

MONEY & MISSION

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EDITORIAL: THE BLESSING OF LONG-TERM EMPLOYEES

The Finance department is singularly fortunate in having several employees who have been with us for extended periods. No matter how complete the records that are maintained within the department, there are aspects of “institutional memory” that can

only be maintained by staff members. These aspects are often most valuable for the smooth running of the department and the service to our clients.

Our long-service champion is Shelley Toner, who joined the department 37 years ago, in 1981. By July this year there will be eight others with more than 20 years of service to The Salvation Army: Paul Goodyear (1987); Georgia Marinos (1991); Serge Laframboise (1993); Rochelle Elliott (1994); Keely Harris (1996); Arnold Adey (1998); Sharon Dury (1998); and Kimberly Efford (1998).

Some of them have served in multiple Army departments or in multiple roles within the Finance department. A further 26 have been with us for ten or more years, including several in leadership positions. While the majority of these long-serving employees are based in Toronto, there are several from each of Calgary and St. John's (including two who live in Montreal but are attached to St. John's office).

We celebrate these long-term employees for what they contribute to the life of the department and its work in supporting the Army's mission.

NEEDED CONTROLS OVER GIFT CARDS

By Lt.-Col. Neil Watt

The growth in the use of gift cards, as well as the latest requirements of Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), has resulted in Operating Policy 4008 being significantly revised. It was re-issued on November 1, 2017.

OP 4008 is specifically directed to four distinct groups of recipients:

- a.)** Officers (Active & Retired)
- b.)** Employees

Gift cards for the above listed are prohibited due to the complexities of tracking and reporting to CRA.

- c.)** Volunteers

Limited use of gift cards for volunteer recognition/appreciation is permissible with adherence to the Operating Policy.

- d.)** Clients

Gifts cards are allowed for the convenient provision of assistance, however, there are strict requirements for controls and accounting.

Controls:

The use of gift cards requires a detailed assessment of the end uses and then the application of the necessary controls outlined in the current policy.

Internal Audit reports from the last two years indicate that almost 50% of ministry units audited have inadequate controls as compared to policy, as follows:

1. Gift cards not secured, logged or reconciled
2. Dollar value of gift cards not included in financial statements
3. Overall controls very weak

Operating Policy 4008 makes it clear that gift cards represent a **form of cash**, and so should be subject to the same controls as cash.

The revised Policy 4008 can easily be accessed through Lotus Notes. A thorough review will highlight the necessary processes and controls to be undertaken by ministry units in order to protect **these substantial assets**.

DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS

A recent article "Are digital distractions harming labour productivity?" in *The Economist* started:

"For many it is a reflex as unconscious as breathing. Hit a stumbling-block during an important task (like writing an article)? The hand reaches for the phone and opens the social network of choice. A blur of time passes, and half an hour or more of what ought to have been productive effort is gone. A feeling of regret is quickly displaced by the urge to see what happened on Twitter in the past 15 seconds. Distraction is a constant these days; supplying it is the business model of some of the world's most powerful firms."

While most of us with financial or administrative functions in the Army do not write articles, we all know how easy it is to be distracted from the task at hand, especially by e-mails, text messages, voice mail or web browsing. And it isn't just the time taken for these functions that is costly: research has shown that it takes an average of 23 minutes for a person to fully regain focus on a task after being distracted.

Many suggestions have been offered for minimizing the effects of distractions. One of the most common is to set aside one or two periods a day to review and respond to e-mails, text messages and voice mails, preferably at times when you are not at your best – perhaps early in the day, if you are not a “morning person,” or before you break for lunch. If you are expecting an urgent message, check for it more often, but defer dealing with other business messages until your scheduled time, and leave most personal messages until the evening.

Of course, colleagues can also distract. If you avoid making eye contact with the person who walks past your desk, they are less likely to stop to chat; if you have your own office, closing the door usually indicates that you don’t want to be disturbed. In his *Money & Mission* article about the reorganization of the Finance department (December 6, 2017), Paul Goodyear noted “Many staff members regularly work off-site, and we encourage this because studies have shown that it results in higher productivity.”

Of course, interacting with colleagues and answering e-mails are every bit as important to the job we do as anything else; the challenge is to manage these potential distractions so that they do not prevent us from accomplishing important work that requires thought and concentration. Avoiding them is not the answer, but planning when to allow them to have your attention is key to getting other important work accomplished.

WHO'S WHO – LT. COLONEL NEIL WATT

Lt. Colonel Neil Watt is Senior Advisor to the Financial Secretary, a role he has held on a part-time basis since retiring from active officer service in 2014. Prior to that, Neil had been the Territorial Secretary for Business Administration for ten years. Previous appointments included Divisional Secretary for Business Administration in the Ontario East Division and Territorial Property Secretary.



As of April 1, 2018, he and his wife, Lynda, have been seconded to the Caribbean Territory where Neil will serve as interim Chief Secretary for a three-month period. While this is a short period, with his in-depth experience and his enviable personal characteristics he will doubtless make a valuable contribution to the Territory's leadership.

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