

# The Fall Flow

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2014



# 100 FOR 100,000

It was all about the Benjamins at the Second Quarter staff meeting in the IEI headquarters and the Georgia office. In celebration of IEI reaching 100,000 customers for the first time in its history, all employees received a \$100 bonus, paid on the spot and in cash.

The gesture was all the more remarkable because it was a complete surprise to all but two IEI employees and the Executive Committee. CEO Rich Blaser brought out a cardboard box filled with specially printed envelopes, each containing a brand-new \$100 bill, and personally paid employees while he and CEO Darin Cook congratulated each recipient. How did such a public display of employee appreciation come about? IQ spoke with Darin to find out.

Darin said the Executive Committee wanted to observe the 100,000-customer mark with an occasion

that would be long remembered by everyone. Several proposals were considered, but the \$100 bonus was the one that seemed the most memorable and executable without too many people finding out. Nancy Penske made the arrangements for new bills from the bank, and five executives stuffed envelopes. Darin himself picked up the money from Wells Fargo Bank, which was handed to him in a brown paper bag! (IQ sincerely hopes Darin looked in the bag to make sure they hadn't slipped in a dye capsule.)

Were some on the committee worried about

the company ever reaching that elusive 100,000-customer goal? "Some were discouraged, but now that's totally turned around," said Darin. "People realize that we can do it. We've stopped stagnating again. It took 20 years to get there, but I think it's going to take a sliver of that time to get to 200,000.

"When market conditions are right, we're going to grow in spurts," Darin continued, in reference to recent wholesale prices in Texas that led to a sudden influx of new electricity customers. "We never grow at a steady pace, and that can be discouraging in one of those times when you're not growing. You have to go for the long game. You just have to keep communicating and reminding folks what we've done, and that anything is possible, as long as we stick to the plan."

*"We never grow at a steady pace, and that can be discouraging in one of those times when you're not growing. You have to go for the long game. You just have to keep communicating and reminding folks what we've done, and that anything is possible, as long as we stick to the plan."*

An integral part of that plan, according to Darin, is transparency. "We're a pretty open company, and because of that, people feel they are part of the company. We all recognize that it takes all of us to get to a goal, and by communicating, we all pitch in towards that goal, and we make that goal. Now that we've scheduled these monthly meetings, it's become a top priority. You have to communicate what's going on, and people understand that. Those ideals will help us get to the goal of 200,000 customers and beyond," he said.

The discussion then turned to new currents in the world of employment. An emerging trait among millennials just entering the workforce has been

the desire to be a part of something bigger than themselves, a stark contrast to the more egocentric goals encouraged by the economy in the past 30 years. As a member of Generation X, Darin said he has always approached hiring differently than other companies, and that this modus operandus has begun to bear fruit in the form of increased loyalty.

"People need purpose, and they need to be able to support themselves," he said. "Our culture statement basically reflects that: passion with purpose. The Greatest Generation didn't put themselves first; they put country first. We sort of lost that until Facebook came along and other social media programs. We became a community again. Anytime greed is encouraged, the company is going to fail. That's why our culture puts morals first, company second."

And how was the money put to use? Industrial Billing Analyst Jeannette Colon was able to get school supplies for her three children out of layaway. Customer Care Team Lead Christopher Vega did the same for his three school-age kids. Both of them remarked that this was yet another reason they enjoyed working for IEI: "What other company would do this?" they both said in separate interviews.

IQ would be interested to know: Do you have a story about what you did with the \$100 you received? Perhaps something funny or unusual happened? We'd love to hear about it. Let us know at Marketing@InfiniteEnergy.com. If your story is right for IQ, we'll consider reporting it in our winter issue. ☑

*Dear Infiniter and Veterans,*

*As always I find myself getting lost in the facts, permutations and predictions that little swirls of statistics can bring. One that has anchored around two pillars of statistics is that we have grown just over 15% in a week and two days less than ten months of this year. The two pillars, of course, are the beginning of the year customer count statistic (96,403) and the one week and two days less than the end of October statistic (111,029).*

