



MISSISSIPPI SOCIETY OF
ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES

Connections

Winter 2022

Time for a New Year and New Priorities

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Connections is published for
Mississippi Society of
Association Executives
P.O. Box 12467
Jackson, MS 39236
601-853-4282
msae-net.org

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MSAE MISSION STATEMENT

MSAE strives for the success of association executives by providing leadership, professional development and networking opportunities and seeks to promote the role of associations in Mississippi.

With Conference Behind Us, We Turn Our Attention to 2022 Events

Welcome to 2022! We are looking forward to a great year ahead and finding new ways to bring value to our MSAE members. We truly appreciate all of our executive members and our industry partners alike. We are all in this together! The door is always open for your suggestions and input to help you get the most benefit from your membership dues. I truly look forward to serving as your President this year and can only be effective with feedback to keep growing.

Thanks for everyone who attended the 2021 Conference. We enjoyed seeing everyone in Natchez. Thanks so much to our generous sponsors, Natchez Convention Center and the Natchez CVB and other partners who made the event a success. Our theme was "Making Magic Happen" and we heard some inspiring messages. Mayor Dan Gibson gave a great speech about impactful Mississippians. We

also had the opportunity to hear from Sarah Thomas, who is the first female NFL referee. She is breaking barriers and is from right here in Mississippi. This year's conference also featured pertinent breakout sessions and, most importantly, unique opportunities for both executives and industry partners to network and have fun!

In January, we are starting off with a virtual happy hour event. The COVID numbers are rapidly increasing and MSAE wants to be mindful of our members' health. We are planning to have State Auditor Shad White to kick us off for the next Lunch and Learn March 9.

Stay tuned for announcements on the upcoming events and our exciting new location for the 2022 MSAE Conference!

MSAE President **Shannon Coker**, APR is Executive Director of the Mississippi Dental Association.



**SHANNON
COKER**

"Thanks so much to our generous sponsors, Natchez Convention Center and the Natchez CVB and other partners who made the event a success."

MSAE 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MSAE President **Shannon Coker** has been the Executive Director of the MS Dental Association for the last 3 ½ years. She has worked in the association field for nearly 20 years. Shannon and her husband JJ reside in Brandon, MS with their two dogs Bella and Piper. A few fun facts about Shannon are that her first job was a part-time Beauty Advisor for McRae's Department Store when she was in high school and that in her spare time she enjoys running.



Coker



Pepper



Garrett



Brown

Officers

Mike Pepper, MSAE Immediate Past President, is the Executive Director of the MS Road Builders Association. He has held this position for 14 years and has spent 25 years in the association profession. Mike lives in Mendenhall, MS, and in addition to his association career, he operates a commercial blueberry farm, supplying grocery stores, fine restaurants, and bakeries in the Jackson area.

MSAE President-Elect **Ricki Garrett**, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the MS Speech-Language-Hearing Association. She has held this position for 7 years and has been in the association profession for 18 years. Her first-ever job was working for her family's trailer and motor home business, The Camping Center, and backpacking business,

The Hinushi Trading Post, in Jackson. Ricki's husband, Jesse, is a retired pharmacist with the VA Medical Center in Jackson. Their oldest son, Walker, is a cyber security systems architect with Northrup Grumman. Walker and his wife, Yvonne, a mechanical engineer, live in Huntsville, AL. Their daughter, Alex, is a polymer scientist in Cartersville, GA. Ricki and Jesse's other son, Oliver, is an assistant director in Burbank, CA, and he and his wife, Val, a make-up artist, have two children, Layla and Ozzie. Ricki and Jesse have two cats who, they say, adopted them. In her personal life, Ricki holds the position of Alderwoman at Large in Clinton, MS.

MSAE Treasurer **Robbie Brown** has worked as Deputy Director of the MS Municipal League for the past 4 years. He previously held the position of City Hall Center Director and

has been in this profession for 15 years. Robbie's very first job was as an errand boy for a florist — processing boxes of flowers that came off the delivery trucks, keeping the stock room organized, cleaning the shop, and making deliveries to hospitals and funeral homes. His hobbies include playing the trombone and learning to play the banjo as well as rooting on the Florida Gators, MS College Choctaws, Miami Dolphins, and Tampa Bay Lightning. Robbie resides in Clinton, MS.

MSAE Secretary **Pat Fontaine** has been the Executive Director of the MS Hospitality & Restaurant Association for the last three years and was previously the MHRA Membership Director. He has been in the association profession for 17 years. Before this profession, Pat worked as a Workers Comp Claims Adjuster. Pat lives in Brandon, MS with his family—wife Amanda and their three children Wesley, Taylor, and Sydney.

