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Recognizing Exceptional Employees

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The Pragmatist addresses topics relevant to Pragmatics’ employees and clients. If you would like to contribute, please contact Anne Hurley at hurleya@pragmatics.com.
Key Success Factors

From the COO

Success Requires Vision Alignment, Trust, Talent, and Resources

In early December, the company held the Pragmatics Annual Leadership Meeting (PALM). At this year’s PALM, more than 60 representatives from management and key technical and support staff spent a day discussing the prior year’s performance and our initiatives for next year, and attended workshops on topics such as project control, talent acquisition, proposal writing, and government/industry interactions. It takes effort to pull together this day-long event and begins with reflection on those things that went well and didn’t go so well in the past year. Looking back over the past year, we can cite many high performing projects that consistently meet and often exceed customer expectations. While these projects vary in size, duration, complexity, and other aspects, their success stems from the following factors:

- **Alignment with Customer Vision.** It is critical that we understand how each project fits into each customer’s current and long-term vision. Understanding our customers’ visions ensures we make better decisions, tailor our solutions appropriately, and provide enduring value. When we help shape their visions by introducing new ideas, innovation, and best practices, we demonstrate our commitment to their goals and true partnership.

- **Strong Trust and Collaboration within our Team and with the Customer.** Trust is critical to success in any endeavor. Trust is earned every day and many of our customers have had good and bad experiences on projects. When we consider our most successful programs, there is solid communication with the customer, within the team, and with Pragmatics management. Trust is earned every day.

- **Right Mix of Talent, Tools, and Processes.** Team, tools, and processes are needed for every customer engagement. We have some of the best and brightest employees in the industry, as well as proven processes tailored to each project’s unique needs. We have invested in tools, facilities, and other resources needed to provide the environments necessary to efficiently and effectively deliver. Whether it is warehousing for our installation teams, cloud-based environments, or Agile team rooms, we have ensured that our teams are provided the resources they need to be successful. When our folks don’t have the right tools, the projects can suffer due to inefficiencies.

- **Taking Advantage of Corporate Resources.** Each project is typically staffed with a dedicated team well qualified to support the customers’ needs. However, there are times when surge support, specialized training, access to tools, or a fresh set of eyes are needed to get a project over a hump or take it to the next level. The most successful projects understand that they sometimes need help and call on Pragmatics leverage teams to ensure they get it.

These factors are a few that have ensured long term value to our customers on some of our most successful programs and projects. As we move into 2018, I ask you all to continue to focus on our mission to serve our customers with the best services and solutions.

Thank you for all your hard work during 2017. I look forward to greater success in 2018.

Joe
Pragmatics knows that recognizing and appreciating employees are essential to ensuring success, be that of our customers, our personnel, or our company. In keeping with Pragmatics’ tradition of honoring employees and their achievements, on December 2nd CEO Dr. Long Nguyen graciously hosted Pragmatics’ annual Holiday Gala which included the annual awards ceremony.

During the ceremony, Dr. Long, Chief Operating Officer (COO) Joe Brock, and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Kimmy Duong presented seven employees with Chairman’s Awards for exceptional contributions in the areas of Project Support, Technical Support, Senior Technical Support, Project Management, and Project Team performance. The Chairman’s Award recipients are selected from employees nominated by their colleagues and supervisors. Awardees for each category and excerpts of comments about them are noted below.

**Chairman Award Recipients – What Made Them Winners?**

**Gregory Snell, Project Support:** “Greg’s contribution to the Finance Team goes well above and beyond what is asked of him. While he has not been at Pragmatics that long, he has become pivotal to the success of the Army Enterprise Classroom Technology project, working tirelessly to ensure the job is done right. Greg has a “can do” attitude and jumps at the opportunity to help other co-workers, no matter the job.” ~ Kimmy Duong

**Troy Ioannou, Project Support:** “Within the GCSS-J project team and among our DISA customers, Troy is recognized for his outstanding capabilities and expertise. In addition to technical knowledge, Troy is recognized for his dedication to software craftsmanship and the high-standards he sets. He has introduced business intelligence tools that the DISA customer quickly recognized as beneficial. He is the “Go To” team player on a team of talented individuals, and has experience and technical insight on which the GCSS-J team leads rely.” ~ Joe Brock

**Darin Chapman, Project Support:** “Darin provides outstanding support to the FAA’s Navigation Programs Directorate. He was instrumental in guiding the NextGen Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) program to achieve a major FAA acquisition milestone. Several different FAA customers have identified the contribution that Darin makes to the success of their tasks. Earlier this year Ms. Deborah Lawrence, FAA Navigation Programs Manager, complemented Darin and the Navigation team for the preparation and execution of the Capital Investment Plan briefs. Darin demonstrates a great depth of aviation expertise and commitment to customer success.” ~ Joe Brock

