



President's Message by Ellen Coopersmith



The Global Outreach of Decision Quality

Dear colleagues,

After eight years as the Society of Decision Professionals, we are on the yellow brick road! As a result of this year's DAAG courses and conference, we are truly growing into a close-knit and sustainable organization, well poised to greatly impact each other and the communities in which we live and work. The event was a true DQ outreach, hosting decision professionals from around the globe (Europe, the Middle East, Asia/Australia, and the Americas, including Alaska) and from a diverse range of industries. Along with our more typical representation from oil and gas, pharma, manufacturing, and technology, we were fortunate to host companies such as Starbucks, the transit authority, power, government agencies and many more.

Fresh Faces, New Places

Looking around the conference, we were thrilled with the number of new faces. Our Vancouver based SDP members really got the word out, as did our chapters. Many came from the Calgary, Seattle and Houston chapters, which prompted a lot of discussion of areas considering forming chapters – Denver, Vancouver, Pittsburg, California, and Dallas, to name a few. It was great proof that we are seeing that DQ minded professionals and leaders enjoy meeting face to face to share learnings and build a sense of community throughout the year, not just once a year at a conference. The thrill was how much the new people enjoyed the conference and felt welcomed as a part of our community.

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Expanding Roles, Expanding Councils

Posters on our councils prompted many new folks to sign up as we introduced the expanding roles of some of our councils. The Membership Council is taking on Membership and Communication and will be addressing our social media and integrated communications, along with expanding our membership and mentoring program. The Outreach Council is rebranding itself as the Chapters and Outreach Council, which makes perfect sense. In the end, it's the chapters who will decide what forms of outreach best suit their local members and communities.

Community Involvement

Very moving was [Eleanor Bergin's keynote](#) on her framing facilitation of her community's flooded church and school campus after Hurricane Harvey. Her poster and talk both brought people to tears as well as motivated us all to reach out to our communities and bring our DQ skills to help out whenever we can and certainly after disasters. This was further underscored when Frank Koch was awarded the SDP Volunteer of the Year award for his teaching of DQ principles to high school students in Oregon. What can we say? People are jazzed to reach out.

Thank you all! It's been a wonderful year.

Your friend and colleague,

Ellen Coopersmith

Upcoming Events



SOCIETY OF DECISION
PROFESSIONALS
Clarity & Insight for Decisive Action

- Webinar: [To Cure or Not to Cure - An HIV Cure Cost-Benefit Analysis](#)
Wednesday, May 23, 2018, 8 am PT |
11 am ET



[40th Annual North American Meeting](#)
October 14-17, 2018
Montreal, QC, Canada

Do you know of upcoming professional events that might be of interest to other SDP members? If so, please email the SDP newsletter at newsletter@decisionprofessionals.com



DAAG 2018 is a Big Success

SDP held a highly successful DAAG conference in Vancouver April 10-13. With over 130 people in attendance, it was by far the best-attended DAAG meeting in its history. The event started with two full days of workshops led by Katherine Rosback, Frank Koch, and Ron Howard. The conference proper kicked off with a welcome reception and dinner highlighted by a keynote address from Hal Kvisle, who clearly described the many benefits he has experienced from engaging decision professionals in his career as a chief executive. A second keynote address was given at lunchtime the next day by Eleanor Bergin, who vividly described how she successfully used the decision quality approach to lead her volunteer team to plan and execute the rapid re-opening of a private school badly damaged in Hurricane Harvey.



The sessions in the two-day conference covered topics that ranged broadly, from big data to the role of emotions in DQ, from employing DQ to address societal problems to the relationship between decision analysis and risk management. For the first time, this DAAG presented parallel sessions, one on leveraging failure in DQ and the other on starting the journey toward sustainable DQ.

Plenty of opportunities for networking were included in the conference schedule, including an enjoyable dinner at a restaurant in nearby Stanley Park.

Congratulations go to the DAAG Program Committee co-chaired by Len Falsone and Pat Leach and to the DAAG Logistics Committee chaired by Hilda Cherekdjian for organizing this successful event.



