

## 2010-2011 International President Incoming Speech

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Thank you very much to my dear friends Karlena and Judie for introducing me tonight—with friends like that—you can easily understand why I adore them both and also wonder what was I thinking when I asked them to introduce me—right?

Sandra Day O'Connor said, "We don't accomplish anything in this world alone...and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something."

That is certainly true as I look back on my life and where I am today. I have a whole host of people to thank for the tapestry of my life. First and foremost my parents—my dad, Bill Ramsay, passed away my first year serving on the International Board—he was my biggest fan and supporter—always interested in what was going on and how I was doing, my mom, Mary Ramsay, who has always been there for me and is here tonight. The rest of my family, some of whom are here tonight, and most especially the love of my life—my husband, Mark Drow.

I have so many mentors and friends in IAAP that have helped me that it could take the rest of my allotted time tonight to read through the entire list—so let me just say thank you to all of you—you have encouraged me along the way and I truly appreciate your support.

I do want to thank the members of the Milwaukee Chapter, Wisconsin Division and Great Lakes District for their support on my leadership journey. You are the best!

I've been blessed to be able to work with several terrific international presidents—each having taught me something about being a leader and helping to affect change in our association. I want to especially thank Barb Horton, CAP and Susan Shamali, CPS/CAP for their words of wisdom, their mentoring and their support during our time on the board together.

I want to thank our headquarters staff—they have also made a difference in my life. I look forward to another year of their support, not only for me, but for the entire Board, as we work through the challenges and opportunities facing our association.

Finally, I look forward to working with the new Board—we have a very talented group of leaders on the 2010-2011 leadership team and I want to thank them for their dedication and commitment to our association.

I thought long and hard about the words I presented to the board as the international theme for 2010-2011 and I felt it was really important that there be a feeling of continuity, particularly in relationship to the past two years as we created and worked through the Project Plan for IAAP. For the past two years, the international board has worked together to ensure that our focus and the words we use for the theme—those words that we rally around each year—be not individual, discrete thoughts or phrases, but a sentiment that builds upon what has gone before creating the vision of a better future for our association by having a consistent path and plan to follow.

For Barb Horton—it was Excellence in Action—and that was the personification of both Barb and what we were doing on the board, taking our strategic plan, creating a project plan to find and to actively create excellence in our association.

For Susan Shamali—it's been the Power of Commitment—using the project plan we developed, our charge during the past year has been to complete each step, make adjustments along the way, and keep moving ahead to reach our goals.

The word I began with was "Intention." My whole thought process behind the theme was to let members know that what the past several years has been all about is our passion for IAAP and the purpose—the intent—of what we've been doing—it's not just some fly-by-night ideas but rather thoughtfully constructed and *intended* changes to make our association remain a viable and vibrant organization for our members and a viable and vibrant business entity.

So that's how we arrived at the 2010-2011 international theme of Passion and Purpose.

At the Incoming Division Presidents' Conference in April, we did a lot of training for the incoming group of division leaders and for the weekend's closing session, we gave each incoming president a copy of the book, *Change is Good—You Go First* by Mac Anderson and Tom Feltenstein. I chose this book because I wanted to reinforce that for IAAP to remain strong and vital—change is good—and that the leaders have to be willing to go first and make the changes we need to keep

IAAP vital and growing in the future. Change *is* good, though it can be difficult at times. I've seen it work its magic throughout my life.

I was an Army brat during the first 9 years of my life, so I was used to changing homes, schools and friends on a pretty regular basis—every 2-3 years. Even when we finally settled in Kenosha, Wisconsin, after my dad retired from the Army, I was at the age where change was still going on—moving from elementary school to middle school and three years later moving to high school—then off to college and then I changed jobs every 2 to 3 years for the first 15 years or so of my career. I was always seeking out new experiences, new challenges and new opportunities. In nearly every case, the changes I chose to make in my life meant something better for me and my family.

You know how much change our profession has seen since the advent of personal computers, e-mail, the internet, social networking, and all the other technological advances developed over the past couple of decades. We've had the ability to adapt and change for the sake of our careers.

Similarly, we need to make sure we are the willing change agents for the association—to keep it appealing to the next generation of admins—who are not like the current demographic in our association. If we don't adapt and change—we go away.

