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CSI U Annual Conference - Success Story

By Lee Orosco, FCSI, CDT

If you were in Philadelphia at CSI University Annual Conference, you have been telling others they should get tapes of the speakers and they need to make plans to go to San Antonio next year. If you weren't there, you are wondering what makes people say that CSI University Annual Conference was a success. I will give you my definitions of success.

There were 344 attendees!!! This number is not the end of the story. The mix of attendees was rich with representatives from throughout the spectrum: CSI novices and CSI veterans, young and old, east and west, north and south, designers and contractors, manufacturers and product reps, sole-practitioners and large corporation executives, as well as many more.

Thursday events started with a strong showing of candidates sitting for each of the CSI certification exams. Most conference attendees began with the late afternoon Conference Orientation where they were congratulated for being an active participant in this first Annual Conference and told 'what to expect' over the next few days.

The time each attendee invested gave valuable returns. Getting the most from the structured education sessions presented by national caliber speakers was made easier by the fact that the slides, handouts, and other presentation materials for each session was included in the Final Program Book given to each registrant at the conference. Having the handouts was an aid to deciding what session to attend, as well.

The educational sessions were packed with people. The speakers gave appropriate attention and time to questions. At the close of the talks, attendees clamored around the speaker to give feedback and ask more personal questions. I noticed that the session attendance was steady, even in the late afternoon when I have traditionally seen a drop.

The social interaction was a highlight in that there were various opportunities to mingle informally. All the sessions were in one area of the hotel, so the central mezzanine was a natural gathering area. While networking with a product rep, I learned that he has been delivering operation and maintenance manuals electronically rather than hardcopy. We have been looking for examples of this at my office so now I have one!

The whole 'flavor' of the weekend was around preparing ourselves for the future. It was a logical segue at the Presidential Luncheon for Phil McDade to pass the torch to Edith Washington, as our future leader. Edith's address was a call to action accompanied by the musical theme from 'Rocky'!

There were conversations about whether 'university' was the correct name to use. Others debated the merits of having this event separated from the CSI Show. The interchange

felt like healthy questioning and refining of this embryonic idea but did not detract from the success of the weekend. I sensed, in the passionate interchanges, a sincere desire to improve CSI's future, rather than a refusal to let go of the past.

Positive, upbeat, usable education and networking with excellent role models is what made the CSI University Annual Conference a success for me, my chapter, region, and institute friends. There is room for improvement and I am convinced that CSI leaders will work toward that goal.