

Valley Business

FRONT

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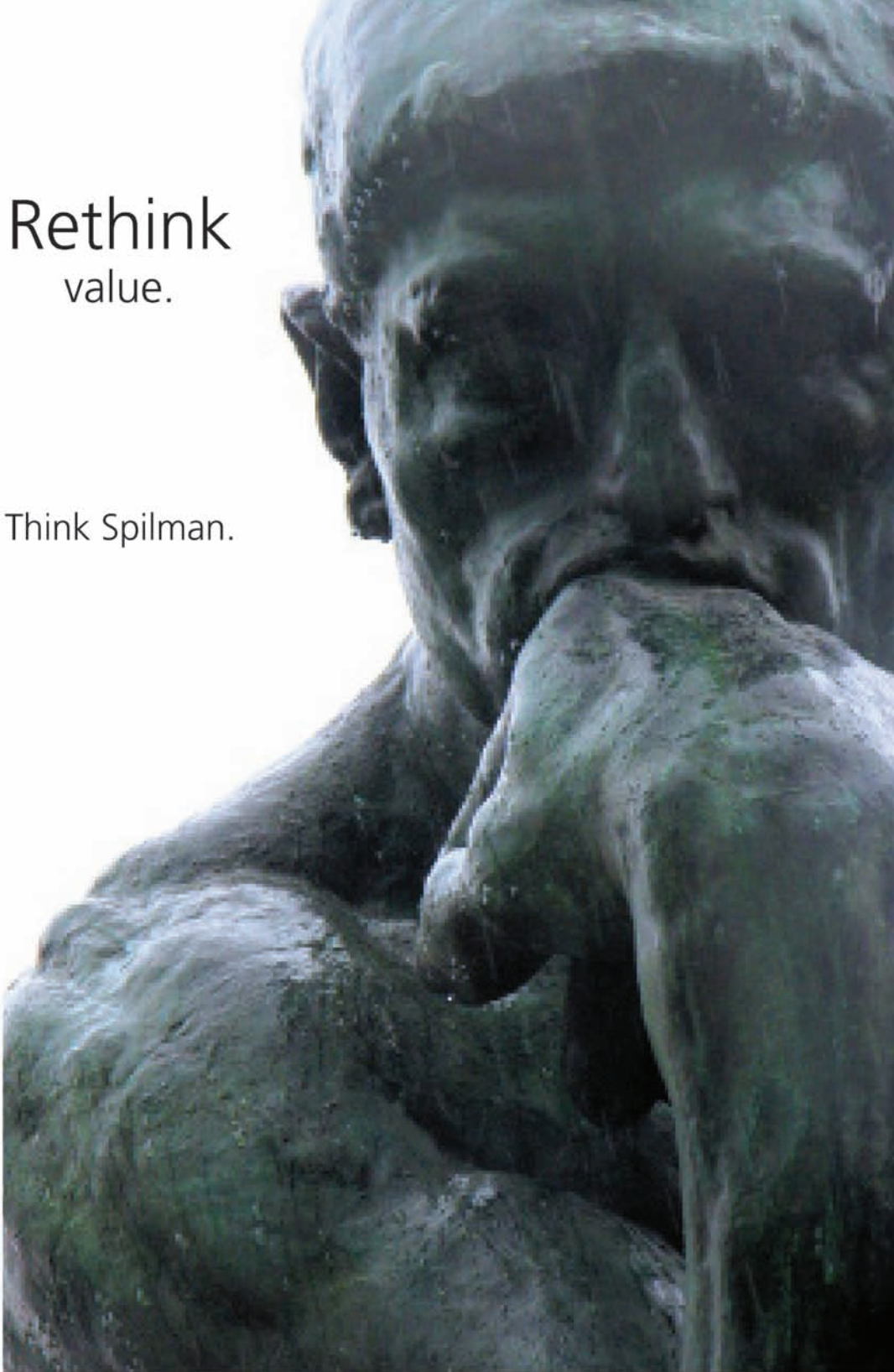
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Counting on Health Analytics

Steve Morgan,
Carilion

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The catalyst for our FRONTcover story this month was a simple two word answer to a question at a breakfast networking event. A panelist was asked where the growth areas were for technology jobs, especially for the benefit of our region.

Health analytics.

The response surprised some people in the packed room at the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council. Even the most expert sources usually refine from such specificity. But our panelist may be on to something. His predictive prowess might have as much to do with the way our technology base will evolve and progress as it does with definable job openings.

Take the word "health" out of his response, and we find ourselves in an even broader field of analytics, or informatics, or the more eyebrow-raising term a lot of us are watching: big data.

We tend to think of our technology sector in terms of tangible product and engineering and chemistry and high-tech sciences. But what's behind it all? It's as germane and foundational as the data that drives everything. Whether it's for healthcare, manufacturing, energy, education, defense, consumer, or any other goods or services, every bit of that ultimate success will come from the application of one core: business information.

Apparently, we're still very much living in the information age.



Tom Field

“ ”

Make 'em laugh and you got 'em

— Page 34



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FYI:

for your informatics



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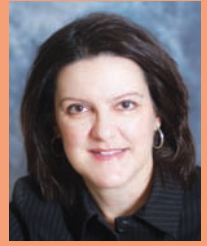
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NOVEMBER



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Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that will turn over every year and a half.

This board has been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "Members essentially have a red telephone at their hand," says publisher Tom Field. "They can inform us best on what is important, what is new, what impacts the greater community. Of course, our red phone reaches right back to them as well, for assignments and insight on our coverage. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia." An additional contribution by the Editorial Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year.

CONTRIBUTORS



Dan Dowdy



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Randolph Walker

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 40.

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Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry “fronts.” This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. In keeping with our policy of being “the voice of business in the valleys” we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by calling or e-mailing us your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

““ Avoid frumpiness!

— Page 20

““ The ‘wow factor’ convinced his high school class to hold its 50th class reunion there — Page 25

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Dr. Steve Morgan: All health care systems are having to make data-driven decisions.

FYI:

for your informatics



Behind the human faces of the doctors, nurses and technicians who deliver our health care, computer servers are whirring in nondescript buildings, churning through billions of ones and zeroes gathered at millions of doctor visits, reflecting treatments, outcomes, and provider costs. And that data is being interpreted and fed back to doctors' laptops and nurses' stations, sometimes literally overnight.

Health care is becoming computerized. It's not that computers are deciding who gets surgery, but the decision-makers have more data in front of their eyeballs than ever. Data is making hospitals more efficient and improving patient outcomes both on a systemwide basis and on the level of individual patients. Before long, it may alert the nurses' station that a patient is about to take a turn for the worse—six hours before it happens.

Health analytics is the collection of, analysis of, and use of data to improve patient care and system efficiency. The emergence of analytics to the forefront of healthcare is being driven both by technical improvements, and by policy changes affecting reimbursement.

According to CMS.gov, "Hospital Value-Based Purchasing (VBP) is part of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS') long-standing effort to link Medicare's payment system to a value-based system to improve healthcare quality, including the quality of care provided

The Rising Need for Health Analytics >

Executive Summary:
Health analytics is computerizing the practice of medicine and changing medical care on both the clinical and business side.

By Randolph Walker



Dr. Richard Embrey:
Systems will soon alert
nurses to potential
adverse events before
they happen.

in the inpatient hospital setting.

"The program attaches value-based purchasing to the payment system that accounts for the largest share of Medicare spending, affecting payment for inpatient stays in over 3,500 hospitals across the country.

"Participating hospitals are paid for inpatient acute care services based on the quality of care, not just quantity of the services they provide." The program uses the hospital quality data reporting infrastructure developed for the Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program authorized in 2003.

In other words, providers are rewarded for meeting certain performance measures and penalized for failing to meet those criteria. Data show whether the target has been met.

Feedback for better decisions

Dr. Richard Embrey is Chief Medical Officer for LewisGale Regional Health System.

"The care of patients produces an enormous amount of data," says Embrey, who has a medical degree from Johns Hopkins and an MBA from Duke. "HCA [LewisGale's parent company] sees 20 million patients a year. Each one of those patient encounters generates information on the patient's history, lab data, vital signs, all sorts of things. What we struggle with now is to collect that information and process it accurately and draw actual conclusions from that information.



Rick Maguire

Predicting the future of healthcare

When Rick Maguire goes to conferences, the hot topic is predictive analytics.

"Everybody wants to be in the area of predictive [analytics] on both the business side of the house as well as the research side of the house, plus increasingly on the clinical side," says Maguire, a research and academic medical center specialist at Oracle Healthcare. The IT company is based in Redwood City, Calif.; Maguire lives in Massachusetts.

"Population health is the business side of a hospital," he says. "5 percent of your patients cost you 95 percent of your cost. And you better figure out who that at-risk population is, because they have a high risk of being readmitted. And why is that important? The payors do not pay if you're readmitted. The hospital bleeds money. That's number one, it's mission-critical, it's bottom line."

On the clinical side, systems are moving from after-the-fact analysis of a why a patient died (of septic shock, for example) to alerting staff before a fatal turn for the worse.

