

Bringing My Convention LENS into Focus

by Lynn Webster

Late September 2009 found me excitedly planning a journey that offered two “firsts”: My first trip to the United States and my first involvement with IEHA. Little did I realize that this September planning would become a major feature in my annual schedule, or that trips to the U.S. and my involvement with IEHA could play such an important part in both business and personal life. Three trips to the U.S. and three IEHA and ISSA/INTERCLEAN® Conventions later, there is no getting away from it: I’m hooked!

It’s apt to describe the weeks following the IEHA and ISSA Convention as the reflecting and action time. This gives a perfect excuse for drawing together reflections and actions and making sense of these, not just personally, but for many IEHA colleagues and friends as well.

When I started to consider my most recent experiences in Las Vegas, it became clear that a series of themes were emerging. I had treated myself to an iPad2 prior to flying out Vegas and used it to take notes during and after the various activities that I was involved in. Clearly, I took on plenty of new ideas and suggestions — exclamation and question marks with small asides to myself for later showed that there were many things I wanted to return to once I returned back home. The fact that I learned something new in every activity goes without saying, but the fact that I felt energized and enthused from what I learned and by those I met was quickly obvious, too. And finally, there were all my resulting plans for passing on my learning to my clients and colleagues back in the UK, supporting them in developing their own businesses and skills in the industry. Imagine my delight when I realized that I had a perfect acronym for my IEHA convention experience: LENS,

which stands for Learning, Energizing, Networking and Supporting.

Learning is the keystone to what we all do. Whether through formal involvement in training programs or picking up ideas during a seminar presentation and with all the opportunities in between, we can only help our clients if we recognize what we need to learn and take steps to somehow acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. The next trick, of course, is to take what we have learned and apply it in some

very excited about introducing this approach to clients. I can’t wait to see glow testing in action on those infamous door handles!

Green cleaning and sustainability remain at the heart of our industry’s future. Some in the UK have missed some of the grassroots principles of green cleaning and are way behind in their thinking. The U.S. is certainly “out in front” on this subject.

Always a favorite speaker, Steve Ashkin combined practical advice with his usual enthusiasm to help consider the review of my own practices, integrating his suggestions into training programs and into the independent quality audit work for clients, which includes health care, education and food retailing clients. I realize that by building a green approach into all the work that I do, in the training of cleaning operatives, supervisors and managers, my consultancy and audit services, I can “do my part” to ensure that de-

livery of green practices becomes the norm. I believe that this, in turn, will help to overcome some of the common anti-green objections that we are all familiar with because the proof of the effectiveness of a green approach will always be in the results.

Across the ISSA trade show halls, there were continued debates on the issues of green cleaning. It is something that not everyone truly understands or what the true impact has on our environment. Compare this with the World Federation panel who presented, somewhat controversially, the use of bleach and chlorine-based cleaning products in worldwide health care and the fight against infection. No final conclusions were reached, but this one is unlikely to stay quiet for very long.

I can genuinely say that I always
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“Team UK.” Lynn Webster (far left) with fellow IEHA International members from the United Kingdom. From left: Sara Cockram, Sheila Perera, Angela Jaquiss and Liz Smith-Mills (back).

useful and beneficial way for our own and our clients’ businesses!

Three conventions under my belt, and I can genuinely declare the learning I have taken away from each to be of great value to me and hopefully my clients. So what learning can I pinpoint from my 2011 Convention experience? Time and space mean I can only touch on some of the key learning points, but I would like to emphasize the fact that there was an opportunity for learning something at every session, and throughout every encounter.

Highlights to incorporate into my existing quality inspection routines, where we already use “black light technology” included excellent advice on the use of “glow testing.” The powder and gel are a great innovation and with the idea to share the benefits and the results gained for greater analysis of performance and for training. I am

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feel energized after attending IEHA Conventions. Charged with new ideas, reminded of the tried, tested and often invaluable messages that underpin our work, I fight off the jet lag and launch into my work with renewed energy and vigor.

