

## Staying Current

Facilitated by **Luke Auburn**

**Luke Auburn:** You're listening to the RIT Professional Development podcast series; I'm your host Luke Auburn. To be an effective employee, regardless of your position, you have to constantly find ways to keep your skills sharp. In a Forbes article I recently read, Margie Warrell said that "to succeed today you must be in a constant state of adaptation – continually unlearning old 'rules' and relearning new ones. That requires continually questioning assumptions about how things work, challenging old paradigms, and 'relearning' what is now relevant in your job, your industry, your career and your life."

At RIT, we're fortunate to have many resources to help us adapt and evolve. Judy Bender, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, outlined a few of the tools at our disposal.

**Judy Bender:** You know, I can't say enough about RIT's fantastic benefit of free education. Employers are pulling back in the industry on that benefit. So the fact that we continue to have that as a current benefit for employees is fantastic. And I would encourage people to take advantage of that.

Following that, we have a great CPD program -- Center for Professional Development. There's a specific course that might help people in this area called Managing Your Careers at RIT. And that's a two-part series course that may help people to give them some ideas about what to do in terms of advancing their careers. Other things to think about are looking for opportunities outside of work. Volunteering in the community. Serving on non-profit boards. Those are all great ways to increase your skill sets. And then I suggest to people to network. If an area interests you, reach out to individuals that work out there, and look for opportunities to potentially job shadow. That's another great way to learn about other areas, and to think about different career paths."

**Luke Auburn:** Lyn Kelley, Associate Vice President for Finance Administration, Controller and Assistant Treasurer, thinks technology has really opened new avenues for sharpening our skills.

**Lyn Kelley:** I think we're really fortunate with the advent of online training. There's numerous webinars that give technical skills. Of course, we take advantage of CPD classes which make up a lot of the training. But we also require technical training, so we belong to several professional organizations. We look at webinars, we gather as many people as we can in a room if there's a topic of interest. It's very low cost, but a very effective form of training. We attend workshops

with other colleges and universities where we bring in speakers. Those happen twice a year, I encourage as many people on our staff to attend as possible. Sometimes we have between 50 and 60 people go to these workshops. And it also gets them out of the office and the opportunity to mingle with peers from other institutions. And then we do very targeted, specific workshops where we send people away for cash management training, debt management, other types of topics that are specifically related to what we do in the controller's office.

**Luke Auburn:** Ebony Miller, program manager for the Saunders College of Business Center for Urban Entrepreneurship, sees benefits in looking outside the University to benchmark with peers.

**Ebony Miller:** A big part of my current position is the research development and delivery of mission-related programming. So to be able to do that, be able to identify programs that are needed in that area and that will work, I need to be able to know what's trending, what other entrepreneurial centers that have comparable missions to ours are doing. So constantly researching that, going to conferences, and just staying in the loop. Working with other organizations with comparable missions like the Urban League of Rochester, like SCORE, which is the Service Core of Retired Executives, the Rochester City School District, and just making sure that we're catering to the needs of the community that we're serving. So staying current, staying connected and constant relationship management.

**Luke Auburn:** Randy Vercauteren, RIT's Director of Parking and Transportation and Building Services, also had thoughts on how to look outside the organization to stay current.

**Randy Vercauteren:** Certainly, I go to conferences and I network with peers, you have to network with peers to know what's going on. You need to be involved in reading publications that are industry specific. For example, I'm parking, I get international parking institute news, I get stuff from our parking software provider who have over 300 universities, so like I network and understand what they're doing. I read their papers that come out. In the facilities field, we belong to an organization called the APPA which is actually the higher education facilities officials. And they write all kinds of articles about cutting edge technology and cutting edge thinking in facilities management. So on both sides, you really have to stay current with professional in the field. You must stay aware of what's happening out there. Technology changes all the time and thinking changes all the time. You know, one time, it was total quality management, then, it became quality implementation. Well now, it's all about lean Six Sigma

and things like that. So, they're very similar concepts but they progress in how they're applied. So, we need to stay current.

**Luke Auburn:** Regardless of your current occupation, RIT President Bill Destler sees plenty of ways to improve your skills and prepare for the next step.

**Dr. Destler:** We're all hopeful that RIT becomes a place of opportunity for people to come and to start, perhaps modestly, in positions, but to advance their careers to the point where they can be very, very successful. I think that staff especially have, you know, an obligation and an opportunity to increase their own educational skills by, for example, taking courses or taking advantage of the offerings in professional development, or even taking degree programs here, and we have a large number of our staff have done that as well. So I'd encourage all of them to just take advantage of the opportunities available to you. And then, I think, look for opportunities that could use your newly acquired skills more effectively and in more advanced positions here at the university.

**Luke Auburn:** So whether you have a terminal degree in your field or not, there are always opportunities to learn more and stay on the cutting edge.

That concludes this edition of the RIT Professional Development podcast series. For more information on how you can develop your career, visit [rit.edu/cpd](http://rit.edu/cpd).