Directors-Executive Members

Gwen Howard is the Executive Director of the MS Economic Development Council, Inc. She has held the position for one year and was previously the Manager of Member Services and Communication for seven years. Gwen resides in Brandon, MS with her two daughters, Eliza and Heidi, and their dog Zephyr and cat Coco. Her first job ever was working at a fishing lodge in Alaska. Another fun fact about Gwen is that she has been a member of MSAE since the beginning of her association career eight years ago. She has stated that she is thankful to have an opportunity to serve the organization that provided wonderful programming and networking from the beginning of her career.

Hal Miller has been the President of the MS Trucking Association for the last 8 years. Prior to this, he spent 25 years as a member of the Board, including Chairman. He has spent 39 years in the trucking profession. Hal lives in Madison, MS with his wife Tricia. They have three married sons, three granddaughters, and one grandson. One fun fact about Hal is that he and Tricia love Ocean Springs and spend most weekends there. Their love of Ocean Springs started when they used to travel there with Hal's family when they dated in high school. They have since continued this now 40+ year tradition with their children and grandchildren.

Karen Moody is the President/CEO of the MS Society of CPAs. She has held this position for 6 years and was previously a member of the association for 30 years, serving in many leadership positions, including Chairman of the



Fontaine



Howard



Miller

Board. She has been in her profession for 41 years. Growing up in Utica, MS, Karen worked in her mother's beauty shop washing hair, taking down hair rollers, removing nail polish, helping old ladies, sweeping the floor, and other odd jobs. She says that she improved her skills by cutting and perming her doll's hair. One of Karen's proudest accomplishments was achieving 12 years of perfect attendance in school. She was incentivized by the promise of receiving a trophy, which unfortunately never came. She did, however, receive an honorary certificate and the pride of her achievement. Karen and her husband, Tommy, live in Clinton, MS, and have been married for 40 years. They have two sons, Austin and Josh.



Moody

Directors-Industry Partner

Ashley Gatian works for the Vicksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau as the Sales and Marketing Manager. She has been in the tourism profession for 10 years. Ashley's first job ever was as a hostess at Xan's Diner.

Ashley is the co-founder of River City Kitty TNR group in Vicksburg. They sterilize homeless and feral cats in the community to try to lessen the overpopulation problem.

Jan Pannell has been the Sales Manager of Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau for nine years. Jan has been married for 34 years to her high school sweetheart, John Pannell. Her children are John Malcolm Pannell and his wife Hannah, and Sallie Rakestraw and her husband Brett. She also has two grandchildren, Peyton and Tucker, and a rescue chihuahua named Willie and a rescue cat named Sandy. In her free time, Jan enjoys antique shopping, and she loves to cook and entertain in her home in New Albany, MS. She also volunteers at the food bank at her church.

Annette Rand is the Director of Sales at the DoubleTree by Hilton Biloxi. She has held the position for two years and was previously the Sales Manager beginning in 2016. Overall, she has been in the profession for 28 years. Annette lives in Gulfport, MS with her fiancé, Joel Beckham, and her dog child, a golden retriever named Winston. Fun facts about Annette are that her first job was working the bumper boats at Fun Time USA, and she loves to watch football and boxing. She also enjoys reading, traveling, shopping, and being wined and dined!



Gatian



Pannell



Rand

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Making the Magic Happen

Highlights from 2021 MSAE Annual Conference



MSAE's Annual Conference was held in beautiful Natchez, MS from November 8 – 10, 2021. Our wonderful Natchez Partners pulled out all the stops to make this a MAGICAL event. Each day was packed with engaging speakers and exciting activities. Each evening stunned attendees with a variety of exceptional food, beverages, and entertainment at various charming venues.

Monday Highlights

With the help of our Welcome Sponsor, Oxford Conference Center and Visit Oxford, we kicked off our conference at the Natchez Convention Center with a Meet & Greet followed by a delicious lunch. After a brief message from our sponsor, Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa, attendees heard from guest speaker, the Honorable Dan Gibson. Natchez's Mayor Gibson inspired the crowd with a who's-who





of inspirational people of the past. From Helen Keller to Malcolm X, he utilized their strife and success to encourage our members to rise to their best.