"If you have a breathing respirator and it gets out of sync with the patient's breathing, that patient's going to die," he says. "In a critical care center there's a lot of sensors. If you want to have a better patient outcome you connect those sensors. That's where you have a machine learning algorithm, so you glean the data and put it in the knowledge base and the system, the software, gets smarter and can discern if the patient's going to have a bad outcome. This way you deliver the information directly to a nurse or clinician [to] say 'this patient is at risk now.'"

"This is where people want, in terms of the 'healthcare internet of things,' to connect sensors, to make sense of all this streaming high velocity data."



In the old days...it was very hard to make changes because you couldn't see cause and effect very well. Now... we can see where even the small changes... have an impact.

— Dr. Richard Embrey

"It's becoming increasingly important to what I do. The opportunity to get real-time feedback on how we're performing allows us to make better decisions about how to improve care. In the old days when you got information about patients that was six months old, it was very hard to make changes because you couldn't see cause and effect very well. Now we get data almost on a daily basis about patients who are going through our system and we can see where even small changes that we've made have an impact.

"One of our key efforts is to reduce the amount of blood transfusions we give patients. Transfusions are very important to the care of patients but they have risks associated with them. We can see almost on a daily basis what patients got a transfusion and what the trigger was."

Data is "generated here, it goes up to HCA, they process it and send it back to us. We work through their Clinical Services Group. They collect not just our data, but the data from the 164 hospitals or so that HCA has and compare one versus the other. We can see how we stack up to other hospitals and if there's one facility that stands out as being a best performer, we frequently will reach out and go, hey, how are you meeting these best practices?"

Almost all of the data is acquired automatically, pulled from sources including electronic medical records, billing software, bed allocation software, and the transfer center (which handles patient transfers and direct admissions).

"We have at night, programs that run reports automatically. In the morning they're sent not just to us, but to our division headquarters in Richmond and the group headquarters in Nashville, so we get real time reports from the last 24 hours or the last week in our inbox."

A dashboard is a program that provides at-a-glance information on specific clinical parameters. One of LewisGale's dashboards looks at patients with sepsis, an infection of the blood stream. "The earlier you start treatment of that, the better their chance of surviving. It's a problem that has a very high mortality rate." The dashboard reports on key treatments like antibiotics, IV fluids, and certain blood tests, and how quickly patients got them.

The program generates sepsis alerts in real time. A monitor at the nurses' station, and in the patient room, alerts nurses if a patient has sepsis caution signs, such as elevated heart rate and respiratory rate. "Having those alerts is going to help us bring the mortality rate down for sepsis," Embrey says.

What's coming next? Greater use of predictive analytics.

Harold "Skip" Garner, scientist, biomedical entrepreneur and executive director of Virginia Tech's new Office of Medical Informatics Translation, Training, and Ethics (MITTE), works from anywhere he happens to be (here at Panera Bread in Christiansburg).



New office at Tech promotes data-driven medical research

In September, Virginia Tech announced the creation of the Office of Medical Informatics Translation, Training, and Ethics (MITTE). Medical informatics utilizes supercomputing to process massive amounts of biomedical data, potentially leading to innovations in diagnosis and treatment.

"Translation is an academic or government keyword for moving something from the research arena into the product arena," says Professor Harold "Skip" Garner, the founding executive director of MITTE. "It's akin to entrepreneurship. The actual amount of effort and cost to bring something to the market after it's been invented is much, much larger than the amount of money to actually invent something, five, ten times more."

The focus of MITTE (pronounced Mighty) will be on pioneering research, training the next generation of scientists in the field, and facilitating entrepreneurship.

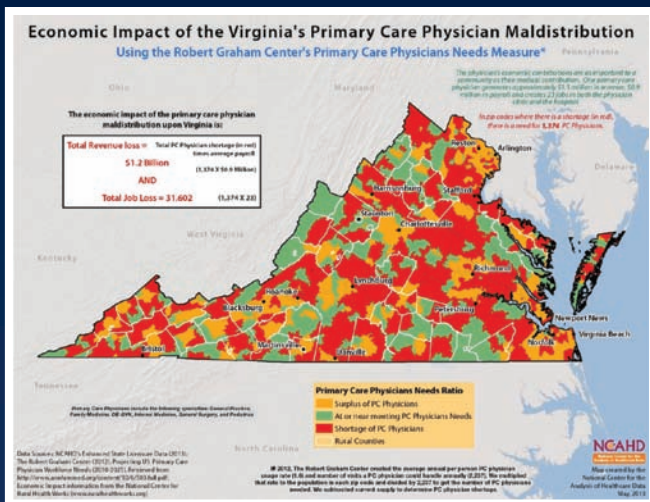
Garner was an early contributor to the human genome project, with a record of publications and patents. Among MITTE's first projects will be the study of genomic "dark matter"—the understudied parts of the human genome—with a focus on developing diagnostic methods and drugs for cancer and neurological conditions.

At MITTE, says Garner, "my role is to work on my technologies, and to get my technologies out into the market. After going to market, Virginia Tech will share in a percentage of the revenue, which for a successful product could be significant." Garner, who reports directly to Tech president Timothy Sands, has one graduate student and "a large number" of undergraduates.



Much of NCAHD's processing is done on two servers in the server room at the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine. Each server runs Windows Server 2008, has quad core processors running at 3.47 GHz, has 64 GB of RAM, and a 2 TB hard drive. The room has to be cooled to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, as the temperature in the server rack is a feverish 100 plus.

This map generated by NCAHD “indicates that in those areas where there are primary care physician shortages, those communities are losing \$1.2 billion a year,” Peton says. One PCP brings almost \$900,000 into a community per year and generates 12 jobs.



Small office crunches big data

You may have read or heard news reports about medically underserved areas. Chances are, the data in the story came from the National Center for the Analysis of Healthcare Data (NCAHD), a tiny but powerful operation located at Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center, near the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM).

NCAHD “provides data and analysis, primarily maps and visualization of data to the public and to anybody who needs healthcare workforce data,” says Ann Peton, director. “We have all the healthcare workforce data in the country. Nobody has anything like what we have.”

NCAHD collects and analyzes data on primary care doctors, specialists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other providers. This data, much of it collected from licensure boards, is compared to medical need, based on population, demographics (such as percentage of elderly, children, women of childbearing age), type of insurance, and other factors.

The real workforce issue isn't a shortage—actually, it's maldistribution, Peton says. “We do have, in some situations, surpluses, primarily in your urban areas. It's very difficult for providers to make enough income in areas where there's not enough population,” or where insurance is inadequate or patients lack transportation or can't take time off work. “Doctors have to go through balancing how many of the private pay, non pay and federally paying insurance [patients] can they afford to keep.” Nurse practitioners and PAs aren't necessarily the answer because it costs just as much money to keep the building open.

The total staff of NCAHD is two, including Peton (pronounced Payton), who has a background in geographic information systems and public health, and is an expert on the healthcare workforce.

NCAHD pays its bills mostly from user fees. The clientele includes “people writing grants, medical schools, large health organizations, the federal government, state organizations.” One service which earns money is building internet portals for states so they can have easy access to workforce data. The center also earns money from tracking of alumni for medical schools, and providing research support to VCOM.



A dashboard is a program that provides at-a-glance information on specific clinical parameters.



We shifted our focus on how to best report and analyze this information to improve the health of the community.

— Dr. Steve Morgan

"HCA is working on a system where all the patient's vital signs are transmitted to a server in Nashville [which] processes it, and very soon we'll be able for our nurses to get an alert that the vital signs for your patient in room 521 show that patient will deteriorate in the next six hours. That's going to allow us to provide much better patient care, but also do it more efficiently."

Benefits are also coming on the business side. Currently, "every chart is looked at by a live human being that determines which codes we submit [for billing]. We're on the threshold of having computer programs that will be able to look at all the information in the patient's chart and determine the appropriate billing codes without it ever being looked at by a human being. That will reduce turnaround, reduce costs associated with that coding."

Data for improvement

Dr. Steve Morgan is Carilion's Chief Medical Information Officer (CMIO). His role initially focused on implementing the electronic health record (EHR) and tailoring the system to meet the needs of physicians and staff. His role now involves informatics, the translation of the practice of medicine into digital data; and healthcare analytics, which serves to convert that data into actionable information.

Carilion implemented the EHR in 2008. From then until around 2010, says Morgan, most health systems focused on implementing the EHR, enhancing connections between hospitals and with external clinics, and facilitating information exchange between providers. "The EHR allowed us to collect a vast amount of data, specifically around quality measures," he says. "As the payment models started to change to where we now have more of a focus on value-based care and quality metrics, we shifted our focus on how to best report and analyze this information to improve the health of the community."

COVER STORY

Most of Carilion's clinical and financial data is generated by the EHR. As far as data processing, says Morgan, "we've tried to do much of this work centrally. That's both reporting the data out and doing the analysis of the data. We also have staff in different departments who do data analysis, and data visualization.

"Clinicians use data analytics on a regular basis at the point of care to help make improved clinical decisions. We also give feedback to clinicians on how they are performing against national benchmarks." Carilion uses several outside vendors to assist with analysis and benchmarking.

