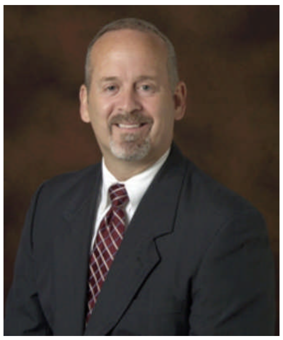
INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

215 Dean A. McGee, Suite 153, Oklahoma City, OK 73102 http://www.oklahoma.feb.gov/ (405) 231-4167

Chair's Corner



Summer is quickly approaching!

Our 2011 Leadership FEB class has three forums completed now.

Our Federal Executive Board is looking at a special event for all participants of our Leadership FEB program (all years). If you have been a participant of Leadership FEB, be sure that the FEB office has your most recent email address so that you can receive the information.

Over the summer, we have two Leadership Symposiums scheduled (one in June and one in August) for networking and training. Registration forms are provided in this newsletter for your convenience.

We will also have 2-1/2 hour training sessions on the topic of preretirement. This varies from the full day training we offer for each of the two retirement systems in that it covers the topics that are held in common. A registration form is provided in this newsletter for your convenience.

Everyone should have received the email containing the link to the 2011 Congressional Handbook that was developed in April. As a reminder, you can access the handbook from our website at www.oklahoma.feb.gov/Forms/2011CongressionalHandbook.pdf.

As part of our FEB's federal outreach we maintain a website for the Federal Executive Association of Arkansas for their federal community. In addition to the website, we send the FEMA notices for Arkansas (the same kind of notices you receive from our FEB office for natural disasters in Oklahoma). We have also developed a Congressional Handbook for the Arkansas Federal Executive Association, containing the appropriate information for their geographic area.

I am pleased to provide you information on an effort of our FEB in updating our Media Guide that was published in 2000 and 2004. The updated version will include information driven by technology changes, such as Social Media. Watch for the release of this guide on our website. An email will also be sent out to federal leaders with the link when it is completed.

With all the activities our FEB has underway, I am looking forward to attending the National FEB conference scheduled for July! If you see opportunities for our FEB to coordinate an interagency effort, please contact me or LeAnn in the FEB office!

Jon C. Worthington

Jon Worthington, Chairman

The Engage, Recognize and Nurture (ERN) Formula: The Very Short Course on Making and Sustaining Meaningful Business Relationships

There are lots of emails and text messages these days. Yet, solid and meaningful business relationships eventually get down to the nitty gritty of making and sustaining person-to-person connections. Whenever you seek to create and sustain a business relationship with another individual, picture these three letters on his/her forehead . . . **ERN**. The "how-to's" of these three letters are spelled out below:

E is for Engage. When engaging others, listen more than you talk. Indeed, the word listen and the word silent contain the same six letters. Throughout our lives, we all have heard about the gift of gab. But the gift of listening is much more endearing than the gift of gab.

Secondly, don't strive to show how much you now. This is not a sign of security or charisma; it is a sign of insecurity. Third, take your time. Respect and trust are built best by a "crock pot approach" not a "microwave approach." When engaging others, remember the wisdom of Harvey the Rabbit. He said, "In this world, you must be oh-so smart or oh-so pleasant. I've been smart. I recommend pleasant."

R is for Recognize. When recognizing others, bear in mind that people (even the most shy among us) like to talk about themselves. Strive to steer people away from talking about their livelihoods. Instead, recognize and encourage them to talk about others things like their hobbies, their hometown (everyone has stories/insights about their roots) and their "hot buttons." Hot buttons are things they are passion about…like their grandchildren, pets or a favorite athletic team. Talk about yourself a bit, but then put the focus back on them.

When recognizing others, heed the words of Emily Dickinson. She said, "I felt it shelter to speak to you."