**Andy Pratt, Technical Support:** “Andy provides technical support and in-depth expertise to the ECP Technology and Sustainment contracts. He has spent several weeks assisting in the development of two labs that the TRADOC PM and PMO use as a showcase for current and new technologies. Andy has successfully led the installation of eight major auditorium programs at six posts in the last year. Andy’s high standards and technical expertise are a great value to Pragmatics and our customer’s mission.” ~ Joe Brock

**Claudine Wilkinson, Senior Technical Support:** “Claudine leads the team of systems engineers responsible for maintaining the DCGS-SOF enterprise infrastructure and tools, which consists of test, staging, and production environments on NIPRNet, SIPRNet, and SOCRATES (JWICS). The SOCOM DCGS-SOF program office relies on Claudine’s leadership for sustaining the enterprise while improving system performance and addressing the continuous stream of new releases. Claudine leads a very cohesive team of engineers with a can-do attitude to supporting customer needs—much of which is the result of Claudine’s positive relationship with her team and the program office.” ~ Joe Brock

**Jason Spyker, Project Management:** “Jason is the Program Manager for the OCC ASC contract. Under his leadership, our OCC projects have introduced value and innovation aligned with OCC objectives in the areas of Agile development, automated testing, and quality and performance standards across all projects. As a result of his leadership, Pragmatics is leading the Agile implementation at OCC, and automated testing is improving program quality and reducing cycle times.” ~ Joe Brock

Joe Brock noted that, again this year, the award selections were very difficult given the high number of high performing employees.
Federal Financing Bank Team (FFB), Project Team:

In 2015, Pragmatics was awarded a task to modernize the FBB’s Loan Management Control System. The goal was to migrate the capabilities developed in Fortran and Oracle to a modern Java-based solution. Since our initial award, the FFB team has met each major milestone, working long hours in the design, development, and testing of the modernized LMCS solution. The team has proven itself to be committed to the project’s success, working closely on all aspects of delivery. The team has received numerous ratings of ‘Excellent’ over the course of the project. They have gained the trust and confidence of the FFB customers and demonstrate the exceptional performance that we strive for in all projects.” ~ Joe Brock

Pragmatics Appraised at CMMI® Level 5 for the Third Consecutive Time

By Alexandra Hoey

Pragmatics’ Agile Software Development Center was recently re-appraised at Maturity Level 5 of Capability Maturity Model (CMMI®) for Development (CMMI-DEV) Version 1.3, for the third consecutive time.

CMMI is a capability improvement model that organizations adopt to either solve performance issues or improve performance by outlining clear processes intended to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and improve overall quality.

Pragmatics’ appraisal at Maturity Level 5 indicates we are performing at an “Optimizing” level, continually improving our institutionalized processes through both quantitative and qualitative methods. These processes put forth by CMMI are utilized on a multitude of our projects, most of the time without people even realizing it.

Our appraisal, conducted from November 6th through November 15th, was led by a Software Engineering Institute Certified High Maturity Lead Appraiser from Global Process Solutions, LLC, Peter Barletto. Mr. Barletto was joined by the Pragmatics’ appraisal team which consisted of six Pragmatics employees of various backgrounds including:
- Todd Godfrey
- Alexandra Hoey
- Valerie Faircloth
- Rey Forrest
- Charles Knell
- Michael Sturm

Moving forward, Pragmatics is determined to continually improve our product and service development, but is also taking the initiative to improve our capabilities to provide quality services for our customers. The CMMI® for Services (CMMI-SVC) model is designed to improve mature service practices and increase customer satisfaction. Accordingly, Pragmatics is taking steps to apply this model’s practices to the current services we provide.

For more information about CMMI, ISO, or Quality and how it can positively impact your projects, please contact Deke Moeller at moellerd@pragmatics.com.
The Pragmatists Holiday Gala was an evening filled with colleagues, friends, and family enjoying the fun of dinner and dancing. Anne Hurley, Director of Proposal Operations and Marketing, served as the Mistress of Ceremonies. She was assisted through the evening, especially in the raffling of great door prizes, by her merry band of helpers including Alex Hoey, Sarah Solomon, Jackie Solomon, Jose Coronado, and Cecil Solomon.

Following the awards ceremony, everyone enjoyed dinner and dessert, and then the dancing began. Led by the crowd-favorite band, “The Exclusives,” Pragmatists danced away the night, grooving to some of the classics like the “Electric Slide”. When the dancers needed a break, it was raffle time! This year Pragmatics raffled off great gifts including beautiful coffee table books, a portable stereo, two drones, an action camera, a home theater projector, and more.

Congratulations to our grand prize winners!
- Mika Bennett won the Morton’s Gift Card.
- Jean Claude Descorbeth won the 3-night stay in New York City to celebrate New Year’s.
- Melvin Williams won the latest Apple iPad Pro with 500gb memory.

Other Pragmatics offices not local to Northern Virginia also held holiday celebrations, including the Iran Litigation team in Trevose, Pennsylvania, and the DCGS-SOF II team in Tampa, Florida.

