



THE GROWING EDGE

Issue: #20

SEPTEMBER 15 2009



Dear John,

I want to start off by clearing up an unfortunate choice of words from an article in the last issue. In my piece about Iredell Museums, I noted that Julia Wilson had "stepped down" as president of the organization. Actually, her term as president had ended and she chose not to be re-nominated, which is not the same as "stepping down." Sorry for any misunderstanding, Julia. The fact is, as business and community leaders, we often assume people know what we mean when, in fact, a poor choice of words or ill-timed remark can communicate a message completely different than the one intended.



Early in my career, I was a manager for a national retail chain. My store was having some difficulty getting the lead cashiers to submit their weekly reports in a timely manner, so I posted a list of "Outstanding Cashier Reports," the intent of which was to call out those cashiers who were consistently late with their reporting. Unfortunately, many of the cashiers saw the word "outstanding" and thought they were being praised.

One of the biggest communication mistakes people make is assuming that others have the same frame of reference for topics, terms and ideas as they do. This has always been a recipe for disastrous miscommunication, but in the Information Age where we communicate in so many different ways, often without immediate face-to-face feedback and sometimes with people of different cultures, it has become an even larger issue.

Most people have had the experience of being misunderstood in e-mail. You say something meant to be funny, but the other person thinks you're serious. Or you write something innocent, and the receiver "reads into" the message anger, frustration, ridicule or worse. The reasons are well known: People treat e-mail like face-to-face communication. We're used to saying things out loud and having our intentions, mood and demeanor correctly interpreted by the person we're speaking with. But when you strip away facial cues, social context, tone of voice and other information, people can easily misunderstand.

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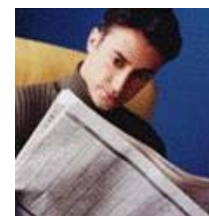
Quick Links

[GSDC Website](#)

[PSNC Website](#)

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In The News

Research tells us that both sender and receiver tend to automatically fill in the "tone" of an e-mail conversation - but they're not getting information about the tone from the e-mail itself. They're basically making it up based on how they feel or what they fear, not what's actually being said.

Unfortunately, just knowing all that won't necessarily prevent you from being misunderstood. Researchers Michael Morris and Jeff Lowenstein were collaborating recently on a research project to study the phenomenon of misunderstood e-mails when they got into a huge argument because one had misunderstood the e-mail of the other. It can happen to anyone, no matter how knowledgeable.

Studies have shown that some 44 percent of e-mails are incorrectly interpreted in some way by the receiver of the message. Here's the worst part: Most of these e-mails go unchallenged. You might be angering people, bruising egos or burning bridges and you'll never even know it.

Here are some tips for making sure you don't accidentally annoy, anger or intimidate the people you communicate with over e-mail.

1. If you're joking or being sarcastic, use surrogate facial cues like smiley faces - :) - or type "[grin]" or use some other indicator of your intent. They seem trivial, but are very important.
 2. Use plentiful qualifiers such as "don't take this the wrong way," "I'm joking," or "I'm not angry at all."
 3. Beware of overly brief e-mails, as they can be interpreted as brusque. An e-mail with just a word or two can be interpreted as frosty, angry or dismissive.
 4. Start the e-mail with something obviously humorous, which conveys that you're not angry.
 5. Be aware of who you're talking to. It's very easy for a co-worker or subordinate at work to read anger, disappointment or other negative emotions into your notes. If you're a manager, you need to go out of your way to send friendly e-mails or you'll end up with a morale problem. In-laws and relatives might be easily offended as well.
 6. End your e-mail with something nice, such as "thank you!" or "hey, I really appreciate this."
 7. Always re-read your e-mails before sending - and be on the lookout for areas of misinterpretation.
 8. Don't get angry from e-mail, then reply based on your anger. First find out the intent of the sender by calling, or asking for clarification. Remember: nearly half of all e-mails are misinterpreted.
 9. Don't use e-mail for emotional or sensitive topics. Pick up the phone or visit in person.
 10. Bonus tip: Be aware that if you're talking about someone, you're more likely to accidentally send that person the e-mail. Make sure you address e-mail to the right person, especially if you're talking about a third party.
- John

As always, feel free to email me with news about your company's events, awards, new products, honors, etc. and I will include them in an upcoming

Southern Business & Development Magazine recently published an interesting [article](#) entitled "Don't Blame the South for Domestic Automaker's Woes" which offers an excellent discussion of performance-based incentives.



issue of *The Growing Edge*.

