The Can’t Be Done Coalition: A Group You Don’t Want to Join
by Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director

Have you become a member of the Can’t Be Done Coalition? I have always found it difficult to join, although it’s easy to understand why people do. A friend of mine, troubled by smartphones, tried to join the Black Desk Phone Association. She had no luck whatsoever. She asked Siri, Alexa, and OK Google, but none of them could find a telephone number or address anywhere. If you find yourself wondering whether a top-secret conspiracy is underway against people who don’t believe in change – well, keep reading.

In the early 19th century, the British labor movement protested manufacturers for increasing mechanization. The growth of textile factories using machine looms and knitting frames only served to fuel resistance to new technology in almost all forms. The protesters (nee workers) were led by none other than Ned Ludd. The birth of Luddites was upon us. Ned Ludd was a fictionalized character based upon an individual historians believe was named Edward Ludlam, who allegedly struck the first blow against technology by smashing textile machinery in an 1811 Nottingham protest. The fictionalized Ludd launched angry missives, made fun of industry, and served as the great leader of the movement. Richard Coniff, writing for Smithsonian magazine, wrote that not all workers were bothered by technological advances. “Workers confined their attacks to manufacturers who used machinery in a fraudulent and deceitful manner to get around standard labor practices.”

That new technology creates mighty change seems almost a quaint notion today. Yet, here we are. The nature of the debates has changed. Which is the bigger problem? Is it new technology or the logic deployed by corporations using that technology? In 2007, when Facebook allowed third parties to build applications and integrate them into its platform, more than 2 billion Facebook users likely had their public profiles scraped by third-party users. Had those users intended to share personal information with third-party users? Did they know how to avoid disclosing their personal data to others? The complexity of various social media platforms and their allied applications still have many consumers wondering.

In June 1999, when Napster launched its peer-to-peer Internet file sharing service, MP3 music files were being circulated by more than 80 million users. The system was so popular among college students, it was estimated 61% of all college network traffic was music sharing. The software also raised the ire of musicians everywhere for violating copyright. In 2002, after losing several court battles, Napster declared bankruptcy. In April 2003, Apple launched the iTunes music store allowing users to buy and download songs. In the store’s first week, customers bought more than one million songs. Apple successfully mastered digital rights management and micro-transactions to support its newhit product. Once the music store took off, Apple expanded iTunes to incorporate playlists, podcasts, e-books, video, apps, music streaming and even television. This product morphing came with its own share of legal challenges and headaches, yet Apple iTunes did what the Can’t Be Done Coalition said was impossible.

Our industry is no stranger to the Can’t Be Done Coalition. There were those who said no one would ever bathe in a tub, stand under a spray of water to get cleaned up, or for that matter stand against a wall-mounted fixture instead of a floor trench to address a call of nature. The author H.L. Mencken published “A Neglected Anniversary” reportedly as the history of bathtubs in America. He cited “the example of President Millard Fillmore that, even more than the grudging medical approval, gave the bathtub recognition and respectability in the United States.” The Mencken article was written tongue-firmly-planted-in-cheek but gained great

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PMI’s New Education Manager Guided by Members’ Input

PMI recently talked with Candace Spradley, PMI’s new education manager, about how she plans to shape training programs and learning opportunities to meet the varied needs of PMI members. Here’s what she shared …

What do you most look forward to working on at PMI?
I am so pleased to have the opportunity to create the foundation for educational and training programs to benefit the professional development of PMI members and allied industry organizations.

The plumbing manufacturing industry fits right into my earlier experience working in the design, construction and architecture field, including my work with the American Institute of Architects, so I’m looking forward to returning to my roots.

How are you getting to know PMI staff and members?
I have met with staff in Chicago and am currently in full-fledged learning mode. The recent member needs assessment will be a large component in providing insights for developing future educational plans.

We’re also busy promoting programs for the PMI19 Conference, including the Aspiring Leaders’ Program, which I’m very excited about. I’ve been reaching out to PMI committees and senior leaders at member companies for potential program nominees.

This program is so innovative, and I’ve had the pleasure of speaking with Kim Macuare, who will be leading the program on Nov. 4 at the conference. She’s using the FourSight Creative Thinking System, which offers a unique component that assesses participants’ decision-making styles. Understanding each team member’s style helps optimize team decisions. For example, team members may learn that they have similar styles and may need to either add to the team with a different style to help them through a challenge – or, the team may need to reprioritize how their decisions are made.

