

## September 2011

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### Upcoming Events

**SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORKPLACE**

Lunch & Learn Series  
November 7, 2011

**ED EXCHANGE - GTA**  
November 2011  
Location TBC

**SOV 2012 Nominations Packages Distributed**  
January 2012

**CASP National Conference**  
October 2012  
Niagara Falls, ON  
(recruiting additional committee members, call DCO offices if you want to help)

## Crisis Link

It is an enormous compliment to the Distress Centres in Toronto to be chosen as the service provider for the newly-launched Crisis Link, the first subway suicide awareness and helpline program of its kind in the world.

The Crisis Link program launched June 16, 2011, as a partnership between the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), Bell, and the Distress Centres in Toronto. 69 subway stations, including the Scarborough LRT, have been outfitted with 200 posters and 141 payphones with direct lines to the Distress Centres Toronto in an effort to make support readily available for those in distress and people contemplating suicide while in the TTC subway system.

The program is one part of the TTC suicide strategy initiative, a multiple approach to suicide prevention and awareness. The suicide strategy will ultimately retrofit TTC subways with new, safer subway cars, trains that stream passengers to the train doors, and effective barriers, but this will take time. Another preventative strategy was necessary for the interim, and the Crisis Link partnership fit this need very well.

"There was a desire to focus on prevention, mental health, and community awareness, so a direct link to a crisis line became part of the plan," Karen Letofsky, Executive Director of the Toronto Distress Centres says.

The Crisis Link emerged from the TTC's department of transit safety, public consultations, and professionals in the field. The TTC conducted research and technical analysis, developed protocols, and analyzed costs for the project. Partnering with Bell, who agreed to provide the phones, TTC then approached Distress Centres for telephone crisis support, the only viable partner that the TTC considered. Within a year, the project was off the ground.

The swiftness of the Crisis Link launch speaks to the professionalism of all parties and also TTC's commitment to suicide prevention.

A little-known fact about the Toronto Transit Commission is that they are devoted to suicide prevention and take it very seriously. In a [press release](#) to



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launch the program, the TTC states its understanding of the need for programs "to prevent subway suicides, and to assist TTC employees who suffer post-traumatic effects when someone takes their life on the subway system."

Of mental health and the Crisis Link project, TTC Chair, Karen Stinz says, "Mental health is often a difficult subject for many to broach. The reality, however, is society cannot and should not ignore this critical issue. If 'Crisis Link' saves just one life, it has been worth it."

With a strong media campaign and visibility on subway platforms, public awareness is boosted and vulnerable people have a chance to get help. In its first three months, the Distress Centres Toronto has taken 450 more calls.

Crisis Link is an active and somewhat aggressive program, using the word "suicide" for the first time in TTC history, an indication that perhaps the stigma around suicide is lessening, or that society is paying more attention to it.

Watch [CBC news video](#) covering the launch.

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## DCO Strategic Planning – Part II

Over 80% of our association members met in Brampton on September 23rd 2011, to review the Strategic Priorities they set for the



DCO member centre leaders discuss commitment during strategic planning exercises.

Association in May of this year, and, to develop a solid decision-making model for the association as they move forward. While working through table top exercises and larger group discussions, the attendees reaffirmed their commitment to DCO and the projects and programs the association offers, and suggested several different options on how to participate or determine the direction of these projects.

It was clear to all the participants that commitment and process are necessary parts of moving forward. However, different member centres have differing abilities to participate in DCO programs and we need to refine a model that acknowledges and honours those differences. All member centres will receive copies of the meeting proceedings and the Board-

approved Strategic Priorities in November.

During lunch, volunteers on DCO committees (both standing and ad hoc) as well as board members, were honoured for their service to the association and its membership. As one of the attendees remarked; "I'm struck by how many of the centres have people volunteering for the different DCO committees. Good to know."

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## Defamation Lawsuits Put Social Media Users and Employers at Risk

Warnings of defamation concerning comments posted online that negatively impact the reputation or image of another person, business, or product exist for businesses, charities, and not-for-profit organizations alike, and present a legal risk to the person who authored the post.



