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Power of Perspectives training begins

What do African shamans, *Star Trek*, and the Canadian Hockey League have in common? They were all part of the discussion for the Power of Perspectives training.

This past week, the BLA and AST leadership participated in the training, led by **Anthony Estell**. For some it was a new experience and for others it was a refresher of the training received in 2009 and 2010, but everyone gained insight into how their experiences and acquired knowledge shape their perspectives.

We asked some participants to share their reactions:

- "This was my first time taking this training. I found it very helpful in giving me a way to view the perspectives of others objectively. The skills will be useful in my interactions with staff and leadership when we work to make decisions." **Sean Bodell, CS.**
- "Anthony is an excellent presenter. He makes the concepts fun and easy to grasp through colorful illustrations and activities. I can't wait to see others have this opportunity." **Letitia Levi, CS.**

Anthony said, "The goal of the Power of Perspectives training is to foster an open-minded environment in ORS, one rich with inclusive dialogue where we stop to ask 'What if...?' When we do that, we're more likely to find creative and innovative solutions."

Training continues throughout the summer with four sessions (two half days each) scheduled for ORS analysts: June 28 and 30, July 12 and 14, July 26 and 28, and August 2 and 4. Contact [Chanda Donnan](#) to register. The sessions are limited in size, so don't delay. More opportunities to experience the Power of Perspectives and put it into practice are on the way.

"A change of perspective is often the most powerful way to make a change."
-Brian Greene, theoretical physicist and author of *The Elegant Universe*.

Staff bring customer perspective to business plans

The Strategic Plan refresh focus groups met to develop new objectives and action items for our seven strategic goals. The four groups came up with 32 items for our business to focus on.

for summer reading.

Calendar

June

Summer begins! 21

July

Independence Day 4

Brown-bag lunch with the EPC 6

Brown-bag lunch with the EPC 13

On the Horizon

- Brown-bag lunch with the EPC
- July 20
- State Employees Board Meeting
- July 21
- Brown-bag lunch with the EPC
- July 27
- Public School Board Meeting
- July 28
- State Police Board Meeting
- July 28
- ORS Annual Picnic
- August 3
- ORS Golf Outing
- August 23

Quick Links

- [ORS Member Website](#)
- [ORS Employer Website](#)

Commonly Used Acronyms

AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly (EPC, BPOs, and BPLs)
BPD	Benefit Plan Design
BPL	Business Process Leader

The 32 items have been divided up into three categories:

- 13 items will go on the new Strategic Plan.
- 9 items will go on the new Business Plan.
- 10 items will be added to existing strategic or business plans.

The EPC reviewed and approved the focus group recommendations. "Our staff really knows what's right for our customers and helps drive our business in a direction that best serves 500,000 plus members," said **Phil Stoddard**. "I am pleased with the focus group results."

After receiving EPC approval, BPOs will work out the details, finalize the necessary documents, and share with staff when available. Stay tuned to the *LookOut* for more detail.

ING field reps are now Certified Retirement Counselors

Congratulations to ING's **Colleen Beaumont**, **Eddie Carrington**, **Heidi Schiller**, and **Kathy Van Fossen** for becoming Certified Retirement Counselors (CRC) by the International Foundation for Retirement Education (INFRE). Everyone passed the exam on the first try.

ING began requiring that all field reps have this accredited certification last year. To prepare for the four-hour test, the group studied four different books about all types of retirement plans (including defined contribution and defined benefit plans), investing, counseling, and the INFRE Code of Ethics. To remain certified, each CRC must complete 15 hours of additional retirement education each year.

Lynne Bemrose, who received her CRC certification in 2002, said the certification helps the team better serve their customers because they have a larger understanding of all the ways people can and should prepare for retirement.

Joy Bartell in CE is also a certified INFRE CRC. In fact, she helped design the INFRE certification exam! [Click here to read more about the CRC certification.](#)



Congrats on your hard work, everyone.

New software, servers for ORS and AST

Last weekend, our AST partners successfully moved ORS applications to new servers and installed an upgraded version of Filenet.

A lot of behind-the-scenes planning and testing happened to make sure the change went smoothly. Each ORS process was involved in making sure the new system works just as well as it did before, and to smooth out any issues that cropped up after the changes.

Kudos to **Venkata Angajala**, the project lead, and everyone involved with testing. You are unsung heroes!

CE's new presentation and survey tool

CE has identified 20 new presentation topics to help our early and mid-career members understand their retirement plans and prepare for retirement as early as possible.

Presentations will be available through onsite meetings and



BPO	Business Process Owner
CE	Customer Education
CS	Customer Service
DB	Defined Benefit
DC	Defined Contribution
DTMB	Department of Technology, Management and Budget
EPC	Executive Process Council (<i>Phil, Laurie, Tim, and Anthony</i>)
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
FLB	Forms, Letters, and Barcode
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting (<i>public school employees</i>)
PRO	Preretirement Orientation (<i>state employees</i>)
PS	Process Support
SME	Subject Matter Expert
T&T	Tools and Technology
UAT	User Acceptance Testing

webinars, and eventually through online tutorials. The first two topics, *Leaving Public School Employment* and *Paying for Service Credit*, were covered in Detroit in May and online in June.

