Turning Protests into Progress Against Injustice

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

There’s something’s happening here.
What it is, ain’t exactly clear.
– Stephen Stills

Sometimes the problems feel too big.
Put men on the moon? Ridiculous.
Have a telephone you can carry
around in your pocket that’s also a
camera and computer with data access
and continuous connectivity? Now
that’s seriously unrealistic. How about
a rocket that thrusts astronauts into space and then is collected
to be fueled for another flight? I don’t think so. What’s next—a
faucet you can talk to?

Yet, these are engineering marvels that have come into being,
All of which make the turmoil ignited by the COVID-19
pandemic both frightening and strangely reassuring at the
same time. American ingenuity has solved so many of our
nation’s most intransigent problems. Creative imaginations
have sparked new inventions and new ways of doing things
that were seemingly impossible just a few short years ago.
Will there be a vaccine for COVID-19? It’s beyond a safe bet
that a vaccine will be developed to ward off the health risks
posed by the coronavirus. The timing and availability of a
vaccine may be in question, but the outcome is not.

Which makes the emotions driving the recent protests in
cities around the world even more confounding. How is it
possible that after the past 100 years of profound innovation,
educational advancement, and social development we are still
struggling with equality? The struggles of African Americans
and other communities of color are real. The recent death of
George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer,
and the killing of Ahmaud Arbery by a former police officer
and his son in Georgia have once again illuminated society’s
inequality and re-ignited the anger and frustrations created
by systemic racism.

At PMI, we share the concerns of many Americans who are
upset by this senseless injustice. For more than a week now,
American cities have seen peaceful protests be followed by
violence resulting in injuries and property damage. Opportu-
nistic looters and vandals have run rampant, stoking a sense
of chaos and creating real danger for those who are engaged
in lawful and peaceful protest. While the action of looters
and vandals may grab headlines and evening news airtime,
no one can condone this type of violence. It clearly is not a
solution to what ails America at this moment.

As my colleague Susan Robertson at the Center for Associa-
tion Leadership wrote, “While the answers to racial injustice
are complex and multi-faceted…We need tangible commit-
ments from our nation’s leaders to address racial inequalities
once and for all.”

There can be little doubt that every one of us has a part to
play. As industry and community leaders, our commitment
to work hand in hand with those who seek respect, fairness
and the right to equality of opportunity is vital. It demands
that we identify and challenge the values, structures and
behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism. As industry lead-
ers working together, we must recognize affronts to humanity
and the uncomfortable truths in our world. The will to create
communities that are truly collaborative, and which actively
embrace a better tomorrow, need our collective leadership
now more than ever.
PMI Members Lead with Hearts, Talents During COVID Crisis

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

Collaboration, compassion and generosity. Those qualities have been exemplified by many PMI members as they continue to support frontline workers during the COVID-19 crisis.

PMI member companies have used 3D technology to produce critical face shields, provided bathroom fixtures for medical facilities, and supported the nation’s food banks.

At the beginning of the crisis, PMI member Delta Faucet Company challenged its team members to collaborate on things they could do to help the medical community and first responders during the pandemic. As a result, Delta’s workers produced and donated several much-needed products: an injection-molded, modified version of the Montana Mask, a high-efficiency filtration mask that can be sanitized and reused; intubation shields that help keep medical professionals safe when the virus is aerosolized during intubation; and 100,000 injection molded “ear savers” that help relieve pressure from N95 and surgical masks worn by frontline medical workers. With assistance from Masco, Delta’s parent company, Delta also gave cash donations to local organizations fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, including $65,000 to the Children’s Bureau and $20,000 to Patachou Foundation.

With doctors, nurses and other medical workers facing a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) across the country, PMI members Kohler and LIXIL stepped up to help. Teaming up with the University of Wisconsin-Madison to develop a face shield design, Kohler’s foundry was able to switch its operations from making industrial iron castings to producing up to 15,000 face shields per day. LIXIL’s employees have been volunteering to make 3D-printed face shields for healthcare workers, too.