N is for Nurture. Relationships / partnerships are never a 50/50 proposition. Always go "the extra mile" in regard to the essence of all good business relationships… helping others solve problems or creating a good feeling for them. When nurturing others, bear in mind that little things make big differences . . . send a hard-written note, deliver a small gift or make an "out-of-the-blue" phone call. Mark Twain said, "He liked to like people; therefore, people liked to like him." When nurturing others, be sincere (being hokey is never good), do it now (immediacy speaks volumes about your commitment to them) and be specific (generic praise does not have the staying power of a specific compliment).

The **ERN Formula** is easy to remember. More importantly, it's easy to execute. As Oscar Wilde said, "Be who you are. Everyone else is taken." I would add one thing to his insight: "Be who you are with greater skill." It will pay nothing but high dividends!

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Phone: 817-421-4744 Email:
mark@speakoutseminars.com

Spotlighting Information in Public Service

Did you Know……

Four decades of helping improve workplace safety

BY DAVID A. BATES Published: 4-29-2011

In the 40 years since the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration was created, the agency has led the way to historic declines in workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses. Today OSHA continues to make a difference in the lives of all workers by ensuring that businesses provide safe and healthful conditions for their workers.

At the turn of the 20th century, death in American workplaces was all too common, working conditions were dreadful and few laws existed to protect workers. Through efforts by individual workers, unions, employers, government agencies and others, significant progress has been made in improving workplace conditions.

Since OSHA's inception in 1970, workplace fatalities have been cut by more than 65 percent and occupational injury and illness rates have declined 67 percent. At the same time, U.S. employment has almost doubled and totals more than 107 million workers at 7.6 million worksites.

In 1970, on average, 38 American workers were killed on the job every day. That rate has fallen to just over 12 workers per day. That's an outstanding collective achievement. But there is clearly much work to be done to ensure that all workers can be productive and safe, while looking forward to a retirement free from disabling occupational disease and injury.

In Oklahoma, construction hazards including falls, struck-by and electrical hazards remain serious issues our inspectors have identified in many investigations. These are hazards for which there have long been common-sense OSHA regulations in place. These protections are designed to keep workers safe and earning a paycheck, while allowing businesses to continue to operate without the tragic interruptions and high worker retraining, insurance and compensation costs that accompany workplace tragedies.

In Oklahoma, since December 2010 we have investigated construction accidents resulting in four construction worker deaths. They were preventable situations that did not need to happen again as long as employers and workers work together to keep workplaces safe.

Over the past four decades, America's workers across all industries have benefitted from common-sense government standards and greater awareness of workplace safety practices brought about by OSHA. Workers in high-hazard industries such as construction and manufacturing have especially benefitted from OSHA's efforts.

OSHA has had a positive impact in the lives of all Americans. However, until every worker can return home safely, free from harm at the end of the day, we must celebrate cautiously and never lose sight of the fact that no job is a good job unless it's also a safe job.

David Bates is the Director of OSHA's Oklahoma City office.

Taken from the Daily Oklahoman, online. Read more: http://newsok.com/four-decades-of-helping-improve-workplace-safety/article/3562926#ixzz1Kvln7QXT

Accessible Technology for the Workplace

With the power of technology, it is easy to achieve a barrier free workplace where deaf and hard of hearing employees are fully integrated in all aspects of the agency. The Z® provides cutting-edge videoconferencing technology that is both accessible and secure. This technology empowers employees to be part of a government agency that is a model of success and strength through diversity.

Deaf and hard of hearing employees have the legal right to functionally equivalent telephone communication access. With The Z's array of services and products, we work with you to find the best and most cost-effective solution for your work environment.

The Z Service and Products include, but are not limited to:

Video Relay Service

Video Relay Service (VRS) allows deaf and hard of hearing individuals to use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate on the phone with hearing individuals. Supported by the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, callers communicate by working with videophone technology and nationally certified interpreters at no cost to your agency.

