



March 2017

Independent Consulting TIG Newsletter

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



I'm going to start the year by being pretty sappy, blame it on the hormones. My husband and I are expecting our first child any day now.* This transition into parenthood has made us so much more aware of our little community of support and how thankful we are for it. We have a wonderful group of friends and family who have helped us prepare (as much one can) and they're already lined up to assist as we get our feet on the ground. It takes a village, right?

Back when I was first starting out as an independent consultant, we joked about how I was "birthing a business." [Read More](#)

TIG member engagement is increasing

by Mary Nash
IC TIG Print/Web Chair



One of the best ways for IC TIG members to communicate with one another is through the eGroup group on the [website](#). Even though we're spread out across the U.S. and other countries, we are reaching out to each other to chat about ideas such as conference presentations, how to handle a client's request for report edits, or the benefits of being an LLC vs. a sole proprietorship.

Realizing that communication among our members is something we want to encourage, the IC TIG leadership group set a goal in the Strategic Plan of increasing usage of the eGroup by 25% from 2015 to 2017. Although technically we have until December 31 to reach this goal, I decided to take a look at where the numbers stood in 2014, 2015 and 2016. I was pleased to discover that we've already met the goal! [Read More](#)



Meet IC TIG member Robert Perez, Hamai Consulting

One of the best pieces of advice I received in my early career was, in order to be an effective evaluator, learn everything, and I mean everything, you can about how the program operates.

Please describe your independent consulting practice.

Hi! My name is Robert Perez, and though I do not have my own independent consulting practice, I am taking steps to make it so in the near future. I have over four years experience working at Hamai Consulting in Los Angeles as a Research Assistant and it has been the most fulfilling experience in my early career as an evaluator. It was there that I found my passion for research, evaluation, data analysis, and visualization.

Describe your favorite evaluation experience.

There is not just one experience I can say was my favorite, though, I can say, I love doing site visits. There is something magnificent about meeting with stakeholders and with the population with whom you work that I cannot describe. [Read More](#)



Consulting in Unstable Times

by Stephen Maack, Owner, REAP Change Consultants

We have a special guest columnist, Steve Maack. Steve has served our IC TIG for several years in various capacities, including being our Chair. Steve has officially retired from the IC TIG Leadership Team, but we don't want to lose the benefit of his experience and wisdom, so we have asked him to be a guest columnist addressing issues that we independent consultants might be facing. This time Steve is going to share his thoughts on consulting in unstable times (and aren't they all?).

In early 2017 I received an e-mail from an evaluator concerned about what would happen to evaluation under the incoming administration. Nothing had happened yet – this was before the inauguration. Now, new things are happening but there is resistance and changes are coming slowly. What should you do in these unstable times?

First, check in with your colleagues and clients (potential, current and former). In January I checked in with three consultants I had worked with previously and a client. I found:

- The potential new client had not yet heard about his NSF grant that I would evaluate if funded;
- A very experienced evaluation consultant was also struggling, noting greater competition for new contracts;
- Another consultant was busy with STEM evaluations from word-of-mouth connections, but worried about likely cutbacks in federal funding affecting future contracts;
- A fourth consultant was almost overwhelmed with her best first quarter ever, starting up several new projects at once. I accepted a small sub-contract on one of her projects that could benefit from my skills

I learned that I wasn't the only one struggling and got some business intelligence for future consideration.

Second, think like the business person you are. Does your market, like mine, have a yearly cycle when there are many contract opportunities during certain months and almost none at others? How does this first quarter compare to others? If you don't know, ask your colleagues. [Read More](#)



FAQs and what to do about them!

by Gail Vallance Barrington
President, Barrington Research Group

QUESTION: How Can I Make a Difference in 2017?

Answer: As this difficult year moves forward, consultants need to respond to an increasingly unpredictable and volatile world. How can we help to mitigate the confusion, anger, and fear we see reflected in our clients' faces? Can we make a difference? I think we can!

In the name of good customer service, I used to keep my opinions to myself, proud to be neutral and uninvolved. I told myself this was being professional, that it was good consulting practice. Now, however, I am starting to see things differently. I'm finished with safe findings, vague recommendations that are impossible to implement, and bland reports, acceptable to all and read by none. I want to—no, I need to—confront the truth. If I live stronger, my clients will benefit too.

Here are two new strategies I am using: [Read More](#)

Announcements and Reminders

Save the date for ***Evaluation 2017: From Learning to Action***,
November 6-11, 2017, Washington, D.C. - Consider [submitting a proposal](#) to the IC

TIG related to your work as an independent consultant.

Proposal are due March 16.

Ways to stay in touch:

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

Next newsletter deadline: May 26, 2017. Please send questions, submissions or suggestions to [Loretta Kelley](#).

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