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SWPP Announces Finalists for 2004 Workforce Manager of the Year Award

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE – March 2, 2004 – The Society of Workforce Planning Professionals (SWPP) today announced the five finalists for the 2004 Workforce Manager of the Year Award, which recognizes a workforce management professional who has shown outstanding leadership in the industry. The finalists are Michael Cavataio of BancTec, Annick Duffy of American Express Canada, Tanya Messmer-Himes of Nissan Motor Acceptance Corporation, Rob Partyka of Travelers Insurance, and Aaron Wegehaupt of Communications Services for the Deaf (CSD).

“We are so thrilled to announce these five workforce management professionals as finalists for this inaugural award,” said Vicki Herrell, SWPP Executive Director. “They have all demonstrated great leadership and ability in the field, as well as shown measurable results for their companies. These five individuals are truly representative of the ‘best of the best’ in workforce management.”

Michael Cavataio is the Workforce Manager for BancTec in Dallas, TX. Over the past 10 years, he has worked with several different companies in the same capacity, and has helped create and manage workforce management using many different ACD platforms and software packages. According to Jesse Jackson, Director of Call Center Operations at BancTec, “It’s true Michael knows workforce management software inside and out, but even more importantly, he easily leverages this knowledge to address the real world, day-to-day challenges we face running the call center.” Michael identified a problem with compliance at the center, and then designed a 30-minute class that every person attended. The agents were shown what compliance is, why it is measured, how it is measured, why it is tracked, and what the result is. After setting and communicating a compliance goal of 93% and adding in some fun contests, compliance has risen to more than 97%, saving the center over \$650,000 per year.

As a Project Leader for International Contact Center Engineering for American Express Canada, Annick Duffy specializes in driving new methodologies related to workforce management practices and leverages best practices across 25 international markets. She has recently been working on a revolutionary concept to improve the methodology for measuring the success of call centers, challenging the traditional average service level concept and introducing an innovative concept that will provide a consistent customer experience. Her efforts have led to a roll-out of the concept in over 25 markets around the world. Annick continued to build on this approach and developed a financial tracking methodology to provide a cost benefit analysis for the initiative. To educate the call centers on the greatest areas of opportunities, she also developed three new key indicator metrics, and as a result, a pilot team was able to reduce overtime expenses by 6%, improve scheduling effectiveness by 7%, and improve the new service level results by 3%. For her ability to drive results and build strong relationships in these efforts, Annick has been recognized by American Express with both a “Take a Bow” leadership award and an “Excellence in Leadership” award.

Tanya Messmer-Himes may be relatively new to workforce management, but she has been a driving force in the adoption, implementation, and success of workforce management software at Nissan Motor Acceptance Corporation. “In the 16 years that I have been in the call center industry, I have not found anyone who grasped the concept of workforce management faster or, for that matter, better than Tanya,” said Sean Hicks, Senior Manager at Nissan. “The results she delivered for the company have been nothing short of outstanding.” By introducing workforce management concepts to the agents and communicating with them, Tanya was able to get volunteers for some very unique schedules and introduce part-time staff into the center, as well as add floating lunches and breaks for more flexibility. Measurable results for one group include the reduction of average speed of answer by 66%, reduction of the abandonment rate by 50%, and improvement of the forecast from a weekly deviation of more than 20% to less than 5%.

Forecast accuracy is the name of the game for Rob Partyka of Travelers Insurance. As Associate Telecommunications Analyst, Call Center Planning and Evaluation, Rob is

responsible for creating the weekly forecasts for six Travelers Claim Notice of Loss call centers in four locations. In the past year, he has created a new forecasting model for the centers to provide a greater degree of forecast accuracy in an environment that is driven by weather events (i.e., rain, fog, high wind, snow, etc...). This model looks at the historic impact of multiple types of storm events, and the result is a forecast that identifies the expected increase in calls by skill type. Rob uses a daily accuracy metric to measure the improvement, with an ambitious goal of being within 10% of actual forecast 90% of the time. Through his persistence, Rob now has a track record of being within 10% of actual forecast 95.4% of the time.

Aaron Wegehaupt currently serves as Senior Manager of Video Interpreting Operations for Communications Services for the Deaf (CSD), a Video Relay Service (VRS) that connects deaf users to “operators” who are sign language interpreters in seven centers around the country. The service was implemented in the summer of 2002, and after the first year, the funding mechanism was cut by more than 60%. Aaron was charged with the challenge of making changes that would allow the service to continue with the same high quality, profitable results after the funding cut. With no automated workforce management solution and using only manual calculations, he was able to eliminate excess staffing costs of \$3 million for this fiscal year, double agent occupancy, and meet the company’s service level goal of answering 85% of calls in 10 seconds. “Aaron is truly a one-of-a-kind workforce manager,” said Jim Skjeveland, Senior Vice President of Call Center Operations. “I don’t think there is a person with a more comprehensive skill set that meets the needs of the organization and people he works with. He is by far the best at staffing a center or network of centers by thinking outside the box!”

The SWPP Board of Advisors selected the five finalists from nominations submitted on the SWPP website. The Workforce Manager of the Year award will be chosen from the five finalists by the Board of Advisors and announced at the 2004 SWPP Annual Conference, which will be held March 14-16, 2004 at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, TN.

About SWPP

The Society of Workforce Planning Professionals (SWPP) is an organization devoted to facilitating education and networking opportunities among workforce planners across all industries. Membership in SWPP is available to all workforce planning professionals and other interested parties from consulting and vendor organizations. Both individual memberships and corporate membership options are available, with full benefits and costs outlined on the organization's website at www.swpp.org.

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