"Each time an employee posts a negative comment, including internal postings, online while at work or from a work asset such as a laptop or Smartphone," Michael C. Smith of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, explains, "the employer is exposed to liability."

Smith suggests that though Canada has not seen a large number of media-related defamation lawsuits, he predicts that it could just be a matter of time. Employers are exposed to liability when their employees use work-assigned equipment, like laptops or Smartphones to post negative tweets or comments on social media sites, even if they are personal opinions of the employee.

"Defamation is not just limited to the specific individuals who tweet or blog about a business or product. Employers must be aware that they are at risk of unwittingly becoming publishers of their employees' statements," he says.

BLG offers the following tips for businesses to help mitigate liability:

1. Establish clear guidelines and policies for employee use of social media in the workplace and identify specific rules and expectations for the use of company assets such as laptops and Smartphones. Consider building those policies into employment contracts, and have everything reviewed by legal

counsel.

2. Clearly communicate and educate employees on the policies for using social media while at work and on company assets. Consider holding webinars or staff training sessions so everyone is clear on the guidelines. Staff must understand the consequences of defamatory statements.

3. Establish policies for making employees accountable for their social media posts that are either work-related or made from a work asset.

4. Establish a team of reviewers that can check outbound comments before they are posted. A second set of eyes on significant postings is good practice.

5. More informally, encourage staff to pause and reflect before they send any negative comments, and have a colleague review the message before it is sent. A "cooler head" reviewing will often result in revisions to tone down the message, protecting the business from distracting and expensive lawsuits.

If we rely on the web for advice on purchasing decisions, a negative online review could significantly impact the image and reputation of a product or business, and put the author of the review at serious risk for a lawsuit.

Read the full story [here](#).

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## Weighing the Risks of Mobile Devices

When employees use personal mobile devices for work activities, Canadian IT professionals are divided on whether the risks outweigh the benefits.



Compared to the use of laptops or netbooks, 52% of the 206 respondents who replied to the survey of the IT Risk/Reward Barometer at the Information Systems Audit and Control Association say that any employee-owned mobile device used to access the corporate network is a risk to employers for the following reasons:

Store company data in unsecured manner	49%
Lose the device	23%
Access dangerous or risky websites	9%
Keep passwords stored on device	6%
Leave Bluetooth, WiFi access unsecured	5%

Disable lock feature

5%

Even if there is a security policy in place for mobile computing at your organization, there is a chance that it may need updating. Consider this when you weigh the risks.

Source: IT Risk/Reward Barometer, Information Systems Audit and Control Association.  
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## Congratulations to New DCO Board Members and SOV Nominees and Recipients

At the Annual General Meeting of the Membership held on September 23rd at the Lionhead Golf and Country Club, **Victoria Kehoe** was elected to the position of Chair of the Board of Distress Centres Ontario.



Newly-elected DCO Board Chair, Victoria Kehoe congratulates SOV Young Adult Volunteer nominee, Madeleine Staffieri from Community Torchlight.

Victoria is the Executive Director of Distress Centre Durham and has been associated with distress centres since 1992. Also elected to the Board of Directors are **Linda Genger** from Distress Centre Peel and **Karen Letofsky** from Toronto Distress Centres.

The evening was capped off with a very successful Spirit of Volunteerism Recognition Event that highlighted the wonderful volunteer contributions of fourteen individuals from various Ontario Distress Centres. Nominees were honoured with recognition plaques and a copy of the recognition CD that honoured their achievements. Recipients also received the 2011 SOV trophy.

As DCO Executive Director Liz Fisk noted, "These 14 volunteers exemplify the dedication and commitment that all the 1,200+ volunteers in the province show to the very important work DC's do in their various communities."

All member centres are encouraged to start thinking about who we will be

honouring next year. The nomination packages will be sent to all member centres in early January 2012. As in past years, the nominees will be announced during National Volunteer Week in April 2012.

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