

What Will PMI's Technical Focus Be In 2018?

By Matt Sigler, PMI Technical Director



Matt Sigler

Back in December, PMI staff met to discuss our strategic initiatives for 2018, addressing the areas of focus outlined by our Board of Directors. Though staff's strategic initiatives still need to be approved by the Board of Directors, I thought I would share with you what I believe are some of the top technical focus items for 2018.

Recycled water. One of the most prevalent trends is the reuse of potable water for both potable and non-potable water applications, especially in states with more arid climates. In 2017, California almost mandated requirements for the use of recycled water for toilet and urinal flushing with AB 2282. In 2018, I would imagine several bills being proposed in California, and possibly in other states, that look to mandate indoor recycled water usage. It will be important for PMI to develop a position on recycled water that is based on sound science and addresses our members concerns about product performance.

Lead. Ever since Flint, Michigan, many cities and states have worked to develop regulations to address elevated levels of lead in drinking water. The main culprit for such elevated levels has been identified as lead service lines. However, fixture fittings (especially those located in schools or other places where children are located) that do not meet the definition for "lead free" in accordance with the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act (RLDWA) have also received public scrutiny. As the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to work toward codifying the RLDWA, it will be critical for PMI and its members to continue to push for a simple codification of the RLDWA that requires plumbing products to be third-party certified, and marked and labeled, in accordance with the applicable industry standards.

Waterborne disease. In early 2016, the EPA announced the funding of two research projects to determine the impact of water conservation on public health.¹ These projects, along

with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's comprehensive study on the management of Legionella in water systems², are very concerning to PMI, as they could impact the plumbing products our members produce. PMI will continue to monitor these projects throughout 2018 and beyond until completed. These projects should also cause codes and standard bodies to wait until such projects are finalized and vetted by industry stakeholders before reducing the water consumption requirements for plumbing fixtures and fixture fittings within their codes and standards.

Going lower. In 2017, New York and Oregon reduced their water consumption requirements for plumbing fixtures and fixture fittings. In 2018, Washington has already introduced a house bill to adopt California Title 20 requirements (HB 2327), and Massachusetts is in the process of reducing its fixture and fixture fitting water consumption levels to EPA WaterSense levels, per the recommendations of PMI.³ PMI will continue to support states that decide to go lower in accordance with the WaterSense program, and will continue to fight against attempts to go lower than the WaterSense program in individual states and against attempts to mandate WaterSense levels on the national level.⁴

Green chemistry. With the passage of the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act on June 7, 2016, and the new warning requirements for California

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How to Win the Talent War for Manufacturers

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE/CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

All he wanted to do was get it fixed. Nobody seemed to understand how this thing worked and worse, time was growing short. So, he lugged it into the local

business equipment showroom and asked for help. They wouldn't touch it. Too old. No parts. Too much trouble. Undeterred, the youngster asked to borrow some workspace and a few tools to try to fix it on his own. After an hour of tinkering, he identified the problem. With the gift of a tension spring from the shop owner, the young man finished the repair, reassembled the machine, and hauled the vintage 1906 cash register with the marble ledge out of the shop.

Before he left, he also got an unexpected offer from the shop's owner. "Come back after school tomorrow kid – we could use someone like you to help out around here." And so began a promising high school apprenticeship and eventual technical career in the servicing and repair of typewriters, adding machines, copiers, and other kinds of office machinery. IBM's introduction of the magnetic tape IBM Selectric "word processor" in the 60s opened the door to a computer technology revolution now seemingly without end. It also ushered in the death of the typewriter and office machine repair business and the jobs that went along with it.

Another kid entered college with Advance Placement (AP) credits allowing her to accelerate a college career by completing graduation requirements in just under 3 1/2 years. On a lark, in her final semester she applied for an internship at The White House. To her delight, she was selected from among more than 1,000 applicants to intern for the Executive Office of the President. The

internship led to an opportunity to work on the president's re-election campaign, followed by a full-time White House job, and eventually to a new opportunity with a Silicon Valley high-tech company.

