

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



### Gary Latham

Our first 3-day I-O conference was an unarguable success in terms of attendance (4,096—our second highest number), quality of our preconference workshops and program content, attendance at our closing plenary Saturday afternoon (approximately 1,000 people), and the phenomenal number of California wines that were tasted at the closing of our conference. Kudos to Conference Chair **Doug Pugh** and his committee, Program Chair **Steven Rogelberg** and his committee, and Executive Director Dave Nershi and his staff.

Now it is time for us to set and commit to attaining three 2008–2009 goals. Our overarching goal is visibility. We are going to build on the work initiated by **Doug Reynolds** and his committee. Our new chair of the Visibility Committee is **Chris Rotolo**.

Specifically, it is time that we I-O psychologists be seen, it is time that we I-O psychologists be heard. Hence our following goals:

(1) Because I believe numbers count in the ability to capture and hold the attention of the public, we will be examining ways that SIOP, EAWOP, and Division 1 of IAAP can work collaboratively to influence public policy.

(2) SIOP and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) will examine ways to promulgate evidence-based management.

(3) SIOP and the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management will showcase SIOP's Leading Edge Consortia to the public with the intent that other business school/psychology departments will subsequently do likewise.

In this column, I will address the first goal.

### Enhancing the Visibility of Organizational Psychology

For far too long, from the outset of the 20th century when Münsterberg, the father of I-O psychology, was at Harvard University, organizational psychologists have complained justifiably that we have been ignored by the public. At the dawn of the present century, when the public has questions, they typically turn to the economist, medical doctor, lawyer, or the person who forecasts the weather. It is not that we organizational psychologists are ignored, it is much worse than that as we are not even on the “radar screen.” In general, the public does not know that we even exist. Why does this matter?

Organizational psychology has accumulated a vast amount of knowledge for the benefit of society. Regardless of whether a country is already developed or has an emerging economy, we have the knowledge and skill to improve an employee's and an organization's productivity, as well as the quality of work life and job satisfaction of an organization's employees. What scientific community knows more about leadership, selection, performance management, training, motivation,

decision making, or organizational climate than we? Certainly not the economist, medical doctor, lawyer, or weather forecaster. How do we enter the consciousness of the public? What steps must we take to ensure that in 2108 organizational psychologists are not echoing the same complaints of their ancestors in 1908 or 2008?

First, we need to build on the momentum of SIOP's previous past presidents and their respective executive committees. Specifically, we need to accelerate the internalization and implementation of SIOP's strategic plan formulated in 2006 under the leadership of **Jeff McHenry**.

Central to SIOP's vision and strategy developed in 2006 is that:

- Our profession is recognized and valued by the public for the research, knowledge, and services we offer.
- We are a leader in global efforts to promote the science and practice of psychology at work.
- We are sought, as individuals and as a Society, to provide guidance on issues of policy and practice related to the effective utilization of human resources and resolution of organizational problems.

Among SIOP's core values is:

- *Service*: We are dedicated to improving the effectiveness of organizations and the well-being of individuals in work settings.

In 2008–2009 we need to explore ways to “partner” with other organizational psychology societies whose values are similar if not identical to those of SIOP in order to implement SIOP's strategy. Size does in fact matter. The media and legislators in particular pay far more attention to groups with a large membership. When SHRM, where I serve on the board, speaks, the U.S. Congress listens. To further ensure that SHRM, with its 230,000 plus members, holds the attention of the public, SHRM will be one of the sponsors of the U.S. presidential debate coverage this fall. What are we, SIOP, currently doing to capture and hold the attention of the public?

Partnering in some fashion with the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP) and Division 1 of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) is an initial step, a relatively easy step to increase our potential for having a societal influence. It is a step that will benefit their members as well as SIOP's in implementing the pillars of SIOP's strategic plan. It is a step that they are preparing to take with us in ways that we three associations will determine jointly this coming year.

We three associations should take this step together because we now have a globally interdependent economy. What we organizational psychologists know (mediators) that works in one country may not work (moderators) in other countries. Exploring, explaining, and then implementing our findings are the basis for the thrill and excitement inherent in our scientist–practitioner model. Organizational psychology in North America alone, Europe alone, or Asia alone is arguably too narrow to solve complex global issues. The synergies that will occur among EAWOP, IAAP, and SIOP will benefit the scientist, the practitioner, and the scientist–practitioner. Our specific challenging goal is to discover

and then take the steps that will lead organizational decision makers and the media in Asia, Europe, and North America to continually ask: “What do organizational psychologists have to say about this?” When this goal is attained, organizational psychology will take its rightful place at “the table of influence.”

In forming a partnership with these two associations, we will not be starting from zero. EAWOP and SIOP already have a memorandum of understanding initiated in 2006 by Past President Leaetta Hough and signed by Past President **Lois Tetrick** where we have pledged cooperation with one another. IAAP, under the leadership of Past President **Michael Frese**, and **Virginia Schein**, past president of Division 1 of IAAP (Work Psychology) is putting Frese’s dream into action: “What if psychology mattered?” They have organizational psychologists working on an on-going basis with the United Nations. We, SIOP, need to work with them. The more closely EAWOP, IAAP Division 1, and SIOP work together, the more likely we will become highly appreciated by the public for offering evidence-based solutions for improving society. Working on solving global issues where we have the expertise requires a large number of us who have the desire to “make a difference.” By partnering in a “to be determined” fashion, we will have a critical mass to “make a difference.” World leaders need information based on scientific evidence to make informed decisions. We can and will provide them that evidence.

Third, EAWOP, Division 1 of IAAP, and SIOP need “products” that can be given to the public. Currently, we market products internally to ourselves (e.g., the Frontier Series). We need a series of products marketed through various media that constitute the evidence based management practices that organizational decision makers are currently lacking. The products might include white papers, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and Web site material written/prepared in memorable, meaningful ways. Currently, the public can turn to WebMD. Why can’t they also turn to WebI-O?

To form this partnership, I have asked Franco Fraccaroli, president of EAWOP, **José M. Peiró**, president of Division 1 of IAAP, and their colleagues to join us in developing and designing an appropriate strategy/structure for a worldwide community of organizational psychologists. In addition, **Milt Hakel** is leading an ad hoc committee consisting of the following individuals to make this partnership happen: **Bob Dipboye**, Michael Frese, **Beryl Hesketh**, **Ken Pearlman**, José Peiró, **Bob Pritchard**, **Ed Salas**, **Handan Kepir Sinangil**, and Virginia Schein.

Among the questions they are currently addressing is (a) membership dues. The American and Canadian Psychological Associations have a dues arrangement. Why can’t we three do something similarly regarding association memberships, workshops, and conferences? (b) Should the past president of each association serve on each of the three association boards ex-officio? (c) How do we strengthen our relationships with organizational psychology associations in specific countries (e.g., Australia, Britain, Germany, and South Africa)?

As Robert Kennedy was fond of saying “Some people see things as they are and ask, why? I see things that never were and ask, why not?”