perform testing that addresses the true questions pertaining to an investigation without indiscriminately performing needless testing.

Even though the problem is clear, the solution often remains elusive. This is mainly because there is no *silver bullet* to address it. What works in one laboratory might not be possible in another. The lack of any best practices that address issues related to turn-around time or approaches to large amounts of untested evidence make the task even more daunting. Crime laboratory managers that often achieve their position through their scientific acumen are often left to fend for themselves when developing business rules and policies to guide their laboratories. There is no starker illustration of this than the fact that the term "backlog" still lacks a uniform definition [2]. Without understanding and addressing the root causes of this problem, funding provided for backlog reduction will not have its intended effect or relieve the stress on already burdened forensic laboratories.

Recently the Office of Forensic Services (OFS) began working with New York Crime Lab Directors in an effort to coordinate a statewide approach to address backlogs. In this regard, OFS is fairly uniquely positioned. Few states mandate that forensic laboratories maintain accreditation. Even fewer have an agency that monitors all of the labs in the state. In New York any laboratory funded by state or local government that performs testing on evidence (with the exception of latent print examinations being performed by a police agency) [3] must be accredited by New York State and by either ASCLD/LAB or ABFT [4].

OFS is responsible for oversight of the accreditation process and works as the administrative arm of both the Commission on Forensic Science and its DNA subcommittee which make determinations regarding New York State Accreditation. OFS is also actively engaged in, and sponsors, the Technical Working Groups for all of the state's accredited disciplines and facilitates specialized technical training and information sharing that enhances the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of forensic testing services. While these are not the only tasks that OFS performs, they keep OFS connected with the labs. New York has 22 accredited forensic labs which employ 777 proficiency tested examiners and 982 staff overall. Labs vary in size from 3 staff members to 330, and encompass 11 different disciplines. These labs are run by state, county, and municipal governments [1].

To start the dialogue, OFS organized a two-day intensive workshop entitled *Strategies for Effective Management of Crime Laboratory Backlog*. Over the course of two days, laboratory directors from across the state were brought together to discuss backlogs in all their disciplines and strategies that other laboratory managers from across the country have found successful. The speakers each brought their own perspectives. In addition to talking about what worked, they also discussed what didn't work, and areas where they were still trying to make progress. While the topics were arranged in advance, the content was not. What was striking through the two days was the amount of material that overlapped between speakers. It illustrated that even though there are many different approaches, there are common threads that run through them all. The workshop also allowed time for facilitated discussions among each of the disciplines.

 Strategies for Effective Management of Crime Laboratory Backlog

Wednesday November 14, 2012		
Time	Topic	Speaker
8:30-8:45	Welcoming Remarks / Introductions / What is a Backlog?	Brian Gesting
8:45-9:00	The Value of a Customer Working Group / A Customer's Perspective	Kristine Hamann
9:00-9:15		
9:15-9:30		
9:30-9:45	Are Not a Business, You Just Have to Act Like One: Using the FORESIGHT Project Can Increase Efficiencies and Effectiveness to Reduce Backlogs	Max Houck
9:45-10:00		
10:00-10:15		
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-10:45	Laboratory Lean Six Sigma: a recipe for dramatic efficiency and quality improvements	Tim Kupferschmid
10:45-11:00		
11:00-11:15		
11:15-11:30		
11:30-11:45		
11:45-12:00		
12:00-12:15	Lunch	
12:15-12:30		
12:30-12:45		
12:45-1:00		
1:00-1:15	Firearms, Latents and Drugs, Oh My! (and Tox too): Backlog Reduction Strategies for the Non-DNA Disciplines	Adam Bechel
1:15-1:30		
1:30-1:45		
1:45-2:00		
2:00-2:15	NYPD Forensic Initiative - Forensic Evidence Stakeholders Working in A Cooperative Manner	Phil Pulaski
2:15-2:30		
2:30-2:45		
2:45-3:00	Facilitated Discussions - Drug Analysis	All
3:00-3:15		
3:15-3:30		
3:30-3:45	Facilitated Discussions - Toxicology	All
3:45-4:00		
4:00-4:15		
4:15-4:30		

 Strategies for Effective Management of Crime Laboratory Backlog

Thursday November 15, 2012		
Time	Topic	Speaker
8:30-8:45	Review of Day 1	Brian Gesting
8:45-9:00	The Implementation of Case Submission and Request Submission Policies to Reduce Case Backlogs	Cecelia Crouse
9:00-9:15		
9:15-9:30		
9:30-9:45	Enhancing Productivity with Computer STR DNA Interpretation?	Barry Duceman
9:45-10:00		
10:00-10:15	Break	
10:15-10:30	Facilitated Discussions - DNA Analysis	All
10:30-10:45		
10:45-11:00		
11:00-11:15	Do You Know How Big Your Org Chart Really Is? Maximizing Your Lab's Potential	Adam Bechel
11:15-11:30		
11:30-11:45		
11:45-12:00		
12:00-12:15	Lunch	
12:15-12:30		
12:30-12:45		
12:45-1:00		
1:00-1:15	Facilitated Discussions - Firearms Examinations	All
1:15-1:30		
1:30-1:45		
1:45-2:00	Building a Compelling Case for Forensic Resources	Ray Wickenheiser
2:00-2:15		
2:15-2:30		
2:30-2:45	Break	
2:45-3:00	Facilitated Discussions - Latent Print Examinations	All
3:00-3:15		
3:15-3:30		
3:30-3:45	Clash of the Cultures	Gregoire Michaud
3:45-4:00		
4:00-4:15		
4:15-4:30	So where do we go from here?	Brian Gesting