Ignoring the temptations of beautiful surroundings



Enjoying the networking dinner in Stanley Park

Comments on DAAG 2018

The newsletter editors, acting as roving reporters, asked a selection of attendees of DAAG 2018 for their impressions of the meeting.

Theresa Li of BC Hydro, attending her first DAAG, said that she was learning of ways for project teams to make good decisions and was hearing about the great power of facilitation.

Past SDP President Bill Klimack commented that this DAAG combined good workshops, good attendance, good location, and a good range of topics – including both business and community service applications.

This was the second DAAG for Andrew Thrift of Teck Resources, who said that he enjoyed the collegial atmosphere of the meeting that made him feel welcome as a relative newcomer. He found the parallel track sessions helpful and liked the diversity of topics discussed.

Nicole Thomas is a PhD student at the Colorado School of Mines who was attending her first DAAG. She especially liked the discussion in one session on the importance of word choice and she found the conference a good way to learn more about DA and to meet decision professionals who work in completely different industries.

Rob Lazenby with Chevron had this to say, *“It was wonderful to have my city play host to DAAG 2018. This was my second conference and I was again impressed by the broad range of topics and the quality of discussions. DAAG is the best opportunity I have to meet with decision professionals outside my organization. I look forward to applying the new ideas I picked up over the week.”*

Carsten Schroder with Dupont offered this on his experience at DAAG, *“It has been very exciting to listen to all the different perspective on DA. I cannot wait to get back and implement improvements to our own process.”*

Last and certainly not least, Kathryn Merrill of Boeing offered, “The DAAG conference was a great opportunity to meet and learn from others focused on Decision Quality across multiple industries. One of the most impactful takeaways for me is that the Decision Quality process can be useful regardless of the complexity of the decision that must be made.”

Useful Links

The SDP Board has posted the Society’s Bylaws and Policy and Procedure Manual, which can be found at: <http://www.decisionprofessionals.com/about/governance>

The SDP Knowledge Sharing Council maintains a Fellows Blog at: <http://www.decisionprofessionals.com/?scrollTo=blog-news#blog-news>

A listing of courses in decision analysis available to SDP members is at: <http://www.decisionprofessionals.com/courses/training-program>



SDP Awards

Three SDP awards were presented during DAAG 2018 in Vancouver.



The **Pioneer Award**, sponsored by the SDP Board of Directors, is given to an individual or team for long term contributions to the profession or expanding the utility of DA/DQ to new areas. This year's recipient of the Pioneer Award is **Carl Spetzler** (shown receiving the award from SDP President Ellen Coopersmith).

The **Volunteer of the Year Award**, sponsored by the SDP Outreach Council, is given to an individual or team exemplifying the spirit of giving back to society or humankind through application of DA/DQ principles. This year's award was given to **Frank Koch** (shown receiving the award from SDP Past-President Larry Neal).



The **Recruiter of the Year Award**, sponsored by the Membership Council, is given to the individual attracting the most new paying members in an award cycle. This year the award was given to two members, **Craig McKnight** and **Jeremy Walker** (shown receiving the award from SDP Vice-President Jim Driscoll).

Steve Begg Featured in Article on Decision Quality

On September 14, 2017 IN:SIGHT™ published an article featuring SDP member Steve Begg talking about the six steps to making a quality decision (certainly approaches with which we are all familiar). *Thank you, Steve, for helping to push the value of quality decision-making into the mainstream!*

To see this article, click this link:

<https://insight.telstra.com.au/liberate-your-workforce/articles/six-steps-to-making-a-quality-decision>

SDP Council in Focus: Business Development Council

Jim Driscoll, Chairperson

The Business Development (BD) Council exists to explore and support new initiatives aimed at growing our Society and helping to sustain its financial well-being. The council acts both as an incubator for strategic growth initiatives and as a clearinghouse for new ideas from members, sponsors, and partner organizations.

