

The Vegetation Manager

Serving the vegetation management industry

SPRING 2015

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PVMAA - The New Frontier

Business Insight
**Economic Downturn,
Change and Opportunities**

Why I Became
Laura Hammer

Featured Article
It starts with a seed



Spring Edition



The Vegetation Manager

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Why I Became

Have you ever considered quitting your desk job and choosing to follow a career that allows you to work in the great outdoors? Owner of Cortex Management Inc, Laura Hammer, made that choice last year and hasn't looked back. Hammer remembers making the decision on a warm summer day while she sat shivering in her office, wearing a sweater, because the air conditioning was overpowering. 'I had a great view of the Edmonton river valley and I could see everyone outside while I was stuck inside. I remembered when summers meant working outside and I missed it terribly,' Hammer recalled.

It wasn't just her chilly office or love for the great outdoors that made Hammer yearn for something more than a regular nine to five job. She wanted to step out of her comfort zone and take a risk before it was too late and she lost her courage. 'I'm still young and I know it gets harder to take risks the older you get so I came to the conclusion that 'it's now or never' ", she said. It also helped that her husband, Mike Hammer, had a stable income and emotionally supported her aspirations 100 per cent.

In March 2014, Hammer started Cortex Management Inc, a small herbicide company that focuses on industrial, commercial and residential herbicide application. This company also provides Integrated Pest Management (IPM) consulting, and herbicide applicator instruction. When it comes to pesticide application, Hammer believes that Cortex Management has a responsibility to its peers in the industry as well as its clients. She explained, 'I have always seen my role as protecting pesticides as a tool in our tool box. The only way to do this is to use them responsibly and demonstrate our competence to the public. We have to demonstrate this professionalism by way of our credentials and skill in the field.'

Hammer is strategic and selective of the projects Cortex Management takes on. 'At this point, I'm not trying to be everything to everyone. I'm capitalizing on my strengths and finding work I know I can do very well to build a solid foundation and reputation,' said Hammer. She's also conscious of the company's growth. 'I'm trying to grow slow and steady so that we can do every job well, rather than committing to lots of jobs and having marginal results.'

As with any successful workplace, the staff at Cortex Management are an integral part of the company's success. Hammer does her best to hire individuals who will be cut-out for the adventurous position of herbicide sprayer. On the Cortex Management website, Hammer took special care to entice and deter potential candidates. Here's an excerpt from the careers section of the website:

Are you passionate about....paying for school? Summer work? Want to finish school debt free? We can help you with that! We won't lie. It's not easy....You'll work hard. You'll be tired, maybe sore. You'll be dirty. You might be away from home and miss your bed, clean laundry, and your social life (for 4 months) but.... You will make MONEY this summer.

It may sound obvious, but Hammer has found that the best employees are often those who need to make money and are determined to prove themselves. She reiterated, 'Yes, they need to be open to adventure and be fully committed for the duration of the summer, but most of all they need to need work. If they don't need work, I don't need them.'

Article Continued...

After selecting quality staff members, Hammer's main priority is making sure the staff have the tools they need to do their job well. She explained, "With everything I do: design, build or buy, I ask myself if this will be a good fit for the staff. If they are not comfortable, they will make mistakes and clients will be dissatisfied."

Hammer has enjoyed the freedom of entrepreneurship but has still felt the sometimes overwhelming sense of responsibility that rests solely on her shoulders. She said, "I quickly, went from the joy of not having anyone to tell me what to do anymore, to the shocking realization that I have no one to tell me what to do anymore!" Hammer has learned to manage this responsibility by recognizing that she can't do it all by herself and that it's ok to ask for help. She adds, "I am so much better for my staff and clients when I enlist the help of other professionals. Learning to delegate has saved my sanity and my company is stronger because of it."

It may sound as though Hammer has got it all figured out but she is the first to admit that being an entrepreneur is far from glamorous. She has had some really tough days. Days when she's had to deal with financial issues, equipment malfunctioning, vehicles getting stuck and/or problems with staff. On one of those particularly trying days she happened to return to her truck, after leaving the bush, only to find a bear keeping close watch over the driver-side door. Even with those frustrating moments in the back of her mind, Hammer still thinks of her job as, "so much fun," and adds, "every time something like that happens, I always say to myself, 'this is still better than being in an office,' and I believe that means I'm in the right place for me."