As always, we thank Dr. Long and CFO Kimmy Duong for making these events memorable.
The Party in Pictures
Notable Contract Wins

By Anne Hurley

Pragmatics has several contract wins during recent months, and we note below two given their significance.

**OPIC ITSS**

Expanding Pragmatics’ customer base is an important strategy in our corporate growth and, in September 2017, we did just that by winning the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) Information Technology Support Services (ITSS) contract. This single-award contract has a potential 10-year period of performance and a value of $26 million.

OPIC’s mission is to provide businesses with financing, political risk insurance, and advocacy in overseas investment. As noted in the solicitation, “The OPIC CIO Technical Services Support contract will provide the full-lifecycle of IT and Management Consulting Services. The IT Services are responsible for management and leadership for the planning, delivery, and maintenance of corporate infrastructure services and serves as the technical authority and expert in network and security technology.”

According to the contract, Pragmatics will supply qualified personnel and other services necessary to perform the tasks needed to provide the following general services: system architect and design; configuration management; software maintenance, testing, and troubleshooting; computer security; technical writing; training; implementation and maintenance of IT infrastructure; day-to-day maintenance and operations of OPIC’s IT systems; and coordination of an integrated suite of networking and application delivery services and end-user access. Pragmatics will provide project managers, engineers, technicians, and IT specialists on-site and on-call to effectively administer, enhance and maintain OPIC systems, adopting IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) and Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) concepts.

Accordingly, the scope and associated tasks will be organized according to the following four functional areas:

- Operations Program Management and Oversight;
- Customer Support Center;
- IT Services and Network Operations, and;
- Networking Engineering.

**GSA Alliant 2**

In November of this year, Pragmatics added to its impressive stable of vehicles by winning a contract on the General Services Administration (GSA) Alliant 2 multiple-award, IDIQ contract. Pragmatics was one of 61 awardees for the Alliant 2 Unrestricted Government-wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). The 10-year contract consists of a five-year base period and a five-year option period, with a maximum aggregate value of up to $50 billion. The contract is aimed at enabling federal agencies to modernize systems and accommodate new technologies to meet future needs.

The contract was awarded to the companies that had the highest total points in a self-scoring process. There were several ways to accumulate points. The principal methods were by having past performance in a specified set of Product Service Codes (PSC) and through past performance in advanced IT work considered “Leading Edge Technologies” (LET). This past performance had to be recent and worth a specific amount.

Through scrupulous research of Pragmatics’ work history, we identified and documented our programs, projects, and task orders that enabled us to score all the possible points for the PSCs and most of the potential points for the LETs. Our citations included references to projects at DISA, OCC, USCIS, DoS, USSOCOM, FAA, Army, FDIC, Air Force, and DHS.

Our high score is a testament to the company’s broad range of skills, experience, and commitment to being on the leading edge of innovation and technology.

COO Joe Brock said, “The Alliant 2 contract is an important vehicle for us as many of our clients are looking to Alliant 2 to provide for their IT needs from now well into the next decade. We look forward to delivering to our Alliant 2 customers the safest and highest quality information technology systems and services that achieve their goals of increased mission value with emerging technologies.”

**Congratulations and thanks to all who participated in these important proposal wins!**
Pragmatics Improves Situational Awareness in the Maritime Domain in Just Two Sprints

By Kismet Al-Hussaini

The great paradox of our age is that we want more information while we also want less. We always want the right kind of information. As technology grows more sophisticated, our need for the right information intensifies. Our customers face the same dilemma, and they want technologies like machine learning to address it in ways that are mobile-friendly, scalable, and easy-to-use.

Pragmatics strengthened these precise capabilities this year. Our Technology Solutions Group (TSG), under the leadership of Dr. Ben Nguyen, CMIO, developed an ambitious prototype working with the National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office (NMIO). Our NMIO team was asked by the Arctic Domain Awareness Center (ADAC) at the University of Alaska to aid in an Arctic Intel Fusion project. ADAC is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Center of Excellence that collaborates with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to improve research of maritime zones. This ADAC project seeks to fuse real-time data from multiple sources to improve situational awareness, which is critical now since melting ice in the area has greatly increased ship traffic in arctic waters.

Our team studied several use cases to establish stakeholder and design priorities. The main variables we considered in the design included data related to the ocean, weather, and ships. In the end, TSG brought machine learning analytics to the project by completing a prototype that fused real-time data, then fed the data into an artificial neural network, and finally displayed outputs as a risk score in a mobile-ready app. (See figure below.)

New Employees Bring Fresh Ideas to Innovation Projects

In September, TSG welcomed Lead Software Developer, Mr. Nicholas Sorenson, and User Interface (UI) Architect, Mr. Andres Arana.

Prior to joining Pragmatics, Mr. Sorenson did Research and Development (R&D), which included working on a Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) implementation of Support Vector Machines (SVM) using Compute Unified Device Architecture (CUDA), and improved the design of the sharding algorithms used in the machine learning platform.

