Working Together
by Anita Rathbun

Have you ever heard the phrase “We are a construction company, not an accounting firm.” Many times, those of us who are numbers driven forget to look at the big picture. We love our world of debits and credits, accounts payable and accounts receivable, and think everyone else in the organization should be just as excited. But for those in operations, cost accounting can be considered a necessary evil; only one of many tasks that must be completed in order for the job to get done.

So how do we as Construction Financial Managers assist our staff in pulling necessary information from operations in an accurate and timely fashion? The easiest way to make this happen is to get operations staff to “want” to give what is asked. To create this atmosphere of teamwork, the accounting staff needs to focus on several different concepts.

Client Centered Focus

First, just as our project managers have clients with which they need to nurture and cultivate relationships outside the organization, our accountants must create these relationships with their clients, the project managers, within the...
organization. If we begin to see operations as our customer, we begin to approach them in a different manner. Could you see a project manager go to an owner stubbornly demanding a promised change order? Just as that would not be accepted well by an owner, demanding that a project manager complete their internal paperwork will also not be received positively. There are several methods that assist an accountant in acquiring the information needed without causing havoc between operations and accounting.

**Communication Is Key**

First, the accountant needs to create a willingness in the project manager to complete the task at hand. Many times operations does not understand why something is being requested by the accounting department. If it does not seem important to them, it is likely that it will not be at the top of their list of things that need to be handled promptly. If you can explain the importance to them, their attitude may change creating a willingness to give Accounting what they need. Take the example of the need for a project manager to approve invoices; it doesn’t seem all that important if the accountant just tells him that it is something he must do. If, however, he understands that an unapproved invoice could lead to an unpaid and unhappy subcontractor or supplier on his project, he begins to see how it might affect his productivity. He’s more likely to understand the need to complete paperwork promptly. Secondly, get feedback from operations on your accounting processes. Find out what they do not understand or why they think some steps seem unnecessary. Decide together what processes are beneficial and what processes need to be modified or discontinued. When they are part of the decision-making process, it is much easier to get their buy in when following those decisions.

**Consideration Is Important**

The accountant also needs to remember that the project manager’s responsibilities far exceed making sure the paperwork is handled. Operations has the responsibility to make sure a project is completed on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the owner. Take an interest in their responsibilities and gain knowledge of their obstacles and challenges throughout a project. Visit a job site and let them explain what they do. Having a better understanding of the project manager’s responsibilities may help the accountant to understand why it takes four days instead of the allotted two days to have his paperwork returned to accounting.

**Cooperation Is Essential**

Finally, having a spirit of teamwork is also a vital component. Learn to work together with your project managers. Communicate with them frequently to let them know your time constraints, and to see if they will coincide with your project manager’s schedule. Give a little flexibility to your timeframe so that the project manager can choose what works for him. Remind him well in advance of time constraints that do not allow for flexibility, such as holidays and strict contract guidelines for billing and payment dates. If there is something you can do to make the project manager’s job easier such as partially filling in information or researching issues ahead of time, then do it. Show them that you are not the “paperwork police” but that you are there to help them.

Why not make it a goal for your accounting department this year to improve the relationship between accounting and operations. You may just find that this goal that previously appeared unproductive could end up being the most effective method to increase efficiencies between departments and improve the overall effectiveness of the accounting department.

Anita Rathbun
Beene Garter is West Michigan’s largest independently owned accounting and consulting firm. Founded in Grand Rapids in 1949, our staff includes 12 partners and over 60 employees. We provide an array audit, tax and advisory services, employer support services and wealth management services through our subsidiary, BG Investment Advisory Services, Inc.

A dedicated team of professionals, we strive to exceed client needs and expectations. By providing valuable services and innovative solutions, we can partner with you to achieve your specific growth goals and objectives.

