



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PANEL

LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCED PROJECT DIRECTORS

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# AAPOR PRESENTERS

- Tom Smith, RTI International
- Jennifer Hunter Childs, U.S. Census Bureau
- Bill Davis, Davis Research
- John Stevenson, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Eran N. Ben-Porath, SSRS

# PROJECT DIRECTOR CHARACTERISTICS

- Versatile – topics and tasks
- Brave and courageous
- Generalist
  - You don't know everything – take informed risks
  - Use good judgment
  - Know what don't know – ask, find out

# PROJECT DIRECTOR CHARACTERISTICS

- Educator – clients and team
- Collaborator – clients and team
- Problem-solver – fun and pride
- Smart and kind
- Positive attitude

# STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

- Have clear, **written** expectations
- Manage expectations and uncertainty
- Understand what happens if something goes wrong
- Never say something is impossible
  - Offer alternatives
  - Discuss how problem can be solved
  - Think outside the box
- If something won't work, say so upfront
- Be candid about what can and cannot be done
  - Tell stories
  - Show what worked for others

# STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

- Ask for time when you need it
- Always check what the client submits
- Never charge for fixing mistakes
- Even the client's mistakes
- Consider the data on Day 1
  - Every minute detail is critically important
  - Have a process for catching even “little tiny mistakes”

# COMMUNICATIONS

- Ask and agree about the nature and timing of communications upfront
- Be transparent
  - Being a good human being
  - Look smart
- See something, say something
- Alert people quickly – internally, externally
- Problems – **call** immediately
  - Anticipate questions
  - Offer solutions with implications
  - Tell stories
  - Share previous experiences

# TEAMWORK

- Collaborate with client
- Collaborate with project team
- Inform everyone about the client and project
- Involve the client
  - Clients have expertise
  - Clients know what they need
- Doing **our** job is coming up with ideas and strategies
- Share the results – every role is important

# ESSENTIAL TOOLS

- Monitor schedule
- Monitor budget
- Monitor quality of work
- Documentation
  - Record of work
  - Problems encountered and resolutions
  - Lessons learned

# PRICELESS QUOTE

THANK GOD I HAVE STATISTICIANS!