

# A Learning Experience

As my first year as President of the Hawaii Chapter comes to an end, I must admit that each day has been a new learning experience. As I was thinking about what I should write about for this article, I decided to focus on what I have learned as a new President and some rules that I established for myself to help run the Chapter.

One of the first things I learned was to plan ahead. So for 2010, we booked and scheduled our guest speakers and venues for all of our IEHA general meetings before the end of 2009. By planning so far ahead, we were able to mail out colorful postcards to all of our members to remind them of the upcoming events for the entire 2010 year. When picking the speakers, we asked our membership what kind of topics they would be interested in (i.e., human resources law, infection control, etc.), and we picked appropriate guest speakers to educate our members on these requested topics. We also started our new year with an appropriate fundraiser—a 2010 IEHA Hawaii Chapter calendar, which is full of photos of our 2009 events.

In my first year, I realized that I was very naïve in my thinking, so I implemented some of my own rules/guidelines to better prepare me for future issues/situations. For those of you who are newly appointed Presidents, I hope some of my guidelines will help you, as you may run into similar situations where some of these rules may ap-

ply for you as well.

• **Rule #1: Don't get down if you can't please everyone:** Remember, you can't always please everyone; you just have to do your best. Listen to your board and the general membership, and most will follow and support you.

• **Rule #2: Do what is best for the overall good:** When faced with a tough decision between two factions that both have good points, you must always follow what is best for the overall good of the Chapter.

Both sides can be right, but if you have to choose, base your final de-

cision on what is best for all. Again, everyone will not agree with what you decide, but you must make the decision and stand by it.

• **Rule #3: Remember politics are a part of any professional association:** Even though I thought I could keep the politics out of the organization, I have learned that politics is something that you cannot control, or keep out. You just have to accept that it is always going to be there and you need to be ready to handle it when it becomes an issue.

• **Rule #4: It's nothing personal:** When faced with decision-making, it will sometimes involve close associates. I have been very fortunate that I have been able to keep the personal side separate from what happens in the Chapter. Most of my friends and close business associates have understood this and not let it affect our

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## GREEN SCENE

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tempt to restore their cuts, justify the need for new technology, etc., which could further increase the disproportionate amount of cuts to cleaning.

Thus, executive housekeepers must advocate and even fight for appropriate staffing levels and other resources necessary to clean effectively—Green or traditional. Again, it simply is not enough to convert to Green products in every category if cleaning personnel are not being trained properly or don't have the time to get the job done right. And, the fact is that buildings don't clean themselves, but if executive housekeepers are not fighting to retain the necessary financial, human, and other resources, our buildings will become increasingly unhealthy.

Today, Green Cleaning is incredibly important and cost competitive in most product categories. Frankly, it simply does not make sense to continue to use products such as cleaners containing 2-butoxyethanol (butyl cleaners) or detergents using nonylphenol ethoxylate surfactants (NPE) that unnecessarily place our workers at risk or adversely impact the environment.

Again, the challenge for executive housekeepers is to implement Green Cleaning in as many ways as possible, including the selection and use of chemicals, paper, equipment, tools, processes, times, and more—and to do so without sacrificing ultimate performance and quality, and most importantly, people's health. And in a time when budgets are being cut, this may in fact require an intense focus on our true goals, because if we don't fight for it, no one else will. ♦

*A 28-plus year veteran of the cleaning industry, Stephen P. Ashkin is a tireless advocate for environmentally preferable cleaning. For more information, visit [www.ashkingroup.com](http://www.ashkingroup.com).*

## EXECUTIVE CORNER

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personal friendships or business relationships.

• **Rule #5: Believe in yourself:** Remember that your membership voted you in to be their President because they believe in you. So believe in yourself, always try to do what is best for the Chapter, and the people that believed in you will continue to support and respect you.

• **Rule #6: Listen to your board and the membership:** Remember that you have a strong board to support you, so listen to them, as they also represent the membership. Also, at general meetings, always ask the membership for ideas, as they are whom you are truly working for.

• **Rule #7: Play it straight:** I have found that there are only two ways you can go; play it straight because the only other alternative is crooked. I have found that if you play it on the straight and narrow, then you never have to look back.

• **Rule #8: Be happy:** Be happy, and have an open conscience. It will make your toughest decisions a whole lot easier to make.

• **Rule #9: Don't be too hard on yourself:** Remember, you are only human, and not perfect. Your membership knows this and understands. They will stand by you and support you!

• **Rule #10: Remember why you are here:** Remember why you ran for office. I ran because I believe in the International Executive Housekeepers Association and what it stands for. I care about the membership and the people, and most importantly, I ran because I thought I could "MAKE A DIFFERENCE" in continuing the success of the Hawaii Chapter. [JYamamoto@aquaresorts.com](mailto:JYamamoto@aquaresorts.com) ♦

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