Data also helps Carilion to improve quality by working with patients on their individual needs. "If a patient has not had medication filled or missed a blood test needed

Rob Way is looking for people who can bridge the gap between technology and medicine.





courtesy of Pamela Peele

Pamela Peele:
Analytics can identify patients who can benefit from care coordination.

for diabetes, we're able to identify those patients, then reach out to them on an individual basis, a phone call, letter, etc., to close those gaps in care."

But the system doesn't just check behind humans in case something was overlooked. In some cases, it actually predicts who is likely to suffer complications. "An example of predictive analysis that we use on a daily basis, for our heart failure patients, is a predictive analysis of who is at highest risk based on their past history of hospital visits and clinical factors, to be readmitted, and do targeted outreach to those patients."

ISO: Analysts

Rob Way is looking for people with a special combination of skills. Much of their job will involve assisting department managers, who usually have either a clinical or a business background.

"I think our managers, they know what they want to do, and what data they need, but not all of them are expected to be IT savvy," says Way, an HR consultant and executive recruiter for Carilion. "We have IT people working in technology who are not clinical employees. My goal is to find people on the IT side who have those [IT] capabilities but also the skills to work as a liaison to bridge that gap." Duties include providing application support, troubleshooting and training activities, and serving as a liaison between the technology department, internal clients and vendors.

The person who can do that job might have an associate's or bachelor's degree, or might not. "A lot of our IT positions are really geared more toward experience," says Way. "So you'll see in many cases where we require a degree, or a number of years experience that would eliminate the need for that degree.

"It's a field where skills and requirements for the position are highly in demand. It's an area where people are not that certain where to find these skills and talents. We work very diligently to uncover new recruitment sources, social media and other sources, to identify where we can find these people and get them here to the Roanoke Valley," Way says.

"Trying to find individuals that do this type work is very difficult," says Morgan. "It's a hot market right now because all health care systems are having to make data-driven decisions."

While the technical side of health analytics can be tedious, it can make a life-or-death difference.

"The team that I work with is very passionate about this work," says Morgan. "This is part of the mission of the


organization. They really want to make a difference in patient care.”

Pamela Peele is Chief Analytics Advisor for Evolent Health in Arlington, and has degrees from Virginia Western Community College, Roanoke College, and Virginia Tech.

Analytics can and should be used to assign certain patients to care coordinators, she says.

“In the move to value-based health care, as opposed to fee-for-service health care, a big part of that...is understanding which patients are the ones who would most benefit from having some type of care coordination and which patients don't really have much benefit from that. For people who are very very sick...care coordination is the key. When somebody's got seven, eight, 12 different doctors in the mix, they have chaos going on. That is a confusing landscape and that confusing landscape causes a lot of bad things to happen, and bad things cost money. Coordinating that care has tremendous benefit financially and from a lowered stress level to the member [i.e., patient].”

Perhaps only 5 percent of the hospital population will benefit from care coordination. “You need to be able to identify who that 5 percent is because care coordination is expensive.”

From the level of the individual patient, to system-wide initiatives, analytics is moving health care forward. Says Peele: “The value and the power of analytics is the ability to surface new knowledge.” 

“““

It's a hot market right now because all health care systems are having to make data-driven decisions

— Rob Way

But “data” is plural

Here's a fun little outtake for our consummate grammarians out there. As editor, I'm always reluctant to allow the use of the word “data” as a singular noun. The purist insists that the word is plural. It is. Datum is the singular form. The use of data in singular context is common practice (and nearly all of us use it that way in spoken communication, of course). As this entire report is about data (or datum), I had to make a ruling. I sided with both our author (who knows what he's doing) and the AP Stylebook (which permits it), and a ton of other convincing sources, such as the ones dealing with those pesky Latin origins. Despite the context, the word data is plural; but I'm going with one of those many exceptions we're permitted to employ in our evolving English language. There are collective nouns and mass nouns; so data can refer to facts (plural) or information (singular). So there. If it offends, I invite you to contact the media. They may listen to you... (Ha! Caught you)... It may listen to you.

— Tom Field



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Frumpy, scruffy, and out-of-style appearance is never appropriate—regardless of age.

Dress to look young and appropriate >

In today's world it's important to dress and look youthful – but appropriate. Why, you ask?

Dressing youthfully makes us feel invigorated and relevant. That's for us. However, equally importantly, it helps others see us as relevant, vigorous and valuable. Why invite someone to sit at the (conference) table who seems stuck in the past and likely to contribute little of value?

The catch is finding clothing that fits our older bodies well, is age-appropriate, and looks youthful.

Consider these suggestions:

- Research the latest trends and find a modified version that flatters your body. Every brand has their version of the latest trends. For ladies, find a narrow-legged pant style of high quality fabric that doesn't cling at all. Don't think you can wear spandex tights under a tunic and look appropriate. For men, men's suits today are cut much skimpier through the body. Find one that's moderate in cut. Leave the tighter suit to young guys with rock-star bodies.
- Even if you have a rockin' body, don't wear anything too revealing. After age 50, skin can't withstand the scrutiny.
- Avoid looking too casual. Looking too casual when you're older makes you look over the hill. A scruffy beard and jeans pocked with holes on an older man implies that you've given up. A tidy haircut, trimmed beard, dark jeans, polo shirt and a fitted navy blazer worn open looks casually cool.
- Speaking of scruffy beards, grooming is especially important when we're older. Get a youthful haircut and schedule a regular cut so you never get untidy. Keep your weight in check by eating a little less of what you're now eating. You'll look more youthful at a lower weight. Maintaining your nails is also essential — and keep your smile bright with regular cleanings.
- Use a tailor to alter your clothes, whether they be old or brand-new, to flatter your current shape. Avoid frumpiness!
- In regard to your old wardrobe – if you're wondering if an item in your wardrobe is out of date – it probably is! Unless you love it and can't part with it, toss it. If you do occasionally keep and wear a dated garment, wear it with *panache*. Make it your signature look and own it. Think fedora for men or a sheath dress for women— classic! 📷

Question or comments? Email Kathy@peacockimage.com


Traveling in France >

When I conduct seminars on international protocol I urge my clients to take the time to learn the culture of the country they are visiting. Understanding cultural differences can take years, so doing a little reading on the plane will not bring you up to speed as you deal with another culture – in either the business or social arena. I will be traveling abroad soon for business and pleasure. Paris is my first stop, and I am brushing up on my French and French culture.

The French consider themselves the arbiters of elegance and taste, and their demeanor can be rigid and formal. The word etiquette is French, and there are strict rules surrounding behavior and dress. While this is changing, “casual” behavior or dress is not appreciated.

Some consider the Parisians rude, but I have not found that to be my experience. Remembering the following will help you have a memorable time in the City of Light.

- The French are traditionalists. They revere their language, and insist that it be used properly.
- It is rude to start talking to a French person without a greeting: Bonjour Madame, Monsieur, or Mademoiselle, and acknowledging that your French is poor.
- Avoid the American impulse to rush up to a stranger and demand (in English) where the Metro or anything else is without first greeting the person in French. Then wait to be acknowledged. Most Parisians will respond to that courtesy, and help you out in English.
- The French don't usually smile at strangers. They are uncomfortable with joke telling, but love a good debate.
- Brush up on your French history, art and culture.
- The French are private people. Don't intrude on that privacy with queries about occupation, age, marital status, children, or health.
- Never inquire about political leanings – true in the U.S. also!
- Dress: the French consider themselves leaders of the fashion world. Dress is understated and elegant for both men and woman.
- Very casual clothes are not usually worn in cities.
- The French consider dining an art form, and much time is devoted to the discussion, ordering, and enjoying of both food and wine.
- It is a faux pas if you don't use a knife and fork properly!
- Tipping: gratuities are built into the cost of a meal, but you can round up, and add a little more if you like.

Perhaps I'll revisit this topic. It's been four years since I've been to France, and this is a rapidly changing world! 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
The advice: When in Rome... applies to Paris, as well; do as the Parisians do.



ACEC Merit award winning Emory and Henry Streambank Stabilization project



Mike Lawless

Innovative engineering with an impact >

Executive Summary:

In the past 43 years, Draper Aden has made its mark in the New River Valley, much of it behind the scenes.

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

"Draper Aden Associates is not your father's engineering firm," says Andrew Ryan, public relations agent for DAA. Founded in Blacksburg in 1972 by two Virginia Tech graduates, Joe Draper and Bill Aden, the business has grown into a full service, technologically-oriented consulting engineering firm with seven offices in two states and over 60 personnel.

DAA maintains a large presence in Roanoke and the New River Valley. The Blacksburg office, headed by Executive Vice President Mike Lawless, focuses its services on site planning and engineering, utility engineering, surveying, and

especially environmental projects.

Communications Manager Cathy Hanks says that, if done right, "nobody sees our design; out of sight, out of mind." The firm handles projects from planning to construction, providing essential services.

At Virginia Tech, DAA has its "finger in a little of everything," says Hanks. It was an integral part of the team that installed a state-of-the-art modular turf and drainage system at Lane Stadium / Worsham Field. In addition, DAA has been a leader on the design and construction of the new football indoor practice facility.

