Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
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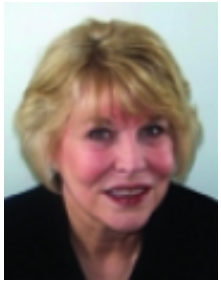

I had the pleasure of joining thousands at IBM Pulse 2011 in Las Vegas several weeks ago. The purpose of my trip was primarily to learn how IBM and its partners are helping you—*our readers*
—do more in the way of asset management.

There was plenty to see and hear on the subject in various sessions and lots of activity surrounding it on the exhibit hall floor.

What I had not anticipated at Pulse was learning about another area of asset management that we all should be interested in: management of the eager minds and hands of the precious assets we know as our children. That opportunity came via a remarkable keynote presentation by Dean Kamen, the well-known inventor, entrepreneur and advocate for science and technology.

The founder of DEKA Research & Development Corporation, which develops internally generated inventions and also provides R&D for major corporate clients, Kamen holds 440 U.S. and foreign patents, many of them for medical devices that have expanded the frontiers of healthcare around the world. Still, he let Pulse attendees know in no uncertain terms that one of his proudest achievements has been the founding of FIRST® (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology).

Based in Manchester, NH, FIRST designs accessible, innovative programs to build self-confidence, knowledge and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology and engineering. As I understand it, there’s a whole lot of hands-on problem-solving going on.

With support from three out of every five Fortune 500 companies and more than $14 million in

college scholarships, this not-for-profit organization hosts the FIRST® Robotics Competition and FIRST® Tech Challenge for high-school students; the FIRST® LEGO® League for 9- to 14-year-olds (9 to 16-year-olds outside the U.S. and Canada); and the Junior FIRST® LEGO® League for 6- to 9-year-olds. More than 250,000 youngsters now participate in this international program.

As Kamen has said, “You have teenagers thinking they’re going to make millions as NBA stars when that’s not realistic for even 1 percent of them. Becoming a scientist or engineer is.” Amen to that and to Kamen’s passion for finding a way to spark our children’s interest in innovation early on.

Kudos to IBM, as well, for supplying a great soapbox. Kamen noted that he didn’t charge the company for his talk—*and had only asked for the chance to promote FIRST and challenge those of us in the audience to become involved in it.* Perhaps you and your organization already are. If not, then you might want to look into how you can rectify the situation.

To learn more about FIRST, go to: www.usfirst.org .
To learn more about Dean Kamen, go to: www.dekaresearch.com/founder.shtml .
To learn more from IBM Pulse 2011, go to: http://pulse.vportal.net/registration/pulselogin.cfm

PS: Let me draw your attention to a new column we’re introducing: “Overcoming Your Challenges” from the Compressed Air Challenge (CAC) initiative. You know that compressed air can basically eat your lunch—and the profitability of your operations. Starting this month and running every other month thereafter, contributors from CAC member companies/organizations will be providing valuable advice on how to better manage your compressed air systems. Watch for it.

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