



**A Cross-Generational Employee Network Initiative  
For the National Park Concessioner**  
A Promising Proposal Respectfully Submitted by Barbara Lang  
[www.TheEtiquetteFactor.com](http://www.TheEtiquetteFactor.com)

**KEY:** CENI– Cross-Generational Employee Network Initiative      SSW = Seasoned Seasonal Worker  
YSE = Younger Seasonal Employee

The Cross-Generational Employee Network Initiative (CENI) offers 4 benefits:

- (1) Honors and acknowledges previous career and life experiences of the older workforce primarily in their second chapter after retirement (henceforth referred to as seasoned seasonal workers or SSW)
- (2) Adds value and depth to the younger seasonal employees' (YSE) experience so they better understand how their work at a Concessioner's property fits into their future career path exploration
- (3) Fosters a spirit of loyalty and collegiality
- (4) Improves customer service and work performance

Cross-Generational programs are traditionally available through university student/alumni functions or high school students and professionals. Applying a university student/alumni model provides a foundation towards designing a pioneering program for Concessioners in the National Park Service sector. The benefits of this program are both immediate and long-range – immediate advantages are outlined above while the long-range opportunities may identify and foster talent from the YSE community for full time jobs (upon graduation) within a Concessioner's parent company. This program can be conducted with employees other than college students.

**What are the Initial Requirements for starting a Cross-Generational Network?**

The three initial requirements to start a Cross-Generational network are:

1. The support and approval of upper management, including the Concessioner General Manager
2. The enthusiasm and willingness of Seasoned Seasonal Workers (SSW) (at least 8-12) willing to participate through all the stages. These employees would ideally, but not necessarily, have varied careers representing a broad spectrum of career path.
3. Management's willingness to participate in the association's activities

**Who Should Take on a Role as a SSW with the Cross-Generational Network?**

An employee of the Concessioner also embodies the following characteristics:

1. Willingness to work with a selected facilitator assigned by upper management
2. Willingness to contribute time
3. Enthusiasm about their present job at the Concessioner property and with their former career
4. Ability to motivate and engage the Younger Seasonal Employees (YSE)
5. Knowledge of the Concessioners' priorities

In addition, based on a shared career interest, each SSW participant would be partnered with a YSE. Participating SSW need to be passionate about their present work at the Concessioner property and personally committed to see YSW grow professionally and personally. SSW share enriching life experiences relevant to career aspirations but also share the life skills they've acquired that help them provide excellent customer service and exhibit a strong work ethic. In addition, these partnerships foster relationships that both parties may not easily acquire on their own. YSE, in particular, who may feel initially isolated, can find support and friendship through these connections, offering them a sense of community and alliance.

**Step 1 – Form an on-site Cross-Generational Network**

Notify Joe Fassler, Chair of the NPHA of your interest. Contact Barbara Lang for a full outline of the process. You will need either an outside facilitator (B. Lang is available), or a member of the Concessioner's human resources department, trained and available to launch, and monitor, the CENI. Enthusiasm and mentoring experience/familiarity are key facilitator attributes required for a successful launching of this pilot program.

### **Step 2 – 1st Special Message to SSW**

An email message would be sent to all SSW introducing them to CENI, requesting interested people to provide prior career experience. It is crucial that this email creates excitement, owned benefit and appeal, emphasizing the respect and honor that the Concessioner places on this workforce population.

### **Step 3 – Conduct an Introductory Fun Event for SSW**

Invite all interested SSW to an initial gathering. Ideally, feature a contest/activity that creates an esprit de corps, creating a comfortable, collaborative atmosphere. Build interest and enthusiasm, motivating interested parties to sign up for official Meet and Greet (see Step 5).

### **Step 4 – Conduct an Introductory Fun Event for YSE**

During the initial orientation, have an activity that allows YSE to introduce themselves to one another, setting the stage for introductions that include career aspirations and present-day job skills they hope to develop. Have interested parties sign up for official Meet and Greet.

### **Step 5 – Meet and Greet Function for SSW and YSE**

The launched inaugural “Meet and Greet” event should be organized with broad appeal to attract as many participants as possible. Facilitate a fun event, partnering a SSW with a YSE. Have the event led by a person who can guide the attendees through the initial steps of starting and maintaining a conversation based on the tenets of informational interviewing.

### **Step 6 – The Follow-Up Meeting For YSE**

An additional event can be scheduled for coaching the YSE in furthering their professional development. YSE learn how they can incorporate their summer experience at the Concessioner’s operation into powerful, compelling stories used in future job interviews. Led by an outside facilitator or a member of the Concessioner’s human resource department who has career advising experience, this can have a positive pivotal impact on job performance. This is also a time when a YSE can be exposed to the career opportunities within the Concessioner’s parent company.

### **Step 7 – Measuring Success**

The quest for measuring success can be seen in less absenteeism, higher work performance, increased job satisfaction and higher customer evaluations regarding customer service. Evaluations and feedback mechanisms for employees can be put into place to further see how the CENI offered value to participants, setting a stage for further improvement and success in subsequent seasons.

### **Implementing CENI – Options for Moving Forward**

Barbara Lang is available to either implement or assist Concessioners in launching this program during the summer of 2011. On or off-site assistance is available to assure a successful program occurs. Your Human Resource department could also take ownership of this initiative.

**Brief Bio** – Barbara Lang has been in the hospitality industry for over thirty years, including twenty-plus years teaching and advising at Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration and ten years as a culinary director at a Napa Valley winery. Mentoring and coaching have become Barbara’s commitment - facilitating relationships between intergenerational communities. During a Fall 2010 cross-country National Park trip, Barbara discovered an opportunity waiting to be mined – connecting elder workers with younger seasonal employees.

#### **Contact Information**

For more information, please contact Barbara Lang at [barbaralang55@gmail.com](mailto:barbaralang55@gmail.com) or at (607) 342-7050.

More information on Barbara Lang (and a brief video on her style) can be found at [www.TheEtiquetteFactor.com](http://www.TheEtiquetteFactor.com).

Content adapted from <http://www.alumni.cornell.edu/volunteer/resources.cfm>

(Affinities -Steps to Creating a Sport Specific Alumni Association) Compiled by Barbara Lang, [BarbaraLang55@gmail.com](mailto:BarbaraLang55@gmail.com). March 2011