The *Leaving Public School Employment* presentation gives our customers who aren't eligible to collect a pension the information they need to transition from public school employment to another job. We emphasize the importance of keeping their beneficiary up-to-date, and answer their questions about whether or not to take a refund.

The *Paying for Service Credit* presentation provides information about the options available if customers want to buy service credit.

CE is keeping track of the presentations' effectiveness by using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. CE will analyze the survey data to determine how much our customers learn about each topic and whether or not we need to make changes to the presentations.

At this time, the presentations have been developed for public school employees only; [members can register using the website](#) just as they do for PRIMs. Future presentations will be created and posted for state employees soon.

Comings & Goings



AST welcomed **Rajesh Kanagala** on June 13. Rajesh previously worked for JPM Chase in Columbus, Ohio, as an application developer. He is from Chicago (his family currently resides there) and has lived in the U.S. for over three years. He enjoys hiking and water sports.

On June 3, ORS bid farewell to **Angela Soto** and **Susan Studer**. AST said goodbye to **Sirisha Ravuru** on June 10.

Staff on the move

Robert Glennon moved to CS on June 13 to temporarily fill the supervisor role previously occupied by **Kara Gross**.

Widget message picked up by western Michigan newspaper

We know that ORS's third widget is all about influencing attitudes. By communicating with Michigan residents about the value of public retirement plans, we hope to inform and influence the attitudes of everyone in our state.

On Sunday, June 5, the *Battle Creek Enquirer* published an editorial that pointed out the economic value of Michigan's public retirement plans. The article used statistics from [ORS's March 2011 issue of Connections!](#)

It's articles like this (and conversations, blogs, emails, letters, etc.) that widen our circle of influence. Keep up your hard work and continue spreading the word!

Have a widget idea? Send it to the [LookOut](#).

What does it mean to be process-based?

ORS Strategic Goals



- **Innovate and Improve Customer Service**
- **Best In Class Business Practices**
- **Instill Confidence in Staff Through Quality Communication**
- **Engage Top Talent to Realize Potential**
- **Continuously**

Renewed Business-Driven Technology

- **Build Business Capacity Through Education and Development**
- **Proactive Policy Development and Legislative Strategy**

Being a process-based organization means that we organize our work around outcomes (like products and services) rather than tasks. This helps us focus on providing our customers with the best possible service.



Although this seems quite familiar now, it wasn't always this way. Before 1997, it took days for customers to get answers to their questions. It could take up to six months for retirees to receive their first pension check!

How did we fix this? ORS made sweeping changes that resulted in drastic improvements in our service. Orion Development Group is a consulting firm that helped us in our journey to becoming process-based. [Click here to read our story in Orion's monthly newsletter.](#)

PURE MICHIGAN™
Your trip begins at michigan.org

Loss for Tigers, win for staff: ORS's Annual Detroit Tigers Outing



ORS staff had a blast at this year's annual Detroit Tigers outing at Comerica Park on Wednesday, June 15. Though the Tigers lost to the Cleveland Indians 6-4, it was a beautiful night at the ballpark, and both teams brought their best game for the crowd. Go Tigers!

[Click here to see a full photo gallery of the event's pictures.](#)

What makes Michigan great for you?

We all know Michigan is a great state. But what makes it great for *you*? What are the places that you love to visit - the ones you make a point of hitting every summer, the ones you take your out-of-state visitors to? Maybe it's a favorite restaurant, park, beach or family destination. It could be right off the highway, down a beaten path, or just around the corner. We want to know! We'll be running brief surveys and polls throughout the year collecting your recommendations.

First up? Restaurants. [Click here to take the survey and tell us where you love to chow down and why.](#) Results will be shared in the next *LookOut*.



Sounding Out is a way for ORS staff to share ideas, viewpoints, gripes, praises, and concerns. Email your opinion (300 words or less, if possible!) to ORS-LookOut@michigan.gov.

Elaine Scott tells us about her experiences at ORS as a temporary employee, moving to her current position as a Departmental Analyst in CS responsible for training, and about how volunteering for committees and projects helped shape her view of work's purpose.



Elaine Scott

Opportunity taken

We are at a unique time and place in the life of ORS as an organization. The retirement incentive allowed many of our coworkers to retire. Those who remain have seen other job opportunities become available at ORS and all over state government. Our landscape changes every week as we greet new employees and have another potluck lunch for staff members who are leaving. Your opportunity to learn and grow is here and now.

