CCEFP Reorganizes and Announces Promotions

The new CCEFP organization will be divided into three clusters: one for administration, one for research, and one for education and outreach. To create the new organization, three people are being promoted.

Mike Gust will occupy the newly created position of chief of staff. This will be in addition to his current position as industrial liaison officer. As chief of staff, he will have overall responsibility for roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures of the Center.

Michael Goldfarb will join Perry Li as deputy co-directors. They will have responsibility for the Center’s research mission. Responsibilities include developing and sustaining the strategic research plan, ensuring research connectivity, redirecting research projects when necessary, defining the overall roles and responsibilities of the research team, clarifying and enhancing fundamental research, and identifying and encouraging new research initiatives.

Don Haney will occupy the newly created position of communications director. His job responsibilities will include the website, promotional material, and major meetings.

Mike Gust will lead the Administrative Cluster, which will include Stephanie Bettermann, administrative director, and Don Haney, communications director. Perry Li and Michael Goldfarb will lead the Research Cluster, which will include the thrust leaders, Andrew Alleyne, Monika Ivantysynova, and Wayne Book. Will Durfee and Linda Western will lead the Education and Outreach Cluster, which will include Alyssa Burger, education outreach director.

Student Retreat Held at UIUC

The Student Retreat was held at UIUC on August 7-9, 2008. Over 20 students from six of the seven Center institutions attended, as well as five industry members. Activities included a viewing of “Discovering Fluid Power” made by Minnesota Public Television, a presentation by Keith Wait, newly elected Student Leadership Council president, lab tours and social events. New this year was a student/industry “speed meeting” session where five industry representatives were paired with groups of students for a period of ten minutes to talk about jobs and research.

CCEFP Sponsors FIRST Teams

In early 2008, the CCEFP sponsored the first Native American FIRST Robotics Team. The anishinaabeg ogichidaag earned 17th place out of over 50 teams in the Midwest Regional Competition.

The Center will continue to sponsor the ongoing FIRST Robotics Team by using a pipeline method of exposing science, technology, engineering and mathematics into Native education. The Center will sponsor a FIRST Lego League for young middle school students and a FIRST Tech Challenge Team for the older middle school students.

CCEFP at Science Museum of Minnesota

The Fluid Team is a group of high school students that investigate compact and efficient fluid power, the science behind hybrid cars, robotics and prosthetic limbs. Over the summer, the team interviewed graduate students and faculty members about current research test beds, and they are finishing an exhibit to be on display in the Experiment Gallery at the Science Museum of Minnesota.

The team worked with over 1,400 museum visitors and children on outreach in the community to educate the public about their projects. The team also spoke at the St. Paul City Council at accept a resolution on behalf of the work they and other youth in the Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center accomplished in the past year.

Four new members joined the team at the start of the school year.

CCEFP Exhibits at Minnesota State Fair

The Center exhibited a display at the Minnesota State Fair. The CCEFP Fluid Power Exhibit (also on the floor of the Science Museum of Minnesota) provides a demonstration on the technology behind a fluid power hybrid passenger vehicle. This was a hot topic as fuel prices hit their peak over the summer months.
New Research Projects Funded

Five new projects have been funded for year three (2008-2009).

Effectiveness Thrust
Project 1B.2: Surface Effects on Start-up Friction and their Application to Compact Gerotor Motor Design by Ashlie Martini, Purdue
Project 1E.3: High Efficiency, High Bandwidth, Actively Controlled Variable Displacement Pump/Motor by John Lumkes, Purdue

Compactness Thrust:
Project 2B.2: Advanced Strain Energy Accumulator by Eric Barth, Vanderbilt

Efficiency Thrust:
Project 3D.3: Improved Seal Design Based on Adaptive Materials by Barney Klamecki, UMN

Student Receives Honors

The 5th Fluid Power Net International (FPNI) PhD Symposium was held in Cracow, Poland at the Cracow University of Technology from July 1-5, 2008. Faculty in attendance from the CCEFP included Dr. Monika Ivantysynova from Purdue University and Dr. Kim Stelson from the University of Minnesota. Both served as session chairs during the paper presentations. Six CCEFP students presented papers, five of whom were from Purdue University and one from the University of Minnesota.

Jonathan Baker of Purdue University was awarded best paper award and Najoua Jouini, also of Purdue, was recognized as being in the top six papers.

Ways to Strengthen Your Business During Economic Tough Times

these organizations will be going out of business, losing critical funding and cutting operations, and/or letting go of critical but expensive assets and people. All of these things open up holes in the market that a clear-thinking organization can fill. As these businesses fail, the market you are competing in may very well contract, and the death of your competition actually creates holes in your market—ones that your organization can fill—so you can actually expand through the slowdown.

When this happens, you will want to be there to snatch up the customers of your failed competitor. Be prepared to increase your sales, marketing and advertising efforts during the slowdown to make sure that newly “available” customers reach out to you first.

FIGURE OUT WHAT THESE TOUGH TIMES MEAN FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS. You aren’t the only one suffering as a result of the slowdown. Your customers are, too. The faster you realize that, the quicker you will be able to better meet their needs. Just like you, your customers are making tough decisions on what they should spend their limited funds on, and what they can afford to give up. And you don’t want to end up on the latter list! Look at your organization from their perspective, and make sure that every portion of your organization, not just its product or primary service, is treating your customers right. Go the extra mile—even if that means spending extra money—to reach out to your biggest and best customers. Make sure you are meeting their expectations, and keep the lines of communication open. That way, if you find out they’re planning to break off relations, you can do something about it before it’s too late.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROFIT AND REVENUE. It sounds like something every executive should understand, but in many organizations, which customers, products, services or geographic locations provide the most profit for the organization, are actually very difficult to determine. All organizations can produce financial statements of gain and loss, but these do nothing to help managers make hard decisions about where they should be cutting specific, unprofitable customers or segments, and where they shouldn’t. During a slowdown, you should apply greater scrutiny in these areas. It’s likely that at some point you will need to cut costs, and the first places to cut should be those areas where you are already losing money.

IF YOU ARE A PUBLIC COMPANY, BE TRANSPARENT AND REALISTIC. We have seen time and again that the market actually does respect firms that deliver realistic growth projects. Even if these projections were lower than expected or desired, the market will not react as badly as it would have if you stated higher earnings than you actually came in at. If you know you are going to fall short of your projected earnings because of the slowdown, tell the market. The value of your organization may take a hit, but it will be much less than it would be if you surprise the market with previously unstated losses at the last minute.

The point of all of this is that the words “economic downturn” don’t have to mean only bad news to your business. If you manage business during the downturn correctly—taking care to address the needs of your employees and customers—it is possible to make it through all of this with a stronger business than the one you had before.

About the Authors:
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