Don Aslett's "Then & Now Museum" served as a marvelous reminder of our industry's heritage and distances traveled in expertise and technological know-how, but reminded us also of the sturdy roots of some of our best practices. Whether it was American or UK design did not matter, the collection was a world beater.

Experiencing Aslett's presentations stressed the value of always "seeking to do better," focusing on quality and fulfilling our commitment to clients through action, not lip service. "Keep your hand in the toilet" is a phrase that will stay with me for quite some time! But the simple reminder to all of us is that we can't do our jobs from behind a desk when competition is at its fiercest and client demand for best value and uncompromising quality is set to rise.

As winter approaches and I face many mornings of digging my car out of the snow and scraping thick ice off the windscreen, I have to remember that, at heart, I love what I do! I love working with clients and colleagues, and Beth Risinger's reminder to lighten stress levels through laughter and using humor to keep a work life balance was an energizer in itself. Her unique style is always memorable. Happy to report that Beth's messages have been carried into all the work I have done since my return, and much laughter has been heard, and indeed positively commented upon, as training participants struggle with their soft red clown noses and party hats! And remember: Life is too short to be under loved and under hugged — so let's love and hug together.

New possibilities, new ideas, renewed energy and heightened enthusiasm are currently being brought to bear on the development of my

Las Vegas 2011 *by Sheila Perera*

*Cloths, disinfectants, mops and brooms
Your aim always was for all to be clean
Today it's microfiber, color coding and Ionation
Where every process has to be quite green*

*What a 'WOW' of a Convention it has been
We're motivated and challenged to go back and share
Thank you for the privilege of being part of IEHA
Be bold, be visible, be passionate, and show our teams
We really care!*

new business website and work that I am undertaking with my personal business coach. I enter the next phase of my business knowing that all good things are possible; due in no small part to IEHA.

It is impossible to underestimate the value of networking to any businessperson, whether this is through face-to-face meetings and encounters or via technology, which has become an increasing feature of our working lives. I arrived in Las Vegas as a Twitter baby (follow me @sparklynn). Imagine my delight to put faces and voices to the "@" sign of fellow tweeters that I had only recently met in the ether.

What may be surprising to hear is how wonderful it is to network with colleagues with whom we don't always have time to properly catch up. For example, Liz Smith-Mills and I are close friends and colleagues in Yorkshire, UK. Although we see each other regularly, we tend to forget to keep each other informed of what's happening in our day-to-day work. Watching the wonderful video presentation from the Las Vegas Chapter's highly successful Housekeeping Olympics was delightful! Well done to everyone who participated! It was fascinating to hear about the other similar chapter activities and then follow up on the "Hotel Olympics" Liz is actively involved with in the UK. The London 2012 Olympics are looming large on our horizon and this gives inspiration for a similar idea for creating competitive opportunities for people in the cleaning industry. I certainly intend to find out more from Liz and others who are involved in the World Skills events. This also links nicely with the stories told by friend and fel-

low IEHA International Member, Sheila Perera with her passion for her teams and putting the "F word" into work: FUN! Olympic gold medals for cleaners and housekeepers — now there is a thought! Will the UK ever topple the U.S. off that leader board?

Certain practical approaches will undoubtedly prove essential for the industry of the future. From the U.S. to the UK and worldwide, it is becoming more a requirement to have verification for the outcomes of quality cleaning routines. The newly launched IEHA ICM™ module is very exciting. It is truly my belief that this will be a lynch pin for success in cleaning management. As a method of measuring processes and practices that serve to improve performance, it will be of real benefit to my clients, and for this reason I hope to become accredited — a true golden egg of my visit this year, with the help of IEHA, of course!

"Good is never good enough" ... "We are cleaning geeks" ... "Changing the way the world views cleaning" ... These words from our speaker sessions throughout Convention have stayed with me, alongside the words of many others that I noted down and absorbed over the week. When I bring the LENS fully into focus on my IEHA and ISSA/INTERLCEAN Convention experience, I realize that I am definitely better able to support clients and colleagues, enabling both me personally and my business to thrive and develop — which is as exactly as it should be. Here's to Chicago in October 2012! ♦

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