*The Veteran Energy growth statistic astounds even more. We have grown since the beginning of the year and this writing by over 156% from 1118 customers to 2870.*

*Now let us have a little fun with prediction and compounding. If our pattern of growth continues to the end of this year, we will grow by 17% and change. If we assume a 17% growth rate for the next several years, our customer count will be 211,000 customers by the end of 218. Oddly enough, I think this is a conservative estimate of prediction.*

*The statistics are swirling into beautiful patterns because our efforts on the customer experience are paying off. Thank you all for getting us to this point. A mantra, by its very definition, must be repeated over and over again. 200,000 customers and beyond! 200,000 customers and beyond! 200,000 customers and beyond! ♡*

*Darin*





# 2014 INFINITE ENERGY OLYMPIC GAMES

Spanning four buildings to bring you the intermittent variety of sport... The thrill of victory and the agony of the feet...The human drama of silly competition...This is IEI's Wide World of Sports.

With perfect weather (not a cloud in any of the four buildings) to welcome them, the 2014 Infinite Energy Olympic Games were held on the Gainesville campus in late September. Athletes and sort-of athletes met on the parking lot of competition in valiant quests for departmental honor.

**The Tug of War** is a centuries-old tradition of grit, muscle and shoulder separations. Congratulations to the Sales I Team for yanking out first place in this event.

**Ping Pong** comes from China, home of very long walls. So there's that. We salute the Sales I Team for its remarkable display of skilled ball-swatting.

**The Water Balloon Toss** was created the day someone decided wetness had not reached its full potential. In a magnificent example of throwing unwieldy, wobbly things, TDI took highest honors.

**Soccer Bowling** is, to our knowledge, an event unique to IEI. You roll a soccer ball and try to knock things over. Whatever its origins, the HR (et. al.) Department did it better than anyone else this year and receives our kudos.

**Volleyball** can be enjoyed on beaches all over the world, particularly in Florida. While there are no beaches in North Central Florida – yet – it was the HR (et. al.) Department that again spiked it home this year. Well played.

**Cornhole** is another word for beanbag toss. And when you put beans and corn together, you get succotash. The Sales I Team tossed it best and receives the IEI trophy.

**Basketball Shoot Out.** The parking lot proved the perfect setting for this exhibition of what it truly means to stuff a ball through a hoop. The Sales I Team owned the paint. That is, if there were any paint in the parking lot. Well, there is paint, but not like on a basketball court, y'know? And you can't really "own" paint, I mean, who does that? Of course, when

you buy paint at the hardware store, you own that, I guess, but...OK, I'm gonna stop now.

Bocce Ball was invented in Italy by old guys with lots of grass. We salute the Sales I Team for doing the best impersonation of old Italian guys on grass.

**The Decathlon Relay** involves running around, handing off things, and toilet paper. Lots of toilet paper. We feel for the folks who had to sweep up afterwards. Still, a well-earned round of woots to TDI for its first-place finish.

**Infinite's Got Talent** was won by the Techno Twins from TDI who did an uninhibited display of whatever it was in the dark while ringed with glow necklaces. It was something. We don't know what, but it was something.

**The Brain Bowl** is an example of humanity's endless fascination with recalling tiny bits of useless information. Funny what one remembers

years after leaving school. In the end, it was the HR (et. al.) Department whose brains floated to the top of the bowl. Congrats.

And the overall winners of the day's combat? Unquestionably 4 Rivers Smokehouse, who catered an irresistible barbecue lunch for more than 300 employees.

Just kidding. Congratulations to the Sales I Team for its overall victory in the 2014 Infinite Energy Olympic Games! And a special shout-out to Meghan Wilhelmsen, IEI Wellness and Fitness Coordinator, who spent her last day with us refereeing and organizing this event, as she has for the last three years. We wish her the very best. 🍷



## Department Spotlight: Project Management Office



**I**n June, a decision was taken to create a new department to lead two new functions within IEI that would better facilitate requests from stakeholders throughout the company. Chief Operating Officer Doug Bianchi appointed several IEI employees for the positions, and the chosen appointees began their duties in the third quarter of 2014. As these are new roles, IQ sat down with Project Management Office Director Virginia Roberts, Senior Product Owner David Kaiser and Project Manager Michael Sallustio to get a definition of these positions.