Tech's Signature Engineering Building, with its suspended structural glass capsule that incorporates a classroom, was a "true 3D project," says Hoppy Knighting, Survey Team Leader. It proved a challenge for the firm. There was only 1/8" tolerance allowed to still build it correctly. In addition, because it is 25 feet off the ground, ladders and scaffolding had to be employed.

Draper Aden has also been a local leader in helping to transform brownfields into



Construction begins at Jackson Park Inn and Conference Center in Pulaski

developable sites, according to Lori Kroll, Community Resource Specialist. Brownfields are sites that have possible soil and water contamination by past industry, whether gas stations or factories were sitting atop them. DAA performs environmental site assessments and identifies the contaminants. Once it can prove there is no liability, the land can be put into inventories as viable for redevelopment.

Perhaps the most notable example can be found in Pulaski. Much of the recent investment in Pulaski would not have been possible without the town's successful application for Environmental Protection Agency grants that DAA applied for on its behalf, as well as DAA's environmental assessments, says Kroll.

Without anxiety about contamination,



JPI & CC completed



JPI & CC room

investors are showing interest in and purchasing the properties. The town has attracted a range of new neighbors, from industry to mixed-use development to the Pulaski Yankees minor league baseball team. Shah Development has turned Calfee Park into a destination, with it setting the Appalachian League attendance record last summer.

Pulaski Economic Development Director

John White's favorite example is an old grocery warehouse "magically transformed" into the Jackson Park Inn and Conference Center, the first hotel downtown Pulaski has seen in decades. White, a Pulaski native, said the "wow factor" convinced his high school class to hold its 50th class reunion there. It was a hit. With the hotel located in the center of activities, including a theater and transportation museum, almost everything of interest was in walking



JPI & CC plaza



Hanging Classroom / Communications Pod




Class of 1965 enjoying their 50th high school reunion in a banquet room of the JPI.

distance. Another part of the “magnificent job” of repurposing the building was making it home to the Yankees during their season.

Kroll touts Pulaski’s brownfield redevelopment as “one of the great success stories in the whole country.” From the grants to the assessments, DAA had a hand in its success. “Everything is interconnected,” says Hanks.

While DAA may have grown from its small business roots, its corporate culture is “warm and friendly,” says Hanks. The firm was

ahead of its time in providing flexible scheduling and a family-oriented work environment. There is also a community component to DAA, which sponsors myriad school and community events and is active in charities such as Meals on Wheels, the Christmas Store, and Adopt a Highway.

DAA’s founding in the region and role in area projects make it a major player in the New River Valley business scene. It just happens to do most of its work in the background. 



Larry the long term guy



“ Treat others the way
you want to be treated ”

Larry Dunn
Sales
Woodson Honda
540-777-1669
ldunn@woodsonhonda.com

A transplanted

Oregonian: moved from Eugene, Oregon to Salem, Virginia in 1975

First car owned: you won't believe this... a 1968 Corvette. For real! He and his family have three Hondas in their driveway, but he still yearns for a vintage Corvette.

Start Your Engines: manages a local stock car racing team

Favorite foods: Mexican and BBQ (not necessarily at the same time)

Larry Dunn's business card states that he's a sales consultant for Woodson Honda in Roanoke. But Larry does more than sell cars; he cultivates relationships.

Over his 21 years at Woodson Honda, Larry has built a customer base of over 10,000 people. Most of his business, which averages about 240 car sales per year, comes from repeat customers and referrals. He says it's not about what you get today; it's about building a long-term basis of trust and responsiveness that brings people back to him.

For example, he responded to a call from a nearby stranded motorist (who hadn't purchased her new Honda at Woodson Honda) with a locked steering wheel that wouldn't enable her to start the engine. Larry thought it was an easy fix, but it turned out not to be. After the tow truck arrived, he then took the woman and her husband to their home to pick up another car.

This is how he builds relationships—doing what needs to be done without hesitation and always with the other person's best interest in mind. You can bet this woman will ask for Larry when she needs another car, and she will tell her friends about this nice guy.

Larry describes his sales style as not being pushy. Apparently, it's a successful way to do business: he has earned Gold Master status in sales leadership—the highest category in the dealership's sales rankings. He was the first at Woodson Honda to earn this distinction. Larry's success is a reflection of his attitude toward work and his affinity for where he works. He says that Woodson Honda is a business with a family atmosphere “where we all get along”.



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Target on millennials >


Over the past couple of years, the millennial demographic has become a desirous target market. As a marketing professional, what's not to love? Millennials are known for wanting instant gratification, trust online platforms as ways to buy almost anything, and have a distinct fear of missing out (or, colloquially, "FOMO").

As a millennial, I can confirm these generalizations. I fell victim to clever advertising, feeling the pull of the latest-and-greatest, everyone-has-it, what-are-you-waiting-for jargon between the carefully crafted lines. I joined the ranks of iPhone-toting 20-somethings, leaving my Kindle to gather dust in the corner, not yet six months out of the box.

There are many millions of people who will continue to buy into the system. To be honest, I'm already trying to figure out how to swap my 10 month old, perfectly functioning iPhone 6 for a 6s. Beyond the powerfully enrapturing iPhone, however, I can say I have become a slightly trickier future customer for businesses that simply "target millennials."

Millennials are highly adaptable creatures. We were raised in an environment where the technologies were constantly changing, giving us new tools to do things faster and with more accurate information at our fingertips. We fall in step with the new hardwares and softwares presented to us without missing a beat, a trait that mystifies and infuriates my older colleagues. We are starting to see through the targeting, because we are now becoming the marketing professionals who used to target us, either by promotion or entrepreneurship. Millennials are creating the mediums through which new, far more clever messages are sent.

My point is simple. If your product is to be marketed to millennials and you are not one, invite millennials (two or more) to the table. Do not simply show them the plan and ask what they think. Rather, give them the space to use words that might not be in the typical marketing vernacular, to joke with each other and to experience the product or service out loud. And take notes.

Though these colleagues might not have the experience to formulate a marketing plan from start to finish, they can certainly pepper in the details that will make the campaign genuine. Speaking from experience, nothing gets me more excited about purchasing a product or service than hearing my friends talk about it. Their trust in and familiarity with the product provide me with crucial pre-engagement details. Having a millennial in the room can partially accomplish this step for you, and get you closer to that "moving target" market. 



Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:
The millennial generation is one that looks to its peers when taking the consumer role.



Fall, football, and succession plans >

Fall is my favorite time of year. I enjoy the weather, changing leaves, Thanksgiving food, and football (especially the Green Bay Packers!). As I've watched football this season, it has occurred to me that businesses and organizations can learn something from how football teams train and develop their players.

In football, it's inevitable that a member of the team will get injured and the "next man up" must fill in. Talent depth is important, because when those injuries occur, a strong replacement player can mean the difference between wins and losses. To ensure they are ready, football teams train multiple players for each position.

It's not much different in business. The loss of quality team members will eventually occur due to retirement, medical leave, or "a better offer." But many organizations do not adequately prepare for the loss. Take a minute and think of the leaders and specialists in your organization that you can least afford to lose. What happens when they go on vacation? What would happen if tomorrow they were hit by the proverbial beer truck? Or win the lottery?

If the thought of losing key team members makes you break into a cold sweat, you probably need to work on your succession plan. The Society for Human Resource Management defines succession planning as a means for an organization to ensure its continued effective performance through leadership continuity. Although a thorough plan can be quite complex, there are a few basic steps:

1. Identify the positions and employees that are critical to your operations.

Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

How "deep is your bench" at your organization?

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vbFRONT.com

Also get more stories and pictures at morefront.blogspot.com


P E R S P E C T I V E S

2. Identify the key knowledge and skills required for those positions.
3. Identify at least one person to fill each position when it becomes vacant.
4. Create a development plan (and act on it) to close any knowledge and skill gaps.

For those organizations that do put together a succession plan, the first three steps are usually completed, but the fourth one is not. The reasons for this vary, but there are a couple actions you can take to help your plan along.

First, review your important operations to determine if the supporting processes have been standardized. Are your key functions “people-centric” or “process-centric”? If you have employees that you rely on heavily and no one understands what that employee does, it could be a problem. Imagine trying to train and develop substitute players on a football team without a playbook. It’s imperative to identify, standardize, and document your key processes so that you can determine the knowledge and skills needed to train a backup or replacement.

Second, you must make a commitment to your plan by budgeting funds and scheduling time to work on it. Succession planning does not seem urgent (until it’s too late), so it often gets little priority. You have to make it a priority. Develop a systematic program to cross-train and develop your employees. Assign action steps and deadlines, and track your plan regularly.

Strong succession planning enables future growth, maintains smooth operations, and keeps your team in the game. Now get out there and win! Go Pack Go! 



What would happen if tomorrow they were hit by the proverbial beer truck?



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Dan Smith

Kyle Edgell: Letting the laughter out

A good, healthy laugh >

Executive Summary:

Caricaturist Kyle Edgell knows the value of a good laugh. She has recently learned that the value includes a therapeutic side.