He also modeled the spread of viruses for a National Science Foundation (NSF) paper while a Graduate Research Assistant. Mr. Arana, a recent graduate and UI expert, quickly developed a strong, user-friendly interface for our design.

Continued…

Situational Awareness in the Maritime Domain
Our development consisted of two Agile sprints, the first beginning in May and the second ending in October. We worked with our NMIO customer to refine requirements along the way. Chief Solutions Architect, Mr. Jared Spigner, oversaw Sprint #1, which consisted of six weeks of data wrangling and two days of algorithm design and development, resulting in our first demo on June 23rd. TSG’s objectives in Sprint #2 were to connect data sources and modularize the Artificial Neural Network (ANN) we had implemented to output better predictions. Our prototype’s ANN consists of three hidden layers, and uses a supervised learning model to create classifiers from human-labeled data. The output delivers a probability, or in this case, a score, not unlike the way the human brain classifies probabilities. The ANN incorporates 13 dimensions, 65 input nodes, 131 hidden nodes, and five output nodes. We also improved our visualization capabilities to render Lat-Long position data at a precision of $1 \times\ cm^2$. Sprint #2 lasted roughly three weeks.

As nuanced as it sounds, "Machine learning isn’t a magical black box," according to Mr. Sorenson. "There is plenty of rigorous math backing up the fitness and convergence of the solutions found during the training step of machine learning. We hope to demystify those parts of our process to help our company and our customers understand how our product works in the future."

TSG team members were excited and welcomed the challenge of solving a real-time, mission-critical problems, and working with emerging technologies. Direct access to the customer helped them understand the purpose of their work. They also enjoyed choosing the libraries and frameworks they used. Time played an invisible but strong hand throughout development. According to Mr. Sorenson, "the limited timeframe was a blessing and curse, and there were a few late nights."

Overall, the team was pleased with the outcome given the project scope. As Mr. Arana said, in the end, “Learning to become a valuable team-member in a short time was valuable. Also, being able to see 20,000 ships and 1,300 buoys in real-time was really satisfying.” Mr. Spigner’s main takeaway from the two sprints is that “we have a great team.”

Mr. Spigner, who has 20+ years of experience with prototype development and R&D in the federal and commercial space, conceived the Innovation Center at Pragmatics in 2015 for the purposes of prototype development and R&D. Since that time, Pragmatics has developed dozens of prototypes for agencies such as the General Services Administration (GSA), U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), and NMIO. Still, “Prototypes are not one-size-fits-all, and they are not created in a vacuum.” says Dr. Nguyen. “You have to understand what the customer expects and evaluate the opportunity cost.”

In the end, our customer "liked that we have distributed parallel processing at work, and we have proven ourselves in the financial and health areas." He was impressed that we were running the demo app on an 8-core CPU, and that our "elegant design" was built with scaling capability in mind. He thinks our technology can “save the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars," and intends to deliver more data to TSG in January 2018 so we can continue refining our design.

Pragmatics is now ready to underscore Machine Learning and Data Analytics as a core capability, along with Software Engineering, Cybersecurity, Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) and Infrastructure Solutions.

In the words of Dr. Ben Nguyen, our machine learning prototype for ADAC is "the most complex prototype delivered by a team at Pragmatics. It sets us up to do further prototypes. Government customers today are asking for data analytics and, as a company, Pragmatics is answering the call.”

Dr. Ben Nguyen,
Chief Medical Informatics Officer,
Technology Solutions Group

For more information about TSG and how we can bring innovation to your customers, please contact Ben Nguyen at nguyenb@pragmatics.com.
Pragmatics Annual Leadership Meeting

By Alexandra Hoey and Anne Hurley

“The difference between success and failure is a great team.”

On December 1st, Pragmatics managers attended the Pragmatics Annual Leadership Meeting (PALM) in Reston. This year’s theme focused on “Serving Our Customers” through our five core values of:

- Honesty and Transparency
- Open Communications
- Delivery Value for Our Clients
- Investing in our People
- Giving back to our community

To emphasize achieving these values through teamwork and collaboration, Pragmatics kicked off the PALM with a team bike building activity. Six teams of employees were tasked with harmoniously building a bicycle from start to finish. Spirits were high as teams completed their bikes, each team with a unique process. After the build, teams discussed challenges faced, team communication, how different skills were utilized, and how take-aways from this activity can help foster collaboration and teamwork in every day work environments. In the spirit of giving back to our community, each bicycle built was donated to the Salvation Army.

Following the team building activity, CBDO Dr. Kim Nguyen, COO Joe Brock, CMIO Dr. Ben Nguyen, VP DGM Mike Froelich, and Sr. VP GM Mike Yocom spoke about current business strategy, the state of operations, our current technical capabilities, growth in 2017, and plans for targeted growth in 2018. Deke Moeller and Andy Vogt led a presentation on our quality control capabilities and how to properly leverage them.