Figure 1: Workshop Agenda

At the end of the two days, it was clear that this process was just beginning. This past April, OFS hosted a conference call to discuss the path forward with the state's lab managers. As previously mentioned, New York State has Technical Working Groups in each of the disciplines as well as one for Quality Assurance. As a result of the workshop and the follow-up conference call, OFS is going to start a Technical Working Group on backlog reduction (TWGBack).

TWGBack's first job will be standardizing definitions associated with backlog management. As one might anticipate, this will be challenging. One size rarely fits all, but in order to be useful, the same terms must apply from the smallest labs to the largest. The only way to determine if certain strategies work is to have metrics in place to measure them. This is not possible without consistent terminology. The terminology must also be flexible enough to accurately capture the reality of what is happening in the lab.

For example, in New York the penal law indicated that an individual arrested on a felony charge can only be held in custody for 120 hours (5 days) or 148 hours (6 days) in the event of a weekend or holiday without disposition of the complaint. If this time period is exceeded, the defendant may be released on their own recognizance. While different jurisdictions throughout the state interpret N.Y. CPL. LAW § 180.80 differently, a number of laboratories in the state are forced to perform felony drug and gun cases within this time period and produce a report to prevent the risk the defendant fleeing when they are released. Because of this constraint, these laboratories will often receive drug and gun evidence directly, even if they are not from felonies. In order to streamline operations, felony cases will be assigned upon their receipt and other cases might require a request for analysis. Given these business rules, is a case that is in the lab more than 30 days truly backlogged if it is not a felony and no analysis was requested?

Once the terminology has been agreed upon, the next step will be reevaluating how each laboratory's LIMS captures the data. Despite the fact that almost all the labs in the state utilize the same LIMS system, the data is being captured differently making comparison difficult.

This is all uncharted territory. TWGBack will strive to fill the void and develop a best practice document to help the State's laboratories. Once there is consistent terminology and consistent data capture by the LIMS, TWGBack will also be able to clearly demonstrate that these practices are effective. Since this project is not a monologue but a dialogue we welcome any input or lessons that you may have learned and we will continue to share our experiences as we navigate this process. Feel free to contact me with any of your thoughts at (518)402-0658 or via email at brian.gestring@dcjs.ny.gov.

[1] Data from the Office of Forensic Services

[2] Nelson, M., "**Making Sense of DNA Backlogs - Myths vs. Reality**" NIJ Journal No. 266
Published July 16, 2010

[3] N.Y. EXC. LAW § 995 (1)

[4] 9 NYCRR Part 6190

Manager Tools: The Best Management Advice I Ever Received

Jeremy Triplett

ASCLD Board of Directors

Chair: Training and Education Committee

I was not aware at the time, but the best piece of management advice I ever received was while checking out at my local Pier 1 store. At the time, I had just been promoted from bench-level drug chemist to the supervisor of the drug chemistry section at my lab. I was in the throws of a familiar forensic management dilemma: *“I have a degree in Chemistry and a Masters in Pharmacy. Now I’m in management. What in the world do I do now?”*

My wife was working at Pier 1 at the time and on this day I had stopped by the store to pay for the new rug that, in her words, we just “had to have.” As I was paying for the rug at the register, my wife remarked to her district manager, who happened to be visiting the store that day, that I had just been promoted to supervisor at my job. He looked at me, smiled, and said, “Congrats. You need to listen to Manager Tools. Seriously, you should start today.” He seemed so convinced that I figured he must know what he was talking about. So I did listen – and never have I been so glad that I stopped somewhere and bought a rug.

What I found in Manager Tools was an incredible source of easy-to-understand, immediately actionable management training and tips, all neatly packaged into a weekly podcast hosted by two successful managers who truly know what they’re talking about. Looking back, today, I firmly believe that this 5-second piece of advice changed the trajectory of my management career. If you’ll give me a few minutes of your time to read this article, I think it just might change yours, too.

So what is Manager Tools?

In the largest sense, it’s a management consulting and training firm owned by Michael Auzenne and Mark Horstman that delivers free weekly podcasts with management and career tools and tips, premium content for purchase on their website, and training conferences all across the globe. In this article, however, I would like to tell you about “Manager Tools” their free, weekly podcast on management.