After lunch, Executives and Industry Partners made their way to the Reverse Tradeshow. At these invaluable sessions, our Industry Partners were able to sit down for one-on-one, 5-minute meetings with each association executive in attendance. Thanks to our Cash Prize Sponsors, Embassy Suites in Ridgeland and Pearl River Resort, two lucky executives at each tradeshow session won a cash prize.



Our first educational session covered the ever-more-prevalent topic of Cyber Security with speaker Ken Jones, Senior Technology Architect at Pileum Corporation. This informative session answered the questions “Why is IT security more important today than previously?”, “What are the top security risks for your organization?”, and “How can you protect yourself?”.

Monday’s evening events began with an enlivening, interactive Magical Cocktail reception with Magician Joe M. Turner, sponsored by PCH Properties in Muscle Shoals and Point Clear, AL. Attendees relaxed and enjoyed hors d’oeuvres provided and sponsored by Natchez Grand, while Joe wowed the crowd and turned some skeptics into believers.



After this dazzling performance, attendees began the short walk down the block to Natchez Brewing Company where Visit Natchez treated members and guests to a selection of 15 specialty beers, wine, and live music! Visit Natchez also organized “A Taste of Natchez” with fan favorites from local restaurants such as Fat Mama’s Tamales, Biscuits & Blues, specialty stone-fire pizzas and more!



To end day one, attendees were invited to the “Afterglow Reception” at the new Playmakers Bar and Grill at Magnolia Bluffs Casino. Sponsored by Visit Hattiesburg and Magnolia Bluffs Casino. Once again the sponsoring property amazed guest with even more interesting and creative hors d’oeuvres and desserts.



Tuesday Highlights

Day two of the conference began bright and early with another “amazing” session from Joe M. Turner. In this educational seminar, Joe spoke on the topic “Five Kinds of Amazing: Creating Member Experiences that Engage and Amaze”. As always, Joe’s knowledgeable and comical approach to education was a crowd-pleaser. Attendees gained renewed knowledge on growing enthusiasm and participation in their associations through interactive experiences that were surely unforgettable.

The morning continued with a Bloody Mary and Mimosa Break, sponsored by Vicksburg Convention & Visitors Bureau. During this brief break, attendees were able to network and catch up before wrapping up the Reverse Tradeshow.

After the tradeshow, Executives and Industry Partners

went into separate sessions. Executive attendees heard from Shannon Adams, CPA on “Updates Affecting 501c(6) and 501c(3) Organizations”. This instructive session provided current guidelines on filing requirements with the Secretary of State and other state and federal government among other important updates.

At the same time, our Industry Partners gathered for an open forum where they shared the biggest challenges they are facing currently and ways in which they have or could overcome them. This discussion was incredibly beneficial as the collective industry leaders shared expertise openly to help one another succeed.

The day continued in the cozy ballroom of the Natchez Grand Hotel for Lunch with the Filmmakers, sponsored by our Starkville Partners! Attendees enjoyed a delicious soup and salad bar while hearing about the Natchez film industry directly from filmmakers John Norris and Daniel



Lewis. They discussed their love for filming in the quaint, historic city of Natchez, and they shared anecdotes on recent projects, including a Hallmark Christmas movie set and filmed in Natchez. The movie production, titled 'Every Time a Bell Rings', lit up the city with magnificent Christmas decorations that were still on display around town through the holiday season. Be sure to watch and keep an eye out for a few very familiar faces!

Tuesday afternoon offered optional group activities, including a city tour in a horse-drawn carriage, gumbo in the gardens of Monmouth Historic Inn, and/or the opportunity to explore the city on your own.

In the evening, the group gathered outside the Natchez Grand Hotel where they were treated to party favor flashlights from Visit Natchez and refreshments from our Coastal Mississippi partners, before jumping on a shuttle to the Natchez Cemetery for private tours of Angels on the Bluff. This unique event, which sells out every year, delighted with a guided tour winding through the cemetery grounds with reenactments of historical figures who made an impact on Natchez.

To close out day two, attendees were shuttled to the remarkable Castle Restaurant at Dunleith Historic Inn for dinner followed a reception under the stars, sponsored by our Tupelo partners. The delectable dinner of either Shrimp and Grits or Chicken Piccata, was enjoyed over glasses of wine and delightful conversation. Downstairs in the cozy Castle Pub, White Chocolate Raspberry Bread Pudding was served for dessert and made for a wonderful transition to the evening's reception. Outside, attendees could continue mingling around a fire while listening to live music. It was a spectacular ending to another lovely day in Natchez.

