



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAM

Young Professionals weigh in

In May, a number of IRWA Chapter leaders were invited to experience an exclusive Leadership Development Pilot Program led by Mind Gym, an expert on behavioral science and educational psychology. Focused on the impact one can have on others, the event aimed to develop innovative leadership programming with IRWA and attendees had the opportunity to provide feedback and observations after the experience.

Among those who attended were two Young Professionals, Janella Cordova and Gabe Becerra. Janella is a Senior Project Manager for OPC and has worked in the right of way industry since 2008. She is currently the International Electric & Utilities Committee Chair and one of the Young Professional Representatives for Region 1. Gabe is a Senior Right of Way Agent for OPC with experience in project management, acquisition, relocation and right of way engineering/design. He is also a Region 1 Young Professionals Representative, the Communications Chair for Chapter 67 and he was recently elected to be the Chapter's incoming Treasurer.

As the two Young Professionals in attendance, Janella and Gabe provide a unique perspective on the event. They were challenged to think about their motivation, assess their purpose and analyze their respective motivational styles.



Q: Why did you feel it was important to attend this Leadership Development Pilot Program?

Janella: When opportunities arise to focus on leadership development, raise your hand and volunteer to put in the effort and the work. Dedicating time to programs like Mind Gym can have a great impact on your development. Furthermore, it is important as a Young Professional in this industry to be a part of the strategic development of the future of the organization.

Gabe: As a Young Professional and a future leader of my Chapter, I found it almost necessary to attend. I find it one of my top priorities both in my personal life and my professional one to push for growth. Self-reflection allows me to understand and realize where I can work to better myself. I find I flourish with change and when I step outside of my comfort zones. This program emphasized thinking about one's motivations. It allowed me to question my intentions of being a leader, pushing me to grow and think outside of the box.

Q: Describe your experience that day.

Janella: I was grateful to be invited to a pilot program that the Association is considering. The day started on our feet. We were immediately engaged to think about how we motivate others and how everyone is motivated differently. We were asked to assess why we do what we do and how today can benefit that. We split up into our respective motivational styles and focused on how best to communicate or how best to motivate each different style. As a Young Professional, understanding what motivates others in such an interactive, positive and straightforward manner was refreshing. I would describe the day as engaging, interactive and highly informative.



Gabe: To begin with, I was very honored to have been invited to such a training. As I walked into that conference room and saw other leaders and members of IRWA, I felt equal and excited to work side by side with other well-experienced professionals. If I had to use just one word to describe the overall experience for the day, it would be *energy*. The moderator was very energetic and with concise statements, she was able to pique our interest in participating. The outcome of this energy was rather organic in the sense that our responses came naturally. The groups worked fluidly and effectively on each step of the activities.

Q: Tell us about your most memorable moment from the event.

Janella: The most memorable moment was at the end when the idea of treating others as they would like to be treated had a resounding effect on everyone. I thought about our morning, how I could motivate others and how I could better

approach my communication with those around me. The day was a build-up to this moment where I understood that although we may have similar goals, we are all motivated distinctively.

Gabe: I would have to say the most memorable moment in the event happened even before we began the "workout." Upon entering the room, the layout of the space was like any other conference room I had seen before. The tables and chairs lined up in a "U" shape, giving me the assumption that we were going to listen to yet another presentation. However, the Mind Gym moderator came in and instantly created a sizable impact on my overall impression of the program. She asked the staff to remove all the tables and to leave behind just enough chairs for those participating. She made it known that we were not there just to listen to the program, but to *be* the program. I had never experienced a seminar where there was so much engagement expected from the those in attendance. It instantly gave me a feeling of accomplishment as I

felt we (the participants) were the driving force behind the success of the program.

Q: What is your biggest takeaway?

Janella: Taking the time to understand what motivates others or colleagues can have a great impact on common goals for an organization.

Gabe: The realization that everyone truly has a different motivational style. By participating in this program, I learned how I could be a more effective leader, as well as a more contributory member of any team.

Q: How can this experience help to shape future IRWA Leadership Development Programming?

Janella: I have always felt that the IRWA is forward-facing. These types of pilot programs are no small feat for the organization to take on, and I am sure they have been strategically and methodically coordinated to provide the Association the highest benefit. Mind Gym was different than other development programs because it was concise and impactful, and if

IRWA continues to provide such development programming to its members, they will open the door to important tools for our members to be successful in the industry.

Gabe: A leadership development program such as the one we experienced would help to shape the innovative potential for future leaders. Our industry—as well as our goals for improving infrastructure—are constantly changing, increasing and yielding value to the public. Having a program that puts stress on the positive differences in each leader would produce a healthy balance of integrity, teamwork, excellence and respect at all levels of the organization.

Q: How can the Association as a whole benefit from this Leadership Development Pilot Program?

Janella: Investing in professional development will help elevate the Association. This investment will boost retention and growth for the organization, especially as it focusses on recruiting the next generation of right of way professionals. They

say that millennials strive to have a “higher purpose” in life. As a millennial myself, I would say I strive to be a part of something that believes its actions impact the world. By investing in the professional development of its members, this Association shows me that they care about the impact we have. I want to be a part of building an innovative, sustainable and happy future—and I believe IRWA does too.

Gabe: Ultimately, a leadership development program like this would help to elevate the right of way profession, as well as the Association. A program like this would assist the current and future leaders of IRWA to become a powerhouse of energy, drive, passion and understanding. Our members would be individuals who understand how best to work together to achieve the common goals. These achievements would allow those outside of the industry to see the benefits and potential career opportunities within the profession. This could aid in expansion and outreach, as well as increase member participation and member satisfaction within the Association. ★