Manager Tools, the podcast, is focused on how you can become a more effective manager and leader. Mark and Mike discuss nearly every management topic that you can imagine – from big ideas like “Delivering the Performance Review” and “Develop a Sense of Urgency in Your Team” to very focused, detail-type ideas like “How to Write a Thank You Note.” If you have a particular management issue that you wish you had some guidance on, you can bet Manager Tools has covered it. The best part of Manager Tools, however, is not the breadth of content they deliver, but the quality. Mike and Mark are expert communicators and teachers and you can tell that every podcast is carefully planned to deliver maximum value. Many times, Mark will literally check off a list of

actionable items from the podcast. You will finish the podcast with a list of concrete, actionable steps to improve your management skills or implement their suggestions into your management role. Additionally, in many instances the Manager Tools team will even provide their own templates, forms, and documents for the listener to use, such as their annual review preparation forms, sample meeting agendas, and one-on-one meeting note sheets.



In Their Own Words

“Manager Tools is focused on helping you become a more effective manager and leader. Each week we’ll be talking about new tools and easy techniques you can use to help achieve your management objectives. If you’re tired of a lot of management “theory” and would rather learn specific actions you can take TODAY, we think you’ll enjoy the Manager Tools podcast.”

<http://www.manager-tools.com/about-us>



The Numbers Don’t Lie

- Number of Members: 37,000
- Number of Downloads per week: 85,000
- People’s Choice Podcast Award (business category): 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012
- People’s Choice Award (overall category): 2008

<http://www.manager-tools.com/press-pages>

There are so many Manager Tools podcasts available that it’s actually somewhat daunting to decide where to begin. Luckily, they’ve covered that as well. “Manager Tools Basics” is a series of

podcasts that cover their core management philosophies, which they call the Manager Tools Trinity (this trinity, oddly enough, has 4 components). The Manager Tools Trinity is composed of: weekly one-on-one meetings, the Manager Tools Feedback Model, the Manager Tools Coaching Model, and finally, Delegation.

The Manager Tools Core Management Philosophy (The MT Trinity) – Summarized

One-on-Ones

One-on-Ones (also called O3's) are weekly meetings between you and each of your directs that are consistently scheduled on your calendar and *rarely, if ever*, missed. They are 30 minutes long, and time is divided into 3 separate 10-minute segments. The first 10 minutes is completely the direct's agenda. You both talk on anything the direct wants to talk about: their family, their work, their career, their hobbies, anything. The second 10 minutes is the manager's agenda. You talk about projects, things you both are working on, information to pass along from above you in the organization. The last 10 minutes are to talk about the direct's future: training, development, career opportunities, etc. The primary thing to remember in the one-on-ones is that the focus is the relationship between the boss and the direct, and not necessarily work-related task discussions. Manager Tools regards one-on-ones as the single most powerful thing that a manager can do to improve their relationship with their direct reports.

The Feedback Model

The MT Feedback Model is a simple, direct, and effective method to deliver feedback to direct reports. Feedback is given *often*, for both positive and negative behaviors, and is always based on *observed behavior* and not your perception of the motivation behind the behavior or the direct's "attitude" (you cannot see attitude). Feedback is about guiding future behavior. The Manager Tools Feedback Model gives you an effective and easy method to deliver it.

The Coaching Model

Coaching is a collaborative effort between a boss and a direct designed to provide value to the company while encouraging and equipping an employee to improve on a specific skill at the same time. The goal is to improve the productivity of your team by coaching higher performance from each of its members. The Manager Tools Coaching Model provides a step-by-step approach to facilitate your employees' development that is easy to understand and implement.

Delegation

The (ironic) 4th part of the Manager Tools Trinity is Delegation. Delegation is a key component to successful management, and many, many managers agree that they stink at it (it's certainly a weakness of mine). Delegation is a topic covered in many books, seminars, and management trainings – and, of course, it's covered by Manager Tools, as well. Manager Tools provides a great model for how to decide what to delegate, how to choose and speak with the direct that you are delegating to, and how to follow up. In typically Manager Tools style, they even provide their Delegation Worksheet, a step-by-step action plan on how to delegate items to your directs.

In addition to the core management fundamentals presented in the "Manager Tools Basics" series, they also offer casts on how to implement and rollout the Manager Tools Trinity fundamentals in your management situation. There are step-by-step action plans that show you how to start from the

very beginning with one-on-one's and eventually have all 4 pieces in place. Beyond the Basics series, of course, they also cover numerous other topics (in more than 7 years of producing podcasts, the Mark and Mike have recorded well over 400 shows) and anyone interested in a particular topic can simply look on their website and use the dropdown menu feature to find a list of podcasts sorted by topic.



Ways You Can Listen to Manager Tools

1. You can listen directly on the website. *www.manager-tools.com*
2. You can download a podcast client on your computer, smartphone, or tablet. Check the applications store on your particular device, download the podcast client, and search for "Manager Tools" in the client's podcast directory.

It is my sincere hope that you will give the Manager Tools podcast a listen and that you would find it to be as helpful and as informative as I have. I would certainly also love to hear your thoughts on which Manager Tools podcasts you find most helpful.

In closing, I'd like to pass along to you the best piece of management advice that I ever received. Wherever you are in your management career, however far you've come – "Congrats. You need to listen to Manager Tools. Seriously, you should start today."

