

Water Wheels Keep on Turning

By

Barb Batson, AS

Do you want to do more but find barriers to your aqua career path?

Are you daunted when encountering a fork in the road to success without a clue about the direction to take?

Now is the time to explore ways to remove barriers and make waves. And one of the best ways is to get out of the box and keep moving. Making plans to attend professional development events is especially helpful to exchange information with others who are encountering similar situations to those you are facing, including brainstorming with those whose ideas may point you in the right direction.

ATRI Symposium will be especially helpful this year since an entire afternoon is devoted to many facets of business development. Here insights to help overcome obstacles can be gained. Time and again aqua professionals encounter and overcome the seemingly insurmountable as they navigate the nuances of aqua career challenges. Coming together and sharing concerns and solutions is THE WAY to success. And this year addition to the personal one on one talk time always available when two or more aqua professionals gather, the Business Development Forum provides a structured career enhancement opportunity.

Just because our work environment is not a traditional one with just a cubicle wall separating us from the help and encouragement of our colleagues does not mean we cannot share with one another ways to meet those needs. You will likely find affinity with the thoughts of those likeminded in the experiences related below.

Donna Adler, owner of Liquid Assets for Fitness, still going strong after 24 years, credits success to a formula she learned long ago. Get plenty of quality training, and get in the pool to try different approaches to aqua movement to find the specialty you truly love.

Julie from Washington echos Donna's suggestion this way: "I had a great mentor in the beginning. She made suggestions, helped me set goals, put me in touch with organizations, found jobs for me, recommended me, and was basically my cheerleader! After that, I took every aqua class I could at all kinds of facilities, with all kinds of instructors. That helped me identify my style and find where my heart was. I also learned about the participants themselves, their goals, fears, challenges, from their perspective. I took classes in all different types of aquatic modalities. I never turned down a teaching opportunity. I wanted to experience everything aquatic!"

Think back to how you got started. Did you set out to be an aqua professional?

Or like Billie from Pennsylvania, did you find the pool after a string of other career successes - geochemist, accountant, a Mom, School kitchen Manager, Youth Minister, Scout Leader, Sewing instructor, and Master Knitter. Billie's career transition began when she passed out hiking with her kids about 6 years ago. Completely out of shape and 50 pounds overweight she hired a trainer, learned about portion sizes and

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hunger. She read, studied, worked her butt off. She lost those 50 pounds, found joy, confidence and a cycling instructor position then was promoted to program director. She got certified - NASM, NETA, AEA, NESTA and continues to learn. She listens and takes action. Billie found exercise and took it to the pool for the health of it – and now for the health of others as she leads group x classes and personal trains in the pool. Billie knows first-hand the therapeutic benefits of aqua exercise and invokes those skills to improve the lives of those in her care. What's next for Billie?

Former teacher and school administrator, Teresa from North Carolina found aqua after experiencing 180 pound weight loss and becoming ACE CPT certified to complement the weight training regime key to her loss maintenance. An array of aqua and land certifications followed including AEA, ATRI, Ai Chi, AquaStretch, White Crow Yoga – all providing the framework for a successful therapeutic aqua career. She notes however, that early on she invested time and money in many trainings of little value to her preferred aqua path. And she made some choices without proper regard to her age and body vigor; wiser now, she paces herself in a way to provide a total experience in the water for those she serves. There's more to therapeutic exercise than a vigorous, no holds barred workout.

What has kept you from moving forward as fast and as far as you can?

Well certified by AEA, the Arthritis Foundation, and as an AquaStretch facilitator, Carrie from Kentucky felt her career momentum was stalled, perhaps because of her necessary family biz priority focus for a time. In spite of home pool availability and the good fortune to connect with an active therapeutic aqua specialist willing to mentor her, things still were not going as hoped. Then there was a turning point – a colleague urged she get her name 'out there' in the therapeutic aqua world and to begin making contributions to the profession. She's recently heard of and applied for an opening at the local Y. And she found special encouragement via email from aqua colleagues validating her perspective regarding pool water treatment. And now that her battery's recharged, she's ready to tackle the aqua personal training certification that's been on hold and is working on fine-tuning her ai chi presentation skills with serving wounded warriors in mind. .

Rosemary, LRT from North Carolina feels very fortunate to have found her Aquatic Specialist opportunity at a local hospital but would like to maximize the value of her MS degree and is on the look-out for ways to do so for the greater good of those she serves.

Similarly, Felecia from VA notes her choice of degree – 'The challenge I face most often having a BS in Human Ecology and a passion for helping people is that my credentials don't allow me to bill insurance. Growing with the field from the near ground level, I've learned much about PT, anatomy and physiology, sports medicine and rehab. However, the lack of the sheepskin this late in life makes it a challenge for me to gain the support needed to secure positions for which I am qualified experientially to fulfill. '

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Where do you go from here?

Alice DPT, PT from California says it this way: "I'm just getting started in the aqua therapy career. I'm a physical therapist at the hospital 5 days weekly and just once weekly at the pool. I think the hardest thing about starting out in aqua therapy as a PT is getting the consistent flow of patients. Although we as therapists try to make aqua relevant to real life on land for patients since our goal is "return to function" sometimes it's difficult to have functional goals in the water. I believe that my clientele (mainly geriatrics) make gains no matter how they're moving....as long as they're moving) therefore I'm promoting aqua therapy to this population. But I am not yet convinced that it is appropriate for everyone. At some point I want to open my own practice in the pool. I think the hardest part will be generating awareness (doctors, nurses, other allied health professionals, and other clients) will refer to me. Who do I start talking to first?"

Then there's veteran land and aqua fitness leader Howard from Wisconsin, approaching retirement from his primary career in sales. He ponders the wisdom of seeking ATRI certification in preparation to provide continuing waterwork for those whose physical therapy visits are concluded. What is the key to finding clients? Does community need justify the time and effort necessary to prepare for this work? Will ageism be an obstacle?

Mary Essert, the consummate aquatic professional whose career has spanned 60 + years still encounters and overcomes obstacles. She sites compassion and willingness to learn a most helpful attribute and personal wellness as her greatest current obstacle. She moves forward girded with perseverance and encouragement networking brings, counting on communication skills and a strong intuition to balance a good knowledge base. She finds being alert and in right place right time is also key and most important – **KEEPING UP AND KEEPING ON.**

As aqua enthusiasts the water surrounds and binds us together regardless of the distance between our hometown pool work places. Joining forces at events such as the ATRI Symposium enables a tsunami of information sharing to increase knowledge and provide powerful support impossible in any other setting. Mark your calendar now – June 28 through July 2. Set the water wheels in motion to be part of the flow. Together we can do this.

Barb Batson, AS primary focus is special population therapeutic aqua as a group movement activity instructor and personal trainer at the medically based fitness center at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville TN. She's certified by AEA, Arthritis Foundation and NMSS, having served as continuing education provider for each. In addition, Barb is a frequent contributor to aquatic professional and mature adult publications, Fitness Host Coordinator for Fun & Fitness Travel Club and ATRI On-Site Continuing Education Liaison. Contact Barb at barbatson@gmail.com or 800 500 8905.