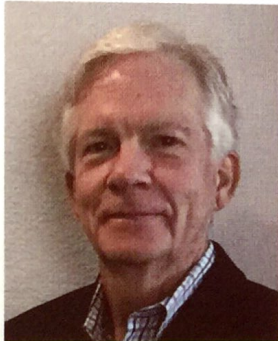


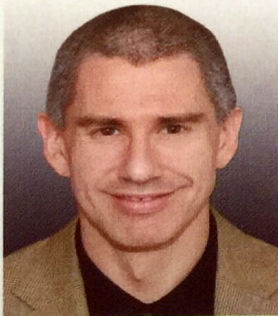
# DEMYSTIFYING THE VIRTUAL OFFICE

Thomas Cooper calls his publishing director in Baltimore as he sits in his San Francisco office clicking through emails from his administrative assistant in Dallas. This cross-country communication is normal for Cooper, who transitioned the International Anesthesia Research Society (IARS) into a semi-virtual office more than 10 years ago.



Thomas Cooper

The result is better talent, better continuity, and reduced expenses, says Cooper, who will be joined by two other virtual office proponents in



Michael Cummings

Tuesday's session "Remote Control: How Going Virtual Skyrockets Productivity...and the Bottom Line," which will begin at 11 a.m. in Room W178a. The speakers will try to

demystify the distributed office while sharing pros and cons of working virtual.

One of the pros of a virtual office is hiring talent based on merit and experience rather than geographical location, says Michael Cummings, principle of Tate/Cummings.

"This is a candidates' market," says Cummings, who admits he is obsessed with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "We're going to touch a little bit on what it means for an association that's based in a smaller U.S. city to all of a sudden have unlimited access to talent."

The virtual office is particularly appealing to millennials, who are clamoring for work-life balance, says Megan Markowski, CAE, executive director of the United Dance Mer-

chants of America, which has always maintained a virtual office.

"With the technology that's available—online/collaborative file sharing, videoconferencing, the ability to take your work anywhere with you—working remotely is just as easy as being in an office, if not more so," Markowski says. "But there's still a stigma of working remotely that hinders some people from being open to the advantages."

Cooper, Cummings, and Markowski hope to break down the barriers preventing associations from going virtual. But, they caution, it's not for everyone. It takes a specific leadership style, work ethic, and employee makeup to make it work, not to mention board approval and support, says Cooper, executive director of IARS. An employee working remotely

must be a self-starter and a manager must instill trust in employees.

"You really have to manage to outcomes, not to tasks," says Cooper, who will discuss how



Megan Markowski, CAE

he shepherded IARS' transition to semi-virtual.

Good communication is also critical to success, all three presenters agree. Emails can be misinterpreted and camaraderie can be slow to develop when coworkers are thousands of miles apart.

"It's really hard to build a relationship with somebody when they're not face-to-face," Cooper says. "When you've built that relationship, you can carry on fairly successfully without being face-to-face as long as you refresh it from time to time. I recommend coming into the office to refresh relationships."