One of my favorite quotes is by Mahatma Gandhi, who said, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

The choice is really this—either we manage change or it will manage us. Change can be a wonderful gift. It is the key that unlocks the doors to growth and excitement in an organization, in your professional life or in your personal life. Like being offered the perfect job out of the blue or meeting the person you will spend the rest of your life with...both life-changing and uncertain, but full of promise and hope.

A big part of the change process is being able to forget for success and being able to walk away from outdated beliefs and practices. That has been the challenge for the International Board of Directors for the past five years. What we have been attempting to do is change the culture of the organization—both from a business perspective and from a member perspective.

In 2005-2006, when Kay Enlow was international president, we began a journey to transform the association in order to focus our time and resources on the most important component of our association—the members. That was the advent of the phrase "career-minded administrative professional." We wanted to focus on those individuals who view IAAP as a vehicle to help them become better administrative professionals by providing them the education, networking and leadership skills they need to be better on the job each and every day.

In order to do that, we also needed to change the business of IAAP—how it works--to better utilize our staff and the resources they have at their disposal to help accomplish those goals. Each year since then, we have worked toward this and with the publication in August 2006 of the book *7 Measures of Success, What Remarkable Associations Do that Others Don't*, we found a blueprint on how to accomplish this and have picked up speed on the transformation process.

Out of this blueprint, IAAP created a project plan to take us to the next level—and the challenge of doing this work has been daunting at times. But we have, instead of creating new goals and a new direction each year, persevered along the same path...the one that will take us to remarkable.

Along that journey, I've discovered one of my absolute favorite phrases. It's a concept introduced by Peter Drucker and it's called—Purposeful Abandonment. It was really instilled in my mind as a filter for how to view everything IAAP does for its members. It is now a part of my thinking when we look at the resources—time, money and staff—when figuring out what we *can* and *can't* do. Because of limited resources—we have to quit doing those things that we've always done just because we've always done them—if they don't add value according to our mission—and look at other programs and services we need instead. But to add new programs and services, we have to be prepared to let other things come to an end.

You've heard about one example of this during this EFAM: the changes coming to our Certification program. It is IAAP's mandate to create and maintain a strong program that recognizes excellence in the profession and tells the rest of the world that *these* are the best, the brightest of the admin workforce. To ensure that our program remains vital, it's necessary for us to *focus* as tightly as we can, on what we do as an association. We changed our name to recognize that while our profession *encompasses* the secretarial field, it is also more. Our certifications must reflect that, and these changes will allow us to create more and more ways for us to recognize excellence in our field.

Brent Harris of Nordstrom said, "You can't teach culture. You have to live it. You have to experience it. You have to share it. You have to show it."

To affect change in any culture, in any company, in any organization, it is the people at the top that have to show it, because words without deeds mean nothing.

But what is this culture change we're in the midst of? We all need to remember that IAAP isn't just a club to belong to—but a business that includes staff, a building, a magazine, research, education, certifications, support for nearly 600 individual business units in our chapters and divisions, and so much more. We need a place for individuals in our profession to:

- Gather together to get education and training for their jobs;
- Have the opportunity to network with others in the profession; and,
- Get leadership training that will not only serve them well in the workplace and IAAP but also in the world at large.

On the other hand, we need to make sure that we:

- Have the best staff we can afford
- Have the best technology we can to run the business of IAAP
- Offer the best education we can and provide the tools our leaders need to make them successful.

The reality is—to do this—we need to have enough resources (people and money) and capacity (people and time) to accomplish any goals that we determine are important. We have laid out aggressive plans to transform IAAP—but the reality is that it will take longer for us to accomplish that until we have more of resources and capacity to help us get there. In the meantime, you heard earlier this week from President Shamali that the Headquarters staff went through a process mapping project to help determine overlap in processes and streamline the work they do so they can accomplish more. We still only have about half the number of staff we need for an organization of our size and composition—and I have to tell you the staff works their hearts out each and every day to the best of their ability. Efficiencies have been realized because of the process mapping and our staff continues to look at each and every project with an eye toward accomplishing it in the simplest and most cost-effective way.