Two different times. Two different stories. Yet, both reflect the seeming randomness of career paths in modern-day America. Talent is everywhere. The Gen X, Gen Y, and the millennial generation are among the most educated people in the world. It's estimated 15.2 million young people will enroll in college this year. *The Atlantic's* recent article, "Why Aren't College Students Using Career Services?" notes that, "While more than 80% of students cite the prospect of a job as a critical factor in their decision to enroll in college, few feel confident once they're enrolled in their ability to participate in the job market and the workplace." According to a Gallup poll cited in the article, "Fewer than 20% of undergraduate students reach out to their school's career centers for advice on finding jobs... Often, students instead consult with friends and family members about important decisions that can determine employment, such as choosing a major."

That uncertainty and the use of informal networks offers a recruitment opportunity for manufacturers that think creatively about showcasing modern manufacturing through community-based programs, internships, work-study programs, campus-based recruiting initiatives, and other means to showcase both the complexity and high-tech nature of today's manufacturing environment.

There's a second avenue of opportunity for manufacturers in search of talent today. Walk through most any community college lab and you see the chasm between old and new. Renton Technical College, outside of Seattle, has 3,885 students engaged in training, re-training, or career path education. 67% of the student body is over age 25.

The college's millwright lab illuminates the striking contrast between manual machining lathes and the automated high-tech digital machine tools humming in the background. Students are learning the fine art of coding, programming, digital design, and machine tool set-up. Projects that would have required days of labor are now completed in hours. Most of the college instructors are practitioners with hands on knowledge and years of experience who have been through multiple retraining in their chosen field. Renton reflects the new age of technical training by ranking in the top 10 of *Washington Monthly's* best two-year college for adult learners (goo.gl/pF8Xk1). "Though we don't do it for ranking or recognition, it is gratifying to see RTC named among the nation's best," said the college's president **Kevin McCarthy**. "Every day we're working to help our students change their lives and be competitive in the workplace."

Vickie Holt, writing on ShopFloor.org (goo.gl/Xr46kK), points out that the new emerging high-tech manufacturing environment is a solid match for millennials coming into the workplace. "Millennials want technology jobs. And the industry is in need of software developers, data scientists, and engineers to drive the digital revolution forward," she writes. All that's lacking is the effort to help millennials understand that manufacturing occupations aren't the loud, low-paying, and physically labor-intensive jobs of decades ago. She notes that companies have used differing tactics such as showcasing their digital focus or making millennials the face of their organizations in advertisements and promotional efforts.

Showcasing the fresh changes on the manufacturing floor and the evolving workplace culture millennials value are the real responsibility and opportunity behind our ability to win the talent wars.

Imants Stiebris: Always Going for the Win for PMI

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, once said, "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible." For inventors and creators, it's a skill that – when combined with action – produces innovation. Similarly, **Imants Stiebris** describes his creative process as "seeing the need for a unique solution that wasn't there before." Throughout his more than 20-year career in the plumbing industry, Imants has successfully brought to life many of his distinctive concepts, including two patents and the first mobile app for the shower and eyewash industry.

A new PMI Board of Directors member in 2018, Imants said he is looking forward to applying his experience, creativity and insights to helping impact and move the industry to the next level. "Being a PMI member has been a huge benefit to me and my company," he stated. Imants, vice president of compliance and safety at Speakman Company, pointed out the importance of the broad range of industry knowledge both shared through and influenced by PMI, especially information on new codes, standards and laws – and how plumbing manufacturers need to comply with them.



Imants salmon fishing on the River Tay in Dunkeld, Scotland

Imants also noted that PMI's annual conferences deliver valuable insights and inspiration. For example, he mentioned **Bruce Vincent**, a third-generation logger from Libby, Mont., who made an impactful presentation on sustainable forestry, sharing his experiences of successfully dealing with issues that can get distorted in the public's perception and debated by lawmakers. "His lessons ap-



Amanda, Kathleen, Christina and Imants on a ski trip to Vail, Colo.

ply to similar issues we deal with in our industry," Imants said. "We learned that you need to go beyond communicating the right message to getting all stakeholders to hear and understand your message – and then collaborate and act on it, too."