The first of two new functions led by the Project Management Office (PMO) is product ownership. "The Product Owners are focused specifically on our software applications that we have here in house,"

said Virginia. Product Owner is a role in Agile Scrum methodology that serves on a team alongside software developers. He or she collaborates with both the development team and end users to decide on the

most important things to build. IEI's Product Owners will spend a significant amount of time coordinating the needs and expectations of all those who request new software features or improvements.

"Some requests start at the executive level, and others are just good ideas from employees that we want to follow up on," said Michael. "We get feedback from all of our co-workers on what's the most valuable thing we can be working on," said David. "We're just now in the process of assigning metrics to those decisions.

"The most powerful question we can ask is Why? If we can share the Product Owner's vision, and people can buy into that and it gets them excited, it can lead to more opportunities to develop that software," David continued.

The second new function created is enterprise-wide project management. Its purpose is to enable IEI to achieve its strategic goals through the successful execution of initiatives requiring the participation of numerous departments. "When I assign a project to a Project Manager, I give them a clear set of objectives," said Virginia. "The manager is in the middle of a circle, and all the numerous parties involved are on the outside perimeter of the circle. It's the Project Manager's job to do a lot of research, brainstorm with those on the circle's perimeter, and then synthesize all of that information together into a project plan, making sure everybody knows what their responsibilities are and tying that back to company goals." The project managers follow

four core concepts: coordination, communication, collaboration, and cooperation. "A Project Manager helps facilitate the completion of projects," said Michael.

Virginia, Michael and David each wanted to leave IQ readers with an important thought about their positions.

Virginia said, "My burning desire is for the Project Management Office to be everyone's go-to team when there is a difficult challenge or problem to solve."

Michael said, "I'm here to listen, to actually spitball back and forth and come up with ideas on anything. My door's open."

David said, "The purpose of my role is to ensure that the highest-value projects are being addressed by our development teams."

The members of the PMO are: Virginia Roberts (Director), David Kaiser (Sr. Product Owner), Cliff Mann (Sr. Project Manager), Michelle Davis, (Sr. Project Manager), Clarence Yates (Project Manager), Michael

Sallustio (Project Manager), and Christy Dvorak (Project Manager).

Employees interested in requesting a new software feature can speak to the appropriate Product Owner: Don Ilgen (ADEPT), Laura Hammond (MPA), Xavier Yrausquin (Broker Portal), Mat Houchens (Customer Website), Cliff Mann (Billing), Christy Dvorak (Transactions), and Joey Bissinar (Energy & Power Management). When in doubt, David Kaiser can route any request appropriately. ■

*"The most powerful question we can ask is Why? If we can share the Product Owner's vision, and people can buy into that and it gets them excited, it can lead to more opportunities to develop that software," David continued.*

## Employee Spotlight: David Kaiser



**Y**es, everyone knows he won the grand prize of \$50,000 at last year's holiday party. But what sort of a guy is IEI Senior Product Owner David Kaiser?

Probably the first thing you notice in conversation with him is how soft-spoken he is. Then you realize that is the ideal quality a Product Owner should possess. Add to that his background in computer science and it becomes clear that David is the right person for the task of fielding requests for new software. And that the 50K couldn't have gone to a nicer guy.

David joined Infinite in 2011 as a Project Manager, focusing on customer-facing web applications with the web team. He had worked previously as a software developer at a small investment company in Pennsylvania and as a business systems analyst in another Gainesville-based company.

His skill set "filled a need that they had," he said, regarding his hiring at Infinite. "My take on my role was to oversee the tasks that made up a large project, communicate the status of the project to interested

parties, see if the web team was on time. And then my role shifted over to Agile Scrum." (The term refers to a methodology for effective, productive software development.)

"I get to talk to a wide variety of people here, from all departments and all levels, and interact without regard to level or department," David said. "I enjoy the face-to-face communication because I think it is a very rich way to communicate. Other methods of communication typically leave something lacking, but I enjoy being there face-to-face with someone, because I can understand their perspective better, how passionate they are about this topic."

