



June 2017

Independent Consulting TIG Newsletter

CHAIR'S CORNER: The IC TIG Community by Laura Keene, 2017 IC TIG Chair



This quarter, some ramblings about **Balance**...

Dan Pink's book **Free Agent Nation** is one of my favorites. It's about the rise of freelancers in the last 20 years. In the book the author talks about how being an independent contractor breaks down the brick wall between work and home and he argues that this is a good shift. He describes the glorious harmony he experiences in his own life moving fluidly back and forth between working and spending time with his family.

My first child, Evelyn, is three months old and I'm back at work, so I've been thinking a lot about this issue of balance.

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Communicating results: Cutting through the noise with podcasts by Lisa Shimmel



In a world of decreasing attention spans and a multitude of ways to access information, it can be hard to cut through all the noise and reach your audience in an engaging way. Podcasts are an effective way to tell the story of your work and help people understand how it applies to their context. The number of people listening to podcasts is growing; many listen to multiple podcasts a week. You don't need fancy equipment or special training to produce a podcast; it's not that complicated.

Developing a podcast will require a fair amount of time and effort, so make sure you have a compelling topic which will connect with a broad audience and tell a relatable story. Share your idea with a colleague or friend and get feedback. Now that you have your topic, what's next?

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Meet IC TIG member Susana Morales, Communities in Collaboration

As an independent consultant, I am an entrepreneur constantly hustling, learning about new initiatives, and meeting new people.

Please describe your independent consulting practice.

I am the co-founder and Principal of Communities in Collaboration | Comunidades en Colaboración. We are a women-minority-owned consultancy based in Oakland, California. We are committed to equity and collaboration. We specialize in participatory evaluation, youth-focused evaluation, and community engagement.

What advice would you give to someone new to independent consulting?

Don't do it alone. I know it's hard to find a partner and that some of us have very little choice but to do it solo. In any case, surround yourself by a supportive group of professionals. Start a happy hour for independent consultants in your area. Meet with other consultants and develop a network and establish a community. Also, and perhaps more importantly, know consultants in other fields, not just in evaluation.

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Balance by Stephen Maack, Owner, REAP Change

*Finding balance in our personal and professional lives is a concern we all face. Several of our members have raised this issue recently. Our Chair, Laura, devoted her column in this issue to balance. Our featured member, Susana, included the topic in her interview. Here, in the first of three parts, our former Chair, **Stephen Maack**, shares his thoughts on balance in relationships with us. Parts 2 and 3 will address balance in time and our personal needs.*

As evaluation entrepreneurs, sole proprietors, owners of small firms consulting full-time or part-time, we have to try to maintain balance in several ways to stay productive. These include balancing relationships, time, and ourselves. In my experience, these are interconnected.

Relationships Balancing relationships with your clients is important to sustain business and protect business

relationships. Balancing relationships with our clients is important to stay in business -- and get repeat business from clients. One needs to understand how to present oneself, listen and learn about the client's needs, respond in a timely fashion, and present results effectively. One has to know when and how often to contact clients, how collaborative to be for this evaluation, etc. All that can be learned from the many business books out there (including Gail Barrington's Consulting Start-up and Management: A Guide for Evaluators and Applied Researchers), business and AEA workshops, and sessions. It is a dance and when dancing one has to keep one's balance to avoid stepping on toes or running into others. [At the Howard University, Evaluation and Training Institute (unfortunately now defunct) in 2005 Phillis Clay (Youth Policy Research Group, Inc.) and Jamie Calahan (Texas A&M University) taught us swing dance moves and had us dancing while talking about evaluation as a dance between evaluator and client.]

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FAQs and what to do about them!

by Gail Vallance Barrington

President, Barrington Research Group

QUESTION: What can I do when the client wants to change my report?

Answer: A colleague asked me what to do because a client wanted him to change his final report. The last payment (i.e., 70% of the contract) would be withheld unless he did. My initial reaction surprised me—and not in a pleasant way: *Change the report, take the money, and run. Never work for that client again!* But then I thought, *No, wait a second, that's not right. It's not ethical.* So I looked for more answers.

Morris (2008) says that pressure to alter the presentation of findings is one of the most frequent—and vexing—ethical problems encountered by evaluators. He suggests we check the *AEA Guiding Principles on Systematic Inquiry and Honesty/Integrity*.

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Have I lost my mind?!

by Carrie Giovannone-Jordan

This thought keeps crossing my mind at least once a week as I'm about to start my own business.

Years ago, I worked in industry. Then I went to graduate school and entered the wonderful world of program evaluation. I worked eleven years for a state agency, though at times my job barely related to evaluation. Now, I'm

moving to a remote town in New Mexico, so it's time to take a leap of faith and venture out on my own. I love the idea of being my own boss! I have it easier than some because I have a spouse who is employed. I'm not exactly diving off the board with no one to make sure I come up for air once in a while.

Here is a chronological account of the CRAZY thoughts that are swimming around in my head...

- **AEA excitement**

10/29/16. Oh my gosh! How exhilarating was the AEA Conference?! I made a list of those I wanted to talk to and what I needed to know about starting my own business. I received much more information than I ever expected. Over the next four months I will heed their advice and put my business together. I need to answer very important questions such as: What do I do in slow months to pay my bills? What about health insurance? Can I wear pajamas all day?

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Check out the IC TIG's book club: Evaluation Connection

Evaluation Connection is a virtual book club for evaluators who want to learn, reflect on, and discuss evaluation practices and theories. We meet online to discuss journal articles and books. Not only will you get some external motivation to read, but you'll also get to know and connect with other evaluators!

This month (June) we'll be reading from [Evaluation and Program Planning Volume 62, Pages 1-86](#) (June 2017) which includes topics on cross-cultural training, kind discipline, concept mapping, and much more. And we'll also be finishing *Diffusions of Innovation* by Everett M. Rogers next month. We'll discuss how organizations innovate. Chapters can stand alone, so feel free to jump in.

[Join our mailing list](#) to get details on what we're reading and when we are meeting.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me, [Michelle Molina](#).

Announcements and Reminders

Coffee Break Webinar Coming Up!!

Networking for Introverts: Circumventing Cultural Beliefs that Silence Leadership Tuesday, July 20, 2017 2-2:20 PM Eastern Time

Presenter: Norma Martinez-Rubin (from the series Building Latino Presence, Social Capital & Leadership within AEA)

Co-sponsors: Latino/a Responsive Evaluation Discourse TIG (LaRED) and Independent Consulting TIG

[Register](#) for this and other AEA Coffee Break Demonstrations

Evaluation 2017: From Learning to Action, Save the date - November 6-11, 2017, Washington, D.C.

Ways to stay in touch:

Like us on [Facebook](#) -- Engage with other IC TIG members on our [website](#).

Next newsletter deadline: August 25, 2017.

Please send questions, submissions or suggestions to [Loretta Kelley](#).

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