He said that collaborating both inside and outside the industry is a great way to accomplish more. As a member of the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA), Imants said he is eager to explore the potential cross connections between PMI and ISEA and any resulting benefits. He currently serves as vice chairman of ISEA's ANSI/ISEA Z358.1 Shower & Eyewash Product Group.

With his 22nd anniversary at Speakman coming up in March, Imants reflected on some of his career highlights, including involvement in two product patents – one for an integrated eye wash and sink faucet and the other for a janitorial service sink eyewash – that have become the industry standard in schools, hospitals, laboratories and janitorial closets in a wide range of commercial buildings. "The genesis of the two certified eyewash products came from my sales and field experience, which really helped me see and hear, first hand, what customers needed," he said.

Imants attributes his successes to a mantra of "always go for the win" backed by hard work and a good dose of creative problem solving. It's a message he shares

frequently with his two daughters, **Christina** and **Amanda**, as they make their way through college. Creative problem solving became a Stiebris family tradition several years ago, when the girls got involved in "Odyssey of the Mind," an international competition where kids solve technical problems by learning creative solutions. "Our house was a constant backdrop for inventing and building things to solve technical challenges, so we always had boxes, wine corks, duct tape and other materials laying around ready to be made into something useful," Imants said. "Those kinds of skills will carry you through school, business and life, in general."

Traveling has been another integral part of broadening their family's life experiences. Imants said he and his wife, **Kathleen**, have enjoyed taking their girls on trips as often as possible, including a vacation to France last summer. "For us, it's all about the excitement of discovering new places and seeing and doing things we never have before," he said.



Amanda, Kathleen, Christina and Imants on a family adventure to Château de la Rochepot in Beaune, France

Just the Facts About Legionella and Water Supply Systems

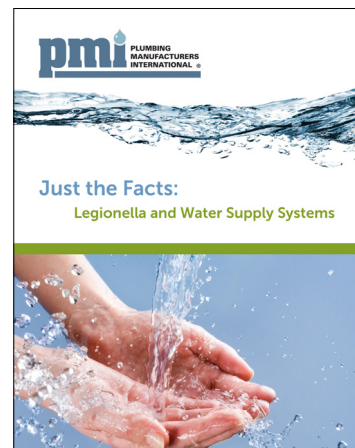
“Just the Facts: Legionella and Water Supply Systems” was recently introduced to media, PMI allies and the public. Produced by PMI with the assistance of a nationally known Legionella expert, this new PMI content was produced for those who may have questions about the threats posed by this waterborne pathogen.

The content takes a deep dive into the subject matter, with 27 different publications cited as references. This publication can serve as a core document for organizations wishing to advocate for water system safety. In addition, to encourage participation and social media conversation and sharing, PMI

also introduced a toolkit including a one-page summary, social media messages and graphics, a quiz you can link to from your website, and a newsletter/website article.

“PMI produced this content to be true to its mission of ‘Safe, Responsible Plumbing. Always,’” said **Kerry Stackpole**, PMI CEO/executive director. “Our past experiences with topics such as lead in plumbing, low flow rates, and water-efficient plumbing have informed our belief that PMI can make important contributions as a thought leader providing reliable and accurate information on issues pertaining to safe water and safe plumbing.”

The content is available as a website page and as a .pdf document. You can access it and the toolkit at goo.gl/aLyG8S



“Save the Pink Bathrooms” Makes A Vintage Feature Retro Cool

February is the month during which we celebrate Valentine’s Day, President’s Day – and the color pink!

“Save the Pink Bathrooms” (savethepinkbathrooms.com) is a blog managed by **Pam Kueber**, whose fascination with the color often associated with Valentine’s Day can be tracked back to former first lady **Mamie Eisenhower**. Extremely fond of pink, Mamie redecorated the private White House quarters in the color, causing reporters to refer to it as the “Pink Palace.” Mamie’s bathroom in the Eisenhower’s Gettysburg home was pink down to the cotton balls. As a result, in the 1950s, the color was referred to as “Mamie Pink.”

