

# NAYGN FOCUS:

## Say Cheese

February 26th, 2015

The outgoing NAYGN Past President, Christine Csizmadia (pronounced "cheese-muh-dee-ah"), discusses cross-industry relationships, balancing workday productivity with NAYGN activities, and Bravo Channel's Real Housewives during a conversation with the members of the Recruiting and Retention Committee.

**[L] I'm Lauren Neuburger, the R&R Committee lead for 2015, and I'll be interviewing Christine Csizmadia. So Christine, what is your current position in NAYGN, and how long have you been with your company?**

[C] Thanks Lauren. Number one, thank you for saying my last name correctly. That doesn't happen very often so that was super impressive. My name is Christine Csizmadia and I am the current Past President for NAYGN and I have had, I don't know, a half a dozen positions within different committees and sub-committees over the last 9 years. Someone pointed out to me that I am coming up to 9 years this July at NEI, so that is scary to me. However, I started with NAYGN as soon as I started at NEI so it has been 9 full years.

**[L] What's your current position at NEI?**

[C] I am currently the Senior Manager for State Outreach. I manage our state and local lobbying programs, which include talking to State Legislators, Mayors, and Governors- that level of elected officials. I work in Government Affairs, so most people think of members of Congress when they think Government Affairs, and we do have about a dozen federal lobbyists that talk to members of Congress regularly to do that outreach. My colleague and I are the only two that do the state and local outreach.

**[L] So you said you are the outgoing Past President of NAYGN, which means that you have been extensively involved with the Core. What has been your favorite part of being a Core Member?**

[C] A lot of answers came to my mind when I thought about this question. The thing that really makes me happiest when I think about my time on the Core has been the cross indus-



try relationships that I've developed. I do have a unique position working for the trade association that represents the utility companies and the nuclear industry, but I don't have opportunities to build these relationships with my peers and colleagues. The example that I love to use is that I have a great friendship with Kristin Zates, who is the Past President from last year. She works at Diablo Canyon in California, where I now have a friend, and I wouldn't necessarily have these relationships and points of contact all over the country if I hadn't been so networked amongst the NAYGN group.

**[L] So do you think the networking and friendship aspect of being a member of the Core is pretty universal to everyone that gets that opportunity? Or do you think that was just a Christine specialty?**

[C] No, I think that's part of being a leader in NAYGN because it didn't have anything to do with my job, per se. It was because I was on Core calls with folks that are representing

chapters all over the country. It's about being on the Core, and it's about being in a leadership position where you can make these connections all over rather than sitting in an office not talking to anyone. Doing that outreach and getting involved is the best way to expand your network for sure.

**[L] It's always nice to hear about the teamwork going on behind the scenes. I think a lot of our members don't know how close the Core can be.**

[C] Absolutely!

**[L] The flip side of that question is: what has been your least favorite part of being either an NAYGN officer or being on the Core?**

[C] Well, I didn't tell this to any of the candidates that are running for current office because I don't want to deter anyone. It's a lot of work going into and being a part of this administration and management of an international organization. It is not paperwork exactly, it's more the attention to detail. There are only a handful of people in this country that are willing to devote their time and energy to making sure that we are organized, consistent, and our structure is functioning correctly to have the infrastructure to manage individuals all over the continent. So, to devote that kind of time and attention to detail can be a little bit of a hurdle at times. That is probably one of the most time consuming parts of being on the Core. It's not the most fun. The fun stuff is the public speaking and getting to talk and problem

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solve together. But the duller parts are organization based, and that’s one of the most important functions of a CORE member.

**[L]** I imagine that the members of the Core take great pride in their work, so it’s sort of a badge of honor that they have jumped that hurdle, so to speak.

**[C]** Yep! Absolutely, absolutely.

**[L]** So rewinding about 9 ½ years ago: how were you recruited for NAYGN in the first place?

**[C]** Working for NEI, I ended up being asked

to support this conference that was coming up in Chicago. So I got on these phone calls with this super bubbly woman named Amy Buu; I don’t know how many Presidents ago she was. We had maybe 150 participants in the conference. It was putting the agenda together, figuring out speakers and sponsors, and that was back when we had the old fundraising strategy. We sponsored a breakfast and I took notes on these conference calls and then the conference was coming around and my boss said, “You’ve got to go to that meeting.” So I learned a lot about the group through the conference support, which I was able to engage in just as an NEI employee. Once I got there, I met people and it was 5-6 Presidents ago or something like that. It was so long ago! It was through my job that I was able to really get in the network and then I volunteered- of course you volunteer because once you start volunteering you just can’t stop. Then I volunteered for the D.C. Chapter Chair position, and then I got real rouge and asked for the Membership Chair to give me all of the people in the database that had a Virginia, Maryland, or D.C. zip code. I just added them to the