Wednesday Highlights

The third day of the conference started with a hot and hardy breakfast buffet, sponsored by the Ridgeland Tourism Commission. After a bit of nourishment and a lot of coffee, attendees made their way to the first session of the day, where Vidal







MEET BY DAY. PLAY BY NIGHT.

The much anticipated Threefoot Hotel is now open, right next door to the MSU Riley Center. From a rooftop bar and new brewery to the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (the MAX), downtown Meridian exceeds expectations.



— MEET IN —
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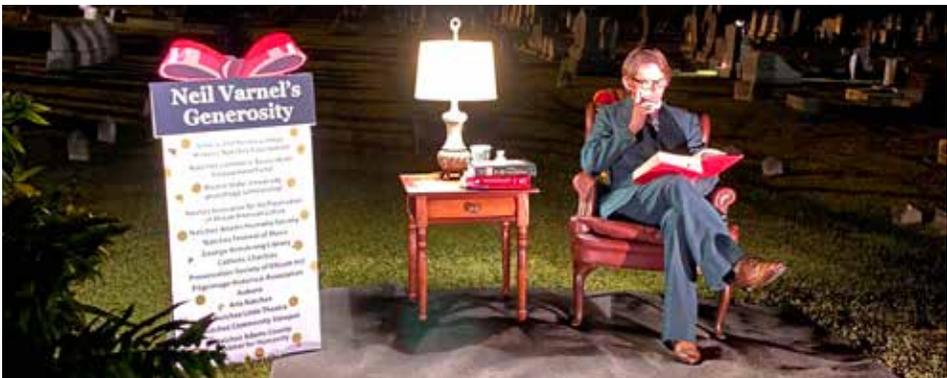
Blankenstein, Owner of Imaginary Company, Inc. shared on the topic “Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste: Reinventing Our Messaging, Membership, and Marketing Post-pandemic”. This session, sponsored by the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau, was a nice reminder on how to reinvigorate communication strategies and adapt techniques for today’s “new normal”.

Lastly, what better way to end the 2021 MSAE Conference than with a captivating closing session from Sarah Thomas, Mississippi’s Own and NFL’s First Female Official, sponsored by Visit Meridian! Sarah recounted her life and the determination it took to rise to her position in the National

Football League. She talked about her love for her family and how they drive each other to be great. She finished her seminar with inspiring lessons in leadership, dealing with pressure, and staying focused.

The 2021 MSAE Conference was fantastic, and the City of Natchez was magnificent and welcoming! We would like to thank Visit Natchez, the Natchez Convention Center, the Natchez Grand Hotel, Magnolia Bluffs Casino and Hotel, Dunleith Historic Inn and Monmouth Historic Inn for putting together an unforgettable experience and for showing our members the wonderful possibilities offered in Natchez, MS!







Thank you, Sponsors!

We appreciate your support of the 2021 Annual Conference

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Old Capitol Inn hosts soirée



After another year of meeting and gathering challenges, MSAE hosted a Holiday Reception for the first time in several years. The Old Capitol Inn was the perfect location to bring MSAE members, spouses, and guests together to celebrate the season. Mende Alford and her staff at Old Capitol Inn, including Chef Bruce Cain did not disappoint. The Inn was in its glory dripping in holiday lighting and décor. Chef Cain created a menu that appealed to all possible pallets.

MSAE members brought over 50 coats and jackets that were donated to We Will Go Ministries and Stewpot Ministries. Thanks to the generosity of MSAE members a number of Jackson residents will have a warmer season.





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Three Keys: Effective Communication is Essential in Roles of Leadership



By **KENT JULIAN**

Many people believe leaders automatically possess effective communication skills. However, if you're a leader, you know this isn't necessarily true. You've probably met colleagues who demonstrate poor communication skills. You might even label yourself as having less-than-effective communication skills.

No matter where you fall on the effectiveness scale, most leaders agree that good communication is essential to great leadership. With that in mind, here are three keys to effective communication in leadership that you can use immediately in your interactions with colleagues and customers.

Be a listener. Effective communication in leadership starts with good listening. If you are to lead others well, you must first learn to listen well. Stephen Covey said it best in *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." The best leaders start with the act of listening because listening allows you to gain a better understanding of your colleagues and customers. As you gain insight into their world, you are in a better position to effectively and positively lead them.

Be an echo. You can become a better listener by practicing a communication skill called active listening. Part of active listening is when you occasionally repeat, or

echo, key phrases said by the other party. By doing this, you demonstrate that you are engaged in the conversation. This practice also helps both parties track the main points of a discussion. One word of caution: when you overuse active listening, your echo loses effectiveness and can become irritating. The key to using this active listening skill is to repeat "key phrases" and only do so "occasionally."