Hammer has a combined 17 years of experience in the natural resources industry. She has a diploma from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in Forest Technology. From the University of Alberta, she has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture specializing in Plant Science. She also worked for the Government of Alberta as the Pesticide Policy Advisor for Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Julie Thoring, Freelancer



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Featured Article

**"The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see."
- Winston S. Churchill**

It starts with a seed

Nobody knows better than a vegetation manager how plants grow. With the right conditions and a good climate, a strong, viable tree can emerge from the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant seed.

Stories of origin – where you came from – vary greatly. But the best stories, and the most compelling, are the stories of humble origins; the small starters who keep their focus, who use their strengths and who eventually grow up to do great things.

The Professional Vegetation Managers Association is, today, an industry leader with influence and a clear voice, but our story of origin is humble. As we move into the future with a new name and a stronger focus, we need to look back at where we began, so that, as Churchill said, we can see even further forward.

Environmental pressures
By the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s ecological awareness and environmentalism was coming into the public consciousness. A fear of unfettered industrial use of chemicals in the landscape was growing and in 1973 the provincial government called for input into public hearings on the use of non-agricultural use of pesticides. An ad hoc committee, the 'Industrial Vegetation Management Committee', was formed to respond, chaired by Fred McComb of Molsberry and assisted by Dr Vanden Born, a respected scientist.

The report of the committee took two years to put together before it was submitted in 1974. It outlined vegetation management needs by industry segment and talked about the cost benefits of safety and procedures. Effectively, it became the pre-cursor to the standards of good practice.

'We even did it up nicely with a 'professional' typewriter," remembers past IVMAA President, Neil Thiessen. 'And then the committee was dissolved and we celebrated a job well done.'

But it wasn't the end. Over drinks at the Edmonton Petroleum Club, marking the successful completion of the report, Thiessen and another member, Stan Powers, from Alberta Agriculture, decided to lobby the group to continue the committee, possibly even to form an official association.

'We wanted to represent the concerns of the non-agricultural use of chemicals, particularly herbicides," Thiessen explains.

Indeed, there were continuing issues that needed to be addressed. It was the time when 2,4,5-T was banned and feelings around the use of chemicals and herbicides were still high.

Finally, in 1978, the Industrial Vegetation Management Association of Alberta was registered, with 10 charter members including Thiessen, Ed Kelly, Ron Standish and others. By the end of the year the association had quadrupled in size with 44 members and an income of \$1,250, and had established a magazine ('The Reporter' edited by Ed Kelly) and seven sub-committees, some of which still exist today.

In the 1980s growth was steady, with membership numbers more than doubling and budgets increasing to \$50,000. Most notably, the IVMAA had broken ground and become a model for other provincial organizations that would grow across Canada. The small seed that would become the PVMA tree was sprouting.

continued on next page...

Featured Article Continued...

IVMAA People

One of the most important things the IVMAA has done is to bring people together. Frequent conferences have drawn participants from many jurisdictions and related industries, not only for education and work, but also for fun. (People need to enjoy what they do) In fact, people are what has kept the PVMA/IVMAA going for nearly four decades. Many early members are still active in the association today and a large number of past Presidents still help and support the organization. Thousands of volunteer hours have gone into the many IVMAA committees.

It's these committees that have produced the UTW-UTT program, approved by the industry as well as the Provincial Government. The committees have also produced the Operating Protocol Manuals, which provide guidance and best practice standards for countless organizations across the country.

Staying relevant

Through the 1990s and 2000s, the IVMAA never sat back, folded its arms and said, 'that's it. We've achieved everything'. Rather, it continued to become more and more professional as the industry around it matured.

Not only has it provided training and education to members, who have then taken their knowledge to provide best practice vegetation control services to green spaces along Canada's infrastructure, it has also provided vital networking opportunities for members.

'Some organizations struggle and some fail, but the IVMAA continued to embrace the philosophy of continuous improvement,' explains Neil Thiessen. 'That has kept the IVMAA relevant to the members and the industry.'

The Operating Protocol Manuals continue to be revised so that they are always up to date and useful to industry stakeholders. The PVMA Codes of Conduct have assisted in raising the bar for operational excellence. And the UTW-UTT program has become the gold standard.

New name, new focus



In 2014, another major step in the transitioning of the IVMAA to remain strong and relevant for many stakeholders was when the membership approved the new objectives, bylaws and name change.