Council members debate the merits of major initiatives, explore alternatives and ensure that proposals being put before the Board are both resource feasible and likely to provide our Society with the most upside. The BD Council is currently composed of SDP Executive Director, Hilda Cherekdjian, SDP Treasurer, Henk Krijnen, Laura Keating, Chris Haase, Dave Macway and Somik Raha, as well as our current SDP President, Ellen Coopersmith, and past SDP Presidents Larry Neal and Jack Kloeber. The BD Council is traditionally chaired by the current SDP VP/President-Elect.

For complex initiatives, the BD Council often forms temporary sub-committees made up of SDP members with relevant content-knowledge and/or passion for a given topic. An excellent example of this sub-committee model is the amazing work being done by our Chapter Strategy Sub-Committee under the leadership of Laura Keating.

Laura and her fellow sub-committee members (Jeremy Walker, Dan Hudson, Pat Leach, Troy Helm, Trina Weller, Hilda Cherekdjian, Craig McKnight, and Jessica Galbraith) have been working hard to determine how SDP can best support our growing network of local chapter organizations. This includes support for our well-established chapter in Houston, our newly-formed chapters in Calgary and Seattle, and future chapters “under construction” in places like Denver, Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, British Columbia to name just a few. It has been wonderful to see the Chapter Strategy Sub-Committee apply the tools and techniques of our profession to clearly frame the opportunity, develop a set of creative alternatives, and evaluate each alternative in light of our key success criteria. Special thanks to Jeremy Walker for acting as digital scribe and process leader in support of this sub-committee’s important work.

Other examples of initiatives being addressed by the BD Council include broadening the appeal of our Society to leaders in related disciplines, revisiting our vision and mission statements, helping members apply their skills to the benefit of their local governments, non-profits, and community organizations (note: for a powerful example of what is possible here be sure to check out [Eleanor Bergin’s presentation](#) from DAAG 2018) as well as converting SDP to 501c3 status.

Do you have an idea about how to grow our Society or the desire to participate as part of a sub-committee? If so, please contact Jim Driscoll (james.r.driscoll@intel.com) today!





Spotlight on SDP Member Sandy Wrobel

In every issue of this newsletter, we turn the spotlight on a randomly-selected member of the SDP to learn more about that member's life as a decision professional.

The editors



SDP Fellow Sandy Wrobel started her career working for a few years at the U.S. Department of Energy in nuclear weapons waste management R&D and then enrolled at the Stanford Business School. In her first quarter there, she found herself studying decision trees in the beginning decision science course. In her words, she “ate it up”. She realized that she was learning skills that would have made her much more effective in her engineering job. She took all the decision science courses offered by the Stanford Business School and served as a teaching assistant for some of them. She considered getting a PhD in decision science so that she could teach in that field, but was advised by a professor that she would be a better practitioner than teacher. So she applied to, and was hired by, the consulting firm Strategic Decisions Group (SDG).

At SDG, she worked initially with clients in the oil and gas industry and then started working with electric utilities. She moved to the SDG office in London with the intention of starting a utilities practice area. But, by happenstance, she wound up leading a big successful project for the pharmaceutical company SmithKline Beecham. She fell in love with the life sciences area and, upon her return to the U.S., started and, for many years, led SDG's life science practice.

Sandy left SDG to become the CFO of a small biotech firm where she used the skills she had acquired at SDG to help manage the firm's portfolio of products. Her experience with that firm made her realize that many small companies could use help with important decision-making. So, she founded her own consulting firm, Applied Strategies, to provide decision support to small companies in the pharmaceutical industry. Later, the firm entered the global health sector and quickly became the “go-to” group for analytic support in that sector, ultimately attracting much bigger competitors who tried to imitate what they did.

Sandy has just accepted the position of COO of Savonix, a player in the digital neurocognitive assessment field. When she looks back on her long, varied, and successful career so far, Sandy says that it was all made possible by her early embrace of decision science.

Among the many satisfactions that she has experienced as a decision professional, she highlights her initial interaction with the people at SmithKline Beecham. Despite knowing almost nothing about the pharmaceutical industry, she led a day-long initial workshop. At the end of the workshop, the client asked her to run the subsequent project. She credits that success to her command of decision skills, particularly in clearly framing the decision problem, and to her ability to establish a strong relationship of trust with the client, “the EQ part of decision science”.

