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President's Desk

A Great Night for the Profession

INFORMS President

Mark Daskin

m-daskin@northwestern.edu

"John, may I have the committee's decision, please." Even veteran Edelman competitors and observers had a heightened sense of anticipation as John Milne, chair of the 2006 Edelman competition, handed an envelope to Russ Labe, INFORMS vice president of practice activities, with the name of the winning team.

The scene was a lavish ballroom at the Miami InterContinental Hotel. It was the culmination of a three-hour dinner and ceremony honoring the Edelman competitors past and present. While many people contributed countless hours to this spectacular evening and the practice conference surrounding it, a special thanks is due to the many Edelman coaches and judges; INFORMS volunteers Jeff Alden, Tom Cook, Irv Lustig, John Milne, Anne Robinson and Randy Robinson; Karl Kempf, chair of the Practice Conference Advisory Council; Rina Schneur, our vice president of meetings; INFORMS staff members Terry Cryan, our director of meetings; Barry List, the director of marketing and public relations; and Mark Doherty, our executive director. If you weren't there, you missed a wonderful evening. Be sure to join us next year for the practice conference in Vancouver!

It was the pinnacle of a three-year marketing-the-profession campaign that began under Tom Cook's presidency. Many of you have asked about the future of this campaign, which has, to date, been outwardly focused and aimed at senior corporate and governmental officials.

Marketing is critical for any professional society. In my view, marketing for INFORMS can be thought of as a three-legged stool. First, we need to market the broad profession of operations research to our clients and sponsors in business, government and non-profit agencies who benefit from our work and who affect the funding for our research and the availability of jobs and projects in the field. The Science of Better Web site (www.scienceofbetter.org/), along with the Edelman competition and award ceremony, are important components of this outreach effort. But, as is the case in any marketing campaign, these activities quickly become stale if they are not continuously refreshed with new material and innovative ideas. The first leg of the marketing stool should also include outreach efforts to high school students and undeclared college undergraduates

who might elect O.R. as a field of study, as well as math, science and engineering majors who might pursue graduate studies in O.R.

The second leg entails marketing the Institute to potential members and our current members. We offer myriad outstanding products and services, including 11 print and online journals, one online-only journal, two national meetings as well as a summer international meeting, numerous specialty conferences, and more than 100 communities organized around methodological and practice issues, student groups, demographic breakdowns and geographic groupings. I suspect that few of our members realize the extent of the opportunities available to them within INFORMS and even fewer of the non-members understand the benefits of belonging to the Institute. We need to do a better job of getting the word out.

Finally, marketing should entail helping our members become better advocates of their own work and of the profession. The excellent material on the O.R. Champions Web site (<http://www.orchampions.org/index.htm>) is a start, but much more can be done. Some of our members have found excellent ways of promoting O.R. within their organizations and to others beyond their own immediate environment. We need to find better ways to learn from their examples.

Which brings me back to the Edelman competition. As discussed extensively elsewhere in this issue of *OR/MS Today*, five teams made the finalist round this year. They represented a broad mix of applications. A group from Animal Health Institute and Cox Associates quantified the risk to humans associated with the use of animal antibiotics. The U.S. Commercial Aviation Partnership used system dynamics and econometrics to inform the policy debate about aviation security. Omya Hustadmarmor and Møre Research/Molde University College developed an optimization-based approach to scheduling calcium carbonate slurry shipments to balance inventory and shipment costs. Travelocity and Sabre Holdings analyzed customer behavior, product pricing and supplier agreements to double revenue at Travelocity and significantly increase earnings. Finally, Warner Robins Air Logistics Center coupled with the University of Tennessee to reduce the time required to repair and overhaul C-5 transport aircraft, thereby reducing the number of C-5s in repair from 12 aircraft to seven.

John handed Russ the envelope. After a few long seconds, Russ announced that the winner was the team from Warner Robins Air Logistics and the University of Tennessee. While Russ was correct in a narrow sense, the real winner was INFORMS and the profession as a whole. When any one of us does great work, we all benefit. Each of the five teams should certainly be viewed as a winner. And when INFORMS does its best to publicize such success stories we are all stronger. I hope that the magnificent Edelman ceremony emboldens us to search for additional marketing opportunities that strengthen all three legs of the marketing stool: outreach to executives and students, promotion of INFORMS and its products, and assistance to members in marketing our excellent work. With limited resources we will need to choose our projects carefully. I welcome your input on these decisions.