Her love of pink caught on throughout America, and pink bathrooms became all the rage. Kueber estimates that between five and 10 million pink bathrooms were built into the 20 million-plus homes constructed in the United States between 1946 and 1966.

“Save the Pink Bathrooms” is dedicated to convincing those who may be

considering ripping out these vestiges of home design heritage to preserve them instead. Her blog provides examples of how pink bathrooms – and bathrooms of other vintage colors like yellow, blue, green, beige, peach, salmon, lavender

and grey – can be modernized without losing their classic appeal.

Kueber’s other site – retrorenovation.com – gives tips on how to make pink and other older home features retro cool.



From KBIS, CES: Consumers Ready for Smart Bathrooms

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

While the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS) and CES, an annual global technology event, cater to very different audiences, one message came through loud and clear this year: consumers are ready to get connected in the bathroom.

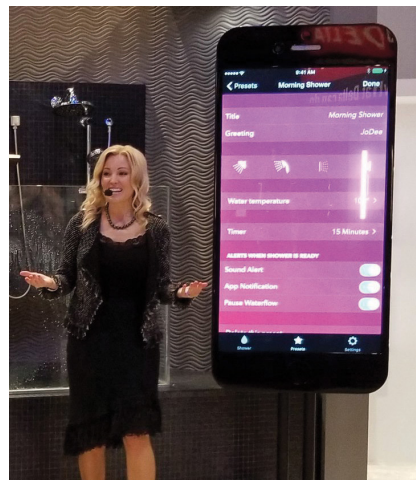
At the two events in January, Kohler Co., Moen Incorporated and TOTO USA joined other PMI members in featuring bathroom fixtures with smart technology and voice activation, bringing a full array of digital assistance into the last room in the home to join the trend.

“There’s a noticeable absence of smart home technology in the bathroom,” said **Nicole Allis**, marketing manager, cross-channel strategies, for Kohler. “However, most people bring electronics in the bathroom, even if they don’t want to admit it.”

Privacy has been a concern with using voice-controlled systems in the most intimate space in the home, she added. However, consumers’ desire for efficiency, convenience and enhanced bathroom experiences have won out over any lingering doubts. The company featured its Kohler Connect range of bath products, including a voice-controlled shower that can remember

several presets for temperature, music, lighting and steam, and a mirror with Alexa, Amazon’s digital assistant, built in. A new app for the product line will measure and track water usage.

How does an international event like CES known for technologies, such as virtual reality goggles and self-driving cars, benefit the plumbing industry? For all three companies, CES offered an opportunity to bring awareness about their latest bath innovations to an audience unfamiliar with plumbing fixtures.



Moen presenter JoDee Anderson demonstrates the new U by Moen Smart Shower for KBIS attendees

“Since CES is a consumer show, we see a mix of tech-savvy media as well as consumers and enthusiasts looking for products for their personal use. It’s a great opportunity for us to learn what they desire from their smart home experiences,” said **Andy Conroy**, senior director, wholesale marketing, Moen, which showcased its U by Moen Smart Shower at both KBIS and CES. The shower, which can be voice activated, uses Wi-Fi connectivity so it can be started remotely, activate preset favorites like ideal water temperature, and shut off after a specific amount of time. For the KBIS contractor and plumbing audiences, Andy said Moen focused on the shower’s installa-

tion features, including a 30-foot data cable offering placement flexibility.

Bill Strang, president of operations and eCommerce at TOTO USA and a PMI member, described CES attendees as more aspirational, seeking products from brands they can trust and believe in while also looking for the “geeky tech” factor. At KBIS, he said, construction and design pros are looking for new and clever products to incorporate into their projects this year. At both events, the company demonstrated its TOTO Flotation Tub, with integrated technology features and an ability to simulate the feeling of floating in space. Bill said the tub was developed to not only meet consumers’ continued need for efficient, sustainable and easy-to-clean bath fixtures, but also to deliver a better bath experience. He explained that his company completed comprehensive research, measuring brain-wave activity of users, to develop a tub that could induce mental activity associated with a meditative, Zen-like state of mind.