After a Q&A session, employees attended breakout sessions where they heard from Paul Cohen about Proposal Reviews, Linda Weiss on Open Enrollment, Hiring and Referrals, and Dennis Lauer on Project Financial Management. Mike Froelich also spearheaded a mock industry day presentation, letting employee’s role play (Fed v. Industry) to simulate what an actual industry day would entail.

Dr. Long closed the PALM by thanking employees for the hard work and sacrifices that make Pragmatics a successful organization. “Pragmatics has a great team, and focusing on our core values through teamwork will ultimately pave the way for future successes.”

Pragmatics’ Tech Day

Our annual Tech Day was held on October 5th. Each year management and key technical staff are invited to participate in a presentation and demonstration of some of our latest technical offerings and solutions. Tech day is designed to serve as a platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration among colleagues working on various projects to find better solutions and technologies to serve our new and existing customers.

To break the ice and get participants ready to learn, VP Deputy General Manager Mike Froelich played his best Alex Trebek and hosted a game of Jeopardy.

This year, employees heard presentations on USPTO’s Trademark Content Management System, Arlington National Cemetery’s Mobile Application, and GCSS-J’s implementation of DevOPS capabilities. Attendees also heard presentations on TSG’s new machine learning platform and our Infrastructure Solutions Group’s next generation classroom design. Finally, participants learned about our newest customer at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and how we are leveraging our IT Infrastructure best practices to support their mission.

Following presentations, employees gathered for a social hour where presenters demo’d some of their solutions and technologies. This was an engaging session that allowed our managers and technical experts to share information, exchange ideas, and brainstorm ways in which customers are better served through our technical capabilities.
Pragmatics Exhibits at Industry Events

By Alexandra Hoey

During recent months, Pragmatics continued its practice of sharing with industry its corporate capabilities and innovations by attending numerous technology conferences and shows.

Infrastructure Solutions Group

Mike Sousa, Director of Pragmatics’ Infrastructure Solutions Group, attended several conferences between September and December to network our Infrastructure Solution capabilities. Exhibiting at these events has allowed Mike to exchange information with industry, the military, and the educational communities, ensuring the services we offer are cutting edge, innovative, and in-line with current industry needs.

- Air, Space & Cyber Conference
- Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting
- National Training and Simulation Association’s annual Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference (I/ITSEC)
- ACT-IAC Executive Leadership Conference (ELC)

Transportation Solutions Group

For several years, Pragmatics’ Transportation Solutions Group has attended the Air Traffic Control Association’s Annual Conference & Exposition. This year, MaryAnn Davis, Director of the Federal Civilian Transportation Group, and other Pragmatics’ staff, including Max D’Angelis, Patrick Eydenberg, Alexandra Hoey, Mike Froelich, and Amy Trevisan, networked with more than 100 exhibiting companies, government agencies, and NGOs to take an in-depth look at the future of air traffic control. Participants engaged with others in industry, participated in various seminars and presentations, and used networking opportunities to analyze the ways in which Pragmatics can leverage our growing capabilities to meet the future needs of transportation agencies.

If your customers would like to speak with Pragmatics about our Infrastructure, AV, and Learning Technologies solutions, please contact Mike Sousa at sousam@pragmatics.com.

If your customers would like to speak with Pragmatics about our transportation services and solutions, please contact MaryAnn Davis at davism@pragmatics.com.

Max D’Angelis “Tests” Exhibits at the ATCA Conference

One of Pragmatics’ Infrastructure Solutions Group Displays
Pragmatics Develops Employees

By Alexandra Hoey

In the August 2017 issue of the Pragmatist, CBDO Dr. Kim Nguyen outlined three actions young adults in the workforce should take to advance their careers. These included selecting a mentor; getting out of comfort zones; and capitalizing on networking opportunities. As follow-up to that article, we profiled one of the high-value, young professionals working at Pragmatics, Mr. Zach Ahad.

Profile – Zack Ahad, Quality Assurance Process Analyst

Zack Ahad is a recent addition to the Pragmatics family, beginning his position in September as a Quality Assurance (QA) Process Analyst for the Process Improvement and Quality Assurance group. Local to Northern Virginia, Zack comes to Pragmatics as a young professional with a B.A. in Economics and a Minor in Applied Business Computing from Virginia Tech.

Asked what drew him to Pragmatics and specifically to the Quality Assurance Group, Zack noted that he sees Pragmatics as a stepping stone to various career paths. Zack ultimately wants to get his MBA and a Project Management Professional Certification to become a Program Manager. He says that working in the Quality Assurance Group allows him to interact with various organizations and teams, both internally and externally, and he sees this as a benefit to career development. He commented, “What better way to start a path in Program Management than getting to interact with current Project Managers about their artifacts and deliverables?”

