

HIKING, GEOCACHING & GREENER PASTURES

By Carol Bergeron



It was a beautiful fall Saturday when I headed out with a couple of friends to Wachusett Mountain for a hike. The air was crisp. The temperature was perfect; cool enough to avoid overheating and warm enough to avoid lugging around layers of extra clothing we had on hand. And there were no pesky bugs to have to swat so we could leave behind the bug spray. The heavens were perfectly clear, sunny and a gorgeous bluer than blue. It had not rained for several days so the grounds were dry and rock climbing less hazardous.

When we arrived at the summit on this crystal clear morning we had no trouble identifying Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire, the Berkshires and Beantown. We were in good company too. There were young people, old people, bikers who rode their Harleys to the summit and photographers capturing nature's essence on the horizon. Truly the makings for an exceptional hiking experience: a wonderful destination, multiple challenging trails to choose from, great conditions, friendly folks and we were prepared with a map and other hiking essentials.

My maiden voyage with Geocaching over the summer was another story. A little background: Geocaching combines hiking with treasure hunting and requires use of a global positioning system (size or a large cell phone) to locate the treasure. Currently people across seven continents and over 100 countries participate in 900,000 plus active geocaches. First, you go online to select an area to hike, identify the coordinates of the treasure and print out a map. Start the hike by loading two sets of coordinates, your starting point and the treasure's location, into the GPS. Then go for it.

Mother Nature was not feeling well on geocache day. It poured, cleared up, got hot and humid and then poured again. We lugged around slickers, hats, bottled water, ineffective bug spray (ran into the skeeters' convention) and extra socks since the grounds were saturated. Once we learned how to use the GPS, which was easy to do, then we practiced by finding a host of destinations close in proximity. The big destination of the day, geocaching to find our lunch, was scratched from the agenda so lunch was rather anti-climatic.

The GPS is a wonderful tool for guiding you in the right direction. Though it doesn't tell you squat about the terrain (like mountains, bodies of water, structures) you may have to navigate around. A map, good old fashioned compass and GPS are the highly interdependent tools required of skilled geocachers.

I missed the compass lesson in Girl Scouts so was unprepared.

Don't get me wrong. I'm glad to have had the experience and will most likely geocache again someday but an exceptional experience it was not. Going for it: friendly folks ready for an adventure; enthusiastic leaders to guide us and practice using a GPS. On the flip side: the ultimate geocache for the day was cancelled, there were limited options in getting through our practice runs, conditions were lousy (okay an

Routing List

uncontrollable) and we had not prepared adequately for using the three interdependent tools.

This is the part where I link my story to an organizational challenge you may be facing, ready? Does your organization provide its workforce an **exceptional employment experience**? Does that experience, as seen through the eyes of employees, include: a concise strategic destination, an open mindedness to choices for navigating from point A to point B, developing people so that they are competent, clear integration of tools/systems/process and skills preparation for their use, working with conscientious people committed to the same purpose and recognition for achieving the desired outcomes in a productive way.

NOW is the time to take stock of the quality of the employment experience since it will drive company turnover, the ability to attract talented new hires and productivity levels of existing employees as the economy slowly starts to turnaround. How green is your pasture?

Last Month's Trivia

Q: What are the rules of the "Marco Polo" game when playing the "fish out of water" variation?

A: The same as the rules for regular "Marco Polo" except that folks can get out of the water to change positions provided that they always have at least one body part emerged (usually a hand or toe) in the water.

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