

March 2009

Monthly Newsletter

This is the fourth installment of our newsletter. Here we discuss the 2009 IAQA meeting, how to grow your business in a down economy and tips for getting better accuracy from lab analyses.

-Edward A. Sobek, Ph.D.
President/Lab Director

IAQA 2009 by
-E.A. Sobek, Ph.D.

**Growing Your Business
In This Economy**
-Brad Russell, MBA

The Trace
-Lyn Pope



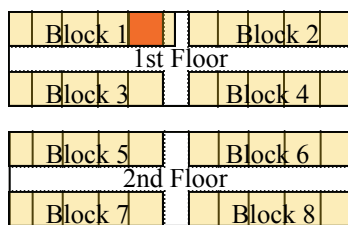
IAQA 2009 Fort Worth, TX

By Dr. Sobek

I was invited to give a presentation and participate in a discussion at the February 2009 IAQA annual meeting. The session was entitled: *ERMI and MSQPCR: State-of-the-art DNA Mold Diagnostics for Use in the Science of Building Forensics*. My presentation described novel uses of the ERMI Panel. I presented two case studies, which included a commercial office building and a manufacturing plant.

In my presentation I demonstrated the benefit of using the ERMI panel to source mold contaminations. Moreover, I showed inspectors in the audience how to significantly reduce analysis cost by using a sampling method which I term Systematic Sample Reduction (SSR). SSR requires the skills of the IEP to amalgamate like areas of a building into defined sampling units. For example suppose an IEP is faced with widespread complaints of mold-related symptoms in a two-story fifty-unit office building (see figure 1). The cost of collecting an

Figure 1. Two Story Building



* Each Block consists of five offices.

ERMI sample in every unit in the building would be \$9,750. However, by systematically reducing adjacent offices into eight blocks (thus eight samples) the number of samples was reduced to eight (\$1,560). That's an initial savings of \$8,190. In this example, a high ERMI score was found in Block 1. Further sampling of each office in Block 1 identified the source in the library (red office). Even with the additional samples, the IEP saved the client more than \$6,000.

I will be going into much greater detail on SSR methods and ERMI testing during my PDC class in Toronto at the AIHce meeting this May.

Growing Your Business in This Economy

By Brad Russell, MBA

We all know the economy is in bad shape. Every time you turn on the radio, TV, or a computer you hear about it. However, that doesn't mean *your* business has to be down. A recession is one of the best times to grow your business, because other businesses cut marketing to save money. Here are a few things to think about and hopefully help you grow your business.

- *Find New Growth Opportunities.* Buying a house usually requires a home inspection, but home sales are slow right now. So what do you do to keep business up? Think about the reasons people use your services – including those out of the ordinary – and target areas with high growth potential. A great example is foreclosures. The reasons for the economic crisis and housing situation are many, but the results are simple: many people cannot afford mortgage payments and houses are foreclosed, leaving them to sit vacant.

So how do you capitalize on your target area? Know why people need your service and determine who makes the decision on to use it. In our foreclosure example, do the banks decide a mold test is necessary? Is it the people purchasing the house? Is it required by law (as some states do) or just a thorough prospective buyer? Once you know the 'why' and the 'who', figure out how to reach them and have an impact on the decision-making process

- *Increase (Or Start) Advertising.* Advertising is a scary unknown to many small businesses, but it is a great way to grow when done effectively. In fact, advertising during a recession is one of the best times. While other business scale back to keep profits up, you can advertise (often at a lower rate) and capture market share.

Advertising doesn't have to be expensive, either. You can advertise online for a couple dollars per day and you can do it yourself. Online advertising has a 91% satisfaction rating, 57% higher than the next highest avenue. Targeted print media sources are good as well, such as a paper for home buying if you offer inspection services. If you are spending money now, think about what you spend it on and what your return is on that money. A good rule of thumb is that you should spend 8-10% of your revenue on advertising. If you aren't advertising at all, just 4-5% could help you see a difference.

