

## The Emerging Leaders Alliance (ELA) Conference: What to Expect

In July, I was selected as one of eight to represent ASCE at the ELA conference. I was very excited and knew that I would be in for a great learning experience! The three-day conference hosted a series of talented speakers, covering a variety of pertinent topics.

Bob Heavers, of **Priority Management**, developer and team success mentor for 35 years, delivered dynamic sessions on “Becoming an Indispensable Leader” and “Building Highly Productive Relationships that Matter”. He employed tools, such as the **Social Styles Model**, to facilitate each individual’s grasp of how those around us perceive our actions, and to shine a light on potential weaknesses with room for improvement.

We also heard from Rahul Dogra, who has over sixteen years of experience managing an international software company. He opened discussions on “Making the Transition from Technical to Management” and “Developing Emotional Intelligence for Success”. Rahul’s dynamic talks helped attendees explore the difference between a technical expert and an excellent manager. Such discussions aided audience members to explore what it really means to have emotional intelligence.



*Bob Heavers, of Priority Management*

The highlight of day one had to be the “architecture” competition. Each group at a table made up one team. Every team member had a specific title and task. I worked as the observer. I had to look at an artfully crafted gum drop and tooth pick masterpiece and deliver a description to the runner. The runner was not allowed to ask me any questions about what I described to him. The runner then had to deliver what he got from the observer to the builder. The objective was to convey instructions such that your builder could construct an exact replica, down to the correct colors of both gum drops and toothpicks... Some tables finished products looked like large buildings, others like monsters. We all learned important lessons about our own communication abilities and capacity for interpreting others.

Mike Giorgione of **Leading Leaders, LLC**, Mo Hamilton of **Toastmasters International**, and Betty Shanahan from the **Society of Women Engineers** also brought their talents to the event. Mike, with a fruitful career in both the military and consulting as an engineer, shared a wealth of

experience with us and highlighted the importance of successfully working through challenges. He taught specific examples, which illuminated how knowing yourself and your mission will help you best lead your team.

**Mo Hamilton**, a Governor of Toastmasters and seasoned veteran of law enforcement, used engaging activities to get teams talking, discussing experiences of conflict, and how such challenges are best handled. Later, **Betty Shanahan** emphasized where our society, particularly fields like engineering, stand with cultural and gender equality, and how we can all contribute to improve the workplace for peers from all backgrounds.

On the final day, the conference hosted **Jeffery Cufau** of **Idea Architects**. Jeffrey gave us insights into how companies, such as **Ideo**, cultivate a work environment that fosters innovation. We explored how, as leaders, we can foster team dynamics that result in both happy and productive team members.

At the end of our second full conference day, the ASCE organizing team took all the sponsored attendees out for dinner to discuss our experiences and thoughts on improving the conference. This was a great chance to get to know some successful engineering leaders from across the country. Everyone's experience is different and all had a unique perspective to offer. The ASCE team was a gracious host.

I strongly encourage any young professional Civil Engineer involved with ASCE to apply for the opportunity to attend the ELA conference. The viewpoints explored and relationships developed at the conference all contribute to gaining a deeper understanding of management, leadership and how to be your own personal best.

**Melissa Butcher**