TRANSPARENCY

Effective Root Cause Analysis

Emma K. Dutton

Instructor

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board

Somewhere along the way, there's an incident (i.e., a discrepancy, nonconforming work, a problem, mistake, error, or a departure from policy or procedure). Any of these could be brought to light or identified from a number of avenues: proficiency tests, internal audits, external assessments, management review, customer complaints, technical review, verification, supervisor review, quality control, instrument calibration, or staff. If the significance of the discrepancy is such that the problem could recur or there is doubt regarding compliance to the management system operations, the incident is moved to corrective action.

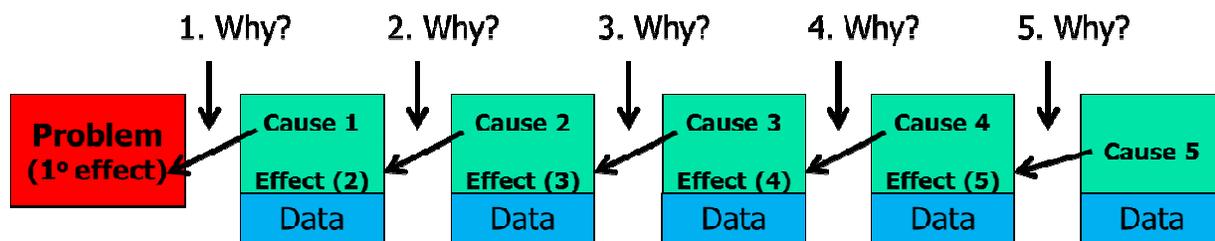
The first step of the corrective action process is root cause analysis (RCA). RCA is a process used to define, evaluate and systematically analyze a problem to determine the underlying factors or reasons for the problem. The sole purpose of which is to implement corrective actions to eliminate and prevent the problem from recurring. RCA can be accomplished in four steps: (1.) Define the problem, (2.) collect and analyze data, (3.) determine and implement outcomes and solutions, and (4.) follow up and monitor effectiveness.

Step 1: Define the problem. “A problem well-defined is a problem half solved” (Charles Kettering). Initially ask yourself, what is the problem? Focus on the departure to policy or procedure or the nonconforming work, not the “who”. Simply state or describe what is wrong, not the why. Identify the what, where, when, how many, how much, and who involved, or who affected, as well as define the impact to the organizations goals or performance measures. When all is defined, write a problem statement.

Step 2: Why did it happen? Step 2 is broken into two independent but interdependent sub-steps of *data collection* and *data analysis*.

- *Data Collection:* Data collection starts with a review of documents (policies, procedures, methods, work instructions, and accreditation standards) to understand the process that was affected by the nonconformity and to narrow the focus on potential causal factors. For each potential causal factor identified, formulate a hypothesis and develop a data collection plan. Data collection is done through review of records (e.g., case notes, reagent logs, purchasing records, validation records, instrument maintenance records, etc.), interviews and/or witnessing. It may also be helpful to generate a timeline of events. This part of RCA works well using a team approach utilizing multiple individuals with different backgrounds and areas of expertise for gathering the information. The analysts/staff are the best resources for data collection. They know the procedures, how the instruments work and why methods are used. They also typically know when work is technically nonconforming or not as expected.

- Data Analysis:* During the analysis phase, the data collected is evaluated to delineate the cause and effect relationships. That is, is there evidence to support that the potential causal factor contributed to the nonconformity? Did the potential cause produce the effect (i.e., cause the problem)? This is done by asking why at least five times and mapping the cause to effect relationship (see diagram below). Start with the identified problem as the initial effect, ask “why did this happen?” Then for each potential cause, evaluate the data collected and determine if the potential cause is supported as a producer of the effect. If supported, the potential cause becomes a cause and effect #2. Ask why again and repeat the process at least five times. If the data doesn’t support the potential cause you can do two things. 1. review more records for the first potential cause or 2. go to the next potential cause, review records, collect data and determine if that cause is supported as the producer of the effect.



Step 3: What will be done about it? What are the outcomes and/or the solutions to be implemented? For each identified cause ask, is there a way to correct the cause(s) to prevent the problem from happening again. You may find that there are multiple solutions. Not all need be implemented or they could be implemented in phases. Once potential solutions have been evaluated, develop a corrective action plan and implement the corrective action(s).

Step 4: Is it effective? Did the corrective action plan work as expected? After a designated period of time, it is essential to follow up and verify that the corrective action(s) implemented are effective. Follow-up and monitoring activities do not need to be laborious or time consuming. Follow up simply requires a review of records and implemented actions to evaluate the effectiveness of the corrective action(s). That is, did the root cause analysis identify the cause(s) that when corrected, fixed the problem from happening again?

In summary, we typically do not focus a sufficient amount of time and energy on the “why” (step 2) and immediately jump to conclusions and implement a “fix” (step 3). We must learn to refocus our attention on evaluating the process, and collecting the necessary objective data to identify the underlying reason(s) for the problem and move away from the knee jerk reaction of pointing blame on the individual.

As Joe Friday from Dragnet use to say, – “Just the facts ma’am”.

FUNDING

The Hidden Costs of Backlog Reduction

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West Virginia University

When a laboratory receives grant funding to help address backlog, the news is generally met with enthusiasm. But that euphoria may erode as the realities of implementation set in.