How will you use PMI’s recent membership needs assessment to help develop new training programs?
It’s important to conduct needs assessments and also evaluate each program, to see if adjustments need to be made or new programs and courses need to be developed. The recent PMI assessment will serve as the rationale for driving PMI’s educational structure, which will be a blended approach, mixing both live and online courses.

The assessment revealed some very insightful details, including the reasons why members would like to participate in PMI’s educational programs. We found two very different mindsets: the majority of respondents, ages 46-55, would like to participate in education to establish professional credibility and expertise while those age 35 and younger said they would like to gain immediate skills.

This information also reinforces the value of many topics and speakers at the PMI19 Conference, including keynote speaker Lindsey Pollak, who will address the importance of successfully managing a multigenerational workforce with various development needs.

What are the most important educational issues that members need addressed?
One of the biggest hurdles in the plumbing manufacturing industry is recruiting and maintaining qualified personnel. We’ll consider the skills demand plumbing manufacturers are facing and we’ll look to frame some education around human resources needs.

We’ll also weigh educational programs against making a tangible impact on careers – whether our members have employees who are just starting out or are seasoned professionals.

In addition, the member needs assessment brought our attention to the dynamic between PMI members working at larger companies that may have more in-house training resources vs. smaller companies that may need more training support from PMI.

I’m looking forward to applying my experience creating certification programs, networking events, e-learning courses and live meetings to give PMI members access to a mix of training programs that work best to fit their needs.

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notoriety and occasionally was quoted as fact. It was not. Companies that jumped into the business of showerheads had the challenge of promoting showers as a healthy alternative to baths. A 1923 edition of Domestic Engineering magazine noted that promoting showerheads in advertising would give the customer “some concrete idea of just what he wants from his local plumber and why he wants it.”

All of which brings us around to the rapid integration of technology into plumbing products today. There was a wonderful article in the place where food and culture meet – Bon Appétit magazine. It wasn’t about the apple cake of your dreams. It was about toilets. Toilets as a branding device. Toilets as a differentiator in your dining experience. Now that’s something the Can’t Be Done Coalition could never have imagined.
Manufacturing Day Celebrates Industry’s Contributions

Many PMI members, including Viega LLC and Sloan Valve Company, have participated in Manufacturing Day, which occurs on Oct. 4 this year. On this day or on any other deemed “Manufacturing Day” throughout the year, manufacturers open their doors to the public to highlight all their positive contributions to the economy, communities, consumers and more.

This year, Viega’s Manufacturing Day event at its McPherson, Kan., campus includes visits to its extrusion, molding, metal fitting and logistics divisions, as well as a job fair, according to the Manufacturing Day website (tinyurl.com/yy5qk7mk). Also, students from Pratt Community College’s Modern Distribution Sales & Management Program recently spent the day touring the Viega campus’ pipe and fitting manufacturing facility.

By hosting events like these, PMI member companies help build a positive public image of the plumbing manufacturing industry. A recent Forbes article (tinyurl.com/y3o38p7v) discussed the importance of manufacturers and government working together to help the public understand that U.S. manufacturing is an innovative, exciting and growing industry – ripe with excellent career opportunities.

The article emphasized how public misperceptions about manufacturing careers continue to persist, and recent research supports that point. While eight out of 10 Americans believe manufacturing is crucial to maintaining economic prosperity in the U.S., only three out of 10 are likely to steer their children in the direction of a career in manufacturing, according to a Deloitte study on the public perception of manufacturing careers (tinyurl.com/yy2kdyxx). Fewer than five in 10 Americans said they believe manufacturing jobs are interesting, rewarding and secure, the study found.

Nevertheless, when asked what future jobs in manufacturing will look like, the Deloitte survey respondents had exceptionally optimistic views – with 88% saying future manufacturing jobs will require high-tech skills, 81% responding that those jobs will be clean and safe, and 77% believing those jobs will be more innovative.

By working together during and after Manufacturing Day, manufacturers can help address any misperceptions about manufacturing careers, confront the skilled labor shortage facing the industry, and bond with future generations, according to the Manufacturing Day website.