Field hospitals and COVID-19 tent facilities were built across the United States to add care capacity for pandemic patients. PMI member Bradley Corporation contributed to those facilities in many ways. A range of the company’s washroom accessories were installed in 50 COVID-19 medical triage tents outside Maryland hospitals. Bradley also assisted with the transformation of Chicago’s McCormick Place into a COVID-19 hospital by providing more than 150 lockers for frontline medical personnel to store their personal property. Bradley’s stainless-steel washroom accessories – including grab bars, mirrors, soap dispensers, napkin disposals, hooks and shower rods – were installed in the Wisconsin State Fair’s Exposition Center. The center was turned into a COVID-19 alternative care facility, with capacity for up to 750 patients.

The crisis also has put a strain on the nation’s food banks. Feeding America, the largest hunger relief organization in the U.S., reported in early May that most of its food banks had experienced an increase in demand, with an average increase of 59%. PMI member Symmons Industries, Inc., wanted to help. The company is donating 10% of every order for the new Symmons SAFEkey to Feeding America. The new tool, made from pure copper, offers people protection from bacteria and viruses, and can be used to open doors, flush toilets, push elevator buttons, and carry bags and groceries.

If your company has been helping to support COVID-19 relief efforts and would like to see those efforts mentioned in a future issue of Ripple Effect, send the information to Jodi Stuhrberg, PMI association manager, jstuhrberg@safeplumbing.org.
Current title and employer: Product Manager, Duravit USA, Inc.

Length of time in the plumbing manufacturing industry: 15+ years.

My proudest plumbing manufacturing career achievement: Our most recent successful product introduction of the SensoWash i, the first integrated shower-toilet from Duravit in the United States. It was based on market demand, with well-coordinated work between product management, our R&D global teams and all global departments to ensure product compliance in the U.S. and Canada. We found that U.S. consumers were looking for a nice-looking, sleeker design in a bidet toilet. My role was overseeing the whole process, from concept to finished product, making sure the product met all U.S. certification and installation standards.

I started a career in the plumbing manufacturing industry because: After receiving my bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, I was interested in continuing my master’s thesis research in advanced ceramic. I simultaneously applied for a position in the advanced ceramic department at a large global corporation. My future manager called with an offer to join the R&D department and to my surprise, it was in the plumbing section, which was not the section I initially applied for. However, my manager had made such a great initial impression that I plunged into and never looked back. To this day, he remains my trusted mentor and I still rely on my early hands-on plumbing experience when modifying global products to meet U.S. and Canadian certification requirements.

What is your current role in PMI? What do you hope to accomplish in this role? My role has slightly evolved from being the chair of the Universal Conformity Assessment Standing Committee several years ago to heavily participating in PMI’s Tech Talks and other committee calls and conferences, where I enjoy networking directly with my industry peers. Building these relationships is especially important to me!

I promote PMI within my company by: Taking key information from PMI, including from Tech Talk calls, and editing and sharing it with our international employees. We get so much good information on legislative and standards changes in the U.S., which I boil down into monthly updates for my colleagues in Germany and Asia.

Our PMI membership delivers the following benefits to my company: Even though we have a smaller operational footprint in the U.S., we appreciate that PMI gives us a voice in such a large industry. PMI keeps our international audience updated with all regulations and registrations while CEO Kerry Stackpole and Technical Director Matt Sigler always guide us in the right direction with our questions. We really rely on PMI! A great recent example: we reached out to PMI during this coronavirus crisis for guidance in the U.S. PMI shared important information about how we, as a supplier, were considered an essential business, which led us to keeping our Atlanta operation running. It was good to hear that everyone in our industry is thinking the same way – keeping our doors open and making our products accessible to meet market demand and plumbers’ needs.

Best career advice I ever received: Invest in creating and building relationships.

I’m currently reading: “Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t” by Jim Collins.