The IVMAA officially became the Professional Vegetation Managers Association (PVMA). According to current President, Brandon Tupper, there are a few reasons for the new name. 'We wanted people to notice that something has been changing at the organisation,' he explains. 'Key committees are taking new directions and there are new ideas coming in, so we felt the time was right for a rebrand.'

The Board also felt that the new name better represents today's membership. 'We could see that not everyone related to the word 'industrial',' says Tupper. Dropping 'industrial' for 'professional' allows more people and groups to join and participate.

Bringing in an individual membership model to replace the former 'organisations as members' model has provided a place for the small companies and individuals to have their say. It also allows people to focus on the industry rather than on the competition. And, as membership now crosses provincial borders, it was important to get rid of the geographical limitations of the name 'Alberta'.

'The name change is a symbol or metaphor, that's going to allow the door to really open us to bigger things,' explains Tupper.

In 2011, exciting and new ideas around things like professional certification, defined standards and good practices were developed by a strategic planning group. However, the bylaws and corporate governance made it difficult to put them into practice. Since then, the Executive Director has been working on the organisational structures of the PVMA so that they allow change and innovation to happen smoothly rather than being a stumbling block to the organisation moving forward.

In the future

It's a given that the vegetation management industry will face challenges. And in the next ten years, these are likely to come from public pressure, government regulation and the labour force.

The use and regulation of pesticides was the issue that provided the catalyst for the IVMAA to be formed, and it continues to be an issue today.

Basically, pesticides are not popular.

They have always been a necessary tool in effective vegetation management, but with environmental groups shining a continual spotlight on them, they are firmly on the radars of government regulators. This will not be going away soon, if ever, and it will be up to the PVMA to communicate effectively, both with the general population as well as with government, that its best practices are backed up by strong, evidence-based, scientific proofs.

Brandon Tupper says that it's up to the industry as a whole to come up with strategies on how to deal with these challenges. 'If we don't stay organised and continually challenge our industry, we will see pressure from government regulators. We need to stay current, and stay active.'

Tupper is hopeful that the new name and new, more individual, membership structure will drive current and future members to become more active in the association. He strongly believes that if members of the industry come together, it will be easier to meet the challenges to vegetation management head on.

'The PVMA is needed now. And it's going to be needed in 20 years as well,' he says. 'To walk away from the mission is not an option. We need a unified voice to meet the challenges that are coming for our industry. And we have created an excellent foundation.'

Telling the story well

Perhaps the hardest challenge for the PVMA is to communicate the value of the industry, clearly and transparently to a wider audience. 'We need that hook,' explains Tupper, 'that clear, definite answer to the question of 'why'. But I believe it is coming. Once we identify that, so many things will come in line. It will be exciting to be part of the movement.'

Vegetation management has a broader story to tell, and the benefits it brings to society at large, as well as to the environment, are not well known. Managing the green spaces alongside pipelines, roadsides, railways, utilities, oil and gas and other facilities, not only provides a safe work space, makes fire less likely and suppresses noxious weeds, but also increases bio diversity, carbon capture and storm water retention. Environmentally, managing the green spaces increases migratory bird habitats, pollinator habitats and agricultural yields. It also protects the structures surrounded by the green space. Last but not least, it looks great.

We have an important industry that does good things in the world. Our biggest challenge will be to communicate that as well and as widely as we can.

What's coming

In the near future, the PVMA will be working to continue to engage its membership by providing benefits that they see as relevant, particularly through using digital media and online. Further into the future, the organisation aims to be the leader in training and certification (UTT and UTW certification) a leader in self-governance, and an authority for standards and best practices.

As the current President, Brandon Tupper is excited about it. 'I see a very positive future for the association,' he says. 'The path to get there is taking shape.'

As a former President, Neil Thiessen is excited too. 'As a founding member it is humbling to watch the younger generation take on new and exciting challenges,' he says. The seed planted by a few dedicated people all those years ago is growing into a tree that will be strong enough to stand and flourish into the future.

CALL TO ACTION?

Cecily Paterson, Freelancer



PVMA Committee Report

The Fall IVMAA AGM was held on October 23, 2014 at Gateway Entertainment Centre: 3412 - Gateway Blvd Edmonton, AB from 9:00AM-2:00PM. The theme for the meeting was Safety and Emergency Response. Geoff Thompson-Engage Agro & Boris Makale - Account Manager Worker's Compensation Board gave presentations to those in attendance. The AGM addressed issues of new bylaws, new objectives and a name change for the Association.