### Meet the Interviewer!

**Lauren Neuburger is the 2015 Recruiting and Retention Committee Lead. She is a mechanical/nuclear design engineer at Luminant’s Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant in Glen Rose, TX. She graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in radiological health engineering in 2011.**

- Enjoys videos of baby animals more than could be considered healthy.
- Currently reading David Sedaris’ *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*.



listserv, started emailing them, and then I had this whole network of people in the D.C. Chapter, so that is sort of how it blew up and snowballed.

**[L]** Pretty impressive! And you are absolutely right about the volunteering aspect of it. You do it once and it never goes away. Christine, you’ve practically already answered this question but, how do you balance being a working professional with being an NAYGN leader?

**[C]** Well it’s a good question for anybody that is involved with NAYGN in particular. It goes hand in hand with being professional. I think that as an individual if you are interested in your career path and you want to elevate your profile and make sure that people know that you are engaged, active, and



Christine poses with her two-year-old niece, Elisa, beside the Octonauts at the White House Easter Egg Roll. To Elisa, anthropomorphized nautically-themed cartoons are more important than meeting the President.

willing to take on additional work; that's a good profile to have in the workplace. People know that you are involved and respected by your peers and colleagues. I think that if you are somebody that's focused on moving up in life, then it goes hand in hand with what you are trying to do.

*“You volunteer because once you start volunteering you just can't stop.”*

**[L] Do you tend to catch up on your NAYGN activities before work, during work, after work, or on weekends? I know Felix (Meissner) had mentioned that he stays late to do whatever he needs to do to feel prepared for the next day, including cleaning his desk.**

[C] Yeah, I think I just pepper it in where ever I can fit it. Less of the before work, probably more of the after work and on weekends type thing. Lunch hour is very productive for me, for sure.

**[L] Oh man, I'm too focused on my food to do that. I'm impressed.**

[C] Yep, I hear ya.

**[L] You're the outgoing Past President, so what's next on your agenda?**

[C] You know, this is probably the hardest question you could ask because it's unclear. I mean in life, I moved over from doing grass-roots work at NEI and then I got this state lobbying gig about a year ago. I had to go through an interview process to get this job; it wasn't a promotion. It was a separate job from where I was coming from. So, I had a question like this during that interview. It was essentially, "What's next for you? What do you think is next?" My answer at that point was, "It is really hard to see what's next when you feel like you

have already made it." I feel like I've accomplished a lot in life. I feel like I am doing quite well. You sort of look back at your family history and say, "I'm making more money than my parents made. I'm more successful and I've accomplished a ton. I have peers and colleagues that respect and like me." It's hard for me to answer but, I'm only going up. That's all I can say!

**[L] And I don't think anyone would doubt you when you say that, not for a second. This is sort of a similar question, what would be your ideal dream job? I'm leaving it vague. I don't care how you answer this, even if you say, "Well, I always wanted to be a ballerina." That is a perfectly acceptable answer.**

[C] I don't know if I want to be a ballerina, but I did take dance lessons. I sort of always wanted to work in the White House. So I don't know under which administration I would be willing to take that dive but, I could see myself and actually might end up working for some administration someday down the road. It's just so high profile and so fast paced. It's influential and as a Washingtonian, political work is a real opportunity to get to spend some time working for a President.

**[L] So what I heard is you're running for US President. Csizmadia 2016!**

[C] You know what? My birthday is next week and I turn 35. That's the legal age to run for President!

**[L] You're eligible! And I would vote for you. I can already say that.**

[C] Thank you so much. Thank you!

**[L] This is kind of an interviewee type question: if you were going in for a job interview, say for the President, what is your Meyers-Briggs personality profile type?**

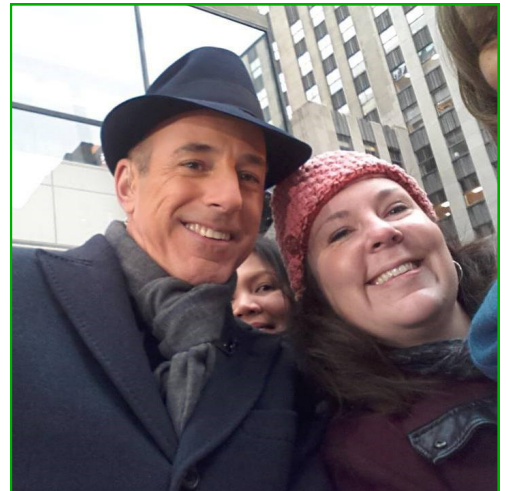
[C] I'm pretty sure it's ISFJ, which is Introversion, Sensing, Feeling, and Judging.

