



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello VOE-Network Community,

As we continue to grow and evolve together, I've been reflecting on how much of our progress is rooted in two things: engaged committees and a shared commitment to understanding the why behind our challenges.

This edition of the newsletter highlights the incredible work happening across our VOE-Network committees. These groups are truly the backbone of our organization—bringing ideas to life, creating space for connection, and ensuring that our programs reflect the needs of our community. Whether it's education, membership, programming, or engagement, our committees are where passion meets action, and I'm continually inspired by the energy and dedication of our volunteers.

We've also chosen to spotlight the Fishbone (Ishikawa) diagram—a simple yet powerful tool that reminds us to pause and look beneath the surface. In operational excellence, it's easy to jump straight to solutions. The Fishbone challenges us instead to ask better questions, examine systems rather than symptoms, and recognize that meaningful improvement often comes from collaboration and curiosity. In many ways, this mirrors the work of our committees: diverse perspectives coming together to better understand problems and create sustainable change.

As we navigate ongoing challenges in animal healthcare, these principles matter more than ever. By staying connected, leveraging structured problem-solving tools, and empowering our committees, we strengthen not only our organization—but each other.

Thank you to everyone who contributes their time, ideas, and heart to VOE-Network. Your involvement is what makes this community special, and I'm excited to see where our collective efforts take us next.

Mary Spencer

Mary Spencer
VOE-Network President



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb 11 - Coffee Chat: Optimizing Laboratory Animal Science Training through Lean Management
- Mar 11 - Coffee Chat: Motivation & Connection
- Apr 8 - Coffee Chat: Work Styles, Training Styles and Communication

**Coffee Chats are FREE,
but registration is required!**

Seeking a Social Media Ninja

Are you looking to add marketing and social media campaign management to your **resume**?! We would love to have your help & skills on our team!

If this sounds great, please reach out to:

membership@voenetwork.com



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

In this issue we highlight Jenn! She uses her talents and gifts in many ways in this organization and we are thankful to have her!!



Jenn Brooks
IT Product Owner
Inotiv
Indianapolis, IN

What VOE-Network committee(s), programs, or events have you been part of?

Clerk, Program Committee, Member Engagement Committee, Plus many other subcommittees

What do you love about the VOEN?

The programs the VOEN puts together are OUTSTANDING! Being a member is important to me.

What is volunteering on a committee like?

Volunteering on a committee is easy, enjoyable, and genuinely rewarding. The environment is collaborative and welcoming, with people who are excited to share ideas and work toward a common goal. Most committees or subcommittees meet for about an hour once a week, making it a manageable commitment. Beyond the work itself, volunteering is a great way to build relationships, develop new skills, and feel more connected—studies show that people who volunteer often report higher levels of happiness and a stronger sense of purpose. It's a simple way to make a meaningful impact while having fun along the way.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

Our 4th annual virtual conference committees are beginning to form and provide lots of opportunity for networking in our industry, plus you may pick up skills that can enhance your resume! It is never to late to join!

Education Committee - Shapes conference educational content by managing abstract submissions, coordinating speakers, and ensuring all RACE requirements are met. Meetings begin in January.

Sponsorship Committee-Secures vendor partnerships that offset conference costs and enhance the attendee experience. Meetings beginning in March.

Registration/Whova Committee - Manages conference registration and oversees the Whova platform to ensure a smooth experience for attendees, speakers, and sponsors. Meetings begin in April.

Engagement Committee - Drives attendee interaction through gamification, contests, polls, and other engagement activities within Whova. Meetings begin in June.

Email us today at Programs@voenetwork.com



TOOLBOX SPOTLIGHT - VOEN BELT TOOL LIBRARY

Last month, we highlighted the 5Whys. This tool pairs well with the *Fishbone Diagram*, also known as the Ishikawa Diagram or Cause-and-Effect Diagram, is a simple but powerful tool used in continuous improvement to identify the root causes of a problem rather than just treating its symptoms. It helps teams think systematically, ask better questions, and uncover contributing factors that may not be obvious at first glance.

The diagram visually resembles a fish skeleton. The "head" represents the problem you're trying to solve, while the "bones" branching off represent major categories of potential causes. Common categories include People, Process, Equipment, Environment, Materials, and Policies, though teams can customize categories to fit their situation. By brainstorming causes within each category, teams gain a clearer picture of what's really driving an issue.

Fishbone Diagrams are especially effective in group settings because they encourage collaboration and structured discussion. They help prevent finger-pointing, keep conversations focused, and ensure all perspectives are considered. Whether you're addressing workflow inefficiencies, communication breakdowns, or quality concerns, this tool turns complex problems into manageable insights—and sets the stage for meaningful, data-driven solutions.

