



This column is part of a series of monthly columns focused on the future of the screening industry and is specifically geared toward the future and growth of occupational health, wellness, and retention in the workplace. Join us each month as we tackle topics that help you and your organization thrive.

Technology, Tradition and Passing the Torch

By Nina M. French is the Founding Partner of Inflection Point Consulting Group, LLC

August is often a busy time with vacations and kids going back to school. As such this month's article will be brief – a bit of a summer beach book to be enjoyed and considered rather than studied.

Few things unite the nation and, in fact, the world, like the Olympics. The Olympics allow people to root for individuals, root for an event and root for a country all in the atmosphere of fierce but healthy competition. The competitors strive to win but revel in the successes of their teammates and of others who may beat them in one area and be bested by them in another. The games themselves are heavily steeped in tradition and yet, with each event we see innovation – in games, in skill, and even in fashion. Watching the comradery amidst the competition made me think a lot about the parallels with the screening industry.

I've recently invested a great deal of time learning about new technologies, innovations and adjacent industries and one thing became abundantly clear to me, the screening industry is complex. Our systems and channels, rules and regulations --- all are intermingled and, although it can be learned at a surface level, it takes years to truly understand it. And, as soon as you understand it, something changes. Keeping up with innovation takes commitment and time. Expertise is often hard to come by. The intermingling of that hard to come by expertise with innovation is difficult but is the true key to success and longevity.

Think for a moment of the closing ceremonies and what made this year's Paris Olympics transition to Los Angeles so incredible. It took a fantastic amount of coordination between countries, investment in a concept, execution and, most importantly, understanding of the audience. And all

that hard work was worthwhile because it hit the mark.

Switch back to our industry. We need the same recipe to successfully change the industry and create a path to exceed our past success. Experts in the field need to understand that regulations, laws and history are important but just because we have operated in a manner historically, it does not mean it needs to be unchanged in the future. We often look to the DOT as the ruler upon which we base our industry best practice but, while the DOT rules are important to meet the needs of regulated employees, they do not

often meet the needs of the 40 million other lab-based tests that are performed in the US annually nor the 200 million POC tests performed for employment and other industries. When considering history – the gold medal goes to those who take the classic techniques and applies innovative new approaches to them. And like the Olympiads, there are no good and bad, there are just competitors who often rely

on one another to push them to excel.

Innovators must take the same approach. Forging ahead without a full understanding of the requirements and the market leaves even the best new technology with faults and those faults can prevent adoption. Innovators must evaluate adoption, pricing, channel sales and dependencies on others to be successful. Would one ever roll out a new testing methodology without understanding what the strengths and weaknesses of the current ones are? A pricing structure without understanding what they market will bear, what it values and why? A sales strategy without understanding how clients buy, what the established networks are and what the pros and cons are? Innovation is critical but without deep knowledge of what the problem is and why it exists, it is nearly impossible to develop a solution that is a proper fit. A

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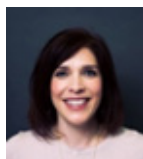
proper fit is what is required for surviving in the market, and if it is done well, changing the market for the better.

Those reading this who are experts, who know the history and its importance also carry a responsibility. Much like a coach, they need to use every tool they can to train the next generation so that best in class remains the industry standard. Volunteering in groups like NDASA, PBSA and SAPAA are critical for the industry's success. It isn't how much knowledge you have but how much knowledge you share that makes you a true industry leader.

Times are changing. Hiring trends are different than they were 10-20-30 years ago. Technology is advancing quickly as are the rules and regulations that govern it. THC legalization has turned the industry on its ear – but look to the past when solving for the future. Workplace drug testing was never meant to be solely used as a pre-employment tool. In fact, its greatest benefits come from testing throughout employment. Zero tolerance policies that were once accepted as the norm, no longer align in a world with a mental health crisis. Punitive use of workplace drug testing should be re-evaluated, and programs designed around prevention need to be created. Urine testing, once considered the gold standard, is now considered along with other methodologies like oral fluid and hair for their value to an organization as

it aligns to their overall testing program goals. Lab based screening as the sole method may no longer meet the need of today's fast paced world. And finally, drug testing needs to be incorporated into a person and an organizations health assessment.

Innovation, history, and excellence. We saw it in the Olympics, we need to strive to achieve it in the screening industry.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nina is the CEO of Neopharma Technologies, LLC. Nina has more than 30 years of experience in the employee screening industry and a deep understanding of drug testing program design, product development and innovation, policies, state laws, federal regulations and supporting technologies. Nina can be reached Ninafrench@neopharmatechnologies.com.

