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Under New System, Bridges Build You

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Under New System, Bridges Build You

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Let's take a page from the lessons that public-speaking classes convey, viz. "tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you've told them." Thus:

- In response to calls from SIOP's past leadership, the [Bridge Builders group](#)—one designed to spread awareness and understanding of I-O psychology to many different audiences—was developed and counts among its members many of us from SIOP. President **Steve Kozlowski's** vision for the organization in the coming years dovetails well with the objectives of Bridge Builders.
- Bridge Builders have been doing some really cool things recently; these were showcased in a session at SIOP this year.
- Want to get involved in this exciting initiative? You should. We'll show you how to get started.

Bridge Builders: What Is It?

Look, real talk: Spreading the word of I-O psychology has been a priority of our Society over at least the past few years. **Tammy Allen** galvanized **Scott Tonidandel** (then SIOP president and Education & Training Committee chair, respectively) to assemble a subcommittee to explicitly support the efforts of SIOP's membership

to—and get comfortable with this phrase in its many instantiations—build bridges. This phrase has been interpreted widely by those who joined the initiative, and I hasten to add that wide interpretation is and was supported. I'll convey some of the efforts that those individuals have put forth in just a moment. For now, back to the objectives of Bridge Builders.

What we are attempting to accomplish is to use the many voices of SIOP's membership to help proclaim our science for a smarter workplace. The subject matter? Our existence, our utility, our dashing good looks. The targets? In short, anyone and everyone—from school children to military organizations to governments to university colleagues and, if those polarities are adequately broad, everyone in between. We have noticed that we have more to offer than we are being asked by the world to offer and we are endeavoring to set things right on this front by increasing awareness, attractiveness, and utilization of our field.

President Kozlowski has articulated a vision focusing on broadening our view, forwarding digestible science, and engaging in bottom-up initiatives. Bridge Builders is positioned and is maneuvering superbly to hit on all of these foci at once. We build awareness on the part of and collaborations with non-I-O bodies. We turn

what we do into something comprehensible to congress and to school children. We, the members of bridge builders, do this individually and authentically with our own voices and in our own words—with the support of the success and wisdom of those who have gone before us. Don't take my word for it, though, take a look at what they, bridge builders, have done!

Bridge Builders: What Have They Done?

Well this is necessarily going to be a very small subset of the actual efforts that bridge builders have put forth of late but as a dual service of recapitulating a SIOP session that you may not have been able to attend we'll focus on those efforts described therein—viz. in the noon-on-Saturday IGNITE + Panel session about sharing I-O with the community. The session, at the delightfully frenetic pace with which IGNITE sessions are associated, captured the diverse efforts of:

- **Dan Putka** (HumRRO) described his cunning approach to explaining I-O psychology to 4th-grade students. Superheroes featured prominently. Dr. Putka was motivated to perform well and innovatively by the entreaty of his child (a 4th grader in the audience) to resist giving a presentation that would embarrass the child.
- **David Costanza** (GWU) carried the ball forward into the 7th-grade classroom (the theme here, by the way, is planting the seed of I-O psychology as a field and as a career option in the notoriously pliable minds of minors), congress, and the United States Army. One of Dr. Costanza's takeaway points

was that the approach for presenting to each of these (quite different) audiences is similar, though the resultant presentations are not.

- **Lauren McEntire** (Frito-Lay) continued the school-children-and-some-other-audience trend by describing her efforts to sell I-O to high-school students (much more proximate to their “hey let's see what we want to be when we grow up” stages in life) and at postsecondary institutions that are not host to an I-O presence (thus substantially expanding the raw material—err, applicants—to I-O graduate programs). As far as I could tell her three guidelines for such presentations were all “give them chips.” Frito-Lay people got some corporate culture.
- **Rob McKenna** (Seattle Pacific)—and hold on to your hat here—broke the pattern by showing us how the program at SPU has become the unlikely nexus of social activism, film-screening, and outreach efforts since its advent in 2010. Dr. McKenna admits that [these efforts](#) stand at right angles to many of the other initiatives about which we heard and is (in my opinion deservedly) unperturbed about this—these are all, in one way or another, means of accomplishing this same agenda of bringing prominence to I-O psychology.

Ah, we can't capture the energy and the quality of the presentations given—nor the excellence of the initiatives themselves. We also fail to capture the richness of the conversation that ensued as facilitated by **Suzanne Bell** (DePaul) and one of us, **Joseph Allen** (University of Nebraska

at Omaha), leaders of the Bridge Builders group. The panelists answered questions and engaged in conversation about matters practical to the bridge-building efforts of audience members; tips and tricks and opinions and caveats were shared.

All in attendance—including both of us—learned a good deal from these presentations and from the ensuing conversations; we were also invigorated and inspired by the tales of success and optimism that were shared in this session. With the guidance of E&T chair **Whitney Botsford Morgan** (University of Houston-Downtown) and the two authors—Joe Allen as outgoing chair and Steven Toaddy as incoming chair—we know where the Bridge Builders team shall be spending our efforts in the coming year. In short, Bridge Builders will be ensuring that more success stories such as these are ready to be told at SIOP 2016 in Anaheim.

Bridge Builders: What Lies Ahead?

We're grateful for all of the work that those before us have done—in building bridges and in building Bridge Builders. More lies ahead, though. Here are some of the things on the horizon:

- Build an accessible resource base—presentations, tips, etc.—for use by all SIOP members in building bridges.
- Start breaking down barriers to starting conversations by helping connect bridge builders directly to potential recipients of presentations. If Dr. McKenna taught us anything, it's that

outreach is habit forming; we'll work towards giving members a nudge towards an organization/group ripe for introduction to I-O psychology.

- Turn more of SIOP into bridge builders (through our initiative). Ideally, everyone in SIOP would be a member of the group (at which point we suppose the separate group would be obviated, but that's a ways away). We all have stories to tell; we can all successfully bring I-O more into the awareness of those around us. And we're going to.

Telling You What I Told You

Let's close by hitting the key points briefly:

- Bridge Builders is a group dedicated to building bridges between SIOP and every other imaginable non-SIOP entity. The desirableness of such an activity has been glaringly clear for the last several years and remains on the forefront of SIOP's leadership's agendas.
- The success stories conveyed at SIOP's 2015 Annual Conference were varied and inspiring.
- We've raised steam well over the last while; we're going to get underway in earnest now. Resources will be aggregated and made plainly available. Additional individuals will be recruited into our ranks. We will begin to actively recommend connections between Bridge Builders and target audiences. We will be heard.

Stay, as it were, tuned.