My favorite movie: Roman Holiday.

When I face a challenge at work (or in life): The first thing I do is stop and take a deep breath so I can think before I act. Every new problem and challenge I face helps me gain more experience and grow. If I want to do great things, I realize there will always be different problems to face along the way. Therefore, I see this as part of my bigger dream and welcome new challenges.

In my spare time, I enjoy: My family and I absolutely love any kind of outdoor activities, such as biking, hiking, swimming, diving, kayaking, tennis and gardening. Although new technology is fantastic and we use it daily, we still believe nothing can replace the live experiences of theater, ballet and symphony that we as a family enjoy.

Symmons Shows State Leaders How To Safely Reopen

Gov. Charlie Baker and Lt. Gov. Kathy Baker of Massachusetts visited Symmons Industries, a PMI manufacturing member company in Braintree, Mass., to see how a business is implementing new workplace safety standards required by the state, State House News Service reported. As orders for plumbing products slowed during the shutdown, Symmons Industries shifted production to make things like ear-savers for masks and copper antimicrobial tools for people to open doors and choose elevator buttons without touching surfaces, said Symmons CEO Tim O’Keeffe.

Now, the third-generation family businesses is working to get back to its traditional manufacturing of producing water valves and other precision parts and hopes to get back close to full workforce capacity.
PMI 2020 Offers A Glimpse of Paradise in San Diego

Looking forward to a future, enjoyable event can be a calming technique during a time of uncertainty. As we begin to reimagine and gradually open up our society this summer, picture yourself on a beautiful beach, kayaking in still waters, or pedaling down a bike path amidst palm trees this coming November 9-12 at the 2020 PMI Manufacturing Success Conference.

PMI is planning its annual conference with its eyes wide open, hoping for the best but preparing for contingencies. Our plan right now for our gathering of PMI members is to have a live, in-person event offering the kind of educational content you’ve come to expect.

This year’s conference location is the Paradise Point Resort & Spa, tucked away on gentle Mission Bay in the heart of San Diego. Featuring comfortable bungalow-style guestrooms, the resort contains lush gardens, tranquil lagoons, and one mile of sandy beach.

Scattered across a 44-acre island, Paradise Point offers plenty of room to roam and relax, as well as five swimming pools, beach bonfire pits, a marina, five dining venues, an award-winning spa, and endless recreation options. It’s a unique San Diego resort experience with a location that is secluded, yet centrally situated; the airport, downtown San Diego and top attractions including Old Town, the San Diego Zoo, and Balboa Park are all just minutes away.

The spa can breathe new life into your being and rejuvenate your soul. With the backdrop of a lush oasis, exotic treatment rooms, and cooling sea breezes, the professionally trained spa therapists will lull you into a sense of well-being and relaxation.

Aspiring Leaders Program gearing up for year two

Building on last year’s successful introductory session featuring multigenerational workplace expert Lindsey Pollak and the team at the Dali Museum’s Innovation Labs, this year’s Aspiring Leaders Program will take place onboard the USS Midway, which has been transformed into a museum and educational center.

PMI members are encouraged to enroll, or to nominate a co-worker who could benefit from the program – meant to help inspire the ability to see and think differently, foster self-awareness, and instill a growth mindset. If you’re interested, or if you’d like to enroll an employee, complete the online form (tinyurl.com/yayq6w5g).

As plumbing manufacturing grows and changes – with the need for new innovations and technologies – more companies are investing in training. The Manufacturing Institute has estimated that manufacturers spent more than $26 billion in 2019 on training for new and existing employees.

Changes in our industry and world will only accelerate. Attending the 2020 PMI Manufacturing Success Conference and Aspiring Leaders Program will prepare you for whatever comes your way.
After COVID-19: Safety Concerns Drive New Business Trends

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

The COVID-19 epidemic has made a big impact on our society in many ways, and experts predict more changes are coming for businesses and individuals. Shifting consumer preferences and concerns for long-term public safety are already driving new product innovations, business practices, and travel trends.