By Dan Smith

Kyle Edgell has known intuitively for the entirety of the 25 years she's been drawing people that laughter and good health go hand in glove. But she couldn't necessarily prove it in a traditional lab setting.

She can now and she has set out to spread not just joy, but the word about laughing yourself well.

Kyle, a tall, pretty, slender, easily recognized woman in her broad-brimmed hats is preaching the gospel of the Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor (www.aath.org), a growing organization on a mission.

The 56-year-old artist has been a fixture in the Roanoke Valley, having drawn probably thousands of local, regional

and national large faces on small bodies over the past quarter century. Her story is familiar: Went to three colleges; suffered through two bankruptcies and survived breast cancer; married late and became a widow; worked as a freelance graphic artist and has been employed by companies as diverse as Lionberger Construction, Carilion Magazine, Robertson Marketing and the Rescue Mission.

She started drawing caricatures on a lark at a bar called Night Lights ("I was scared to death") as a "shy, insecure" illustrator and walked out with \$150 in tips. She discovered that large companies would pay her a flat—relatively lucrative—fee to show up at their company picnics and Christmas parties and draw their employees. "I always enjoyed the interaction so much," she says. "I never thought of it as a job." But it has been a living.

Even while she was married to her late husband, Steve, a fine artist, she continued her caricature work. The philosophy was simple: she had little time, but she had to "develop a relationship [with the subject] before I could turn the picture around." That generally meant levity. Make 'em laugh and you got 'em.

She built her resume and her clientele and wound up traveling the country with her work. Along the way, the value of humor became more and more evident and Kyle discovered a word for it: "psychoneuroimmunoendochronology." A mouthful for sure, but something to hang her broad-brimmed hat on, something to give even more meaning to what has become her life's work. She went to an AAHA convention and "discovered that what I had learned in 25 years of work" was now being learned by medical professionals. It was, she says, "time to invest in me. This is a young field" and she fully intends to grow with it.

In recent years, she developed an essential tremor in her drawing hand, but it has not stopped her practice. It is sometimes inconvenient and a little scary, though, she says.

Kyle is studying at the Humor Academy,

absorbing three years worth of courses in order to earn her humor certificate. She isn't certain how her practice will ultimately manifest, but while she's learning the official line, she continues to practice what she knows. She hopes, she says, "to teach health professionals how to see what is funny, not necessarily to be funny." There is a difference, especially a therapeutic difference. She hopes to show them how "to incorporate having fun" into their treatments. "Play," she insists, "is the most important form of research."

She would ultimately like "to start an AATH chapter" in this region, one that would help her educate and practice at the same time. "I'm not sure what form it will [eventually] take," says Kyle. But "I want to draw people out to help them cope with cancer, disgruntled employees" and a whole universe of challenges.

"It's not about the drawing." 



Dan Smith

Kyle Edgell at her easel with her "props" in place.



Is your company just a sham? >

I got a call from the owner of a mid-sized retail store. A customer had slipped and fallen in the store and had been seriously injured. The customer had filed suit, and the owner had just received the Complaint.

Over the phone I could hear him shuffling the papers. "They've got my company's name on here, and they've got my name on here too," he said.

"OK, so they've sued both you and your company," I said.

"Is that a problem?" he asked. "You can easily get me personally dismissed from the lawsuit, can't you?"

"Usually," I said. "Just because you own a corporation or LLC doesn't mean that you're liable when someone sues your corporation, any more than owning shares in a public company—like, say, Volkswagen—makes you responsible for replacing your neighbor's diesel Golf. That's a big reason why people do business through corporations in the first place. If the corporation gets sued, the most you can lose is your investment."

"That's a relief," he said.

"Well, first we need to check some things. When can I see your corporation's records?"

A couple of days later, the owner brought by a massive printout of his corporation's financial statements and ledgers for the past several years, along with a thin, battered faux-leather folder.

"Let's start by looking at your corporate records," I said.

He handed me the folder. It contained about ten pages of documents, all dating from precisely seven years ago. I flipped through them.

"OK, here we have the Articles of Incorporation," I said. "We also have minutes of the initial meeting of the Board of Directors electing you as President and issuing you 100 shares of stock for \$1 each . . . and here is your share certificate. . . and that's it. Is there anything else?"

"No," he said. "This is everything that I got from the on-line service when I formed the corporation."

"OK, thanks," I said. "Let's look at the financials, then."

The Quickbooks print-outs showed that the corporation owned almost nothing—the owner had purchased all of the fixtures, equipment and inventory on his own account—and was effectively insolvent. This didn't mean that the business had been doing poorly, though. On the contrary, it had

Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
Doing business through a corporation or LLC can protect you from liability; but if you get sued, you need to be able to show that the company is an independent legal entity.

P E R S P E C T I V E S

been recording very large gross sales month after month, for years. However, the owner had taken nearly every penny out of the company as soon as it was earned.

"Are these salary payments to you?" I said, pointing at a group of large expense items. "Or dividends?"

"No, those are just withdrawals," he said. "I take money out of the company bank account and put it in my own account."

"OK, thanks. How about this?" I said, pointing at another large expense.

"That was my daughter's birthday party last month. I put it on the company credit card," he said.

"OK, got it," I said. "Did the company pay any other personal expenses for you and your family?"

"Well, sure," he said. "I use the company debit card to make my car payments, and to pay for my cell phone and my daughter's cell phone, and to buy clothes, and to buy groceries—pretty much for everything, actually. After all, it's my company, isn't it? Of course, when the company needs money, like to pay the rent on the store, I put money back into the company's bank account."

"Well, it looks like we may have a problem," I said. "You know how I said that you can protect yourself from liability by doing business through a corporation or LLC? Well, that only works when you treat the company as if it were a separate, independent person."

"Corporations are people?" he said.

"Yes, for centuries legal scholars have called corporations 'fictitious persons' because they can own property, enter into contracts, and sue and be sued, just like real persons," I said. "But of course they're not real persons—they don't have bodies, lungs, bones, or blood like you or I do. Do you know what corporations have instead of bodies?"

"What?" he said.

"Paper," I said. "Records. Minutes of regular meetings. Resolutions electing officers. You should be having annual meetings and putting the minutes of those meetings into



You can protect yourself from liability by doing business through a corporation or LLC, but it only works when you treat the company as if it were a separate, independent person.



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your corporate folder here. A corporation doesn't have a body like a real person, so if it doesn't have all that paper either, there's not much left to show that it should be treated like a person."

"But I'm the only shareholder and the only director!" he said. "Should I be having meetings with myself?"

"Yup," I said. "Every year you, the shareholder, need to have a meeting where you re-elect yourself as director. Then you, the director, need to have another meeting where you re-elect yourself as President."

"That's silly," he said.

"It may seem silly, but you have to put the records of those meetings into your files," I said. "Otherwise it becomes easier for someone to argue that your corporation should be ignored, and that you should be held personally responsible for the liabilities of your business. That's called 'piercing the corporate veil.' It means that people who sue your business can take your personal assets."

"My personal assets?" he said.

"Yes, like if they sue you and win, then they can send the Sheriff to your house to take your furniture," I said. "But actually you have a bigger problem than just missing records. You formed the corporation with only \$100 in capital, and it owns almost nothing. This is called 'undercapitalization,' and it's the biggest reason why a court might decide to ignore your corporation and hold you personally responsible."

"So how much should my company own?" he said.

"A corporation or LLC should own at least enough assets to carry on its business, whatever that is," I said. "So the requirement will be different for a retail store than for, say, a coal mine or a nuclear power plant. But if a company doesn't have enough assets to carry on its business, then it's easy to argue that company is just a sham, which the owners keep poor on purpose in order to evade possible liability."

He nodded.

"Finally, you've been using corporate funds to pay your personal expenses, and shifting money to and from the company to suit your own personal needs," I said. "This is called 'commingling,' and it's another big reason why a court might hold you personally responsible for the liabilities of the corporation."

"So I can't take money out of the company, or put money in?" he said.


"Sure you can, you just have to do it the right way," I said. "When you take money out of a corporation or LLC you need to document it—as your salary, or



A corporation or LLC should own at least enough assets to carry on its business, whatever that is. So the requirement will be different for a retail store than for, say, a coal mine or a nuclear power plant. But if a company doesn't have enough assets to carry on its business, then it's easy to argue that company is just a sham, which the owners keep poor on purpose in order to evade possible liability.

PERSPECTIVES

as a dividend, or as a loan. Same thing when you put money into the company: it should either be a loan, documented by a loan agreement, or an equity contribution, in which case you need a board resolution issuing new shares to you in exchange. Never, ever have your company pay your personal expenses, and if you do, then be sure to reimburse the corporation right away, and to document it.”

In the end, because of the possible risk to the owner’s personal assets, he decided to settle the case as soon as he could (and probably for more than the case would have been worth otherwise). Afterwards we cleaned up his company records and he was always careful to keep his company finances and his personal finances completely separate. Of course, it’s always best to do these things properly from the outset. 

