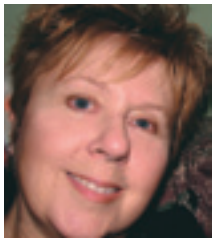


An Interview with Ray Wilson

By Dianne Werbicki, BA

CM: Earlier this year Wilson Blanchard became an ACMO Corporate member. This allowed WB to embark on ACMO 2000 certification. Tell me more about this.



Ray Wilson: My partner Dave Blanchard and I have supported ACMO for over 30 years both during our employment with a past firm and immediately following the incorporation of Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc. The concept of ACMO 2000 Certification to my recollection, dates back to the early 90s and never gained momentum due to the lingering question – what will ACMO 2000 do for me? – other than offer another title or designation.

Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc., along with approximately 25 to 30 other management companies, lost their corporate designation as we did not meet the deadline mandated by ACMO to obtain our ACMO 2000 designation. As one of the principals of Wilson, Blanchard Management, I was frustrated and extremely upset. ACMO had not convinced me and obviously numerous other management companies, the value of obtaining and/or the necessity to achieve the ACMO 2000 designation. Approximately 10 to 12 companies originally achieved their designation. In reality, Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc. was among an easily estimated 250 to 300 management companies managing condominium corporations throughout the province of Ontario that were not interested or enthused with the concept of ACMO 2000. That being said, the principals of Wilson, Blanchard Management did suggest that we would wait to see the impact ACMO 2000 had within the industry, and in particular any impact positive or negative on the original 10 to 12 companies. We further decided that we would wait to see the results of recertification and determine whether to consider moving forward.

We now recognize we need to work together in an effort to strengthen and effect positive change in our unique industry. This can only be achieved by working inside “the box” rather than offering criticism from outside the program. With that in mind, the principals agreed it was time for Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc. to move forward toward certification.

CM: You were an ACMO president from 1994–1996. Tell me the differences between managing 20 years ago and today.

Ray Wilson: Wow, how time flies. I would suppose that the big difference would be that 20 years ago, I was a divisional controller for a company with limited authority, versus now being the owner and president of a successful condominium and commercial management company. Prior to and since 1994 condo living has exploded, and similarly the growth of RCMs has attempted to meet the challenge. Managing a condominium corporation has not changed; however, although education of directors has provided some ease in the day-to-day administration, increase in email, text messaging and now managers carrying Blackberrys 24 hours a day are very important factors which now tax managers to their limits. There is no relief from the office and no time to digest correspondence before responding. Unfortunately today as compared



Ray Wilson, RCM, president of Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc.

to the 90s, managers are far too often verbally abused and subjected to condescending remarks that I truly believe is a result of our industry not recognizing condominium managers as professionals.

CM: Tell me about the ACMO 2000 certification process for WB.

Ray Wilson: The ACMO 2000 certification process was a huge undertaking for WB given the size of our company and the number of offices. In the early stages we realized most of the ACMO 2000 requirements were already in place however policies and procedures were not documented anywhere making it difficult when issues arose or new employees joined the staff.

Shortly after attending the original ACMO breakfast meetings, we drafted, adopted and implemented our own Policies and Procedures Manual for distribution to existing staff and new hires. This document provided staff with a guideline of the company's expectations of them as well as the company's responsibility toward them and for many years seemed sufficient. However, as we continued to grow we realized we needed to tighten up our internal controls even more and firm up the company's operations so we approached all staff to recruit volunteers to begin the ACMO 2000 certification process.

Our team of employees worked diligently on their own time for several months, meeting monthly and assigning tasks such as drafting procedures to specific individuals within the company. Many of the policies and procedures were developed by the committee themselves and described in writing the methods staff

were already utilizing in their day-to-day duties. Once the majority of the procedures had been drafted and reviewed by company executives, the entire package was handed over to our assistant office manager to put everything in order and ensure each of our offices met the criteria specified in the ACMO 2000 Manual.

We are now implementing all of the requirements into our head office in Hamilton as well as each of our field offices and/or onsite offices and we're anticipating our certification audit in the very near future. We now have a manual that can be reviewed during the orientation of new staff or referred to should issues arise with existing staff. We knew from the start that certification would improve our performance and as the process evolves we see these overall benefits to the company and our clients.

CM: Have you appointed an in-house ACMO 2000 ambassador?

Ray Wilson: Dean McCabe along with Karen Reynolds, Jackey Kilpatrick and other supporting staff.

CM: How will you train employees in-house?

Ray Wilson: Initially each department supervisor met and will continue to meet with their staff to introduce them to the ACMO 2000 concept and review any changes to their existing routines that would need to be implemented for our certification. Fortunately for the greater part of our staff very few changes to current operating procedures were necessary so little training will be required.

We look forward to one day having the privilege of teaching the RCM courses in-house since we are fortunate to have two executives on staff

who have or did teach the courses. When that time comes, we will utilize their talent and knowledge.

CM: What do you see as benefits in ACMO 2000 certification for management companies?

Ray Wilson: The preparation for certification has been an absolute positive whirlwind. ACMO 2000 Certification ensures at the very least all your "ducks are in order." Policies, procedures, forms and standardization of many items help ensure that you are a better and more efficient player in the condo market. Hopefully one day we will see legislated licensing of management companies and managers. ACMO 2000 will prepare managers and management companies for the task that lays ahead.

CM: Why should all management firms become certified?

Ray Wilson: While ACMO 2000 does have a recognized distinction throughout Ontario, I am very confident that as more companies become certified, an increased number of condominium corporations will demand or request proposals from certified companies only. Certification will also have a positive impact when interviewing and hiring managers who will know they will be working and/or be trained by a firm who has been audited and passed all requirements to obtain ACMO 2000 certification.

Thank you to my staff who were relentless in pushing me and convincing me to move forward towards our certification. We are now and will be an even better leader in the industry. ■

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