Innovations to focus on better hygiene, touch-free technology
For the plumbing manufacturing and building industry, the crisis has generated demand for greater infection controls and design innovations for future residential and commercial structures, according to a recent article in The Guardian. That will mean doing things like installing more touch-free faucets and toilets in bathrooms, adding antimicrobial surfaces and disinfecting UV lights in offices and cubicles, and creating building and room entrances that do not require human contact—all to boost hygiene and public confidence.

Recent New York Times and Readers Digest articles have confirmed that bidet sales are up, too. The articles linked that demand to the COVID-19 crisis, which triggered a spike in American consumers’ stockpiling toilet paper, causing a shortage.

Some PMI members are already seeing more orders for bidets and touchless bath fixtures, such as faucets. PMI member Kohler Co. said its bidet sales have grown in the last five years and interest in its touchless faucets and other hygienic products are up as well, according to a recent Wisconsin Public Radio article (tinyurl.com/ybdfso8w).

Innovated by consumers’ desire for touchless product options, PMI member Symmons Industries, Inc. created its new Symmons SAFEKey (tinyurl.com/y8xp4ln), a tool made from pure copper that allows individuals to open doors, push buttons, flush toilets, use touchscreens, and carry bags without touching those surfaces.

Sloan Valve Company, a PMI member, is experiencing similar higher demand for touchless products. Several of its customers recently used the company’s retrofit flushometer kits to transform their restrooms into touchless spaces because users do not want to touch the flushometer handle, said Mark Lawinger, Sloan’s senior product line manager for flushometers and fixtures, in a recent Sloan news release.

As Americans prepare for post-COVID-19 life, the vast majority are looking for touchless hand-washing fixtures in washrooms. According to the latest Healthy Hand Washing Survey conducted by PMI member Bradley Corp., 91% of Americans believe it’s extremely or somewhat important that public restrooms are equipped with touchless fixtures.

PMI members Kohler Co. and American Standard (LIXIL) are quoted in a Fast Company article about the demand for touchless fixtures in public bathrooms, as well as changes in these environments that will likely be made to prevent the spread of contagious disease.

Remote working, reconfigured spaces to become the new standard
Businesses across the country have already implemented temporary work-from-home and physical-distancing policies while beefing up office disinfection measures because of the pandemic. Many are now considering making those changes permanent and adding a few new adjustments.

Open office spaces, conference and break rooms, and in-office meetings will likely be replaced with shields between cubicles, more online meetings, and workers eating at their desks. Some businesses are even considering marking one-way paths, so employees are not passing too closely in hallways, according to a May Newsday article.

For manufacturers who need frontline employees working in their facilities, permanent changes will continue focusing on worker safety. That will mean regular employee health monitoring including temperature taking, more equipment sanitizing, less sharing of communal tools and areas, and using face shields and plexiglass dividers on the plant floor.

Expect the unexpected in business travel
The pandemic halted most business travel for now. However, companies will need to consider long-term changes and trends as they plan for future employee trips.

Experts are predicting that demand for flights will decrease, forcing airlines to reduce their fleets. This will make scheduling more unpredictable and cancellations more likely, according to a new paper by Société Internationale de Télécommunications Aéronautiques (sita.aero).

Technology will play an important role for business travelers as airlines will regularly update passengers’ phones with information on flight status and potential border openings and closings, the paper states. With travelers seeking safer physical-distancing practices, airports will use more automation and self-service technology. And digital identification on phones will be verified by facial recognition software to help passengers through the security process at airports.

Other travel trends will follow consumer demand for more trips reachable via car vs. plane and stays at private rental properties instead of crowded hotels and resorts, said an NBC New York article.
“Big Business in the Big Easy” is this year’s theme for the 2020 American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE) Convention & Expo, to be held from Sept. 11-16 at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, La.