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Note: *Facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn’t legal advice—you should consult a lawyer about how to form a corporation, about how to ensure that it is properly capitalized and that you are properly observing corporate formalities, etc. contractor agreement, etc.*

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The company needs to have a good reason to run a credit check — Page 60

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Good call >

Politics and pigskins. It's the one combination that really defines November. It can find you in a room of high energy fist pumping rousing excitement and cheer. Or it can find you in a down dragging head shaking knuckle clenching fit of frustration. It all depends on the team you root for. Or does it?

How do you respond to your team's performance? The one running for the playoffs. The one running for office. My friends, watching the gridiron and electoral races are all over the place.

First, there's Alice (all names are changed here). She's always positive. She flat out told me she never wants to say anything negative; so her response is to share only when the team she supports is doing something right. She doesn't talk much.

Next, is Bob. He chooses a side. He only praises his team; and he only attacks the competitors. He claims to be watching the games, but you know what his ruling will be on every single play; because it will always be in favor of his team and against the other team. He talks all the time.

Lastly, is Ryan. He watches the same games as Alice and Bob, and yes, he also has his favorites. He also agrees and disagrees with the referee. But he'll usually agree with the ref even on those plays that hurt his team. He might be reluctant about it (or even silent), but genuinely tries to apply the same objective observation to both sides. He still wants his team to win.

As fans, it's exciting to show our colors. It's empowering to post our memes. It's nearly impossible to not want to share that great quote or bullet list of facts against those "losers" we know in our little banner waving hearts should never make it up the brackets. What reasonable person could support such a team, we ask? But boy do we get carried away. We start commenting on our "enemy's" looks. We insult their mommas. And our all time favorite "stat" to share and repost, is the one that shows blatant hypocrisy. *Oh, you say you believe in the pass, but all you really do is run the ball.*

Newsflash: Sometimes, our teams screw up. They really did fumble that ball. You can say the other team fumbles worse. You can boo the other fans for booing your team. But at least once in a while, we should respect the ref. (I know; it's much more fun to dis' him!) We should listen to Ryan. We should watch the instant replay.

There's no game if one team is always 100% right. No need to compete.

Plus, good sportsmanship requires we be there for our fellow conservative, liberal, or Virginia Tech fan.

Even in November. 

On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*Enjoy your game room,
cheer for you favorite,
but don't shoosh reason
out the door.*

Explore Park due for a new vision >

Most long-term area residents have at least a vague idea of the park's trajectory to date. From Bern Ewert's original vision of a Disneyesque attraction with a log flume ride, through the park's stint as a living history museum, and developer Larry Vander Mantan's ill-fated plan for a large retail and recreational facility, the park's 1100 wildish acres have defied efforts at recreational and economic development. There was even a plan, in 2010, to develop a film institute and library, in addition to reopening the historic district, with the involvement of Earl Hamner, creator of 'The Waltons'.

Enter Roanoke County, which signed a 99 year lease on the park in 2014, now owned by the state and overseen by the Virginia Recreational Facilities Authority. Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism quickly began offering classes, programs and wedding rentals in the park, but now there's bigger game afoot: the development of a new master plan for the entire park.

As part of the process, Roanoke County hosted public meetings to solicit ideas for the development and use. An online survey was available through October 31.

"We want to build what people want, that's our basis for the plan," says Doug Blount, the director of Roanoke County PRT. "1100 acres is uncommon for park development. We want to create a road map for the next 15 to 20 years. We have to consider the health of the community, positive economic impact and comprehensive infrastructure."



Eric Tamulonis of Wallace, Roberts and Todd, makes a brief presentation



Guest Commentary

By Anne Sampson

Executive Summary: *Explore Park in Roanoke County has experienced its fair share of uncertainty since its inception; some see real optimism in its future with the newest plan, forthcoming.*



A public input meeting was held at Explore Park on October 1

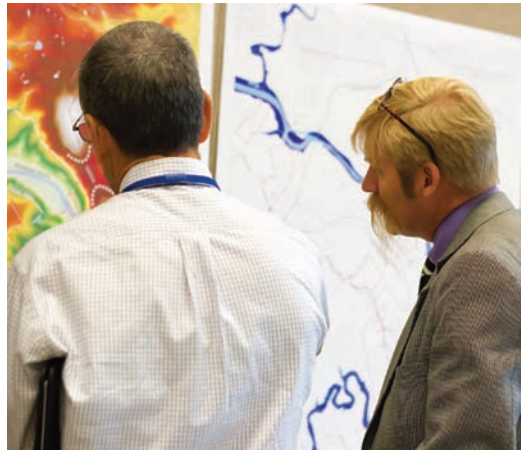
Among the challenges of developing the site is that the acreage is non-contiguous – it's made up of a number of parcels, including a large tract across the river in Bedford County.



Among the challenges of developing the site is that the acreage is non-contiguous – it's made up of a number of parcels

Participants at the meetings viewed a brief presentation by Eric Tamulonis of Wallace Roberts and Todd, the Philadelphia-based design firm which will develop the plan. The rest of the time was spent generating ideas at four different stations – cultural resources, natural resources, infrastructure and recreation – writing them on sticky notes and applying them to the appropriate maps.

Suggestions for park usage include an outfitter for tubing and kayaking, camping ranging from rustic to RV, hiking, biking, horseback riding, birding, photography, naturalist tours, canopy tours, ziplines, fishing, disc golf, scouting and 4H activities and a lodge. All these uses will require infrastructure such as access to power and sewer, improved



roads and access to meals and fuel.

"I was pleasantly surprised at the number of people who turned out," says Dr. Bill Gordge. Gordge is the founder of Pathfinders for Greenways, a non-profit group of volunteers that clears and renovates area hiking trails, provides greenway maintenance, education and fundraising.


"I was pleased at the diversity of interests represented," he continues. "Everyone is interested in the long-term viability (of the park). What is the key? Diversity."

Gordge advocates a wide variety of activities at the park in order to attract, not only Parkway visitors, but local people who will visit again and again.

"Right now, the park is 'out of sight, out of mind'," he says. "It won't survive on Parkway traffic alone."

While stressing the importance of catering to a variety of interests, Gordge feels that the most important development will be to connect the park to the valley greenway system, to pull a burgeoning number of greenway users into the park.

"A primary purpose should be to protect the land. We have a pristine stretch of the Roanoke River, native grasses growing in open fields, and dense woodlands. We need to capitalize on our beautiful surroundings."

According to Tamulonis of WRT, a master plan will be presented to the County Board of Supervisors in March. To monitor the progress of Explore Park's master plan, go to www.explorepark.org/masterplan. 



Right now, the park is 'out of sight, out of mind'. It won't survive on Parkway traffic alone.

— Bill Gordge

Letters

Applicable

I always enjoy reading the articles in this publication. They are always informative and apply to my life. A combination that you do not find in a lot of places in this day and age!

Judy Steelman
Christiansburg



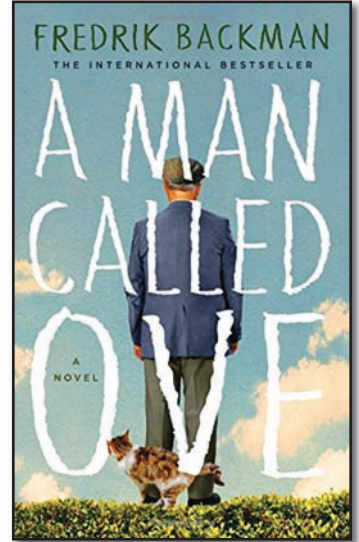
The value and power of analytics is the ability to surface new knowledge

— Page 19

Send letters to news@vbFRONT.com or any FRONT contact of your choosing (page 6). Submissions may be edited. You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at www.vbFRONT.com

Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to news@vbFRONT.com



Grumpy

From the first page onward, in *A Man Called Ove* (Washington Square Press; 2015), Fredrik Backman introduces the reader to a grumpy old man. It took me time to warm to this curmudgeon who gets interrupted several times in the first few chapters when he tries to commit suicide.

Ove is a stickler for rules. All rules. In his community he is a self-appointed watchman who patrols the neighborhood for any tiny infraction. All he wants, we learn in the first part of the book, is to join his wife. This love of his life, this woman who loved him and saw something in him he didn't see in himself, has died a few years before. She's taken the color in the world with her, leaving behind a black-and-white man with few friends and little reason to live. In spite of this, Ove is a compelling character. I recommend this highly.

—Betsy Ashton

Quirky, nerdy love story

I'm going to forgive Jeff Bartsch's overuse of a formula in his debut novel *Two Across* (Grand Central; 2015). The formula? That classic tried and true string-along technique popularized by every other American television sitcom show. You know the one: where one of the guy—and one of

the girl—characters are just meant to be together, but never quite made it happen—unless possibly during the final season. Everyone else watching can see they're destined to be lovers, but there's always some little emotional disconnect or tension that prevents the grand fairytale hookup.