Be a mirror. In *To Sell is Human*, Daniel Pink explains how the chameleon effect is another excellent active listening strategy for effective communication in leadership. Basically, this is a way to connect with people by mirroring some of what they do. Most people naturally do this without realizing it, but the best leaders tap into this strategy to facilitate more effective communication. Just like with echoing, the key is not to overdo it. Then it becomes manipulation. Instead, use mirroring to simply demonstrate that you are engaged and interested.

Action Step: Try using these three simple communication skills with colleagues and customers this week. As you do, not only will your communication skills improve, but you'll likely see your relationships deepen and your effectiveness increase.

Kent Julian is a Certified Speaking Professional with the National Speaker Association.

Board Driver's Manual

Governing principles that drive a high-performing Board of Directors.

Mind the Guardrails

Read the governing documents; they are the guardrails. Prepare thoroughly for meetings and monitor performance.

- ✓ Know the **Mission Statement**
- ✓ Identify the **Vision and Values**
- ✓ Read the **Bylaws and Policies**
- ✓ Understand the **Budget and Financials**
- ✓ Ask for the **Strategic Plan**
- ✓ Read the **Agenda and Reports** *Before Meetings*
- ✓ **Measure Performance:** Budget, Strategic Plan, Board, CEO and KPIs
- ✓ Avoid **Group Think**; *Speak-up BEFORE the board goes off a cliff*

Stay in your Lane

Persons unfamiliar with governance may drive conversations “into the weeds.”

- ✓ **Governance** is the Role of the *Board*
- ✓ **Management** is the Responsibility of the *Professional Staff*
- ✓ **Stay in Your Lane** (govern, *NOT* manage),
- ✓ Avoid **Micro-Management** and “Snupervision.”
- ✓ **Committees** are to Supplement Board and Staff Efforts

Rely on the Roadmap

A strategic plan guides the work of the board and committees.

- ✓ The Strategic Plan is the **Roadmap** or GPS: **Goals, Priorities, and Strategies**
- ✓ Spanning **3 Years** for Impact (not annually)
- ✓ Frequently ask, “**How does this idea advance our strategic plan?**”
- ✓ **Budget and Committees** must be Aligned with the Plan

Watch for Roadblocks

Meetings are ineffective when roadblocks occur.

- ✓ **SQUIRREL!!** (Chasing ideas up a tree and down a rabbit hole.)
- ✓ **Unprepared** for Meetings
- ✓ Lack of **Quorum** to Conduct Business
- ✓ **Personal Agendas**
- ✓ **Conflicts of Interest**
- ✓ The “**Devil’s Advocate**”
- ✓ **DISRESPECT, Distrust** of People and Diversity

Ground Rules for Meetings

Discuss and set “ground rules” or guidelines for effective meetings at the start of the year.

- Meetings start and end on **time**.
- Turn off digital **distractions**.
- Treat discussions and documents with **confidentiality**.
- If you **arrive late**, please refrain from voting until the next agenda item so as not to interrupt the flow of discussion of those who arrived on time.
- An **agenda** will be distributed # ___ days in advance; it will be the primary guide for discussions and decisions.
- If you have “**new business**,” present it in advance of the meeting for proper preparation and placement.
- Avoid meeting **distractions and sidebar conversations**.
- Be prepared by **reviewing the materials in before** the meeting.
- Many **questions can be answered in advance** if you’ll direct them to officers, staff, and committees before the day of the meeting.
- Minutes** will document decisions and actions of the meeting.
- Majority decisions** of the group shall stand; expressing **dissenting opinions** after the meeting is inappropriate.
- Respect **diverse ideas and people**.
- Be sure everyone has an opportunity to speak before **speaking again**.
- Avoid **regurgitating information** and decisions that have already be processes.
- Be **accountable** for commitments you make.



Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com.



MSAE 2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Member-2-Member Reception **5:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.**

March 8th, TownePlace Suites, Ridgeland

May 10th, Old Capitol Inn, Jackson

July 12th, Location TBA

September 13th, Location TBA

December 7th, Location TBA

Lunch & Learn **11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.**

Location: Embassy Suites Jackson North-Ridgeland

March 9th

May 11th

July 13th

September 14th

Annual Convention

November 6-8, 2022

Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa
Birmingham, AL



New Members & Member Updates

Executive Members

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