

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE

By Vanessa K. Solesbee, MA

This issue of *The Parking Professional*—the one that celebrates excellence in our industry and highlights some of the talented men and women who exemplify the term “parking professional”—is the issue I look most forward to reading each year. I am deeply inspired by the stories of self-sacrifice, hard work, and joy that my colleagues and peers from across the country share as our industry celebrates the one thing that matters the most: our people.

I think the hallmark of a transformational leader and/or institution is one personally invested in their people—a leader who takes the time out of his or her busy day to write a nomination, thank an employee for a job well done, or simply take interest in a colleague or employee. An avid reader of *Fast Company*, I was particularly impressed by an article I read last year about the new generation of leaders and the speed with which companies and industries are going to have to adapt to attract and retain the best and brightest.

GenFlux

These next-generation leaders—what *Fast Company* calls “GenFlux”—are characterized by a mindset that embraces instability; it’s a mindset that not only tolerates but enjoys constantly recalibrating careers, business models, and assumptions. According to the article, not everyone will join GenFlux, but to be successful, organizations and individuals will have to carve out a new path. We are pioneers of a new age characterized by collaboration, innovation, and creativity in a world where personal, professional, and civic lives blur; where silos are broken down and true cross-disciplinary partnership is expected. It’s an age defined by technology, mobility, access to information, and entrepreneurship.

When I talk to friends, peers, and colleagues in other industries, it becomes more and more evident that parking, transportation, and access management professionals are uniquely poised to succeed in an increasingly Gen Flux world:

- We are not only accustomed to change, but probably wouldn’t know what to do without it. We

are asked every day to adjust our existing assumptions and paradigms to make sure we meet our customers’ needs, keep our programs in the black, and keep the general public safe.

- We embrace all generations of leaders and innovators. We are too busy solving problems to care if you are “only 30.” If you can do the job well and have suggestions on better ways to do it, you’re hired.
- We are diverse and inclusive. In skills sets, backgrounds, culture, and gender, parking professionals are truly representative of a global population.
- Sayings such as, “That is the way it has always been done,” don’t fly with us.
- We have a strong professional organization in IPI that offers impactful programming and educational opportunities. Executive Director Shawn Conrad, CAE, and his talented team have done a remarkable job of elevating our profession and engaging our membership.

All that said, out of all of the important characteristics that describe and elevate our industry, the foundation upon which everything is built—our atom, if you will—is our people. Our people are the ones I look forward to seeing every year at the IPI Conference & Expo, our people who are up in the middle of the night to salt and sand sidewalks to ensure our patrons’ safety, and who are developing innovative mobile technologies.

We are pioneers and trailblazers in a brave new world of constant change and flux, and in my opinion, an industry that celebrates and values its people is one that will continue to be a leader among leaders for generations to come. **P**



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