Every other year, the ASPE Convention & Expo attracts thousands of plumbing engineers, designers, specifiers and contractors to the largest plumbing products and systems tradeshow in the country. Featuring professional development seminars and networking opportunities, ASPE’s Convention & Expo showcases innovations in plumbing system design and spotlights the latest plumbing products, services and design techniques.

More than 30 educational sessions, 350 exhibits

The ASPE Convention & Expo offers attendees more than 30 educational sessions on topics ranging from project management to green building to advanced plumbing technologies—all guaranteed to provide the information and skills plumbing industry professionals need to succeed in their careers. Each session offers continuing education units (CEUs) for licensing and certification requirements.

More than 300 exhibits display the latest plumbing products and services offered by the industry’s top manufacturers. Plumbing industry professionals travel from all over the country to get acquainted with the products they will be specifying in their designs. Exhibitors send their product engineers and sales staff to answer all technical questions attendees may have and to demonstrate their products’ applicability in plumbing system designs.

Explore registration options and pre-show opportunities

Full registration to the ASPE Convention & Expo includes the ability to meet with more than 300 exhibiting manufacturers and suppliers, network with more than 4,000 industry professionals from around the world, attend all education sessions, earn continuing education credits, and more. There will be five tracks of education sessions featured for those who pay the full registration fee. The sessions will be taught by plumbing engineering experts, with each one offering 0.125 CEUs.

There is also a no-cost Expo-Only registration option for September 14-15. This option includes access to the show floor, the ability to meet with hundreds of exhibiting manufacturers and suppliers, and other networking and educational opportunities.

ASPE understands that in the current climate, it’s become harder to justify budget expenses and taking time away from the office to attend conferences; however, ASPE has developed materials (tinyurl.com/y8y7yj7l) that can help you justify your attendance and communicate the importance and benefits of attending the convention. The materials include discounts you can take advantage of, templates for writing letters to your managers and for trip reports, and information about making connections and optimizing your education at the ASPE Convention & Expo.

Registration and housing are now open. Learn more about the 2020 ASPE Convention & Expo and register at expo.aspe.org.
What Does Safe Reopening Look Like for Businesses?

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

As more states ease restrictions related to COVID-19, businesses are following local, state and federal guidelines to safely reopen. While companies are taking steps to keep workers healthy, they also need to address the safety of plumbing systems that were idle during the shutdown.

**Temperature checks, protective measures set to be new norm**

Temperature checks, physical distancing, enhanced disinfection measures, and increased personal protective equipment (PPE) are becoming the new norm for many of those returning to work. Companies also continue to follow guidelines by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Since the start of the crisis, PMI member companies – deemed as essential businesses by the federal government – have been following CDC and OSHA guidelines and taking extra precautions to keep workers safe and plan to continue doing so. For example, PMI member Kohler Co. provides workers with masks, takes their temperatures before shifts, and has installed plexiglass dividers in areas where workers can’t be separated by at least six feet, according to a recent Wisconsin Public Radio article (tinyurl.com/vcbdo8w).

Many PMI members have provided their workers with tools and processes to protect them from the virus, adding hand sanitizing stations throughout their offices and plants; providing masks and face shields for employees; requiring workers to stay at least six feet apart when possible; limiting travel; staggering shifts; and performing additional deep cleaning of common spaces, breakrooms and work areas.

Because individuals can carry COVID-19 from their workplaces to their homes and vice versa, health officials continue urging everyone to be diligent with washing their hands more thoroughly and regularly, using physical distancing whenever possible, and wearing masks at work and when visiting restaurants, grocery stores and other places open to the public.

**Safeguards needed before opening shuttered buildings**

Many building water and plumbing systems have been sitting idle during the crisis lockdown, causing concern over health risks associated with stagnant water and higher levels of bacteria, including Legionella.

There are several precautions businesses can take with their water systems to keep workers and the public safe before opening their doors again. Proper water flushing and disinfecting techniques are among the most prevalent measures recommended by plumbing safety experts.