The 2015 PVMA Conference planning committee has met many times over the past year and a half to plan for the upcoming conference. Committee members include; Kevin Tritten, Angus Hill, Mike Bates, Darrell Chambers, Daryl Wright, Neil Thiessen & myself. The conference is entitled Excellence by Design, and will be held at the Edmonton Marriott River Cree Resort, 300 East Lapotac Blvd. Edmonton, AB from Tuesday March 24-Thursday March 26, 2015. We have a great line up of speakers coming, and applications have been submitted to earn CEC's & CEU's. New for 2015 we will be starting the conference earlier on the Tuesday, and therefore we will also be done earlier on the Thursday. More details about the conference can be found on the website at www.ivmaa.com.

2015 PVMA CONFERENCE
EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN





Our Membership

Individual Membership:

Our membership is open to all the individuals whose knowledge and skills help keep the green spaces of Alberta's infrastructure safe for all to enjoy. They come together to network, share ideas, provide feedback on standards and good practices, become educated on standards and good practices. Individuals who want to making a difference have opportunities to do so by joining committee's or the Board of Directors. To become an individual member of the IVMAA visit our website.

Corporate Partners:

Our Corporate partners provide products and services. Their contribution to our industry include: Research and development of new technologies, safety products, insurance opportunities, Bringing new concepts of safety, technologies and products to the individual membership.

Sustaining Sponsorship:

Acknowledge how important maintaining the green spaces on Alberta's infrastructure is to the public. These sustaining sponsors aid this industry to maintain professionalism, set the best standards and good practices and keep the public's confidence. A sustaining sponsor may not be involved with day to day activities of the association but has a influence on the direction it takes. The financial support given by these organizations ensures the long term growth and success of the IVMAA.

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PVMA PRESIDENT RECOGNITION OF MEMBER VOLUNTEERS



The following is the Summary of Volunteers 2012 to 2015 Report

2012 - 2013 COMMITTEE'S

SEMINAR COMMITTEE

Maurice Pelletier City of Edmonton
Darrell Chambers Engage Agro
Candice Manshrek Dow Agro
Dave Corry UAP
Kevin Tritten Alta Link
Treena Oglanski Carrilion
Brandon Tupper Marksmen
Neil Thiessen IVMAA
Shannon Tritten IVMAA
Jon Sloman Day Chair, Marksmen

Daryl Wright Powerpoint, Marksmen
Tyson Mitchell Day Chair, Mitcho Spraying
Kevin Plain Day Chair, Renu-L-Tech
Keith Sandtflaben Awards presentation, West Country
** Various volunteers who helped with CEC's*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brandon Tupper Marksmen Vegetation Management Inc.
Gary Godberson Westcountry Oilfield Services
Art Preachuk County of Red Deer AAAF
John Moir Asplundh

Maurice Pelletier City of Edmonton
Darrell Chambers Engage Agro
Mark Alberts Dow Agro Sciences
Ron Standish True North Specialties
Keith Sandtflaben Westcountry Oilfield Services

UTT/ UTW COMMITTEE & SUB COMMITTEE

Angus Hill Davey Tree
Kevin Tritten Altalink
Barry Rothel Arbortec

2013 - 2014 COMMITTEE'S

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brandon Tupper
Codie Anderson
Angus Hill
Vaughn Leuschen
Keith Sanftleben
Art Preachuk
Wade Smith
Gary Godberson
Michael Badger

GOVERNMENT LIASON

Michael Badger

SPRING TRAINING CAMP

Art Preachuk

AWARDS COMMITTEE

Brandon Tupper

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Codie Anderson

PROTOCOL COMMITTEE

Vaughn Leuschen

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Art Preachuk

UTT/UTW COMMITTEE

Angus Hill

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Keith Sandtflaben West Country Oilfield Services
Ian McDonald Ace Vegetation
Wade Smith Southbrook Safety
Neil Thiessen IVMAA

2014 - 2015 COMMITTEE'S

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brandon Tupper
Codie Anderson
Wade Smith
Michael Badger
Keith Sanftleben
Candice Manshrek
Mike Bates
Vaughn Leuschen
Angus Hill