Video Remote Interpreting

Video remote interpreting uses video technology to provide a sign language interpreter on demand for meetings where deaf and hearing people are in the same room. This is ideal for situations where an interpreter cannot be present in person and often is a cost-effective choice for meeting communication accessibility needs.

VCO Plus

Deaf and hard of hearing employees who prefer to speak for themselves can have the option of using their own voice to speak directly to hearing callers. The video interpreter signs what the hearing caller says.

Z Connect Pro (Firewall Traversal Solution)

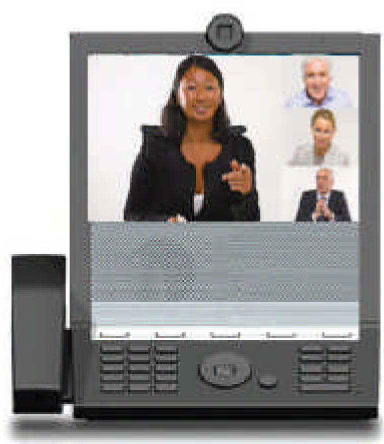
If a firewall makes video technology problematic for your agency, The Z is for you. Our proprietary Z Connect Pro solution makes set up possible and comes at no additional cost. This universal solution does not need any inbound ports to be open on your secured network allowing the Z videophone to work for the deaf and hard of hearing individuals. We, also, provide access to The Z dial plan, allowing your deaf and hard of hearing make VRS calls using your existing videoconferencing infrastructure.

Cost

There are federal programs that can help offset the cost of the videophone accommodation if your agency is tight on funds as all of our videophones come with a one-time cost with no recurring fees. The only exception is VRI, which has its own fees and is completely optional.

Interested?

Interested in making your deaf and hard of employees jump for joy with The Z videophones? Please contact Manny Johnson at mjohnson@zvrs.com or 301-876-4775 today to get started!



The e20 Tandberg Videophone
www.zvrs.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 2011

Jun 7, 2011 **Agency Visits-OKC**

Jun 8, 2011 **Mayors Committee on Disability Concerns**
07:30 a.m.
St. Luke's , 222 NW 15th, OKC
POC: Diana Hubbard, 405-297-4544

Jun 9, 2011 **Leadership Symposium (training)**
All Day
Crowne Plaza Hotel, OKC
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

Jun 10, 2011 **Leadership FEB Forum**
All Day
507th ARW
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

Jun 21, 2011 **Agency Visits-Muskogee**

Jun 23, 2011 **Eagle Horizon Emergency Exercise**
HQ Agencies, Washington, DC

Jun 24, 2011 **Naturalization**
Noon
200 NW 4th Street, OK
US Courthouse
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

INSPIRATION CORNER

The more tranquil a man becomes, the greater is his success, his influence, his power for good. Calmness of mind is one of the beautiful jewels of wisdom.
–James Allen

My general theory is that sound management is merely sound thinking coupled with effective execution.
–Herman Nelson

You'll find that many of the challenges you may be facing—like negativity, stress or ineffective communication—can be overcome by simply investing more time in doing what matters most to you at work and at home.
–David Vittoria

Your Federal Executive Board

"Federal Executive Boards (FEBs) are generally responsible for improving coordination among federal activities and programs in…areas outside of Washington, D.C…FEBs support and promote national initiatives of the President and the administration and respond to the local needs of the federal agencies and the community." (GAO-04-384)

We applaud the efforts of the Oklahoma FEB Executive Policy Council members who ensure information is provided to direct our activities and efforts:

- Jim Akagi, US Drug Enforcement Administration
- Kirby Brown, Deputy Director, Fires Excellence Center, Fort Sill
- Laura Culberson, Director of Staff, Tinker AFB
- Larry Flener, Representative for the District Director, US Postal Service
- Jerry Hyden, Director, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Hector Ledezma, Warden, Federal Correctional Institution
- Dottie Overal, Director, Small Business Administration
- Lindy Ritz, Director, FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center
- Betty Tippeconnie, Superintendent, BIA-Concho Agency
- David Wood, Director, VA Medical Center

This newsletter is published monthly as a cost-effective tool for communicating events and issues of importance to the federal community in Oklahoma. If you have news of interest, please fax to the FEB Office at (405) 231-4165 or email to LeAnnJenkins@gsa.gov no later than the 15th of each month.