The effective leader recognizes that change takes time to take root. Change is necessary—but also takes time and we need to be patient to make sure that it does “take root” before the full benefits will be realized. We can look at this in terms of the dues increase passed at EFAM last July. Just because it has passed, doesn't mean our members, chapters or divisions will see *immediate* benefits. Based on timing of funds coming in and the economy, it will take awhile before we can provide increased benefits and services to our members. The board and headquarters staff are working as hard as they can to make sure that we become healthier financially so that we can offer products and services that our members want and need—but it will take time to “take root.”

So given these factors, how do we take IAAP to the next level? It starts with belief—in our members, our chapters, our divisions, our international board and our headquarters staff—the belief that we can all make our association better and better. One way we can do this is by strongly encouraging all of the divisions, chapters and members to participate in the Pathways to Excellence Program.

When we put the program together it was to create a holistic approach to make divisions and chapters better and at the same time honoring the accomplishments of the individual. Some of the feedback I've seen this past year is that some members, chapters and divisions aren't even going to attempt the P2E program because they know they won't achieve the award.

I have to ask the question—where is the passion and purpose? Is it wrapped up in the award? Or is it about strengthening our divisions and chapters and the way they operate and provide education and training for members to improve their skills? Why would any chapter or division **not** try to do those things that will make them stronger and more attractive to potential members? What is their purpose for being, if not to create an atmosphere of great education and networking for their members?

We need to encourage members, chapters and divisions to first focus on the strengths they currently possess. They need to take a look at the list of criteria and mark down those items they know they can accomplish—maybe that's just five or six items.

Then take a look at those things that can be done with a little more effort—and strategically plan on how to accomplish those criteria; maybe it's just two more this year, and two more the next year, and two more the year after that.

Finally, honestly assess the remaining criteria to determine why they can't be accomplished and then figure out what would truly need to happen in order to change that.

All of the goals were designed to be attainable—and yes—some require more work than others. But the board truly believes that the more everyone works on all of the criteria, the stronger we become as members, as chapters, as divisions, and as an association—and more people will want to join because of the programs and professionalism that is evident throughout the association. Our association will begin to grow like crazy because we are *the* place to come for education, training, networking, technology and more.

Will it happen overnight—no—but it's the journey, not the destination in which we will learn the most and will continue to evolve over time.

While this constant improvement is happening, we need to continue to set the stage for innovation. The best way to get a good idea is to get lots of ideas. We are trying to do that in a variety of ways. We encourage you again to participate in providing ideas and information so that we can make the best decisions we can for the business of IAAP. That means participating in the surveys that are sent out; participating in the web community through egroups, blogs and websites; and participating at the division and chapter level by attending events, volunteering for committees, and as serving as leaders.

We want to create a climate that rewards risk and creative effort. We need to be able to try new things and fail; and try new things and succeed.

**I want to stop a minute and speak directly to the leaders of IAAP who are here tonight.** *We* need to embody the change I've been talking about. *We* need to be conscious not only of the primary effects of the things we do but of the secondary consequences, which are a ripple effect that touches far more people than those in our immediate presence.

Uninspired people rarely do inspired work. *Passionate people in an organization are different.* They constantly show their commitment to the mission and the vision and they do this by demonstrating their passion about what they do. As a result, they accomplish more than their colleagues and are better able to meet the challenges of limited resources.

This is where succession planning comes in. As leaders, you need to identify the passionate people in your chapters and divisions and encourage them to take risks and become the next generation of leaders for our organization. Along with that, the international board and headquarters staff will continue our work to provide more and better resources for those leaders.

I know that as a team, everyone in this room can accomplish more by focusing on our passion for IAAP and the purpose—the intent—of why it exists today, *and* that we have much to do to ensure that it exists tomorrow as well. Everything we do will hopefully have a positive ripple effect for the future of our association.

Mac Anderson & Tom Feltenstein in *Change is Good, You Go First* tell us that, "Each of us wants to be part of something bigger than ourselves. Call it purpose, destiny or a simple desire to get beyond the insufficiencies of our current existence. An individual's yearning to reach outside his life is a seed of greatness waiting for a stream of inspiration."

It comes down to being excellent at what we do, with a deep level of commitment and knowing that what we do has purpose.

It's about making conscious choices where we spend our time and energy and once that choice is made—giving it our all.

I challenge you—as well as myself—during the coming year to be all you can be as an administrative professional and as a member of IAAP...living a life filled with Passion & Purpose.