Zack works primarily under Deke Moeller and Andy Vogt, completing project audits, analyzing corporate and project metrics, and assisting with document reviews to ensure successful external audits.

When asked what he sees as the critical function of QA Zack said, “Essentially, we make sure the company is doing what they are supposed to be doing with a commitment to the quality standards set forth by Pragmatics.” He noted, for example, that the metrics QA collects, including story points and defects per release, do more than just satisfy CMMI Maturity Level 5 requirements. They help leadership determine patterns, trends, and productivity of projects.

Advice for other young professionals...

“Ask questions and reach out.”

While Zack enjoys working in the Process Improvement and QA Group, he says that joining Pragmatics came with a learning curve. He had to learn how to analyze the metrics we collect and the processes we employ to maintain the Process Asset Library (PAL), and grasp other critical tasks. Zack mentioned that, despite this learning curve, he has found that, unlike in other positions he has held, people at Pragmatics are “on the same team.” His immediate colleagues on the QA team are always willing to help and answer questions, but more than that, people outside of his work environment are respectful and willing to jump in on tasks. When asked what advice he would give to other incoming young professionals, Zack quickly responded, “Ask questions and reach out.” He said that people at Pragmatics are really engaged, and there is much to learn if you give yourself the opportunity.

If you would like to speak with Zack, please contact him at ahadz@pragmatics.com.
Pragmatics’ Veterans Day Celebration

Increasing Awareness of Veterans’ Continuing Service to our Nation through Business, Charity, and Community Support

By Jackie Solomon

Each year at Veterans Day, Pragmatics sets aside time to honor all Veterans, including our employees who have served. This is a special time to share with colleagues and show our appreciation for the sacrifices of others. We are richly blessed as a company to have more than 75 Veterans on staff.

This year, we decided to help bring awareness to the impact Veterans continue to have in our communities and the economy as a whole, as well as the needs within the Veteran Community. Anne Hurley and Jackie Solomon led the program.

We were pleased that more than 90 of Pragmatics employees were on hand to honor and support our Veterans. Our special guests were Major General Alan Salisbury, U.S. Army (Ret), and Lieutenant Colonel Laurel Glen, USMC (Ret), from the Code of Support organization.

MG Salisbury shared with us the mission of his organization and the needs of Veterans in our nation. He also took time to present to a Vietnam Veteran in attendance a commemorative “Welcome Home” medal. Authorized by Congress and established under the Secretary of Defense, this Vietnam War Commemoration recognizes all men and women who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975. The commemoration extends through Veterans Day 2025. It was an emotional and celebratory moment that was shared with all who were present.

LTC (Ret) Laurel Glen is an Outreach Coordinator for Code of Support and she shared some of the remarkable stories of Veterans in need who have been helped by Code of Support. You can learn more about their program at their website www.codeofsupport.org.

Our program also shared a number of interesting facts about Veterans and some inspiring videos. You can enjoy the videos at these URLs:

- What is Veterans Day: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_eTLTOhdcA&feature=youtu.be
- 31 Marathons in 31 Days: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMFjtqp3Ffc&feature=youtu.be
- Backpacks for Life: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUMczlMKg2g&feature=youtu.be
- In Flanders Fields: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKoJvHcMLfc&feature=youtu.be

Our presentation included some recommended activities in which Pragmatics employees can participate, including the Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery and submitting stories of their family’s Veterans to the Library of Congress’ American Folklife Center to preserve them for future generations. (http://www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html)

In the days following the event, many Pragmatics employees shared with the Proposal Operations and Marketing team stories of the Veterans in their lives and how they chose to honor them as a result of Pragmatics’ celebration. After learning about the Library of Congress historical preservation of Veterans’ stories, four employees told us that they submitted theirs. One employee shared that he went to the wreath laying ceremony at Arlington. Several Veterans and some parents of soldiers shared their very touching personal stories.

Each participant in the event received a Buddy Poppy from the VFW Post 7589 in Manassas, VA, a program containing a list of Veterans’ charities and support organizations, additional information, and lunch. If you would like to get a copy of the list of charities, you can contact Anne Hurley at hurleya@pragmatics.com.

We encourage you to learn more about the Veterans in your neighborhood.
The program began with 5,000 leftover wreaths and the desire of a small business owner to honor the fallen soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. This year there is a wreath for every one of the 246,700 gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery.

With the simple motto “Remember. Honor. Teach.” this program sets out to help us remember our fallen U.S. Veterans, to honor those who serve, and finally to teach our children the values of freedom. It is a remarkable opportunity to honor fallen veterans and begin to grasp the level of sacrifice required to sustain the freedoms we enjoy.

This year, on the 16th of December, several Pragmatics employees and families were among the more than 75,000 volunteers gathered at Arlington Cemetery throughout the day to help place the more than 240,000 wreaths. This was the largest crowd ever to participate in this annual event.