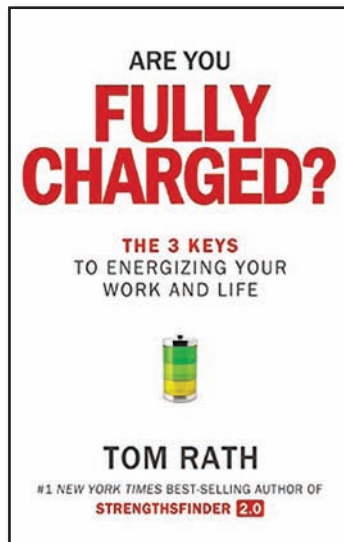
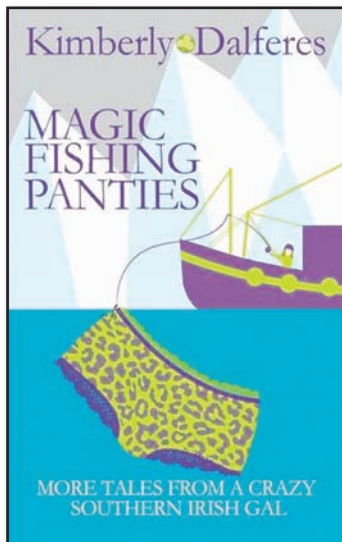
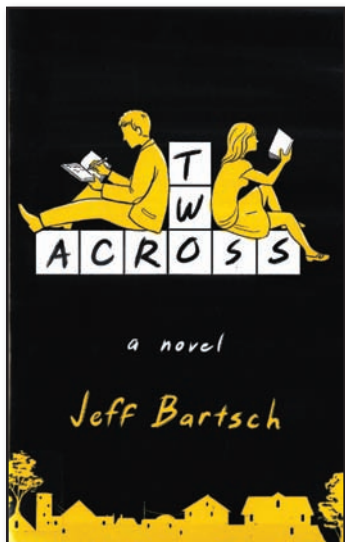
I forgive our author's employment of that tired device, because everything else works. Who else could make spelling bees and crossword puzzles central elements in a plotline, and still keep us glued to the story? With Stanley and Vera, you get a Woody Allenesque aura coupled with a sucking in rom-com for 20-somethings that you can't help but adore. Plus, there are some sprinklings of some of the best single sentence constructions I've encountered anywhere. *Two Across* is _____ like candy: S-W-E-E-T.

—Tom Field

Moody antics

The title alone should make me pick up the book and look inside. Kimberly Dalferes follows her wickedly funny *I Was In Love with a Short Man Once* with the even funnier *Magic Fishing Panties* (Booktrope Editions; 2015), smack in the tradition of Erma Bombeck.

This book is for gals and guys who love them.



Gals will howl at the antics of a half-century-old crazy Southern Irish gal who suffers through the changes life brings at "a certain age." From hot flashes to boobs that no longer pass the pencil test to coping with an empty nest, Dalferes hits us hard where we laugh — right in the gut.

Guys who love their gals should also read this. It's true. How else are you going to survive the mood swings that come with menopause, birthday depressions that lead to tattoos, or running outdoors in the middle of an earthquake to find yourself naked?

—Betsy Ashton

Charging

Tom Rath's newest book *Are You Fully Charged?* (Silicon Guild; 2015) intrigued me with his simple premise of there being three keys to an energized life.

The first key is meaning. Creating meaning for others matters more than pursuing happiness for yourself — though by doing so, you actually increase your individual happiness. Work must be meaningful. Rath includes guidelines such as focusing on work you love instead of salary, and working hard in bursts with frequent breaks.

Key number two is interactions with others.

Spending money on others or on experiences provides more satisfaction than spending money on things. Collaboration and shared experiences are also important.

Lastly, energy. This section can be summarized with: eat, sleep, and move. Rath goes into specifics of what diets bolster energy, as well as offering tips such as move throughout the day even if you have a set exercise period.

The book is a quick read. Only 160 pages are actual text; the rest being summary plus questions with room for answers to help readers make a written commitment to the tenets. With its organization into sections by the three keys, it is a helpful reference book. Rath's book is well-researched, and he does a fine job of weaving facts with anecdotes and narrative. However, a lot of his recommendations are common knowledge: sleep more, eat less sugar, turn off the "you've got mail" sound so that you aren't constantly interrupted. Still, Rath's advice is straight-forward and useful for readers looking to energize their lives.

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

(The reviewers: Betsy Ashton is a novelist who lives life out loud at Smith Mountain Lake; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; Jennifer Poff Cooper is a freelance writer from Christiansburg)



Scientifically festive >

The **Virginia Science Fair** was held Sept. 26 in Roanoke and in Blacksburg at multiple locations, featuring nearly 100 exhibits and programs in "STEAM" areas (science, technology, engineering, arts, math); presenting sponsors included Science Museum of Western Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Virginia is for Science Lovers.



Shop Bot >

Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce held a "How To" session for improving holiday sales, followed by information on maximizing "Small Business Saturday" at the Greenfield Center on Oct. 20; primarily addressing retail merchants, **Bart Smith** with Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center encouraged business owners to consider "pre-season private sales for loyal customers" among many other tips.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



U to the W >

Over 120 local business representatives and volunteers came out to support the **United Way of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd** annual Campaign Kick-Off on Sept. 17 at the German Club Manor in Blacksburg; including Virginia Tech athlete advocates (left to right): Morgan Altizer, Kelly Miller, J.C. Coleman, Trey Edmunds, and Luther Maddy.



\$6 million discovered >

The **American Cancer Society Discovery Shop** celebrated its 20th anniversary, along with a proclamation by the City of Roanoke on Oct. 12 at its retail store at Townside Square in Roanoke; since 1995 the shop has raised more than \$6 million for cancer research and support services by consignment sales of donated upscale clothing and household items. The Discovery Shop was founded by Betty Lesko and Ann Shelton, includes a second store at Smith Mountain Lake, and is mostly operated by volunteers (many of whom were recognized with long time service, 5, 10, 15, 20 years).



Pick me >

The annual **College Fair** was held Sept. 22 at Salem Civic Center, featuring recruiters from more than 75 colleges, universities, career, technical and business schools.

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Also get more stories and pictures at morefront.blogspot.com

FRONT'N ABOUT



X Scenes >

CityWorks (X)Po 2015 was held at Roanoke City Market Building and downtown Roanoke on Oct. 1 – 3; the fifth year for this community improvement, innovation, and civic engagement summit. Founder Ed Walker announced he is handing the reins to a new generation of leadership, with Ariel Lev serving as project manager.

Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the blog links at www.vbFRONT.com for more coverage.

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT

Elizabeth Lynn Atkinson of Humana Roanoke office, has qualified to receive the Soaring Eagle Award of the National Association of Health Underwriters.

Deanna Early has been appointed mortgage loan officer for American National Bank and Trust, Franklin County.



Irby

Jeff Irby has joined as vice president and city executive at National Bank.

LEGAL FRONT

John Fishwick, Roanoke attorney, was nominated by President Barack Obama to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Virginia; appointment subject to senate confirmation.

Jason Whiting has joined as an associate at Johnson, Ayers & Matthews PLC.

WELLNESS FRONT

Raymond Smoot of Virginia Tech Foundation and Union Bank and **Michael Friedlander** of Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute were recognized with a Silver Hope Award by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Virginia–West Virginia Chapter.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Feldkamp

Seth Feldkamp has joined as senior web applications developer at Sitevision.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Lori Kuszmaul has joined as project administrator and **Clint Pendleton** has joined as staff engineer at Daper Aden Associates.

Fe Nguyen has been named community manager of the CoLab in Roanoke.

Chris Yow, PE has joined as Virginia operations manager and **Valarie Cowden** has joined as natural



Yow



Cowden

resource specialist at Jewell Engineering Consultants, PC.

Stan Breakell has joined as director of energy management and facility services at Turner Long Construction.



Johnson

Boyd Johnson has joined as vice president at the Roanoke office of Cushman & Wakefield Thalhimier.



Fisher

Sarah Fisher has joined the Roanoke

office of Long & Foster Real Estate.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Mary Welchel has been named director of sales and marketing at Brandon Oaks.

Rob Yanok has joined as general merchandise manager at Virginia Furniture Market.

Jeff Archer has joined as sports director and weeknight sports anchor; **Jermaine Ferrell** has joined as weekend sports anchor and weekday sports reporter; and **Kevaney Martin** has joined as sports co-anchor and sports reporter at Roanoke WFXR Fox 21/27 television.



Archer

Bob Archer, president of Blue Ridge Beverage Company, received the National Beer Wholesale Association's Life Service Award at its annual convention in Las Vegas.

EDUCATION FRONT

Natalie DiFusco-Funk, fifth grade

teacher at West Salem Elementary School in Salem, has been named the 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year.



Winston

Virginia Tech has announced the following appointments and new positions:

Matthew Winston, Jr., appointed senior associate vice

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com. Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.