MEMBERSHIP

Codie Anderson

BYLAWS COMMITTEE

Codie Anderson
Neil Thiessen
Ian McDonald
Keith Sanftleben

UTW/UTT COMMITTEE: Board of Governors

John Moir
Richard Law
Kevin Tritten
Angus Hill
Gerry Maksymchuk

POLICIES & PROCEDURE WORKING COMMITTEE

John Moir

> FINANCE & CONTRACTS WORKING COMMITTEE

Richard Law

> CURRICULUM DEV. & DESIGN WORKING COMMITTEE

Kevin Tritten

> CERTIFICATION WORKING COMMITTEE

Angus Hill

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Wade Smith
Keith Sanftleben
Ian McDonald
Neil Thiessen

CASINO SUB COMMITTEE

Ron Standish
Shannon Tritten
Neil Thiessen
Keith Sanftleben
Julie Dixon
Treena Olanski
Ron Standish
Candice Manshrek
Mike Bates
Gary Murdoch
Brandon Tupper
Daryl Wright
Laura Hammer
Keli Moiruk
Kristen Steinke
Michael Badger
Jo McDonald
Jerry Maksymchuk
Jeanne Maksymchuk
Michele Kobylnyk
Steve Baylis
JoAnne Ferron
Sarah Bailey
Rob Bernard
Jesse Imbeault
Darrell Chambers
Mary Anne Plain
Geoff Thompson
Angus Hill

SEMINAR COMMITTEE

Candice Manshrek
Kevin Tritten
Darrell Chambers
Michael Bates
Daryl Wright

FALL GENERAL MEETING 2014

Candice Manshrek

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Keith Sandtflaben
Neil Thiessen

PROTOCOL COMMITTEE

Vaughn Leushen
Dan Eddy
Gwen Shrimpton

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Mike Bates

GOVERNMENT LIANSON COMMITTEE

Michael Badger

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25TH ANNUAL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

SHANNON ZEMANEK IS THE WINNER OF THE INDUSTRIAL VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA'S (IVMAA) 25TH ANNUAL \$1000 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP. AFTER REVIEWING HER ESSAY, THE IVMAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHOSE ZEMANEK AS THE SCHOLARSHIP WINNER BECAUSE OF HER DEDICATION TO INCREASING HER KNOWLEDGE IN THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY.

2014

Zemanek grew up on a grain and cattle farm outside Viking, Alberta. She is currently working towards her Environmental Management Degree, majoring in Reclamation/Remediation, at Lakeland College in Vermillion, Alberta. In her IVMAA Scholarship essay, Zemanek said she chose focus on Reclamation/Remediation because she is, "passionate about the environment and reducing the negative impact on all forms of nature."

In addition to pursuing a degree in Environmental Management, Zemanek has demonstrated her passion for the environment and vegetation management by

obtaining summer employment in her field of study. She worked as a Summer Resource Technician for Ducks Unlimited in 2012 and 2013 and more recently as a Custom Sprayer for the Flagstaff County in the summer of 2014.

Obtaining employment in her field has proved to be invaluable for Zemanek as she has gleaned valuable experience that will help her in her future career. While working as a Custom Sprayer, Zemanek developed a sharp eye for numerous species of weeds. She explained her skill development in this way, "As the summer went on, and I became more confident with my job, I would find myself identifying weeds on the side of the road while driving down the highway at

100 kilometres per hour."

As a custom sprayer, Zemanek gained experience in integrated vegetation management strategies when dealing with a Leafy Spurge infestation that was near a river. Zemanek and her coworkers teamed-up with a local goat farmer and arranged to have a herd of goats graze near the river where chemical herbicides could not be used. Even though the goat is one of the only livestock that will eat Leafy Spurge, Zemanek noted that they are not what made this project unique. She explained that it was the partnership with the goat farmer and the community that made this project stand-out as a success. "Contracting a local goat farmer

<<ON PHOTO>>

SHANNON ZEMANEK



IN ORDER TO QUALIFY FOR THE IVMAA SCHOLARSHIP, APPLICANTS MUST:

1. BE ENROLLED IN A BIOLOGY, AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, FORESTRY OR OTHER PROGRAM RELATED TO NATURAL SCIENCES.
2. HAVE COMPLETED A MINIMUM OF ONE FULL YEAR OF THE RELATED PROGRAM AND HAVE MAINTAINED A PASSING AVERAGE MARK.
3. PREPARE A 1 TO 2 PAGE WRITTEN ESSAY DETAILING THE STUDENT'S OUTSTANDING INTERESTS AND AREAS OF SPECIALTY IN THE FIELD OF INDUSTRIAL OR FORESTRY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT.
4. BE A FULL-TIME RESIDENT OF ALBERTA.
5. HAVE NEVER BEEN PREVIOUSLY AWARDED THIS SCHOLARSHIP.

allowed us to get the local community involved in this project, which they were happy to do because the Leafy Spurge was getting out of control," said Zemanek.

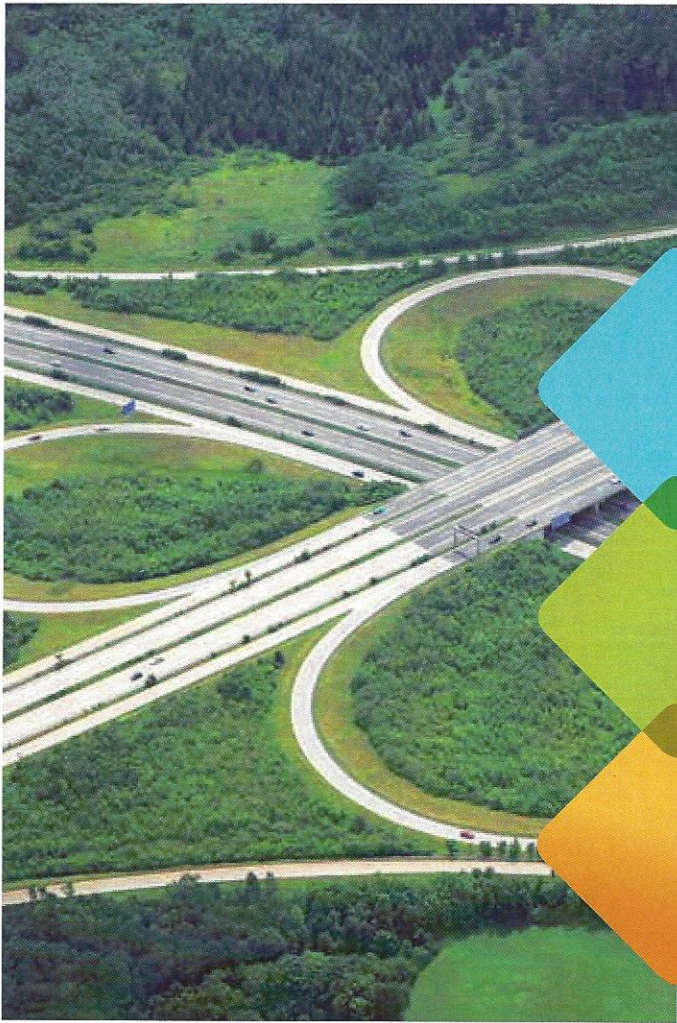
Growing up on a farm gave Zemanek a great respect for the land and the environment. "By seeing how the environment sustained our livestock and grew our food, it became important to me to protect the natural land for our future," she explained. Zemanek added that her passion for the environment also comes from the enjoyment she gets from many of her hobbies, like: hiking, fishing, horseback riding, and snowboarding. "All of these activities allow me to interact with nature and without a healthy environment I

wouldn't be able to enjoy these things I love," said Zemanek.

After three years of schooling, Zemanek will be starting an eight month practicum, the final portion of her degree program, in May 2015. She will be working as a Soil and Groundwater Technician with Husky Energy in Lloydminster. She said she chose Husky for her practicum because they have a strong track record of supporting and teaching their students well. Zemanek added that she feels her previous experience makes her a great fit for the job. "I felt confident accepting this job because I have had extensive practice in soil and groundwater sampling from our field labs in school." This position will also give Zemanek

the opportunity to take part in Husky's weed management plan along the North Saskatchewan River, which will allow her to use the skills she developed while working as a Custom Sprayer. She explained, "With my knowledge in weed identification, I feel like I will be a great fit for the job."

Upon the completion of her program, Zemanek hopes to, "make a difference in conservation and restoration of wetland and other bodies of water." That being said, she recognizes the importance of being able to manage both land and water resources and believes working in either field would be very rewarding.



