

# FLASH!

**B**reaking news often comes at inconvenient times for those of us who are still in the business of printing it on dead trees and entrusting it to the Pony Express...er, I mean U.S. Post Office...to deliver to you.

So, predictably, Mark Woodward's surprise resignation as CEO of GCSAA came at just such an inconvenient time – just as we were readying to go to press with this issue. (*Editor's note: The above revelation may have been quite a shock to all nine of you that still don't have the Internet. I'll give you a minute to digest this information. Perhaps you can calm your nerves by taking a stroll outside your cave and watching the brontosaurus graze in the field out front.*)

We posted the Woodward announcement on our website and on Facebook within minutes of getting confirmation of it and, within a couple of minutes of that, the emails and calls started coming in. All of them basically asked one question: Why?

Well, as I sit here a few days later, that question remains unanswered. Perhaps by the time you read this, all will have been revealed and any speculation I could give you now will be equally old news. So, I won't speculate about why, but I will offer some observations.

First, I never heard anyone question Mark's performance or energy in the job. He's a good guy and he was always fair and patient with me, even though he couldn't have liked it when I wrote unflattering things about the association. I am a professional pain in the ass and he put up with it.

Second, the circumstances of his tenure were – in the words of philosopher Thomas Hobbes – “nasty, brutish and short.” His two years at the helm were dominated by the economy crapping out, trade show and advertising revenue shrinking and the resultant need to downsize about a quarter of the staff in Lawrence. It couldn't have been much fun to be forced to be the hatchet man.

Third, I stand by what I wrote when he was hired that there are inherent challenges associated with being a recent president who tries to move into the role of staff executive. There is a vast difference between the elected

leader and someone who serves at the leadership's pleasure. Going from giving orders to taking them from your former colleagues can be awkward and, perhaps, grating.

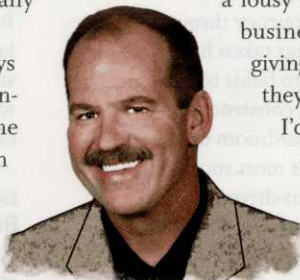
So, all we really know is that the board will once again embark on a search for a new CEO – a costly and time-consuming process, by the way – and that we'll have someone new in the job sooner or later. What kind of person should they hire? Who will drive the process within the board? What will the political ramifications be inside and outside the walls of headquarters?

Here's my answer: I don't know and I really don't care. When Woodward's resignation was announced, it occurred to me that this was the first “real” news I'd heard from GCSAA in ages. Honestly, they just haven't seemed to have done much of anything new in years. In their defense, they were busy managing through a lousy economy and reshuffling their business to keep the GIS cash cow giving milk. In a sense they did what they're mandated to do. However, I'd argue that extraordinary times create extraordinary challenges that require extraordinary solutions. I'm not trying to be snide here but what has the GCSAA done lately that has been extraordinary?

There was a time when

I paid a lot of attention to GCSAA internal politics. The whole PDI thing. Board members losing their positions. The saga of Steve Mona applying for other jobs. Their inability to lure prime candidates before the job eventually went to Woodward. Staff dissension and downsizing. It was a lot of fun for a while, but it's just gotten old.

Frankly, I've come to the conclusion that the GCSAA is increasingly irrelevant to the average superintendent – and therefore to our editorial interests – these days. Yes, they run a fine education program. Yes, the show is an important, albeit smaller, platform for the industry. But does anything else the GCSAA does or says really mean a whole lot to your day-to-day life? **GCI**



**Pat Jones**  
Editorial director and publisher

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