All three companies reported getting positive feedback overall from event attendees on the direction bathroom fixtures are headed, including offering more hands-free and app-control options. “People are looking for more personal time and space to themselves and a connected bathroom helps deliver that,” Nicole said.



Show participants tour the Kohler Connect booth at CES



Visitors check out the new TOTO Flotation Tub at KBIS

PMI Members Well Represented at KBIS/IBS and CES Shows

These photos represent only several of the PMI members who exhibited at the KBIS/IBS and CES shows. PMI CEO/Executive Director **Kerry Stackpole** made the rounds and met with PMI members. At the Crystal Vision Awards Breakfast at the KBIS/IBS Show (below, right), he spoke with **Todd Teter**, vice president and general manager, U.S. Wholesale, Moen Incorporated, and **Cheri Phyfer**, president, U.S. Businesses, Moen.



U.S. Water Alliance Rolls Out Webinar Series

The U.S. Water Alliance is rolling out a webinar series about the seven big ideas behind the “One Water for America Policy Framework.” You can watch recordings of the webinars that have occurred and register for future ones at (goo.gl/V1HkWk). The topics of the webinars having occurred are:

1. **Advance Regional Collaboration on Water Management**
2. **Accelerate Agriculture-Utility Partnerships to Improve Water Quality**
3. **Sustain Adequate Funding for Responsible Water Infrastructure Management**

The schedule for the next four is as follows:

4. **Blend Public and Private Expertise and Investment to Address Water Infrastructure Needs**
February 21, 1 to 2 p.m. EST; Speakers TBD
5. **Redefine Affordability for the 21st Century**
March 7, 1 to 2 p.m. EST; Speakers TBD
6. **Reduce Lead Risks, and Embrace the Mission of Protecting Public Health**
March 21, 1 to 2 p.m. EST; Speakers TBD
7. **Accelerate Technology Adoption to Build Efficiency and Improve Water Service**
April 4, 1 to 2 p.m. EST; Speakers TBD



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EWTS Abstracts Deadline Extended to Feb. 15

The deadline to submit an abstract for the 6th biennial Emerging Water Technology Symposium (EWTS) has been extended to February 15. This not-to-be-missed event, to be held May 15-16, 2018, in Ontario, Calif., is seeking presentations on a variety of topics, including:

- Water-energy nexus
- Educational and behavioral issues
- Water efficiency in buildings
- Water quality issues

- Alternate water sources
- 3-D modeling for plumbing and mechanical applications

Peter Williams, chief technology officer for Big Green at IBM, will be the opening keynote speaker at the conference, presented by the American Society of Plumbing Engineers, the Alliance for Water Efficiency, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, and PMI, in cooperation with the World Plumbing Council.

Learn more about the conference, including the call for abstracts:

goo.gl/ujWR5q

EWTS

Emerging Water Technology Symposium

What Will PMI's Technical Focus Be In 2018?

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Prop 65 that take effect on August 30 of this year, there has been a renewed focus on the types of chemicals used in consumer products. Retailers are now scrutinizing more than ever the chemicals used in the products they sell and are beginning to develop their own policies to better protect the consumer and the environment. Such trends could have a negative impact on plumbing products. Therefore, PMI will continue to encourage the development of regulations and policies that are not only cost-effective, but take into consideration the impact on manufacturers.

There you have it; my top focus items for 2018. I would very much like to hear from others, especially those in the plumbing industry, on what items they are focused on for this new year. Please share your thoughts with me at: msigler@safeplumbing.org.

¹ Hess, David E. "Drexel University Receives \$1.9M EPA Grant For Drinking Water Quality Research." PA Environment Digest Blog, January 12, 2017. goo.gl/55MQCS.

² The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Management of Legionella in Water Systems. goo.gl/yBXMZL.

³ PMI. Massachusetts H.3404 - Promote efficiency in the use of certain natural resources (Letter to Representative Frank Smizik), April 21, 2017.

⁴ Sigler, Matt. "PMI's Approach to EPA's WaterSense Program: Voluntary! Unless" Ripple Effect Newsletter, June 2017, pg. 1. goo.gl/4qFnEF.

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