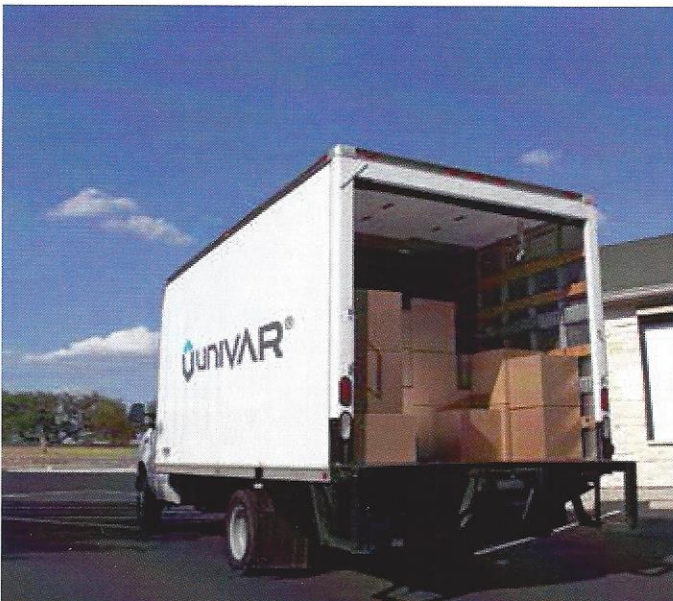
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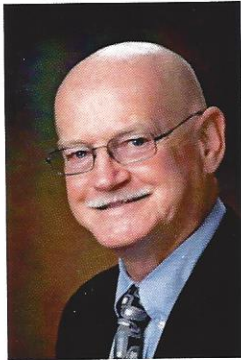
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Business Insight Economic Downturn, Change and Opportunities

By: Neil Thiessen, Able Business Consulting



It's no secret, Western Canada and other parts of Canada are feeling the effects of the lower oil prices. Capital project spending and operating budgets are being cut and there is pressure to find ways to stretch the

available dollars to maintain and operate businesses in and supporting the energy industry. PVMA members by extension are affected by these changes. Whether one works for a service company, supplier, municipality or consultancy, the changing economic environment in the West affects us all one way or another.

Many readers of this article have already been approached by sectors of the energy industry to work with them to find significant cost reductions, some even stating their minimum target expectations. In many cases these reductions in pricing would mean that profit margins would evaporate or even result in a loss using our current operating procedures and processes. Operating at a loss is a condition that is not sustainable in any business for any time, therefore we need to take, yet again a look at CHANGE.

Change for the sake of change doesn't work. Change for the sake of improving efficiencies is needed. That means that everything we do and every process we currently employ needs to be challenged. Every purchase we make, every labor dollar we spend, every process we have, needs to be looked at with the end result to find cost reductions and better ways of doing things. Too often we do the things the way we have always done them in the past and expect a different result.

Entrepreneurs are constantly looking for better ways to do things and they always have their eye on costs, yet they too will be challenged to look for better ways to become more efficient in the delivery of their services. Everyone in the organization and in many cases external suppliers have to participate in finding more efficiencies and cost reductions in what and how we deliver our products and services to customers.

I recently read an article in the business section of a daily newspaper, not always the source of true or accurate reporting; however this made sense to me. In talking about the current challenges in the Oil Industry, it went on to state something that we all could read and head! And here is what it said, 'any student of economics will quickly point out that money and time invested to improve productivity ultimately helps the bottom line'. It also stated that, "lowering costs isn't negotiable".

Here is the opportunity!! Everyone in the organization can help and should help finding efficiencies. Open and honest conversations about the challenges facing the organization should lead to the opportunity of engaging people in helping find ways to lower costs and finding better ways to deliver services.

The energy industry is being given another opportunity to find efficiencies; some would say they lost during the recent boom period. Those of us that provide services or products to the industry directly or indirectly are challenged with finding ways to provide competitive services profitably. Therefore we need to cease the opportunity to engage our company stakeholders and win the battle for continuous improvement. It's not an option, but an opportunity.



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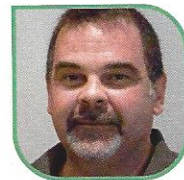
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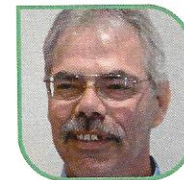
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