Officers:

Chair: **Jon Worthington**
Administrator, Southwestern Power Administration, Tulsa

Vice-Chair: **Adrian Andrews**
Special Agent in Charge,
US Secret Service, Oklahoma City

Staff:

Director: LeAnn Jenkins
Assistant: Brittyn Combs

Reining in Your Wandering Mind

Posting on the American Managers Association's website on May 2, 2011, by Sander A. Flaum

Harvard researchers have proven what we've suspected all along: the mind has a tendency to wander. Sander A. Flaum explains how smart our smart phones have taken this concept to a whole new level.

We spend nearly half of our waking hours thinking about something other than what we are doing in the present moment, say Harvard psychologists Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert. The researchers used an iPhone app they created to poll 2,250 subjects ranging in age from 18 to 88 at random times throughout the day, asking them about what they were currently doing, how happy they were, and whether or not they were thinking about their current activity or something else that was pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Subjects chose from 22 general activities and reported back that their minds wandered on average 46.9% of the time, and no less than 30% of the time during any given activity, except making love. Along with other assessments, the researchers concluded that "mind-wandering is an excellent predictor of people's happiness. In fact, how often our minds leave the present and where they tend to go is a better predictor of our happiness than the activities in which we are engaged." The results appeared in the November 2010 issue of Science.

"A human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind," Killingsworth and Gilbert conclude. "The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost."

This statistical confirmation that our minds do indeed wander and that it is not necessarily a happy occurrence, underscores the necessity of practicing the art of remaining focused. I say "practice" because staying focused takes a conscious effort. It requires us, particularly at work, to notice when our mind has gone somewhere else and to gently bring ourselves back to the moment. We must train ourselves to return from detours to the present past or future, back to the present task at hand. Because to be effective, one's mind must be clear and centered.

Given the mind's natural tendencies to think about what isn't happening, contemplate what used to happen, may happen, or has never happened, this is hard enough; but add a handheld device that takes us out of the present moment multiple times an hour and you can easily spend a day chasing your own tail, without ever settling into the work in front of you.

The "smart phone," which is capable of connecting us to everything except the activity or person right in front of us, is making us even more distracted and dysfunctional. The gadget plays into our basic instinct to interrupt ourselves and exit out of the present. How "smart" is that?

I recently worked with a group where one of the members confided that he puts his iPhone outside the shower and checks the device during his shower. Many people I spoke to said they felt their phones were controlling them, rather than the other way around. Others confessed that their BlackBerries and phones make their workday feel like an ongoing, unending information deluge. "It's like our work lives are always in the 'on' mode," said one executive.

What the Harvard study brings out is that our cell phones didn't create our wandering mind; rather, we possess a wandering mind that our phones support and encourage. Responding to their constant interruption is easier, I believe, than staying focused on the task in front of you.

So what should we do? First, we have to acknowledge the natural tendency of the mind to want to escape the world of the present moment at least half of the time. Simply accept this reality and commit to working with it and through it. Second, we must determine when we feel the most productive and the happiest at work. This is the "in the zone" high that makes work enjoyable. Simultaneously, we have to acknowledge how the "smart phone-in-the-pocket" syndrome impedes this. And third, we have to ask ourselves every day, "Am I ready to stop inhibiting my success by having my 'interrupters' turned on all the time? How important is it to be diverted? Alerted? Permitted to interrupt myself? How helpful is it to my work, to my happiness, to my greater good?"