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Jasper Library Furniture Works to Keep Jobs in Area **Troutman plant faced uncertain future until new owners stepped up to the plate**

Brian Lish and Jane Shuutmat don't look like super heroes, but to the fifty employees of Jasper Library Furniture, they are most definitely heroic figures. To understand why, you have to go back two years. In December of 2007, locally-owner furniture manufacturer Blanton and Moore was purchased by Indiana-based Jasper Seating. B&M produced high quality furniture and fixtures for schools and libraries, and Jasper believed this product line was a good fit with their existing lines of seating products. Shortly thereafter, Jasper opened a second North Carolina facility in Taylorsville. Then the economic downturn hit and orders decreased significantly. Compounding this, the distance between the corporate offices in Indiana and the North Carolina plants made efficient management difficult.



By the spring of 2009, Jasper was seriously considering closing one or both of the North Carolina facilities. That's when Brian and Jane entered the picture. As senior managers with Jasper, both had spent significant time at the plants and saw the potential they offered in terms of skilled workforce and defined product niche. With the support of their spouses, they began crunching the numbers on buying the two plants back from Jasper and operating them as an independent company once again.

Shortly thereafter, they contacted the GSDC and asked for assistance. Along with Uconda Dunn of the NC Department of Commerce, we met with Brian and Jane and made several referrals in the areas of financing, training, marketing and legal. We also made them aware of several state programs designed specifically to assist small and mid-size businesses such as theirs to local resources.

In July, the deal closed and Jasper Library Furniture was born. Since then, the company has developed a training program in conjunction with our partners at Mitchell Community College and have purchased new equipment, signed an important export deal and improved the landscaping and housekeeping at the Troutman facility. Perhaps more importantly, they plan to keep the workforce at the currently level for the foreseeable future, and in these difficult times, that counts as a win.

Iredell Manufacturer's Council to Hold Inaugural Meeting in October

New group seeks to bring together progressive area manufacturers to share ideas and experiences

The Greater Statesville Development Corporation, Mooresville-South Iredell Economic Development Corporation and Mitchell Community College are teaming up to sponsor a new organization for manufacturing industry leaders from across Iredell County. The primary focus of the organization will be Lean and Six Sigma manufacturing processes, but related topics such as safety and environmental will also be addressed.



"Several of the businesses I am working with have expressed an interest in starting this sort of group," said GSDC Director of BRE & Marketing John Marek. "More than a dozen Statesville area manufacturers have received formal Lean and Six Sigma training from Mitchell Community College or NC State, and several others have developed Lean initiatives on their own or are considering doing so. This group will be an opportunity for those companies to get together on a regular basis, compare notes and see how other area businesses are implementing these tools."

Lean, a philosophy based on the Toyota Production System, uses a set of standardized management tools to help companies reduce waste and improve efficiency, quality and customer satisfaction.

The first meeting is scheduled for mid-October -- date/time to be announced soon -- and will be hosted by Engineered Sintered Components in Troutman. Lunch will be provided for all attendees, courtesy of the GSDC and MSIEDC.

For more information or to register for the event, please contact [John Marek](#) or [Robby Carney](#).

North Carolina Agricultural Exports Rise 51%

Animals and meat generate \$553 million in revenue

North Carolina agricultural exports rose to \$3.1 billion last year, up 51 percent from 2007, according to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.



The value of the state's exports, which topped \$3 billion for the first time, grew on higher prices and the emergence of China and other nations as importers of food from the United States, says Peter Thornton, the department's assistant director for international marketing.

"As developing countries get richer, the first thing they are going to do is eat better, which offers us more export opportunities," he says. North Carolina ranked 13th in the nation for agricultural-export value during the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

The state remains the nation's top tobacco exporter, selling \$573.6 million worth of the crop. North Carolina ranks third in poultry products and fifth in cotton and peanuts sold to other countries, most notably Japan, China, Canada, the Netherlands and Germany.

Animals and meat generated \$553.5 million in sales. Cotton and linter fibers produced \$275.5 million, and peanuts brought in \$23.5 million.

"Agricultural exports are important to North Carolina's economy," says N.C. Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler. "They help boost farm prices and income and support more than 24,000 jobs, both on the farm and in industries such as food processing, storage and transportation."

Military/Performance Textiles Forum September 22nd in Raleigh

ITC seeks North Carolina companies to commercialize their research

The International Technology Center (ITC) will be holding a Military/Performance Textiles forum on September 22nd at their facility in Raleigh. Participants will learn about their state-of-the-art research with nano-onions derived from nanodiamonds and atmospheric pressure plasma system (APPS) technologies. The ITC is a non-profit research institution that is primarily funded through federal grants from the military.