Imagine a laboratory that has submitted a grant proposal and the proposal is reviewed to a favorable outcome, receiving the extramural funding. What is the cost of *winning* to the laboratory? Sure, the laboratory receives an additional amount of funding in its budget to meet the targeted purpose, but what does it take to implement a backlog reduction program? The laboratory will likely find that it must give up other opportunities to support this effort, thus reducing funds for other projects. Further, the improvements in processing time that accompany the backlog reduction may well build new expectations from the customers for forensic laboratory services, thus increasing the future demand for services of a perceived ‘free’ service.

Yes, be careful what you ask for, you just might get it.

Over the 2008 – 2012 federal fiscal years, the federal government poured nearly \$700 million into efforts to reduce backlog in DNA casework. While this significant investment in forensic science services highlights the direct accounting cost of the backlog reduction programs, the amount understates the opportunity costs from the initiative. When funding is directed towards one particular activity, say DNA backlog reduction, that action leads to reactions in other areas that must be considered in an assessment of the costs and benefits of the program. Such related activity includes the direct costs as well as the indirect costs to the laboratory, including expenses in the preparation for outsourcing, opportunity costs from the redirection of laboratory activity, increases in the demand for laboratory services, and any loss in efficiency in the reallocation of scarce resources.

Consider some of these hidden costs when a laboratory decides to reduce backlog, whether it is DNA casework or some other investigative area, when outsourcing work to another laboratory. What does it cost the laboratory to prepare evidence for the outsourcing? Additional expenses are incurred to prepare evidence for shipping, verification of laboratory equipment, monitoring chain of custody, and other details to support process quality. In a recent small sample measurement of these indirect costs, a group of state laboratories found that an additional one third might be added to the cost of backlog reduction. And that additional cost must come from somewhere else in the budget, thus reducing the effectiveness elsewhere in the laboratory.

Does such grant funding treat the very foundation of the backlog? Restrictions on the uses for funding may reduce or eliminate the backlog, but this is generally a temporary success if the root cause remains unaddressed. Further, the backlog reduction and corresponding improvement in time to delivery may influence the future demand for services, especially because the activity of the

forensic laboratory is frequently treated as a ‘free’ service. For example, one project FORESIGHT laboratory found that internal improvements to DNA processing saw that success rewarded with a doubling of the requests for such processing.

In the 2009 NAS report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, recommendation (1e) calls for “establishing a strategy, based on accurate data on the forensic science community, for the efficient allocation of available funds to give strong support to forensic methodologies and practices in addition to DNA analysis.” Attention might immediately be drawn to the latter part of that statement; namely that the other areas of investigation, besides DNA casework, should receive some attention. However, consider the initial part of the statement and the emphasis on the “efficient allocation of available funds.”

Efficiency calls for quality analysis using cost effective analytical methods and procedures. Indeed laboratories constantly strive to find more efficient methods, both scientific and managerial. Analysis of data from Project FORESIGHT demonstrates that the vast majority of participating laboratories exhibit great efficiency as they carry out the public mandates for their jurisdictions. Unfortunately, the efficiency of laboratories often fails to be cost effective. The difference between efficiency and cost effectiveness is a critical distinction for the call for an “efficient allocation of available funds.” The key to understanding the distinction is an economic concept known as economies of scale. Consider the evaluation of casework by a laboratory. For any level of casework, there is an ideal process and ideal level of inputs—capital, personnel, and materials—to conduct the analysis in the most efficient and low cost method for that amount of casework. However, there is a scale of operation, known as perfect economies of scale, for which the lowest average cost of analysis may be realized.

In private sector enterprises, competition leads to a natural level of activity that is consistent with perfect economies of scale. In the public sector, however, the amount of activity is not influenced by these same forces. For the public sector, the service area is tied to a political jurisdiction and not an adaptable market. As a result, it is generally serendipity if a forensic laboratory achieves perfect economies of scale. They achieve minimum average costs because they are efficient with their processes and use of resources, but also because they serve an appropriate population with a crime rate that results in the right size laboratory. The majority of jurisdictions serve a population with a corresponding crime rate that is too small to achieve efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Returning to the call for an “efficient allocation of available funds,” raises the question as to what actions might be taken to achieve this goal. One answer is to drum up more business. This is not a call for higher crime rates; rather it is a call to consider cross-jurisdictional opportunities to create the economic markets for service instead of politically determined service areas. This concept is consistent with the NAS recommendation (4) which calls for the “allocation to state and local jurisdictions for the purpose of removing all public forensic laboratories and facilities from the administrative control of law enforcement agencies or prosecutors’ offices.”

While the Justice Grant Programs have had a dramatic impact on backlog reduction, an additional consideration of scale economies could have an even bigger impact as grant funds targeted towards gains from scale can lower the analytical costs for all laboratories. More quality analysis can be accomplished at reduced costs and the corresponding performance metrics provide the justification

for continued funding. And how large are the societal gains from increased funding? One sign is provided through the econometric analysis of Dr. Jennifer Doleac from the University of Virginia. Dr. Doleac estimates that an additional sample provided to the DNA database has a cost of approximately \$40 yet yields societal benefits of approximately \$27,600. With such a dramatic excess of gains over costs, backlog reduction programs should be continuing. A targeted use of new funding that considers efficiency and cost effectiveness should provide the greatest societal returns. Individual laboratories can receive the greatest benefits from such efforts by first understanding the metrics surrounding their current situation and searching for those cooperative efforts from which they may realize the greatest gains.

PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Change Management: Daily Action for Sustained Implementation

*Keren Stashower, Senior Consultant
The Centre for Organization Effectiveness*

*An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching
- Mahatma Gandhi*

Recently, I completed a coaching relationship with a department director who had received some troubling feedback. She was in the middle of a major change effort. She was rough, a bit of a micromanager and had trouble listening well. She was forced to decide both how to respond to the feedback while making sure that the effort stayed on track. After a full year, she could finally say she had seen some real growth in her capacity to work with others. She was receiving compliments on her changes and less resistance from her staff. But even more importantly, she had seen a change in her employee's capacity and overall productivity. To her surprise, her development as a leader had impacted their development as a team. And even more impressively, the systemic change effort she had led was running smoothly.

This is a story of the personal tenacity, the trajectory of development and the day to day work on leading others. Unfortunately, many organizational change efforts provoke introspection for leaders and resistance from others. It's the day to day focus, actions and commitment to self-development that carries leaders through. Whatever skills leaders may read about or learn, personal development and change takes at least six months of focused practice. It's basic neurology: as we develop new behaviors we create new neural pathways in our brains. What fires together will wire together. But it takes time and attention. This is the first lesson of leading change; leadership development is about a commitment to self development in both thought and action. There are rarely shortcuts.

Luckily for us, there are well worn paths that leaders can follow as they make their way through the daily work of leading others through organizational change. Here are a few tips.

1. Stay focused on what really matters

Leaders need to be clear on what they are trying to accomplish. This seems obvious, but it is often the first question employees will ask after change is announced. Find your own reasons for change and talk about them regularly. Stick to outcomes. If your overall goal is backlog reduction, don't get sidetracked with other non-essential issues or policy changes. Be a dog with a bone. And at the same time, leave room for others to have ideas about how to accomplish the goal. If you try a new approach, let your team help evaluate results. Commit to the *what*, and be flexible with the *how*.

2. Be a source of information

Change brings uncertainty. New ways of completing work provoke anxiety and concern over competence. Tell others what you know and what you don't know. Share what you know about

what's working; what's coming; and what's being discussed. Listen to other's concerns and ideas. The more they know they will hear about change from you, the more they will trust and respect your leadership. Find people who will tell you what rumors are circulating. Pull people together informally to address rumors, and raise questions. During the height of change, consider having a ten minute stand-up meeting in a lobby or conference room just to give a change update, share news and address concerns. Don't sit down! Keep it short and focused. Convene check-in meetings as often as needed. People never get tired of feeling that they are in the know.

3. Walk the halls; make your rounds

Stay visible. Many scientists turned leaders tend toward introversion and analysis. This can lead to closed office doors as leaders attempt to work out problems, test solutions or even avoid problems. Face your team every day. Make rounds, ask about issues and express optimism in what changes will bring. Take the long way to your office and say hello to employees you might not see otherwise. Take a different way to your office after lunch. Ask yourself to assess the "feeling tone" in the lab. Is it calm? Do you sense anxiety? Are people frustrated, worried or cautious? Are they focused, attentive and alert? Emotions are contagious, and you really can stop and sense the mood.

And don't forget your boss. Stop by occasionally with a bit of good news, or a question and check in with them.

4. Model what you most desire

It's easy to focus on what others need to do and the changes they need to make. But during times of stress and organizational change, leaders become even more scrutinized. What you are, and how you work speaks louder than anything you might say. On a daily basis, think about what you need from your staff, and model it in yourself. Be adaptable, realistic, tenacious and resilient. Whenever possible, throw in a dash of optimism.

5. Give honest feedback

This might be the hardest of all tips: Easy to say but so hard to accomplish. Change efforts often fail on the backs of dishonesty...or the avoidance of difficult conversations with non-performing employees. Confront resistance. Discuss concerns. Help where you can. Make sure your staff understand the impacts of their actions to the team and their own reputation.

6. Celebrate small wins

Find staff members who are doing well with the change. Take time to thank them in ways that you think they will appreciate. Give them a coffee card, take them to lunch, highlight their work at a team meeting, ask them to share something they have accomplished or leave a sticky note on their computer. A few times in every week, make it a practice find someone doing something well. Mark it on your calendar so you don't forget and get lost in the daily to do's.

7. Seek out good ideas; even if they are weird

Commitments to clear outcomes have to be coupled with commitments to learning and trying new ideas. Innovation often comes at the "edges" of what we think will work. Entertain ideas that sound half-baked. Seek them out both within your own team and in other industries. How have others solved this problem? Create time to think and protect it on your calendar. Ask others to think with

you. Take time out from doing...even if it's half an hour. Even if it's fifteen minutes! Let your mind play with possibilities.

8. Don't focus on nay-sayers; but don't tune out the thoughtful leaders

Leaders mistakenly think that they need to ensure their toughest critic comes on board. But sometimes critics are simply committed to being critical, and attention to their critique only makes it stronger. Others start to be critical too. This can easily divert leaders from accomplishing key objectives. And even worse, it can suck the energy out of progress.

