One of the tenets of employee assistance is that EAPs serve two clients: the employee and the employer. In approaching the employer client, we draw on a strong foundation of working with behavioral risk, from alcohol and drug abuse to violence to gambling addictions. We have skills to assess, intervene, and refer at the individual, departmental, and organizational levels, and we have specialized knowledge about a wide range of workplace issues that affect productivity and effectiveness.

In many respects, our main challenge in providing services to the employer client has been to remain nimble enough to keep up with changing needs. We’ve continuously had to calculate ways to apply our knowledge, to adapt and stay relevant, and to find means to effectively address emerging issues as the workplace and workforce evolve.

A newer challenge, however, has been to step outside our clinical and consulting roles and develop a business terminology and practice skills to help us stay on the employer spreadsheet. A recent article in Workforce Management describes how the human resources field is fighting to stay essential and avoid being outsourced as the business world becomes ever flatter. “Functions that do not have a clearly visible impact on profits are doomed to battle for funding or may face elimination,” the article states.

This is a familiar theme to a lot of EA professionals. Like human resources specialists, we’ve faced pressure to demonstrate value. We know we must translate our services into the language that employers and their chief financial officers speak. But doing these things requires business knowledge so we can better understand the company’s strategic goals and communicate about related behavioral risk factors, such as lost productivity, increased absenteeism, and more workers’ compensation claims.

It also requires that we utilize marketing skills to frame EA professionals as essential knowledge partners involved in bottom-line impact functions. Adding business skills to our repertoires is a good step toward remaining strong in the world of work.

This issue of the Journal contains five articles that discuss how EAPs can provide organizational service. The articles address topics with which EA professionals are familiar, such as alcohol abuse and workplace violence, as well as emerging concerns and technologies such as family responsibilities discrimination and online health risk assessments. Together, these articles offer a variety of perspectives on organizational risk management that may provide ideas on how EA professionals can better understand and meet the needs of employer clients.

Also included is an article that discusses the results of a recent survey of EA professionals on ethics within the industry. The article is not only a barometer of the state of ethical conduct within our profession, but also a call to action--readers are asked to provide feedback via e-mail. I hope all of you will review the article and share your thoughts.

I also commend to you the article on using employee wage garnishments as a source of referrals to an EAP. Financial concerns are affecting a growing number of workers, and EA professionals can minimize the impact on employees and employers alike by arranging financial education seminars and offering other resources.

Finally, I would like to welcome two new members to the Communications Advisory Subcommittee: Don Jorgensen and Dave Sharar. Don is a past president of EAPA and president of the Jorgensen/Brooks Group, and Dave is managing director of Chestnut Global Partners and a frequent contributor to the Journal. Thanks to both of them for agreeing to help with the Journal, the EAPA Website, and other communications tools and strategies. Their experience and perspectives will be valuable additions to the subcommittee.

EAPA Communications Advisory Subcommittee

Maria Hartley, Chair • Columbia, S.C. (803) 376-2668 mariapage@mchsi.com
Mark Attridge • Minneapolis, Minn. (763) 797-2719 mark@attridgestudios.com
Nancy R. Board • Seattle, Wash. (206) 615-2512 nbboard@psc.gov
Tamara Cagney • Livermore, Calif. (925) 294-2200 tcagney@sandia.gov
Joan Clark • Myrtle Beach, S.C. (843) 449-8318 copingeaap@sc.rr.com
Mark Cohen • Rockville Center, N.Y. (516) 536-1570 mcopherintacons@aol.com
Donald Jorgensen • Tucson, Ariz. (520) 906-9148 don@jorgensenbrooks.com
Eduardo Lambardi • Buenos Aires, Argentina 5411-4706-0390 elambardi@eelatina.com
Bruce Prevatt • Tallahassee, Fla. (904) 644-2288 bprevatt@admin.fsu.edu
David Sharar • Bloomington, Ill. (309) 820-3570 dsharar@chestnut.org