When the wandering mind never arrives at a destination, meaninglessness and lack of fulfillment are the unwelcome results. Yes, it's hard to keep the wandering mind on the path of sustained focus, because seeking interruption is natural. Few will argue that it requires great discipline and ongoing practice to stay on task.

One can only hope that multitasking has had its 15 minutes of fame.

About the Author: Sander A. Flaum is Managing Partner of Flaum Partners, Inc., and Chairman, Fordham Graduate School of Business, Leadership Forum. Contact him at sflaum@flaumpartners.com

Leadership Symposium
Developing Your Emotional Intelligence & Dealing with Negative & Unproductive Employees

Where:	Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2945 NW Expressway, Oklahoma City, OK
When:	Thursday, August 18, 2011 (DAY THREE)
Time:	Registration will be from 7:30-8:00am – Training: 8:00am-4:00pm
Trainer:	G. "Eric" Gordon

MODULE I Develop Your Emotional Intelligence

- Understanding the Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence	- Taking the Emotional Intelligence Survey
- The 4 Core Competencies of Emotional Intelligence	- How Emotional Intelligence will work for you

MODULE II Not Performing and Not Happy

- Winning Techniques for Dealing with Difficult People	- Keys to Eliminating Negativity in the Workplace
- Conflict Resolution Strategies	- Discipline Techniques
- Performance Appraisals	

Is confronting another employee about their poor performance stressful? Do you wish "someone else" could talk to your negative employees? Then this session will prove invaluable. We begin with a discussion about the benefits of being Emotionally Intelligent. Recent studies suggest that leaders who score high in Emotional Intelligence (EI), achieve higher levels or organizational success than leaders who score low in this area. EI techniques will give you greater power, and control for dealing with issues that get…emotional!
Conflict Resolution is an expectation of leadership, yet many leaders have anxieties related to this process. Now is the time to take control of your emotions and create a strategic approach that minimizes fear. Anger does NOT have to be a part of your feedback strategies. You can help employees perform better by learning a number of communication techniques and words that are designed to de-escalate a situation. You can learn how to minimize the negativity, get your team performing again, and lower anxiety as well. You'll create more positive vibes.

Registration

[ ] Day One Only ($159)   [ ] Day Two Only ($159)   [ ] Day Three Only ($159)
[ ] 2-days of the Symposium ($300) indicate which days [ ] Mar 24th [ ] June 9th [ ] Aug 18th
[ ] 3-day Symposium ($350 for all 3 days—maximum savings)

Name:	**Agency:**
Phone:	**Email:**

Method of Payment: [ ]Cash [ ]Check [ ]Credit Card [ ]Govt Voucher

Please mail to:	Oklahoma Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 153, Oklahoma City, OK 73102
Or fax to:	405-231-4165

Checks should be made payable to the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, refunds and cancellations will be permitted through August 11, 2011. However, after that date, registrations must be honored. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!

Determined Accord Pandemic Tabletop Exercise

Date:	Thursday, July 14, 2011
Cost:	No cost
Time:	8:30 a.m. registration 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. exercise
Location:	Indian Health Services Area Office, 701 Market Drive, Oklahoma City, OK Must sign in for FEB tabletop and present your govt issued ID
Objectives:	This exercise is designed to increase participant understanding and requirements for Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning and readiness for a pandemic event. We apologize, but the content limits participation to 40 participants. Because there are several more agencies that need to attend this type of exercise, we have included a short train-the-trainer module at the end of the day for those COOP Managers who attend, so they can provide additional tabletop exercises within their agency or for other agencies in your area. This exercise covers information on how to mitigate vulnerabilities during a pandemic influenza outbreak; participants should be able to identify gaps or weaknesses in organizational COOP plans, policies, and procedures.
Instructors:	This is a FEMA/FEB collaborative effort and will be facilitated by members of the FEB Emergency Preparedness and COOP Council with materials provided by FEMA Region VI.

