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Like, hello out there

PATRICK J. QUINN, P.ENG.

PRESIDENT

Judging by the voter participation in our elections for Council, a small proportion of our profession takes an interest in what is happening at PEO. Either some 80 per cent of our members are relatively happy with the way their lives are touched by their association, or they find PEO pretty irrelevant in their lives. In fact, not relevant enough to spend the few minutes it takes to consider into whose hands the welfare of the profession is entrusted. Is this a healthy situation, when one considers the potential downsides to neglect in any area of life? Just consider what benign neglect has done to the infrastructure of our nation, and the penalties we are going to have to pay.

In former president George Comrie's Viewpoint article in our last *Engineering Dimensions*, he outlined the business principles of an autocratic business leader, Jack Welch of GE fame, and suggested that these should be considered by PEO.

Welch's axioms (control your destiny, face reality, be candid, lead, embrace change, and compete), are undeniable necessities in modern business. Apart from our public service duty, spending \$17 million a year requires the discipline of business. If we accept George's concerns as being about our governance, and as real (and I do), changes of serious substance are required if we are going to be able to participate in and take control of the many challenges that all professions must meet in a fast-moving world.

Welch's axioms worked for GE because they were driven by an individual with power, vision, and leadership, who had the trust of his board and the respect of his staff, and had the time to earn both.

Our leadership, where much of the Viewpoint article is directed, is in dire need of individuals with Jack Welch-like passions and commitment. But even with

such leadership, I believe that to succeed, our present governance structure needs radical change. Council needs to be trimmed drastically in numbers, to operate in a much more disciplined way under clearly understood and used protocols. And, it should be focused on its role of policy directing, in a timely fashion. We must recognize that with Presidents turned over on a yearly basis, the role of the CEO must be comparable in power and in status to modern CEOs. There has to be a delegation of power and trust by any modern board of directors. The President's role as chair of the board must be set up to again recognize this time and place. What worked 90 years ago does not work now. Volunteers and committees are in real need of redefining their roles and lines of accountability.

leadership; endless debates on direction cannot keep up, let alone catch up, to the real changes that time and tide wash over us.

I believe we can, by individual effort and generosity of spirit, solve our problems, and that there are ways to foster and engage the debate that is required and the leadership talents that exist throughout our profession. I will be asking Council to authorize regional town halls, in late January and early February, to listen to members' views on the policy directions working their way through our processes. We need the input of a lot more of you, the silent majority. All the information on policy directions is available on our website, and I would encourage you to contact your Regional Councillors for further information and

*Make the effort for our profession,
and please, please, VOTE.*

The court ruling on our jurisdictional claims may compel us to face reality, however uncomfortable that may be, and this in-coming Council will potentially have a great opportunity to consider some really fresh ideas that could change, as we need to do, some of the basics of how we see and participate in our profession. Modern governance, education, registration, classes of licences, insurance, liability, areas of practice—even the concept of self-regulation—will have to be examined and acted on in some haste.

If we out our demons and confront them, we can, as George concludes, re-engineer our corporate ethos, redesign our own self image, move outside our comfort zone and embrace the necessary positive changes. Welch's autocracy is extolled because it was successful, whereas participatory democracy has never been a substitute for inspirational

to engage in dialogue. Almost all of the possible changes coming down the pipes will affect to some degree all practitioners. Once in place they may well not be to your liking, and at that stage almost cast in stone. Now is a good time to take an interest.

You can have great influence through the election process. You get to pick the individuals who will determine aspects of your professional life. If you don't vote, you don't just not participate, you give the power to choose to someone else whose aims may be diametrically opposed to yours. Your profession needs your input to choose the forward-thinking individuals who are needed at this critical time. Please study the writings of the candidates (pp. 24–32), and find those who share your hopes for our profession. Opportunity needs to be grasped for its benefits to be realized. Make the effort for our profession, and please, please, VOTE. ❖