There are thoughtful leaders who will raise tough questions. These team members are fundamentally different from nay-sayers. They respond to good conversation, reasoned thought and even the tough challenge for the worthy goal. Focus on them, work with them and include them in your thinking. Nay-sayers can stall your best efforts, but thought provoking questioners can help overcome the biggest hurdles.

9. Manage your energy not your time

Organizational change is not a sprint...it's a sustained commitment. Take care of yourself. Think about when you are most productive during the day. When is your energy low? Where possible, plan around your own peaks and valleys. Over the course of a week, make sure you take time for activities (work related and not) that nurture your energy and revitalize you. Plenty of research has shown that it's not just time that we deplete in our race to reach our goals, it's our energy core. Protect yourself and be diligent. You can't keep going for others if you haven't taken time for yourself.

10. Commit to the long haul

Sustained organizational change can take as long as 3 to 5 years. While new operational or technical systems can move into place more quickly, full accommodation and implementation may lag behind. So go easy and hard at the same time. At least initially, be easy when it takes a while for ideas to emerge and others to adapt. Be consistent and hard on your personal development and your focus of your change goal.

This is what my client taught me. Through her example, I saw a leader come to terms with herself and be a better model for others. Change in her work place prompted change in her approach and style. By reflecting on herself, she addressed key issues that were holding her team back. By using the approaches reviewed above, she kept her team on track. The combination was impressive. It took time, commitment and daily practice.

Special Guest Writer: Keren Stashower has been a senior consultant with The Centre since its inception. She has also worked extensively in health care as an executive leader responsible for quality related process, design and implementation. She works with San Diego based high tech and bio tech companies on leadership development. She is the program manager for The Centre's Certified Public Management Program. She holds Master's degrees in Social Work, Human and Organization Development and in a Board Certified Coach.

Eliminating the Analysis Backlog of Sexual Assault Evidence

*By Julie Renfro, MBA, Criminalist Supervisor,
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The California Department of Justice has developed a successful and sustainable response to address the backlog of untested sexual assault evidence (SAE) kits by creating a non-traditional approach to the examination of these kits. This approach, referred to as RADS (Rapid DNA Service) differs from the traditional processing of sexual assault evidence by focusing on areas in the workflow that can serve as impediments to the timely processing of these cases. The RADS program eliminates SAE analysis backlogs as it is designed to produce a completed report, with any searchable profiles uploaded to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), within 15 days from the start of batch analysis for all sexual assault cases for which a kit was collected.

Two bottlenecks for the processing of SAE are the timeliness of the *delivery* of sexual assault evidence to the crime laboratory and the subsequent *analysis* of that evidence within the laboratory. The RADS approach eliminates these barriers by having the SANE/SAFE triage the evidence, based on case history, and selection of up to three of the evidence swabs thought to be most probative. These evidence swabs, along with a buccal reference swab from the victim and a copy of the SAE examination report, are separately packaged and placed into a pre-addressed and pre-paid mailer that is shipped directly to the laboratory. When the evidence arrives at the laboratory, it immediately enters the work-stream.

The screening of SAE kits for biological material lowers the process capacity for performing DNA analysis on these samples. The RADS process does not rely on microscopic exams or screening tests as all submitted swabs are sampled and immediately processed for DNA. The elimination of biological screening improves efficiency by removing a time-consuming portion of the SAE examination.

The in-house development of a semi-automated, 96-well, differential analysis method led to the creation of a high throughput analysis scheme for the separation and extraction of sperm and non-sperm cell DNA [1,2]. This method, combined with the use of robotics, has led to reduced DNA analysis processing times and reduced hands-on steps.

RADS was initially rolled out to four California counties as part of a pilot project in 2011 and since then, a few additional counties have come online. Two years later, the results of this program are an indicator of its success. The turnaround time for 96% of the RADS cases is within 16 days, with 89% of the cases meeting the 15-day turnaround goal. Approximately 30% of the cases examined

have yielded searchable CODIS DNA profiles, and of those, approximately 50% of them have resulted in a CODIS hit. Of note, the RADS analysis is a first pass, efficient way of analyzing evidence from every single sexual assault kit in a timely manner. This process does not preclude the analysis of additional items of evidence (e.g., additional items in the kits, clothing, bedding, etc.). Be that as it may, the analysis of additional evidence has only been requested in around 10% of the cases. This means, that for a majority of the cases, the RADS analysis has been sufficient to meet the needs of law enforcement investigators.

Program sustainability is achieved through continued interagency collaboration with the SAFE/SANE personnel and law enforcement agencies. Laboratory sustainability is achieved by utilizing biology screeners to sample the evidence for the DNA analysts and by using automation to prevent repetitive motion injuries for DNA analysts processing samples within this high throughput environment. The analysis of SAE is a supply-constrained system in many jurisdictions. There are simply not enough resources to keep up with the demand for this type of service using traditional methods, without a significant increase in capacity. The RADS program allows the laboratory to keep up with the demand by providing timely DNA analysis for all SAE without a significant increase in resources. The benefits of this program, for the victim and community, are high as the rapid DNA analysis of SAE can lead to the rapid identification of the perpetrator and potentially prevent future crime.