When asked to recall a memorable challenge she encountered in her career as a decision professional, she spoke of a client early in her consulting career who told her that her project would be cancelled immediately if the results did not support what he wanted to do. This was an ethical challenge, not an analytic one. She went to Carl Spetzler for advice and he told her without hesitation to report the analytic results truthfully even if it meant cancellation of the project. She has forever since retained the lesson that being true to one's ethics and values is always the top priority.

A current professional challenge that she sees is that powerful graphics are enough to convince some clients, even if there is little analytic substance behind the graphics. She believes that the best response to this challenge is to continually improve the way that we decision professionals present insights.

Sandy finds value in her SDP membership in the avenues it provides for her to keep in touch with professional colleagues and in the webinars that allow her to keep up with the latest developments in the field.





Dear SDP Fellows: Can you share one of your most satisfying experiences as a decision professional?

I was working with a team to assess the value of a very large oil & gas asset with a wide range of uncertainty. On day 1, the lead reservoir engineer on the project came in, sat down, crossed his legs, folded his arms, and glared at me. He didn't participate at all in the initial discussions. After a while, I prodded him to say what he thought, and he said something like, "I think this is a huge waste of time."

I made no attempt to convince him of the value of what we were doing. Instead I said, "I'm sorry you feel that way, but we've been told to do this, and we can't do it without your inputs. You don't have to actively participate, but I will need you to provide us with key inputs and judgments. Okay?" He agreed to this.

The discussions and high-level analyses we did in that workshop revealed enormous upside potential in this asset, and a correspondingly high value to be added by implementing a more aggressive approach to appraisal and development – two things that this engineer had long suspected and had been trying to garner support for. He asked if he could get the probabilistic modeling tool on his computer so he could test some ideas.

He went on to become one of our strongest advocates in that company.

Way back in the early 90's, several us (Greg Parnell was part of this team) took on the challenge of helping the Department of Energy identify the best new technology for remediating contaminated Trichloroethylene (TCE - a solvent) that had contaminated the soil and threatened to enter the nearby groundwater system. We were trying to determine how much TCE had entered the ground – early estimates from management were about 5000 gallons. Using good elicitation techniques, and finding the right experts, we were able to build a probability distribution that ranged between 50,000 and 200,000 gallons! The story of how we estimated it opened my eyes to how valuable it is just to conduct these de-biasing interviews. This information completely changed the playing field. More expensive technology solutions could now be considered due to the enormous amount of TCE cleanup that had to occur. I just read that one of those technologies we assessed, and recommended (Lasagna), was ultimately used and it was extremely successful.

As one of our Masters students proclaimed at the end of the study – Wow, DA works!

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If you have a question for the SDP Fellows about good practice among decision professionals, please send it to us at [SDP Newsletter: Ask The Fellows](#).



A couple years ago I would have said the most satisfying experience was being part of the culture change at Chevron. But now I would say that the work I am doing in high schools is far more satisfying. I have been bringing decision skills to people who really need them and unlike companies that generally have decision processes in place, however flawed, these kids have nothing but teachers and parents telling them to "make better decisions" without any clue about what that means.

The following SDP Fellows contributed to answering this question: Jack Kloeber, Frank Koch, and Patrick Leach.

Brain Teaser

Congratulations to Jonathan Murphy

The correct answer to the brain teaser posed in the February issue is that the next number in the sequence is 13112221. A full explanation of the answer can be found by [clicking here](#). Jonathan Murphy was the first to submit the correct answer.

THE APRIL BRAIN TEASER

Instructions: You can win "bragging rights" by being the first to submit the correct answer of this brain teaser to the newsletter editors ([SDP Newsletter: Brain Teaser](#)). We will announce the winner in the next issue.

Four Digits

A, B, C, and D are four distinct digits,

where $4 \times ABCD = DCBA$

What are the values of A, B, C, and D?

Note From the Editors

We hope that you enjoy this eighth issue of the SDP Newsletter. Please do not hesitate to send us constructive feedback. [Click here](#) to email the editors.

Matt Gorman and Steve Tani
SDP Newsletter Editors