But what if team members disagree about an objective? "If you're going to be a good moderator at a meeting, you need to let counterpoints be voiced, but you also have to be acutely aware if there is a balance being maintained or if one person is just overrunning the meeting. And also keeping a very close eye on the time that you have, because at the end of the meeting, you definitely need an actionable decision, or it's a waste of people's time," he said.

At the end of the work day, David looks forward to spending time with his wife, Heather, and his sons, William and Luke. He enjoys simple pleasures at home, such as dinner with the family or watching a movie in the living room with everyone. If everyone feels like a getaway, they'll head to St. Augustine or visit family in Deland – places where the kids can be active. He loves the outdoors, especially hiking and motorcycling. He has a deep appreciation for the variety of locations in Florida, be it forests or seashores.

And as for the question, just what was it like to win \$50,000? "Very surreal," David said. "I was sitting there, thinking 'Who should I be happy for?' and Darin announced the name, and I knew he said 'David,' but there are many Davids at this company. And so I was looking for which David it was and thinking, 'Oh, so close.' But then I saw my wife's reaction, and it was just Deer in the Headlights."

Good thing you jumped out of the way, David! 🐘



**O**ur IMPACT Team continues to reach out to organizations in Gainesville in an effort to improve community quality of life.

The Visiting Chef program at Ronald McDonald House continues as residents receive visits from team members through the summer every six weeks. Cooking meals for patients and their families creates an opportunity for IEI employees from different departments to work together. The menu is usually marinated chicken, yellow rice, broccoli casserole and other vegetables. Kids enjoy the ever-popular chicken nuggets and mac and cheese. However, aspiring chefs are always encouraged to take over and prepare haute cuisine if they wish.

Additionally, IMPACT is partnering with SWAG (Southwest Advocacy Group) to renovate existing facilities across from their headquarters into a health clinic. The building has been donated, and funds are needed to upgrade décor and install equipment. (Part of the proceeds raised by IEI's Wear Shorts to Work initiative are donated to SWAG.) The new clinic's services are especially important, as they

will include dental care facilities, and Medicaid does not offer oral care coverage.

IMPACT is always looking for new people to help make a positive difference in the community. Why not come along for a day and participate, just to get a feel for it? If you are interested in becoming part of the IMPACT Team, please contact Bradley Gracy.



# ASK CHAD



Dear Chad - My wife and I will be celebrating our ten-year wedding anniversary next month, but I don't have any clue what to buy her for an anniversary gift. Any suggestions? - Michael T.

**Dear Michael - People buy each other anniversary gifts? Dude, she's lucky you remember the date at all. Take her to Golden Corral and call it a night. - Chad**

Dear Chad - My mother-in-law recently gave us a cookbook of Paula Deen's recipes. However, both my husband and myself have high cholesterol, so we can't cook anything with this much butter! How do I approach this with her? - Amber K.

**Dear Amber - Who's Paula Deen? - Chad**

Dear Chad - I'm going with my boyfriend and his parents to an upscale sushi restaurant, but there's just one problem: I don't know how to use chopsticks! Can you offer some quick tips? - Katie F.

**Dear Katie - Chopsticks come with a whole lot of complicated instructions on the back, but all that'll teach you is how to drop your roll while looking like an idiot. Assuming your roll doesn't have any chicken or other fancy stuff on top, just grab a chopstick, stick it right through that bad boy and pop it in your mouth. - Chad**

Dear Chad - I recently got a new job with a great company, and I want to dress to impress. What kind of wardrobe would you recommend for a young professional wanting to make it to the fast track? - Matt L.

**Dear Matt - You start by thinking about how your role models dress. Think about the most amazing person you know. If you're any kind of person worth knowing, you just thought of Batman. Wear a Batman shirt. - Chad**

Dear Chad - I've always had a flair for the artistic, and I'd like to turn my prowess into commercial success. What advice do you have for those wanting to go to graphic design school? - Rana P

**Dear Rana - I don't know why you'd need to go to graphic design school. Everyone I know already seems to be a graphic designer. Move that headline to the left, Chad. Make the center section blue, Chad. Jeez. How many times am I going to have to design this thing? - Chad**

**P.S. I don't know what "prowess" means. Maybe you should be a copywriter instead.**



These individuals celebrated the anniversary of their hire date during the third quarter of 2014. Infinite Energy is proud to recognize these employees for their many years of service.