- *Help People Find You* Try to get inside your customers' heads. When someone looks for your services, where do they look first? That's where you need to be. The easier you make it for them to find you, the more likely you are to get their business. Ask friends and family what they would do. Ask

your clients how they found you. Then, find a way to influence those people. Some good examples are real estate agents, the local Better Business Bureau, and internet message boards. Once you find these people, the options are limitless – taking influencers to lunch once a month or having pamphlets in strategic locations are easy and high-impact ideas. If your business is the first one the customer sees, you have a significant leg up on the competition.

That's it for now, but if you have additional questions or comments you can reach me at brussell@assuredbio.com or 1-866-547-1727.



THE TRACE

Notes on Sample Submission:

By Lyn Pope-Lab Manager

Have you ever wondered if you can impact the quality of your laboratory results? You absolutely can! Check out the list below to see how you can ensure the accuracy and timeliness of your results.

- The chain of custody should reflect the inspector who collected the samples. His information should also be included in the e-mail field.
- It is always a good idea to include a project name on the chain of custody. This, in conjunction with the project date, can provide an easy way to communicate with the lab about a sample set.
- Include a phone number on the chain of custody. This gives the scientist performing your analysis the ability to contact you quickly should any questions arise.

- Assigning a sample ID number is always a great idea. The lab uses this info to provide a link between a collected sample and the area in which the sample was collected. Any method may be used to assign sample IDs. They can be numeric, alphabetic, or a combination of both. Many collection devices come with a sample ID number pre-printed on them. These can be very useful when submitting multiple projects at a time since each sample ID will be unique. Another benefit to utilizing a sample's pre-printed ID number is the number is stamped in indelible ink, which is traceable to a manufacturer's lot.

- When collecting a sample which requires the reporting of quantitative data, knowing the best volume to sample is a must. Even though many collection devices have a spec for their collection volume, special circumstances encountered in the field may require that the spec be amended. For example, the Air-O-Cell can collect a sample volume of 150L (15L over 10min.) but the particulate concentration in the air may dictate a volume of 75L (15L over 5min.) to prevent sample overloading. Or a property may show no visible signs of mold damage so the wall cavity becomes suspect. This sample should be collected at a volume of 30L (15L over 2 min.) instead of the normal 150L to prevent sample overloading. Without including this information on the chain of custody, the lab analyst may not be able to accurately calculate the spores per cubic meter in the air for the sample. The value could be off by as much as a multiple of 4.

- Check the field of testing that is being ordered. Many FOTs utilize the same sample collection device and without indicating the appropriate test requested the sample's

analysis may be stalled until the inspector can be contacted to clarify his or her order.

- The chain of custody should be signed and dated. This can become important should the data collected ever be needed for litigation purposes.

- The lab recommends that samples from the same project be submitted in one Ziploc bag. This allows them to travel through the lab processes together. It is also a good idea to fold the chain of custody and place it inside the Ziploc with the samples. By doing this the COC will not be damaged or separated in transit to the laboratory.

- Each of these items can impact your lab results. By being mindful of these 8 tips, you can ensure that the data that you receive from your samples is the very best possible.

New Lab Additions

AssuredBio welcomes our newest member, **Mr. Brad Russell**. Brad recently graduated from the University of Tennessee’s MBA program. We are extremely excited to have someone of Brad’s caliber on-board.

Brad will be our acting Business Manager and will work with Dr.Sobek to develop new testing programs, enhance our services for current inspectors, and develop a product line that fully utilizes the lab’s unique capabilities. We look forward to great things from Mr. Russell. Join us in welcoming him. He wants to hear from inspectors, and get to know you to improve our product and services.

Need mold pictures for advertising, then be sure to check out Dr. Sobek’s collection on the Assured-Bio website. Download and use them to increase your sales. Quality pictures impress customers. Just go to our image gallery: <http://assuredbio.com/gallery.aspx>.

Laboratory Contact Information

865-813-1700.....Phone
865-813-1705.....Fax
866-547-1727.....Toll Free

E-mail: info@assuredbio.com
www.assuredbio.com