Hosting an event is a sure way to make meaningful connections with potential new workers. According to a Manufacturing Day infographic (tinyurl.com/y35fourt), 84% of students who attend Manufacturing Day events are more convinced that manufacturing provides interesting and rewarding careers. In addition, 64% said they are more motivated to pursue manufacturing careers, and 71% are more likely to tell friends, family or colleagues about manufacturing after attending an event.

Whether your company hosted an event on October 4 or is planning other events throughout the year, there are steps to take to keep the momentum going:

• Share your story with the Manufacturing Day community in the Success Stories section (mfgday.com/success-stories) of mfgday.com.
• Show everyone how you celebrated the day by adding photos of your event to the Manufacturing Day galleries (mfgday.com/galleries).
• Post photos, information and messages of support on Twitter using the hashtag #MFGDay19.

Since 2012 – the first year Manufacturing Day launched, the number of events has grown from about 240 to almost 3,000 in 2017. In 2018, 275,000 people participated in nearly 3,000 events across North America, according to the infographic. Manufacturing Day is put together annually by the National Association of Manufacturers with contributions and support from the Manufacturing Institute and Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

To learn more, find an event or get additional event resources, visit the Manufacturing Day website (mfgday.com).

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A new study by PMI member LIXIL has revealed that 73% of consumers think the plumbing labor shortage will somewhat or greatly affect them in some way.

That is one of the many insightful findings that LIXIL will share from the study as part of its sponsorship of the Human Resources and Workforce Development Panel on November 5 during the PMI19 Conference at the Don CeSar in St. Pete Beach, Fla. LIXIL’s study captures insights from both consumers and plumbers, examining different perceptions to understanding the profession and helping identify solutions to solve the industry’s labor shortage.

Companies choose to sponsor the conference for many reasons: to gain access to influential industry leaders from top plumbing manufacturers across the country; to showcase their latest technology and services; and to show their support and commitment to the plumbing manufacturing industry.

“We believe as plumbing manufacturers, we have a responsibility to not only work on addressing workforce issues but also to create an open dialogue with our industry peers regarding the critical labor shortage facing the industry,” said Troy Benavidez, vice president, public affairs for LIXIL. “Our goal through this conversation is to identify solutions that together can move the needle on closing the skills gap.”

This conversation is important because the labor shortage is such a critical issue – not just to our businesses but to the overall health and wellbeing of the nation, Troy added. “Over 50 years ago we started a ‘Plumbers protect the health of the nation’ campaign, which we believed then and still believe now,” he said.

Troy said that the conference offers a great opportunity for plumbing manufacturers to gather and have conversations about the industry’s future, including the challenges and opportunities ahead. “PMI brings the industry together to create solutions and we are proud to support the conference for another year,” he added.

Learn more about the PMI19 Conference: safeplumbing.org/2019-pmi-conference

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Gain Insights on Industry Challenges
Expand Your Technical Expertise and Credibility
Engage With Industry Peers
Sharpen Your Skills at Our New Aspiring Leaders’ Program

PLUMBING MANUFACTURERS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PMI CONFERENCE • NOVEMBER 4–7
The Don Cesar • St. Pete Beach, Florida
Celebrate Diversity and Expand Industry’s Talent Base

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

Many PMI members have created formal diversity and inclusion policies and programs that support employees in many ways. These kinds of efforts help to promote women to leadership roles, hire a broad range of workers with diverse skills, form support networks for employees with disabilities, and much more.

For example, Masco Corporation, the parent company of PMI member companies Brasscraft Manufacturing Company, Delta Faucet Company, and Hansgrohe, Inc., committed $1 million of its 2018 charitable contributions to the “Masco Million Differences” campaign supporting diversity and inclusivity in America’s corporate workplaces, according to a Masco news release. PMI members Kohler Co. (tinyurl.com/y5wg9nxg) and Moen Incorporated (tinyurl.com/y48kxvtr) include their diversity and inclusion statements on their websites. And LIXIL (tinyurl.com/yv6t9ocm) has set up a Diversity Promotion Office to advance careers for women, including placing them in senior leadership roles.

With October designated as Global Diversity Awareness Month and National Diversity Day falling on Oct. 4, PMI members will have plenty of opportunities to celebrate and grow their efforts to advocate for diversity, inclusion and workplace development.