Thank you, and congratulations to all!



Buchanan, David D **10 YEARS**  
Dillon, Jamie M **10 YEARS**  
Shi, Xiao-Lei **10 YEARS**  
Strivers, Catherine R **10 YEARS**  
Adams, Rekisha S **10 YEARS**  
Beasley, Maria B **10 YEARS**  
Nelsen, Karen J **10 YEARS**  
Richardson, Jean M **10 YEARS**

Hammond, Laura-Jane M  
Naji, Julie L  
Suarez, David A  
Ramer, Kristina M  
Melengu, Luljeta  
Rivera, Omayra  
Rapp, Tiffany K  
McDonald, Ryan M

Manda, Reddy R  
Bausmann, Sunmi  
Nordstedt, David R  
Figueroa-Vivero, Sandra M  
George, Erica A  
Jones, Angelia L  
Naji, Fatimah K  
Nelson, Bradley D  
Eads, Patrick D

McHenry, Andrea D  
Swilley, Ronnie L

Whitler, Alex B  
Pruss, William  
Thakur, Kedar D  
Koganti, Sarika  
Bonsal, Craig R  
Fenelus, Reginald  
Hernandez, Jorge A  
Williams, Cardell  
Brandhuber, Marissa  
Dixon-Wade, Debra  
Yagnik, Lolita

Rose, Zachery W  
Alvarez, Doraima  
Applebee, Peter A  
Cobia, Phillip K  
Fulton, Stephanie M  
Hayford, Linnea K  
Schildberg, Mark T  
White, Hope S  
Godek, Robert H  
Graham, Shenell  
Davis, Andrew  
Gutierrez, Marcos T  
Rodriguez, Alejandro  
Wilber, Patrick C  
Nosko, Grant F

10+

Jacome, Jessica A **11 YEARS**  
Price, Charles L **11 YEARS**  
Sutherland, Marshall W **11 YEARS**  
Roberts, Virginia A **11 YEARS**  
Doerr, Marysue S **11 YEARS**  
Sallustio, Michael S **12 YEARS**  
Lyons-McDougle, Lauren M **12 YEARS**  
Lee, Leeann **13 YEARS**  
Boswell, Samantha B **13 YEARS**

#### DO THEY LIVE HERE OR WHAT?

09

08

Igen, Don C  
Eisner Swendsen, Kim L  
Adams, Livia Y  
Pinillos, John A  
Caba, Judy  
Romero, Susan E  
Rosado, Noemi R  
Huang, Wen  
Dvorak, Christy L

07

06

Harriott, Charles A  
Andrews, Garrett W  
Kolak, Eliza D  
Lee, Yueqiu S  
Yates, Clarence F

#### EVERYONE KNOWS YOUR DOG'S NAME

05

04

Dolder, Jason G  
Richardson, Sean P  
Garrison, Adreka L  
Ramones, Karen A  
Rhea, Warren L  
Weber, Jeffrey D  
Malviya, Aditi  
Charron, Melissa A

03

#### LONGER THAN MOST OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

01

02

Knapp-Baker, Sarah A  
St. George, Pamela  
Clerici, John P  
Jean-Marie, Judith  
Reno, Michael C  
Taylor, Robert D  
Vercelles, Mark E  
Dartigue, Genevieve M  
Mora, Eduardo  
White, Jason P  
Lester, David J  
Haddad, Charles E  
Brock, Nicholas  
Johnson, David J

#### DESIGNATED PARKING SPACE



ICE BUCKET



CHALLENGE

# Infinite Energy

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## GET SOCIAL

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## HAVE A SUGGESTION?

Do you have an idea that would make the IE Quarterly even more awesome?

Drop us a line at:  
[Marketing@InfiniteEnergy.com](mailto:Marketing@InfiniteEnergy.com)