This full day event is repeated across the nation wherever there are Veteran’s Cemeteries. This year more than 1,200 cemeteries participated. In the Metro D.C. area, we have more than eight cemeteries where you can participate next year. Naturally, Arlington is the largest effort in our region, but you may enjoy teaching your children about the Civil War by laying wreaths on the grave markers from the battles of Bull Run in the Manassas National Battlefield Park. There are about 5,000 wreaths to lay at that event.

“When we lay wreaths on veterans’ graves, we say their names. We encourage every volunteer who places a wreath on a veteran’s grave to say that veteran’s name aloud and take a moment to thank them for their service to our country. It’s a small act that goes a long way toward keeping the memory of our veterans alive. We are not here to ‘decorate graves’. We’re here to remember, not their deaths, but their lives.” ~ Karen Worcester, Executive Director of Wreaths Across America

You can learn more about this program and how it got started at: http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/our-story

**PragmaticSERVES**

By Alexandra Hoey

PragmaticSERVES represents Pragmatics commitment to a culture of “generosity, responsibility, and social awareness” in support of our core value of giving back to our community. Each year, PragmaticSERVES holds fundraisers and gives donations to charities in need.

Recently, in conjunction with the American Red Cross, PragmaticSERVES established a fundraiser to raise money for hurricane relief efforts after the destruction left behind by hurricanes Harvey and Irma. Combined with the gracious donation from Dr. Long, Pragmatics raised more than $25,000 to aid in disaster relief.

PragmaticSERVES also held its annual coat drive to support Cornerstones and the Hunter Mill District Winter Coat closet. All coats, hats, gloves, and scarves donations were delivered on November 7th. To learn more about Cornerstones and their mission, please visit www.cornerstonesva.org.

As in years past, PragmaticSERVES again partnered with the Salvation Army to support their Angel Tree program which assists parents in making sure their children have a wonderful holiday season. This year, Pragmatics’ employees anonymously bought gifts for more than 50 children in the Northern Virginia area. The bicycles that were built during the PALM were also donated to the Angel Tree program.
Pragmatics Pets

By Adirondacks and Alexandra Hoey

Hello! My name is Adirondacks, Dacks for short, and while you guys don’t know me, you might know my human, Alex. I was born near Christmas, December 20th to be exact, and my mom brought me home on Valentine’s day, which she tells me is fitting because we love each other so much. Everyone always asks how I got my name, so I’ll tell you that I’m named after the Adirondack Mountains in New York where my mom grew up. She takes me there in the summer and it’s the most awesome place I’ve been. I get to run free, and swim, and eat hot dogs by the fire (I sneak Marshmallows, too, but don’t tell Mom).

I am a Labrador Retriever, whatever that means. All I know is, I love playing fetch (almost too much). Bird watching and swimming are also my favorite pastimes and I am determined to successfully hunt a squirrel one of these days.

My mom told me I should walk you through my average day because I’ve got a lot going on. It all starts with Mom’s dreaded alarm clock. See, I’m a sleep-in kind of dog, and I don’t like to be awakened before I’m good and ready. Oh well, Mom claims she “has” to go to work, so I embrace an early breakfast. Before she leaves, she takes me out to smell the morning air, play with some sticks, and say hello to the neighborhood cat. Mom’s always nagging, “C’mon, Dacks. Do your business. Hurry up!” but I don’t understand what she means, because taking deep whiffs of the morning air is exactly what I have scheduled.

Some days, I go back to my house and snooze on the couch until Mom gets home. Other days, I go to Affectionate Pet Care daycare to hang out with my peeps. I do this super neat trick where I pretend to hate daycare and refuse to get out of the car, or flop down in the doorway, or under a chair, or behind a desk so mom feeds me as many treats as I want before I’m ready to go in. I have a suspicion the humans at daycare are going to eventually blow my cover with my report cards that read “Dacks had an awesome day running amuck with friends!” That’s O.K. – I always find ways to get treats.

Once Mom gets home, it’s all about her. I follow her around relentlessly and poke her with my cold, wet nose until she picks one of her two favorite activities: walking or throwing my ball.

This is my favorite time of day. Walking is cool because I get quality time with Mom, but I also get to stalk and chase all the woodland creatures. (Guys, rabbits are no joke. They let you think you can smell them, and then dart away at the last second. It makes me crazy.)

After our walk, I focus intently on Mom because any movement could mean it’s dinner time. I live for food. Any food. My food, mom’s food, the squirrel’s food (yeah, acorns are delicious). The worst part of my day is waiting for dinner time. I make enormous drool puddles on the kitchen floor and, on my good days, it even gets on my chest to prove to mom I can’t wait any longer, and that normally works. Once dinner is finished, the only thing I want to do is cuddle with Mom. No matter what she is doing, I find a way to get on her lap and bunker down for the night. She tells me that I’m 90 pounds, and not really a “lap dog,” but I’ve yet to actually squish her, so I’m going to keep doing my thing.