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Crime Lab Education for Attorneys

By John M. Collins Jr. and Beth Kroupa, RTI International Center for Forensic Sciences

Not too long ago, both of us made what became the most difficult and heart-wrenching decisions of our careers: to leave our crime laboratory director positions. The benefit this afforded us was the opportunity to focus our efforts on directly improving, as much as possible, the strategic environment in which all crime laboratories operate. During this time, we've taken a profound interest in the unique role played by attorneys, not only as customers of crime laboratories, but as active *participants* in the practice of forensic science. And like all crime laboratory directors in the United States, we know how bad things can get when attorneys in our jurisdictions don't understand how crime laboratories work and what their true purpose is.

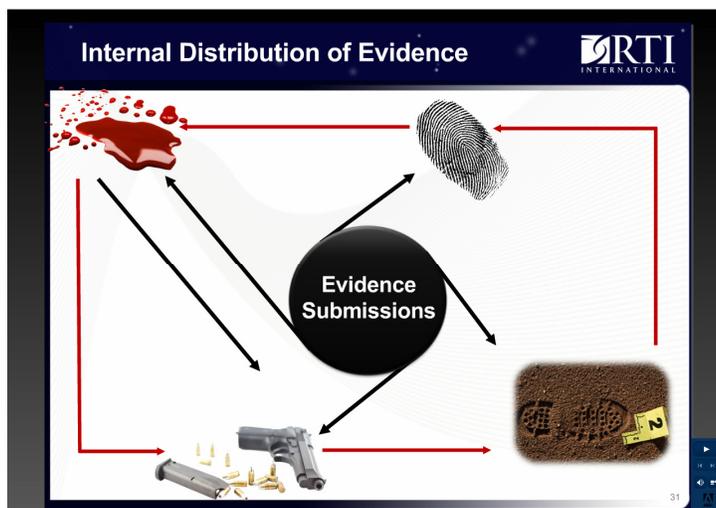
If you think about it, science doesn't really exist in the eyes of the public or among its customers until results, opinions, or other forms of information are actually communicated. Geology, for example, is irrelevant until it delivers useful information to end-users, such as predicting the possibility of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. Similarly, meteorology is irrelevant until one of its practitioners can tell us if there is a chance of rain tomorrow. Until then, geology and meteorology are only sciences, not *services*.

All of us care about forensic science as a service because it is in that capacity that it delivers value to the public. As such, it depends on how results are communicated and characterized. Both prosecutors and defenders play a major role in the communication of scientific results in the courtroom. For this reason, forensic science benefits when the legal community understands where crime laboratories came from, how they operate, and why they exist.

New Online Courses

We are taking this opportunity to make our fellow ASCLD members aware of two one-hour courses that we produced with our colleagues here at RTI International for attorneys interested in understanding how crime laboratory's operate, and what they need to do to become better participants in the delivery of forensic science services.

Each course was professionally written and narrated for the enjoyment and learning benefit of the course attendees. Carefully selected photographs and graphical animations are used to enhance the rich content of the course narratives.



A screenshot from Course 1 in which the narrator uses animated graphics to explain how evidence is distributed through a crime laboratory.

Acknowledgements

Both courses were produced with valuable support and assistance from:

- ASCLD/LAB
- North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys
- The National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators

We are grateful for the subject matter expertise provided by these organizations during the production and review of the training courses.



Both courses emphasize the challenges faced by crime laboratories in making decisions about what evidence is prioritized or even tested, thereby preventing backlogs and excessive volumes of work.

Preview Access for ASCLD Members

To assist ASCLD members who may wish to review the courses free of charge prior to recommending them to attorneys in their jurisdictions, please contact us so that we can provide you with access instructions:

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Participant Access and Billing

We have created two billing options for attendees. A credit card can be used to access the course directly after which the attendee will receive a certificate that can be used to obtain Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits. Alternatively, we can invoice organizations wishing to pay for multiple attendees. More information is available, so please review the course information below and consider forwarding it to any attorneys that you feel would benefit from these courses.

Crime Laboratory Education for Legal Professionals

This training is for legal professionals who present and/or scrutinize scientific evidence in courts of law. The professionally produced courses provide information about the history, purpose and responsibilities of crime laboratories and the best practices for interacting effectively with these laboratories as a legal professional. They can be accessed at any time.

Course 1: Introduction to the Crime Laboratory – Understanding its Role and Purpose

Duration: 60 minutes
Fee: \$95 – Credit Card or Invoice
Instructors: John Collins and Beth Kroupa

Course 2: Managing Quality and Reliability in the Crime Laboratory: A Lawyer's Perspective

Duration: 60 minutes
Fee: \$95 – Credit Card or Invoice
Instructors: John Collins and Beth Kroupa

Please access the courses at www.forensiced.org by clicking the [Premium Training](#) link.

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RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.



Publication Information

This is a publication of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD), assembled and edited by *Performance Pathways*, a program of forensic science outreach and support by the RTI International Center for Forensic Sciences.

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Garner, North Carolina

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