Attendance in Determined Accord satisfies one of the Level I COOP Practitioner requirements for those wishing to pursue certification.

Registration is limited to 40 individuals:

Name:	Agency:
Title:	Email:
Phone:	Fax:

Mail to:	Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 320 Oklahoma City, OK 73102
Or fax to:	(405) 231-4165

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, refunds and cancellations will be permitted through July 7, 2011. However, after that date, registrations must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!

Join us for an informational seminar on Pre / Post Retirement Planning

For Federal Employees in any stage of their Careers

<u>Plan now</u> to be sure you are financially prepared to do all the things you've wanted for YOUR RETIREMENT!!

Pre / Post Retirement Planning Session Topics:

- Gaining the most from your Thrift Savings--before and after retirement
- Military Catch 62 Penalty—Payback (Possibly Unnecessary)
- Deposit and Re-deposit
- Social Security--Windfall Elimination and Public Pension Offset
- Little known methods of maximizing your monthly pension
- Retirement and survivor benefits for CSRS and FERS
- FEGLI Alternatives
- Review of LTC and Medical decisions now and at retirement

Please mark which session you wish to attend:

[ ] July 12, 2011 9:30 am --- 12:00 noon
[ ] July 12, 2011 1:30 pm --- 4:00 pm
[ ] July 13, 2011 9:30 am --- 12:00 noon
[ ] July 13, 2011 1:30 pm --- 4:00 pm

Location Both Days: OKC Public Works Training Center, 3738 SW 15th Street, Okla. City

There is no cost for these informational seminars; however, registration is required due to limited seating. Any questions? Please call the FEB office (405) 231-4167

Name(s):____________________________________ Agency:___________________________________

Email:_______________________________________ Phone: ____________________________________

REGISTER EARLY: Seating is limited. Registrations will be accepted in the order received—when room capacity is reached, registrations will be declined.

Mail this registration form to:	Oklahoma Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Suite 153 Oklahoma City, OK 73102
or fax to:	(405) 231-4165

PLEASE POST FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

Leadership Symposium
Winning Strategies for Motivating & Enhancing Performance & Productivity

Where:	Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2945 NW Expressway, Oklahoma City, OK
When:	Thursday, June 9, 2011 (DAY TWO)
Time:	Registration will be from 7:30-8:00am – Training: 8:00am-4:00pm
Trainer:	G. "Eric" Gordon

MODULE I Motivate & Inspire Others to Greatness

- Motivational Basics	- Understanding Human Nature
- Why Are We Excited?	- Secret Motivators
- Delegation as a Motivational Tool	

MODULE II Increase Productivity & Operational Efficiency

- Defining Success	- Knowing Your Success Metrics
- Getting Team on Same Page	- Coaching and Feedback Techniques
- Building a **Faster, Quicker, Better** Organization	- CHANGE Has Come – Next Steps!
- Managing Contingencies and Problem Solving	

The bottom line is the bottom line. Can you improve your team's performance? Can you decrease costs while improving effectiveness? Can you motivate and stimulate your employees and grow job satisfaction? This day will examine practices that will help participants find answers that are right for their particular situation. All environments are different. So, our strategy begins with an assessment of each leader's environment. We begin with competency evaluations and then a Total Quality Assessment of their operations. This evaluation will allow each leader to know what is causing their performance issues and where problems lie. This will be an exciting day and participants will walk away with a "Working Strategy" for improving the production and efficiency of their operations. We begin our day discussing issues related to the motivation and retention of staff members. There is a psychology to motivating employees – we'll discuss them.

Registration

[ ] Day One Only ($159) **[ ] Day Two Only ($159)** **[ ] Day Three Only ($159)**
[ ] 2-days of the Symposium ($300) indicate which days [ ] Mar 24th [ ] June 9th [ ] Aug 18th
[ ] 3-day Symposium ($350 for all 3 days—maximum savings)

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Or fax to:	405-231-4165

Checks should be made payable to the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board

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Retirement Calculator has limited value

Taken from Federal Times, Money Matters column, dated 5-9-11

There is a new version of the interactive Ballpark Estimate calculator, for use in estimating how much you'll need to save for retirement, available at www.choosetosave.org.

