

HOW TO REV UP INTEREST IN A PROFESSION

What do Charles Dickens, Harvey Keitel, and Michelle Pfeiffer have in common? Before other careers took off, they all trained to be court reporters. That factoid comes courtesy of Mark Golden, CEO of the National Court Reporters Association, who is working to find the future "stars" of the industry.

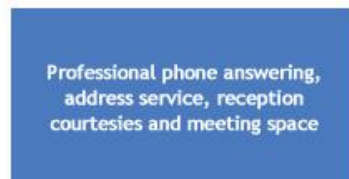


No, Andrew Lloyd Weber wasn't a court reporter also—Mark's just a huge opera fan.

The 23,000 individual members of the NCRA do more than just courtroom and deposition work; they also provide television captioning and instantaneous transcription for deaf clients at, for example, college classes. Despite all the new applications for reporting skills, when Mark arrived at the NCRA in 1998 the number of workers entering the industry was declining. In response, NCRA took "obvious" action like raising public awareness of the profession and its attractions (according to the NCRA's website, www.bestfuture.com, court reporters do pretty well at \$64,000/year). But when he looked deeper, Mark saw that education was at the heart of the problem—too few schools teaching the latest skills, taking too long to graduate students.



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Mark looks like he's all ready to do some reporting himself, but we discovered a dirty secret: He can't type very well. It doesn't affect his success in the association world, though; he's Chairman-elect of the Center for Association Leadership.

So five years ago, Mark put together an "REC"—Reporter Education Commission—to generate new ideas for schools that teach courtroom reporting. To avoid echo-chamber thinking, he put teachers, school reps, and NCRA members in the 20-member group. He also enlisted Scott Swail of the Educational Policy Institute to consult. The NCRA is still implementing the 15 specific recommendations that came out of the REC's work, but some short-term goals have been met. Among other things, the NCRA has developed model curricula, streamlined its school certification process, and developed a network of teachers through a listserve. This month, the NCRA celebrated the House of Rep's vote authorizing \$20 million a year in grants for court reporting education over the next five years, with Senate approval appearing likely.



Mark says the Washington National Opera's current View from a Bridge is "fabulous." Next up, he's headed to the Met for a performance of Tristan & Isolde.

In a previous issue, Madeleine Jacobs of the American Chemical Society told us that leading an association is like conducting an orchestra. Mark has done her one better—he's got an actual conductor's baton in his office. And it seems to work: Since the REC finished its work, the decline in enrollment at reporting schools has stopped.