For five consecutive years, Beene Garter has been selected as one of West Michigan’s 101 Best and Brightest to Work For by the Michigan Business and Professional Association. Additionally, in 2005, we were named one of 60 Cool Places to Work in Michigan. We attribute both of these awards to the enthusiasm and longevity of our staff. We believe that if our staff members are happy, then our clients will be well-served.

Beene Garter’s Construction and Real Estate Industry Team has an in-depth knowledge of the issues and changes within the West Michigan construction industry. The extensive hands-on experience we have in the construction field results in proactive, reliable service to our clients, allowing them to focus on their daily business operations.

Beene Garter has been actively involved with CFMA of Western Michigan since our chapter was established in 1989. CFMA has developed into a significant resource for the West Michigan construction community and we value the relationships with our fellow members.

For additional information on our service offerings and the industries we serve, please visit our website at www.beenegarter.com.

We are pleased to announce the winners of this year’s scholarships:

**Chad Weldy** and **Scott Chaudoir** each received an **$800 National Convention Scholarship**. These scholarships will be used toward the winners’ registration fees at the National Convention, held May 19 to 23, 2007.

A **$400 ICCIFP Exam Scholarship** was also awarded to **Chad Weldy** to use towards the cost of the exam.

Congratulations to this year’s winners!
**17th Annual CFMA/ASPE Golf Outing**

On **Wednesday, June 6, 2007**, CFMA, together with ASPE, will host their 17th Annual Golf Outing at Railside Golf Club in Byron Center. This is a wonderful opportunity for all golfers to play a private course, not regularly open to public play.

The format for the outing is a four-person scramble. This format allows the occasional golfer to enjoy a day on the links as the occasional golfer relies on their seasoned mates to bail them out with a good shot.

Tee sponsorships are available at $100. Tee sponsorships allow golfers, as well as non-golfers, the opportunity to provide additional support to the golf outing. The tee sponsor forms will be mailed with the registration forms.

The proceeds from the golf outing are used to fund education of CFMA members and to send a member from our local chapter to the annual CFMA convention.

We look forward to a sunny day on June 6th, and anticipate your support as we look to continue the successes we’ve had in past years.

Registration forms were e-mailed the first week of May.

There will be a discount for early registration and payment, so please sign up early!
2nd Annual CFMA “Uncorked”

Please plan on joining us **Friday, July 27th** for our 2nd Annual CFMA “Uncorked” evening. This is an evening of grand company, great food, excellent wine, fantastic music and fabulous fireworks.

This is a time to sit back and unwind with the Grand Rapids Symphony at Cannonsburg Ski Area. We’ll enjoy a catered dinner, wine and dessert. We’ll also enjoy the music of “Fantasia” followed by classical fireworks.

Watch your inbox for more details.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Members:</th>
<th>Non-Members:</th>
<th>Children (Ages 2 to 15)</th>
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**27th JULY**
West Michigan Chapter CFMA Is
Teaming Up For The Fight
Relay for Life of Byron Center: Nickels Middle School

JUNE
1st & 2nd
2:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The Promotion Committee is excited to announce that our Chapter is teaming up with the NAWIC Grand Rapids Chapter # 194 for this year’s Relay For Life of Byron Center.

What does this mean for you as a CFMA member? It means a great opportunity to fight back and to make a difference in the battle against cancer.

How can you help in the fight against cancer?

There are several ways you can choose to participate:

✦ **Be Part of our Chapter Challenge**

As this event was being presented to the Board, an associate member took out his checkbook and wrote a check. This was immediately following by a general member who took out his checkbook and wrote a larger check! Which group can raise more donations? The general members or the associate members? Find out at the golf outing June 6.

✦ **Gather cash donations.**

We have donation cans available for your use. Put one out at your office. We also have paper feet you can sell.

✦ **Sponsor a Luminary**

When the sun goes down Friday night, hundreds of luminaries will light the way to remember those lost to cancer, those fighting cancer, and those who have fought cancer & won. For a $10.00 donation, you can decorate the bag that becomes a luminary in honor of a loved one.