Pandelaere

president for alumni relations; **Mario**



Moyer

Pandelaere, appointed associate professor

of marketing; **Michael Moyer**, appointed associate vice president of development for colleges; **Susan Ganter**, appointed professor and director of the School of Education at the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; **Gabriel**

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Career FRONT



Ganter



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Smith



Genest



Wilkes



Hester



Tevington



Mackay



Hopkins



Collins



Avey



Jackson

Blouin Genest, appointed assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; **Andrew Tevington**, named director of compliance; **Monique McKay**, hired as graduate school ombudsperson; **Sean Collins**, appointed Innovate director; **David Raymond**, named deputy director of Information Technology Security Office; **Lisa Wilkes**, named associate vice president for administration; **Steven Mackay**, named communications director for the College of Science; **Paul Avey**, joined the political science faculty; **Jacob Apkarian**, joined the sociology faculty;

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Danille Elise Christensen, joined the religion and culture faculty; **Rebecca Hester**, joined the science and technology faculty; **Erin Ann Hopkins**, joined the housing management faculty; **Jeffrey Jackson**, joined the human development faculty; **Stephanie Smith**, joined the communication faculty.

CULTURE FRONT

Jim Wade, former Advance Auto Parts

president and **Bruce Farrell**, CEO of Berglund Management Group have been inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame; Interactive Achievement's **Jonathan Hagmaier** and New City's **David Poteet** were honored as entrepreneurs of the year.

Lynsey Allie has joined as visitor services coordinator at the History Museum of Western Virginia.

Jim Revercomb, **Gretchen Weinnig**,

and **Leonard Wheeler** have been appointed new board members at the Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Anna Semonco has been appointed executive director of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southwest Virginia.

Kimberly Clymer has been appointed executive director of Historical Society of Western Virginia.

James "Jake" Gilmer, III has been appointed director of the Western

Virginia Workforce Development Board.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS

Tanya Catron has been appointed internal auditor at Roanoke County.

Matthew Ledford, Roanoke County safety officer, has been recognized in the 2015 "40 under 40" Rising Stars of Safety award by the National Safety Council.

Compiled by Tom Field

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Source: Nielsen, Fa'14/Sp'15, Roanoke MSA, M-F 6am-7pm
Roanoke MSA = Roanoke City & County, Salem City + Botetourt, Craig, & Franklin Counties



Primland resort

Prim and proper

Primland resort in Meadows of Dan has been ranked in the Top 100 Resorts in the World by Travel and Leisure magazine.

Heat transfer

Petroleum Marketers Inc has sold two of its home heating fuel oil companies, APB Whiting Oil Co. and Whiting Jamison Oil Co., to Davenport Energy.

Truckin' along

Volvo Group truck manufacturing plant in Pulaski County is investing \$38 million in facility upgrades, adding about 30 jobs.

Hold our spot

Harmonia Holdings Group, a data analytics and visualization software company at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, has been ranked in Inc magazine's 2015 list

of 5,000 fastest growing private companies in America for the seventh consecutive year.

Got more milk

Homestead Creamery is expanding its Franklin County operational facility to meet its increased production needs; including building additions, truck loading areas, and equipment.

Fly food

McAlister's Deli has opened at the Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport.

Small part

Starboard Value LP has purchased a 3.7 percent minority interest in **Advance Auto Parts**.

Turkey tracks

Virginia Tech wants anyone in the community who walks or rides bikes on its campus to download

the **MOVES** smartphone app (www.vt-ptmp.com/app.asp), which uses anonymous GPS tracking to assist in the university's new parking and transportation master planning.

Roanoke Gas partners with MVP

RGC Midstream, a subsidiary of RGC Resources, has acquired a 1 percent interest in Mountain Valley Pipeline LLC and will become a distributor on the new pipeline if the project develops.

Versus Asheville... again?

Oregon-based **Deschutes Brewery** is in the sights of regional economic developers and the business community as the beer maker listed Roanoke and Asheville, NC as possible locations for a new brewery and pub on the East Coast; the company's expansion expected to employ about 100 people. Virginia's explosion of well over 100

craft beer breweries and the responsive market in just a few years is hoped to attract outside decision-makers.

Game moved

The Commonwealth Games of Virginia amateur sports organization program designed like the Olympics, is moving from Roanoke to a new host city, Lynchburg, starting in 2016; Liberty University is the presenting sponsor.

Farmhouse back

The Farmhouse, a popular long standing restaurant in Christiansburg has been purchased by the owners of Billy's in Roanoke, who plan to reopen the business as early as the end of this year.

\$2.5 million in goodwill

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys has been awarded a one-year Health Professionals Opportunity Grant from

the US Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Family Assistance in the amount of \$2,567,650; the funds will be used to support training, education, and assistance for employment in the health care industry for low-income individuals.

Work zone champs

Branch Highways, Inc. received the national Contractor Safety Award by the American Road and Transportation Builders Association at its national convention.

24 hour deadline

AAF Roanoke 2015 CreateAthon was held Oct. 17-18; a 24-hour workshop of advertising professionals and volunteers who produce marketing materials and services for selected non-profit applicants; this year's organizations included Roanoke Rescue

Mission, Bradley Free Clinic, Blue Ridge Literacy, Total Action for Progress, Old Southwest Inc, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Virginia, Feeding America Southwest Virginia, Prevention Council of Roanoke County, Roanoke Emergency Medical Services, and Downtown Christiansburg.

Nuovo pranzo

Fortunato, an Italian restaurant set in a metropolitan styled venue off Kirk Avenue and First Street in downtown Roanoke, has opened.

Transportation claim

The **Blue Ridge Economic Coalition** has been officially announced as an economic and political voice in Roanoke, Lynchburg and the surrounding region; a primary mission is to

Have an announcement about your business?

Send announcements to **news@vbFRONT.com**
A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

ensure state transportation funding and allocation.

Slap shot scores

The **City of Roanoke** has announced the acquisition of a professional hockey team from the Southern Professional Hockey League; expected to begin play in October 2016 with home rink at the Berglund Center; the last team exited in 2004.

Senior community clinic

Warm Hearth Village senior living community in Blacksburg has partnered with **Carilion Clinic** to develop an onsite medical

clinic for residents, employees, families, and the greater community.

Under new management

The new technology accelerator / business incubator that will be housed in the former Gill Memorial Hospital building on Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke will now be managed by a Virginia Western Community College foundation; the Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Network (RBIN) will remain in a consulting capacity.

Compiled by Tom Field

**Additional FRONT Notes posted online at moreFRONT.blogspot.com.
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Charlotte Mason

Running a credit check >

Executive Summary:

If you run credit checks on job applicants, be sure you're acting correctly.

By Christopher Borba

As Universal Studios in Orlando recently found out, obtaining credit checks for employment purposes is like navigating a legal minefield. TopClassActions.com reported that in the beginning of September 2015, Eufemio Mendez filed a lawsuit against Universal studios alleging they illegally obtained and used a credit report in violation of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), and then made a decision not to

hire Mendez. The lawsuit goes on to say that Universal Studios did not provide a disclosure to candidates, as required by the FCRA, which states they may obtain a consumer report for employment purposes.

So, where did Universal Studios go wrong? When do you need to use a credit report for hiring? That is what we wanted to know so we turned to Charlotte Mason of the Roanoke based HR consulting firm, Advantage Resource Group.


Charlotte founded Advantage Resource Group in 2005, and has been helping Roanoke businesses with their HR needs ever since. A proven leader in the industry, she was the perfect person to discuss the issue with over a cup of coffee.

The first thing Charlotte said is the best advice for every business. She said "Make sure your business complies with the Fair Credit Reporting Act" (FCRA). The act governs consumer reports, and consumer reports are background reports by third parties used for employment purposes—and credit reports are part of that. Maybe Universal Studios should have consulted with Advantage Resource Group for their hiring practices.

Did Universal Studios even need to do a credit check? According to Charlotte, that really depends on the position. What she typically sees is companies using them when hiring for banking or financial positions such as a CFO, but recommends credit checks for anyone exercising financial discretion. The company should be able to show the business necessity and job relevancy of the credit check request. Since Mendez's position is not noted we can't say for certain a credit check even needed to be done. In other words, Universal Studios shouldn't be doing credit checks just to "check the box". The company needs to have a good reason to run a credit check. After all, do you really need to know the credit history of a customer service representative?

Charlotte also noted that companies must be consistent with credit checks. That means doing a credit check for one accountant and not the other can get a company in trouble with the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC). What we do know is Universal Studios must have been consistent, because they found themselves in a class action lawsuit. And keeping with Charlotte's HR consulting nature, she recommends that every company has a policy that oversees the use of credit checks for employment purposes, and how to decide on when not to hire based on a credit check. You can't turn away one employee for a 300 credit score and then hire another with the same score for the same position. The EEOC frowns upon those kinds of actions.

Most likely a company as large as Universal Studios has a policy overseeing their hiring process, and it probably covers credit checks –but what probably happened is someone didn't follow the policy. I'm just speculating here, but following the guidelines of the FCRA might be confusing at times; however, it is not rocket science. 

Key Takeaways

It is always good to consult with an attorney prior to obtaining credit checks for employment purposes, but Charlotte had some great advice. When using credit checks for employment purposes keep in mind:

- Comply with the FCRA and EEOC.
- Be consistent.
- Use for positions which exercise financial discretion.
- Have a policy.

If Universal Studios can make such a huge mistake anyone can. So be sure to contact an HR consulting firm or attorney if you have any questions.

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““”

I joined the ranks of iPhone-toting 20-somethings, leaving my Kindle to gather dust in the corner, not yet six months out of the box — Page 29

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An evolution

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