The calculator has been around for a while and is produced by the Employee Benefits Research Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to studying retirement in America. The EBRI recently updated the calculator, which is available through a link at the Thrift Savings Plan's website, www.tsp.gov, under the Planning and Tools tab.

Back in 2007, I dedicated a column to the perils of using the calculator to plan for retirement. At that time, I was unenthusiastic about the calculator's capabilities and reliability for practical retirement planning.

While the new version of the Ballpark Estimate calculator is improved—by adding the capability to include sources of retirement income, like a federal annuity, social Security benefits and part-time work—it still falls short of being anything more than a simple calculator.

This isn't a criticism of the calculator, or the EBRI, as much as of its capability to serve as anything more than what it claims to be: a ballpark estimator. You give it the numbers and it does the math—nothing more or less. Still missing from the calculator's results is any accounting for investment, inflation or mortality risk—all important sources of risk to any retirement plan.

Nor will the calculator handle anything more complex than a steady stream of spending over the course of an entire retirement. If you'll need to spend significant sums of money on things like a wedding, tuition, a real estate purchase or travel, you're on your own.

I appreciate and support the EBRI's effort to produce a useful calculator, and they have done just that. A dangerous pitfall is that savers may rely on the calculator in making key decisions about retirement, or that its use will lead to a false sense of confidence about the ability to retire and spend. In defense of the EBRI, it has produced a useful math engine that will help users to roughly estimate the amount of money they'll need to save for retirement. I support the EBRI's mission and the availability of tools to help workers maximize the value of their financial resources. You need to be careful, however, to avoid putting more faith in these tools than they deserve, or were designed to support.

I ran the calculator for a hypothetical saver at age 55 who plans to retire at age 60 with a Federal Employees Retirement System annuity and eventually, Social Security benefits. I was required to estimate the future rate of inflation, the nominal rate of return on the investment portfolio, the age of death, the growth in federal wages between now and retirement, and the amount of future Social Security and FERS annuity benefits. Some of these are fairly easy to estimate, while others are quite difficult. All of these estimates are subject to the risk of error in estimation, as well as the risk of variations in realized performance.

In my trial, for example, the calculator estimated that my hypothetical retiree can rely on regular withdrawals from savings that amount to more than 7 percent of the initial balance, per year, until age 90. By most standards I've encountered, this is considered a high—and probably unsustainable, or at least unsafe—withdrawal rate.

The problem is that the calculator takes your input assumptions as certainty. It's not asking the what-if questions. What if inflation is different than your estimate? What if the estimated rate of investment return isn't realized each and every year of your life? What if you live longer than you expect to live? In addition to accounting for the possibility of varying outcomes, it is important to account for the probability of these variations occurring.

A more useful analysis would not only account for the possibility that you will live to age 100, but also the probability that this will happen.

When it comes to retirement planning, the "Holy Grail" is certainty. Unfortunately, there is no such thing. The Ballpark Estimate is a useful tool, and I encourage you to give it a try. Just make sure that you don't mistake it for anything more than it is: a simple mathematical calculator.

Written by Mike Miles, a Certified Financial Planner licensee and principal adviser for Variplan, LLC, an independent fiduciary in Ashburn, VA, specializing in retirement planning for federal employees.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
June 2011			**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
5	**6**	**7** Agency Visits-okc	**8** 7:30 Mayors Committee	**9** ***Leadership Symposium***	**10** ***Leadership FEB***	**11**
12	**13** Agency Visits-Vian	**14** Agency Visits-Muskogee	**15**	**16** Eagle Horizon Exercise	**17**	**18**
19	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**
26	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**		

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