I started working at ORS as a temporary employee in Customer Service in October 2004. I was returning to work after being a stay-at-home mom for almost three very long years and I was happy to be able to go to work every day. There weren't any open Department Tech 7, 8, or 9 positions posted that I could apply for the first year I worked at ORS. I wasn't sure if I was committed to stay at ORS or if ORS was committed to keeping me. More than once, I expected all the temporary employees to be let go at a moment's notice.

Along the way, opportunities came along to learn something new, work on a project or serve on a committee. I passed on most opportunities in that first year. I focused on being a good call center representative. I thought my job was to answer every question a customer asked plus any more that I thought they should ask. I am a fast talker. I would rush to the finish line at the end of the call to make certain I had told every customer everything they needed to know about retirement. The customer's comprehension was secondary to my performance. Our members should know tons of information so my calls ran long. I saw myself up as the sole source of information for members and retirees and encouraged everyone to call back. In short, you could say I was confident to the point of arrogance. I went home every night exhausted from having explained everything to everyone all day. Despite my long call length, I eventually got hired.

Then a wonderful thing happened. Opportunities came along again to join some projects and work on committees. Over the next few years, I volunteered to work on the ORS mission and vision statements and the strategic plan. Working on the committees was challenging and frustrating, but it ultimately changed my ideas about the purpose of my work with customers. I started to see myself as one of *many* resources available to our members: our website, our publications and seminars, and later miAccount and website tutorials are tools that are available every day. My conversations with customers became an opportunity to talk about other ways they can get information about their retirement themselves. I am not solely responsible for delivering all knowledge about retirement to our customers.

When I volunteered to step out of my 8:30 – 5 tasks as a call representative and worked on committees at ORS, I stepped into a new way of looking at how to communicate, how to share information, and how to empower a learner. Work with customers became less stressful and more satisfying.

My experience working on the ORS mission and vision statements and the strategic plan continue to guide my ideas about my work. Several months ago, I started my dream job at ORS. I am a Departmental Analyst responsible for training in Customer

Service. I am translating what I've learned about assisting customers into training for staff. Despite all the changes we've encountered this year, I continue to greet each day with some powerful thoughts running through my head: "Life is Good," "Work is Good," and "I am happy to work at ORS."

I am inviting you to step out of your comfortable role and choose to try on a new way of viewing your job. Volunteer for a committee. Go to one of the EPC brown-bag lunches in July. Participate in the discussion.

Thanks for listening.

World's largest Oldsmobile car show coming to GOB

The 19th Annual Oldsmobile Car Show and Swap Meet will be at our very own General Office Building this Saturday. "The largest one-day Oldsmobile show in the world" will also feature a racing seminar by Dick Miller who has over 40 years of Oldsmobile drag racing experience. For more information about this Saturday's car show, visit <http://www.reolds.org/>.

You don't need to wait until Saturday for the fun — there are also [free activities in Dimondale on Friday and Saturday night](#).

Details:

- 19th Annual Oldsmobile Car Show and Swap Meet.
- Saturday, June 18 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- General Office Building parking lot.
- Hosted by the R.E. Olds Chapter of the Oldsmobile Club of America.



Did you know that the first mass-produced car in America was made by Oldsmobile? The 1901 curved dash Oldsmobile was built in Detroit! It weighed 650 pounds and cost \$650.

ORS Purpose:
We are an innovative retirement organization driven to empower our customers for a successful today and a secure tomorrow.

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Phil Stoddard
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Thanks for reading!!

More Michigan books for summer reading

Here's another suggestion from the Library of Michigan's 2011 Michigan Notable Books:

- ***Lord of Misrule*** by Jaimy Gordon (McPherson)
Washed-up horses and people search for redemption in this novel, set at a backwoods horseracing track in early 1970s West Virginia. Can Tommy Hansel, a failing horse trainer, revive business by making quick money with well-trained but unknown horses? Or will the appearance of his luminous but tragic girlfriend Maggie spoil his scam? *Lord of Misrule* is literally a dark horse, winning the 2010 National Book Award for fiction the same week it was published. Gordon teaches writing at Western Michigan University.

Thanks to **Jennifer Carter** for recommending:

- ***Naked in the Stream: Isle Royale Stories*** by Vic Foerster (Arbutus)
The wilderness island in Lake Superior calls Vic Foerster to cross the world's largest Great Lake, land on the island's rocky shore, hike its bony spine, fish its shoal embedded coves, and fall in love with it all — bugs included. After thirty years' worth of visits to Isle Royale National Park, Foerster records his experiences in this funny, poignant, and riveting narrative.

You can find the complete list of Michigan Notable Books at www.michigan.gov/notablebooks. We'll feature other books from the list throughout the summer. If you're interested in sharing a review on any of the titles or suggesting another title, like Jennifer did, contact the



[LookOut.](#)

Note: Because some of the links in this newsletter point to network resources, some of the links may not work if you are reading this outside of the organization.