Flushing water in a building’s pipes at least weekly can help replace all old water with new water and help remove sediments in pipe walls, reports a recent Fast Company article (tinyurl.com/yafyqtd2) co-authored by Andrew Whelton, associate professor of civil engineering and environmental and ecological engineering at Purdue University and a past speaker at PMI Manufacturing Success Conferences. Faucets, water heaters, toilets and other water systems, including cooling towers, require regular water turnover.

To help businesses reduce water safety risks as they re-open, PMI member Sloan Valve Company has published a Building Commission Guide (tinyurl.com/y9mo8h2e). The guide outlines how to prepare commercial restrooms for reopening and recommends several specific flushing procedures for flushometers on water closets, urinals, tank-type toilets, and automatic faucets.

NSF International, a PMI member and a public health organization, recently discussed the importance of the consistent use of disinfectant residual, such as chlorine, when a building has been underused during COVID-19. In an article on its website (tinyurl.com/ybg8zzv), NSF says maintaining a consistent disinfectant residual through regular use or flushing and with associated treatments, including filtration and pH adjustment, is essential to diminishing biofilm growth. NSF also offers “COVID-19 and its Effect on Your Building Water Health,” which discusses top risk areas and risk prevention steps (tinyurl.com/ydlf8r4).

For more facility safeguarding tips, view the CDC’s “Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation” (tinyurl.com/y88kr2w) and “Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility” (tinyurl.com/y7udykmw).
World Environment Day Inspires Positive Global Changes

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

Millions of people celebrate World Environment Day (worldenvironmentday.global) every June 5, finding inspiration to make positive changes – from improving global water quality to reducing biodiversity loss.

The annual event, sponsored by the United Nations (UN), has become an important platform for promoting progress toward the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. One of those goals focuses on clean water and sanitation (tinyurl.com/y222ygrn) with a target of significantly increasing water-use efficiency across all sectors by 2030.

For many years, PMI members have been making substantial contributions to boosting water efficiency and safety through product innovations.

One way PMI members show their commitment is by manufacturing WaterSense and other water-efficient products that meet high performance standards. WaterSense products – including toilets, showerheads, faucets and urinals – meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements for product performance while using at least 20% less water than required by federal water-efficiency standards. Through the end of 2018, WaterSense, an EPA-sponsored partnership program, has helped Americans save 3.4 trillion gallons of water and more than $84.2 billion in water and energy expenses. PMI and its members also support advocacy efforts to restore America’s aging underground water infrastructure to save water and improve water and sanitation safety.

Hosted by Colombia in partnership with Germany, this year’s World Environment Day focuses on biodiversity and a “Time for Nature.” The UN and its partners offer a guide and toolkit (tinyurl.com/yafcacjz) for businesses, schools, individuals and others to help learn, share and act on helping to end biodiversity loss and preserve natural resources.

To learn more, visit the World Environment Day website (worldenvironmentday.global).

Register for June 24 PMI Virtual Legislative Forum

Federal legislative, housing and trade issues will be the focus of the June 24 PMI Virtual Legislative Forum, to be held online from 10 a.m. to noon Central Time. This important advocacy and government affairs event for all PMI members will feature several key sessions:

“Eye on Housing,” an economic analysis and forecast on the impact of the pandemic on home and apartment building from Robert Dietz, chief economist and senior vice president for economics and housing policy, National Association of Home Builders

“View from the Hill,” an update from a House lawmaker covering the latest on COVID-19 relief packages, the potential of an infrastructure package, and more

“Future of Trade in the Wake of COVID-19” covering supply chain challenges, United States-China tariffs, and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), with trade lawyer Nicole Bivens Collinson

“Outreach to Congress: Take Action and Urge Lawmakers to Support Robust Infrastructure Package” – how PMI members can advocate for the industry going forward

This informative and educational event is a must-attend for those seeking insights into national issues and trends affecting the plumbing manufacturing industry. Register today: tinyurl.com/yabcra7