PMI19 Conference to have two sessions on workplace development

New York Times bestselling author Lindsey Pollak will open the PMI19 Conference on Nov. 4 with a presentation on “The Remix: How to Lead and Succeed in the Multigenerational Workplace.” A leading expert on millennials and the multigenerational workplace, Lindsey will provide plenty of tips to PMI members on how to manage the expectations of these talented workers.

The next day, PMI members interested in learning more about diversity and skills gap issues facing the industry can attend a session featuring a panel of human resources and workplace development experts. To be sponsored by LIXIL and moderated by Troy Benavidez, vice president, public affairs, LIXIL, the panel will discuss how to adapt to an evolving manufacturing environment that requires new and different technical and leadership skills. Panel participants will include Keith James, founder, Keith James PLLC; Gretchen Morgan, director HR, Kitchen & Bath Americas at Kohler Co.; Dawn Rowley, executive & leadership coach, founder, Bench-Strength Coaching, LLC; and Cindy Sheridan, CAE, chief operating officer, PHCC Educational Foundation.

Attracting the right mix of workers is imperative

As manufacturers face a tightening labor market and skills gap challenges, attracting the right mix of workers is imperative. Businesses that build relationships with organizations such as national professional associations, educational institutions, and federal and local employment agencies can build a more diverse workforce while finding workers experienced in advanced manufacturing technology, according to a PWC report on diversity and inclusion (tinyurl.com/y3bje9mm).

A recent article by TalentLyft (tinyurl.com/y5bm6hry) highlighted the many benefits of building a diverse workforce, including more innovation, better decision making, faster problem solving, increased creativity, greater profits, reduced employee turnover, enhanced company reputation, improved hiring results, and higher employee engagement.

Research from McKinsey & Company (tinyurl.com/y9rsnkfd) has revealed that gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to perform better than their peers and ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to do the same.

National Diversity Day was designated to celebrate and embrace everyone – no matter their differences – to vow acceptance and tolerance and to learn about different cultures and ideologies, according to Diversity Promotions, the organization that established National Diversity Day in 2005. Global Diversity Month is celebrated by businesses, educational institutions and other organizations to honor the diverse minds and beliefs held by all cultures around the world.

How will your company celebrate diversity and inclusion this month? Be sure to share your company’s plans and promote your diversity programs using the hashtags #GlobalDiversityAwarenessMonth and #NationalDiversityDay on social media.
Honestly, a career in plumbing manufacturing industry because:

I started a career in the plumbing manufacturing industry because: Honestly, a career in plumbing manufacturing was never on my radar when I was in school. I was recruited by Brasscraft and it has been a fulfilling journey that has spanned 25 years. The fact that I have spent my entire career with Brasscraft speaks to the potential and attractiveness that this industry offers. At Brasscraft, I have always prided myself on the innovative and quality products that we provide to sustaining the plumbing systems, which are critical lifeline systems.

Advice I’d give someone just starting their career in the plumbing manufacturing industry: Many people do not have a good understanding of how attractive opportunities are within the plumbing manufacturing industry. It is a specialized profession for which there is a high demand, and it comes with very attractive pay structures and perks. The industry provides experience and opportunity for individuals to continue to advance in the field or move into other industries, utilizing their years of real-world experience. A career in the plumbing trade or plumbing manufacturing can be very rewarding.

If I weren’t in the plumbing manufacturing industry: I’d be working in the world of finance, which I have always been fascinated with, and working in investment banking would have been a top choice. Investment banking is an extremely challenging field and plays a critical role in not only shaping companies and industries, but ultimately the economic picture of the country.

What is your current role in PMI? What do you hope to accomplish in this role? I stay actively engaged with the various initiatives that PMI undertakes on behalf of the plumbing industry and I’m a PMI ambassador, so I help spread the word at my company about important issues that PMI is working on. The Tech Talk meeting is one of many good examples of how PMI keeps members abreast on the latest issues/trends impacting the industry and provides the platform to voice our feedback and position.

I’m currently reading: “Becoming Michelle Obama.” It is a great read about a love story of opposites and a political saga by a woman who was skeptical – if not outright disdainful – of politics, who tried to apply the brakes where she could, and who ultimately transcended her worries to become one of the most popular first ladies in history.

My hidden professional talent is: I am good with numbers and can do math calculations in my head quickly. At meetings where we are dealing with numbers (financials, projections, etc.), I am often the first one to blurt out close estimations to what those could be before others who are using calculators.