That sums up a day as Dacks. Sometimes I deviate from the norm and decide to chew the carpet or eat lamp cords, but I’ve learned that makes Mom awfully mad, and trips to the vet are my nightmare. So now when I’m feeling adventurous I decapitate my toys (see below) or something of the like.

Thanks for letting me introduce myself! If you guys are ever at the Vienna dog park, look me up. I’ll be the one playing in the mud!
Did you know Benjamin Franklin works with us? Or that the “Punisher” is a QA Process Analyst on the 4th floor at HQs? Did you know Pragmatics’ offices in Alaska are riddled in cobwebs and bats? Okay – so these statements are only true if we are talking in terms of the – that’s right you guessed it – the Pragmatics Annual Spooktacular contest and party! This year we had participation all the way in Fairbanks, Alaska! At the headquarters party, we had gnomes and hippies, crazy hair, scary masks, and of course, the usual tricks and treats. As always, we cannot wait to see what everyone has in store for next year!

By Alexandra Hoey

The Spooky Crew at Headquarters

1st Place Decor: Jessica Ramos, FAA, Fairbanks, AK

1st Place Pets: Eileen Ciliberto, Reston, VA

1st Place Costume: Lisa Randolph, “Ben Franklin”, Reston, VA

2nd Place Costume: Zack Ahad, “The Punisher”, Reston, VA

3rd Place Costume: Jackie Solomon, “The Gnome”, Reston, VA

Yes, we even included Pragmatics Pets!
The Pragmatics Picnic in Pictures

By Anne Hurley

On September 9th, Pragmatics held its annual picnic and the weather could not have been nicer – not too hot and not too cold. Many employees and their families and friends came together at Bull Run Park to enjoy lots of food, sports, conversation, and laughter. Because a picture can say a thousand words, we tell the story in photos below.
Keeping Employees Safe

By Sarah Solomon

Winter is here! So far so good, but are you ready for the winter weather? Blankets of snow and ice can bring a lot of troubled conditions, from power outages and frozen pipes, to hazardous road conditions. Here are some ways you can prepare against winter weather troubles.

At Home
Be prepared!
- Rock salt - Use rock salt to melt ice on walkways and driveways. Note that, depending on the temperature, the effectiveness of rock salt changes. Below 27° Fahrenheit, rock salt becomes less effective due to the lack of moisture.
- Sand - Use sand to improve traction.
- Snow shovels or other snow removal equipment (no, flame throwers don’t count).
- Dry wood or other fuel for fireplaces, wood burning stoves, or other heating devices - Ensure all safety measures are followed. Exposure to toxic fumes because of improper venting is deadly. (Learn more about Carbon monoxide poisoning at CDC.gov.)
- Blankets and warm clothing - Keep close at hand.
- Flash lights and battery-powered or crank-powered radio - Don’t forget a portable charger for cell phones or other handheld devices.
- Protect pipes - Know where water turn-off valves are. Turn off valves to exterior faucets. Insulate pipes at risk of freezing.

On the Road
If you must go out remember these tips.
- Before driving, clear off the snow and ice from the lights, mirrors, windshields, windows, and the roof of the vehicle.
- When clearing, use a plastic scraper on the windows and a brush for the mirrors. Do not use hot water on the glass. Do not try to use the windshield wipers until the windshield is clear.
- Ensure that the tailpipe is not blocked or covered by ice or snow. Blocked tailpipes can cause toxic fumes to enter the vehicle.
- Before driving, check road conditions
- Do not use cruise control and avoid sudden jerky maneuvers.
- Keep an extra car length between you and other vehicles.
- Never slam on the brakes.
- Keep the gas tank at least half full.
- Don’t pass a snowplow or other work vehicle unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Keep the driving safety kit available.

In the Car – The Safety Kit
- Warm full coverage blankets
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery powered radio
- Jumper cables
- Emergency flares
- Matches and/or a lighter
- Extra dry clothing
- Shovel
- Rope
- Water and nonperishable high energy food
- First aid kit, including your prescribed medications
- Pocket knife
- Rock salt and sand
- Cell phone and car charger
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Spare tire repair kit
- Paper and pencil
- Reading material in case you must sit and wait


Five Fun Facts

It is always best to learn at least one new thing every day. If you are in need today, here are a few fun facts you might not yet know.

1. Cherophobia is the fear of fun.
2. A group of pugs (the dogs) is called a grumble.
3. A jiffy is an actual unit of time. It is commonly considered equivalent to 1/100th of a second.
4. The largest prime number that we know of as of 2017 is 2^{74,207,281}-1, having 22,338,618 digits. If this Mersenne prime were to be printed out in the tiniest font we have it would be a 14-mile-long number! (Great Internet Mersenne Prime Search)
5. Spinach with nanoionics are now being used to detect bombs, specifically land mines. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
# New Employees

Pragmatics welcomes the following new employees who joined the company from August through December.

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