✦ **Walk**

Help our team meets its commitment of having someone on the track for the entire 24 hours – because cancer never sleeps! If you wish to come out when other CFMA members are there, we are encouraging our members to participate on Friday between the hours of 6 and 10 p.m. and on Saturday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. This doesn’t mean you have to walk the whole four hours. Of course, you can come out anytime from 2:00 to 2:00!

Please start thinking of how you will join us in this fight against cancer. If you would like donation cans, paper feet or brochures, please let anyone on the promotion committee know and we will get them to you.

For more information, please visit the American Cancer Society online at [www.acsevents.org/relay/mi/byroncenter](http://www.acsevents.org/relay/mi/byroncenter) or [www.relayforlife.org/relay](http://www.relayforlife.org/relay).
Thanks to your donations:

- we have been able to send off nine more boxes to our troops overseas
- we have been able to mail out a total of 12 boxes

Please keep those donations coming as the need is great:

- We are in need of cash to help pay for shipping. Each box currently costs $8.10 to ship out (perhaps more when postage is scheduled to increase)
- We are in need of items, especially men’s stick deodorant and reading materials. The past two general membership meetings have not had many donations. Please see the suggested list on our website for ideas (www.cfma-wmi.org/Troops.htm). Our May meeting is the last scheduled collection until this fall.
- If you know someone overseas, please send anyone on the Promotion Committee the name and address (APO/FPO) and we will get their name on the list.

Promotion Committee

Theresa Sickles, Chair
tsickles@beenegarter.com

Randy Brink
randyb@kentcompanies.com

Rhonda Huismann
RHuismann@crowechizek.com

Harriet Perdue
hperdue@owen-ames-kimball.com

Jack VandeGuchte
JVandeGuchte@sobiecompany.com

Ellen Zierley
ezierley@owen-ames-kimball.com
Welcome to our newest members since our last issue of Extras!

Ryan Howe  
Turnkey Network Solutions  
Referred by: Ann Plummer

Christopher Harper  
Hungerford Aldrin Nichols & Carter

Steve Boersma  
River City Mechanical  
Referred by: Ann Plummer

Richard Kuiper, CPA  
Construction Resource, Inc.

Mark Mulville  
The Hartford Group  
(Transferred from Detroit to GR Chapter)

Thane Belen  
Aktion Associates Inc.  
(Lansing member, joined GR Chapter)

Steve Tebeau  
Pleune Service Company

Kent Schutter  
Pinnacle Construction Company

Tom VandenBosch  
Allied Electric

Welcome to all of you!

Membership Update  
by Ann Plummer

Membership Statistics as of May 2007:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Membership Composite</th>
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<td>General Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Members</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Our membership has increased by 18 members since March 31, 2007!

If you have any questions about membership, please contact any Membership Committee member listed below:

- **Mircea Dobre**  
  R.W. Baird  
  mdobre@rwbaird.com

- **John D. Koscielnia**  
  Walburg & Associates, PC  
  jkoscileniak@walburg.com

- **Ann M. Plummer**  
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- **Michael Poggi**  
  Pinnacle Insurance Partners  
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- **Todd Hanson**  
  Financial Edge  
  hanson@fin-edge.com

- **Suzanne Strauss**  
  Great Lake Systems, Inc.  
  suzanne@glsroof.com

- **Steve Huisjen**  
  Dan Vos Construction Co.  
  steveh@danvoscc.com

- **Sheri Wert**  
  Accounting Etc.  
  sheriwert@msn.com
As the source and resource of construction financial management in West Michigan, our Association unites individuals having financial responsibilities in the construction industry. We provide a forum through which the Association’s members can meet to network and exchange ideas. We promote and encourage leadership within the construction industry, as well as our Association. We develop and coordinate educational programs dedicated to the purpose of improving the professional standards of the industry and enhancing the value of construction financial managers to their respective companies.