Best advice I ever received: It is not the length of life, but the depth of life.

My favorite movie: “Shawshank Redemption.” It’s a great story with an interesting ending that is complemented by the acting skills of Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman.

When I face a challenge at work (or in life): I draw strength from the fact that there are a lot more people in this world who are facing far more challenging situations in their lives. Most challenges are opportunities in life that shape you into becoming a more capable and stronger individual.

About my family: I have been blessed with three wonderful boys and a great

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The Multigenerational Workforce: Bridging the ‘Age Gap’

By Genevieve Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

During the upcoming PMI19 Conference, featured speaker Lindsey Pol- lak will lead a workshop during the Aspiring Leaders’ Program on Nov. 4 and open the next day’s proceedings with a keynote presentation, titled “The Remix: How to Lead and Succeed in the Multigenerational Workplace,” a reflection of her book of the same title.

Millennials have become the largest generation in the U.S. workforce, and Generation X workers are right behind them. Leaders and organizations must embrace the new ways of working that appeal to these digital-first generations, while continuing to appeal to Baby Boomers and Generation X, who will likely remain in the workforce for many years to come.

Within any organization, team, meeting, or marketing opportunity, you will likely find any combination of generations, each with their own attitudes, expectations and professional styles. To lead and succeed in business today, you must adjust to how Millennials work while continuing to accommodate more experienced colleagues.

During her PMI19 presentation, Lindsey will discuss how to adapt and win through proven strategies that serve all generations’ needs. The result will be a workplace that blends the best of each generation’s ideas and practices to design a smarter, more inclusive work environment for everyone.

In her book and during her presentation, Lindsey combines the most recent publicly available data with her own original research, using examples from Fortune 500 companies and other top organizations. She outlines the ways businesses, executives, mid-level managers, employees and entrepreneurs can tackle situations that may arise when diverse styles clash and provides clear strategies to turn generational diversity into business opportunity.

In a poll conducted by Randstad US (tinyurl.com/y3a4qahv), a majority of respondents said they prefer having work colleagues of different ages and believe that a variety of ages in the workplace is mutually beneficial. With that being said, the age gap is the reason that communication between generations can break down.

Results from the same Randstad US poll showed that 81% of workers agree that the primary difference between generations in the workplace is communication styles, and that 38% of workers find it difficult to communicate with coworkers who are not in their age group. However, men are nearly twice as likely as women to report difficulty communicating with coworkers outside of their generation.

Aside from the challenges of bringing generations together, when employees come to the point of understanding and effectively communicating, there is great potential to increase worker productivity and morale, regardless of the age of the workers.

Recent articles in Buildings magazine, “Managing the Multigenerational Workforce,” (tinyurl.com/y3frsal) and Forbes, “Why A Multigenerational Workforce Is A Competitive Advantage,” (tinyurl.com/yylhz8em) give further insights into the challenges and opportunities facing many kinds of businesses today, such as knowledge transfer and the importance of mentoring.

As PMI begins to diversify its membership across generations, job functions, gender and more, its members will gain valuable insight from Lindsey’s presentation and from further exploring the workplace issues she will discuss.

Getting to Know Mahesh Cheerla

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partner who helps me maintain the right balance between my work and personal life. My eldest son is serving in the Air Force, and our middle son is a sophomore in high school who keeps me busy in the evenings and on weekends as he pursues his artistic talents in music and drama. Our youngest wraps up his middle school this year.

In my spare time: Spare time… it is a hard one to come by. I enjoy traveling and, with the kids getting close to getting out of our nest, we do our best to spend as much time as possible with them. Mind you, it is a challenge, as we must really work hard to figure out what engages them with us!
NSF International Celebrates 75th Anniversary

PMI allied member NSF International celebrated its 75th anniversary recently during a gathering at its global headquarters in Ann Arbor, Mich. Speakers included NSF International President and CEO Kevan Lawlor, NSF International Board Chairman Dick Rabbideau, U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich. 12) and a host of other dignitaries representing state and local governments, academia, and public and environmental health.

Two Win Gift Cards in Survey Drawing

Fred Grable from the International Code Council and Rick McKee from Pfister are the winners of the PMI Pride $75 Amazon gift card drawing for PMI members who participated in the recent members’ survey. Thanks to all who responded to the survey and provided valuable feedback for the good of PMI members and the plumbing manufacturing industry!