The forum will be held at ITC's offices at 7517 Precision Dr., Suite 106, Raleigh, NC 27617. Technical presentations will begin at 9:00 AM and will be followed by a Q&A session and demonstrations/tours.

The ITC is interested in working with North Carolina companies to commercialize their research. They have pursued patents to protect for their research and will be able to discuss the technologies rather openly at the meeting and in private discussions afterwards if you are interested. They believe that the technologies could be useful for textiles in terms of filtration, lubrication, performance fibers, nonwovens, surface modification, and UV protection.

Please RSVP to Glenn Jackman, 919-733-2829
or GJackman@NCCommerce.com

Jean Manall Retires from Employment Security Commission

GSDC board member and community leader served 35 years with ESC

The Greater Statesville Development Corporation wants to take this opportunity to acknowledge Jean Manall's contributions to our organization and to the Greater Statesville community as a whole. Jean retired from the Employment Security Commission on August 21st after a distinguished career spanning more than 35 years. She served on the GSDC Board of Directors for 12 years. Linda Greene, Asst. Manager, will be the interim manager at ESC.



NC Commerce Announces 52 Job Training Program Awards

Iredell companies among recipients of state funding to assist workforce training

Commerce has awarded \$990,694 for Incumbent Workforce Development Training Program projects to aid 52 companies and more than 1,500 workers statewide, including \$96,000 to train 55 workers in Iredell County. The funding will allow companies to conduct productivity-enhancing, educational and skills training for workers.



The 52 awards, administered by the Division of Workforce Development and 22 local Area Workforce Development Boards, will go to a wide array of companies, from manufacturing, technology and financing firms to those specializing in health, furniture and food.

"North Carolina's workforce has a well-deserved reputation for productivity, professionalism and diversity," Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco said. "This program, which builds worker versatility and skills, benefits our state's valued businesses and the employees that form their greatest asset."

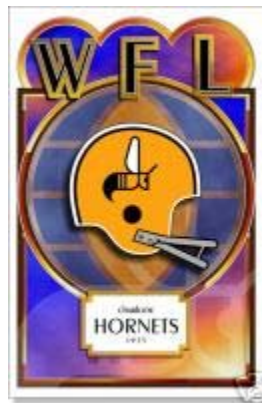
Grants were made in the following counties: Beaufort, Caldwell, Caswell, Cleveland, Cherokee, Craven, Cumberland, Davie, Gaston, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Henderson, Hertford, Iredell, Lenoir, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Pasquotank, Pitt, Randolph, Richmond, Robeson, Rowan, Stokes, Surry, Union, Wake, Watauga, Wayne, Wilkes and Yadkin. Under the program, companies contribute training funds.

The program is funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act.

Just for Fun

Anybody remember the Charlotte Hornets? No, not those Charlotte Hornets.


Most people don't even remember the WFL, let alone remember that Charlotte fielded a team in that short-lived league. The Charlotte Hornets started life in 1974 as the New York Stars. Midway through the 1974 season the team, which drew less than 10,000 per game to a tiny out-of-the-way stadium on Long Island, moved to Charlotte and became the Charlotte Hornets. The team's first home game in Charlotte was a rousing success. The Hornets sold out all 25,133 tickets, leaving some 5,000 out of luck. Unfortunately, the visiting Memphis Southmen ruined their debut, winning 27-23. In spite of the loss, the new Charlotte club -- which played at American Legion Memorial Stadium -- did far better in ticket sales than as the old New York Stars.



Although Charlotte finished second place with a 10-10 record, they couldn't afford to attend the playoff game at Orlando, against the first

place Eastern Division winning Florida Blazers. The Philadelphia Bell, who finished third with a 9-11 record, took the Hornets' place.

The team returned for the abbreviated 1975 campaign and lasted until the league ceased operations in midseason. The Hornets finished at 6-5.



The Greater Statesville Development Corporation (GSDC) is a public-private partnership of local governments and business leaders. Our purpose is to promote the industrial and commercial development of the City of Statesville, the Town of Troutman and the surrounding area of upper Iredell County, North Carolina. We provide a variety of services and assistance to help locate, maintain and expand new and existing businesses and industries in our area.

View available [sites and buildings](#).

View [resources](#) for existing industry.

Learn more about the [Committee of 100](#).

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