**[L] And that is the Nurturer, I believe.**

[C] Weird right?

**[L] That is weird. That's not what I would've expected, no offense. But that is a lovely personality type.**

[C] I might have one letter off, but I'm pretty sure that's what it was the last time I took the test.



Matt Lauer poses with his idol, Christine Csizmadia.

**[L] Do you find that one or two of those letters might change depending on your feelings when you take the test? I know mine do.**

[C] Yeah, mine change over time. It changed based on, not so much my mood, but more of my status in life. It's up for grabs in the future. I will not remain ISFJ forever, that is for sure, but who knows!

**[L] This is a question I don't think we initially included on your (pre-prepared) bulleted list, but we like to do fun personality questions with the people that we're interviewing. What was your favorite cartoon when you were a kid, and why?**

[C] Cartoon?! Um, gosh there are so many! I couldn't even choose one! I was definitely a big fan of...are you talking about action cartoon or print cartoon?

**[L] Let's do both!**

[C] Oh man! I mean... me and the Archie comics. When my mom would buy one for me, I

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would read it so many times. Nonstop. I was obsessed. I thought that I was going to name my kid Veronica.

**[L] Oh wow. That is a level of devotion I didn't expect anyone to have for Archie comics.**

[C] I know, right? I really wanted to name my daughter Veronica! Yeah, I would probably say that Archie was one of my top ones. I watched cartoons when I got home from school. Duck Tales was an awesome one. I can still sing the song, but I won't for you.

**[L] I'll keep it on the interview recording forever.**

[C] Yeah, I don't need that captured. I'm a big fan of cartoons though. Many good memories have come from cartoons.



Christine is so cool she takes selfies with black bears.

**[L] I imagine that you probably don't have a whole lot of free time given how active and busy you are, but what have you been watching on TV lately?**

[C] Well, I don't want to admit to the Bravo channel, but I do have a little bit of a problem with all of the Housewives.

**[L] You're not the only one!**

[C] I was at a conference a couple of weeks ago and the speaker was talking about persua-

sion. There is research being done on the intelligence level of what you expose yourself to, whether it be reading, writing, television, or what you see and hear. If you are exposing yourself to dumbed-down information, then you become less intelligent yourself. The whole point in what the speaker was trying to say was, "Stop watching the Kardashians," which was very funny.

**[L] Oh no! That's dangerous for me.**

[C] Yep. So, I watch Bravo channel. I watch Scandal and White House-type political shows. Veep is my favorite! Julia Louis-Dreyfus is absolutely brilliant. I think she is the most hilarious woman alive. I love a female comedian; it goes a long way with me. I like those shows.

*"If you are exposing yourself to dumbed-down information, then you become less intelligent yourself."*

**[L] Veep doesn't get enough hype. That is an excellent show; it's so funny.**

[C] Exactly!

**[L] You mentioned that people run the risk of being dumbed down by what they're watching. Let me ask you a similar question, but on the opposite side. What have you been reading lately and what books most influenced you growing up?**

[C] That is a good question. I was more into the fantastical type stories growing up. So thinking about *A Wrinkle in Time* and *Phantom Tollbooth*, they were things that took me out of reality. That is sort of what I enjoyed the most. I didn't really enjoy historical novels or anything like that. Currently, I've been reading all of Jillian Flynn and I am just now finishing all of her novels. She wrote *Gone Girl*, *Sharp Objects*, and *Dark Places*. I am now read-

ing *Dark Places*. She's a brilliant writer: the way that she relates behaviors is really interesting. Her phrasing and her word choices are just so clear, and it creates the image in your head. I'm just now finishing her *Dark Places* book and, if you haven't read it, it is crazy!

**[L] I haven't. I have not read any of them. I saw the film *Gone Girl* and I thought it was just riveting, so I imagine the book is even better. They're on my list for sure.**

[C] Yes. Definitely.

**[L] Christine, I'm all done with our interview questions, and I greatly appreciate your responses. And, of course, the fact that you also watch the Housewives.**

[C] You know, I admitted it. I appreciate you all taking the time. Last words of wisdom: get involved, stay involved, and it will be worth it for sure.

**[L] Excellent advice. Thank you so much.**

[C] Thank you, Lauren. Take care! Bye guys!

**Recruiting & Retention Committee**

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