The Alpha Oh!

Combining the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, it signifies a beginning-to-end, end-to-end or complete solution.

Resembling a key hole, it signifies unlocking or creating new possibilities for our customers and employees.

Resembling hands together, palms facing each other and fingers pointing upwards, thumbs close to the chest (gesture called añjali mudra and greeted with “Namaste”) to signify our service-minded approach to our federal customers and, ultimately, to the nation that continues to provide opportunity to ordinary women and men, like myself.

Resembling a heart (Omega at the core) to signify our core values, abbreviated by HEART, which, in turn, symbolizes the core values at the foundation of what we do.

There is an important significance in Alpha Omega’s logo – one that transcends its use beyond simply promoting public identification and recognition. Our logo is meant to reference the intersection of our passion and capability, a concept referenced as the Hedgehog Concept in Jim Collins’ Good to Great, whereby:

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- Resembling a key hole, it signifies unlocking or creating new possibilities for our customers and employees.
- Resembling hands together, palms facing each other and fingers pointing upwards, thumbs close to the chest (gesture called añjali mudra and greeted with “Namaste”) to signify our service-minded approach to our federal customers and, ultimately, to the nation that continues to provide opportunity to ordinary women and men, like myself.
- Resembling a heart (Omega at the core) to signify our core values, abbreviated by HEART, which, in turn, symbolizes the core values at the foundation of what we do.

Harmony
Develop an environment wherein employees maintain an ideal balance of work, family, community service, and personal enrichment.

Engagement
Create stronger enduring relationships with customers (internal and external) by consistently delivering at-most value; close the gap between these circumstances and solutions in the easiest & most friction-free manner.

Accountability
Take responsibility to achieve a desired objective, learn from failure and share lessons learned to develop an environment of trust and interdependency.

Resourceful
Foster positive changes and encourage success by using resources ingeniously, thinking outside the box and challenging the status quo.

Tenacious
Display courage to follow through with a course of action or principle and be determined to achieve a desired outcome creating new possibilities.

-Gautam Ijoor
President, CEO

About The Alpha Oh!
The Alpha Oh! is the Alpha Omega Integration employee newsletter and is intended to serve in several ways: to inform to recognize individual and team success and to invite commentary and discussion. Employee comments, suggestions, ideas, and photos of interest are highly encouraged and always welcomed.
CTO Corner
Mahe Rangareddy, CTO

BE A HERO!
Use the Phish Alert Button

You receive an email asking you to take an action. Sounds suspicious, right? But don't worry. You can be a hero by taking the correct action—and giving your IT department the information they need to defend your organization against the effects of malicious email attacks. It’s easy. Thanks to the Phish Alert Button, or PAB for short.

How do I know what to report?
You should only report messages you suspect are malicious, like phishing or spear phishing emails. Reporting annoying messages, like spam, to IT will waste their time and resources.

- **Spam** is unsolicited and unwanted email, typically sent to try to sell you something. While it is often annoying and misleading, it is rarely malicious. **Simply delete it!**
- **Phishing** messages are bulk emails, typically appearing to be from a reputable source, that ask you to take a specific action that can cause damage to you or your organization. These messages are malicious. **Report it with the PAB!**
- **Spear phishing** emails are targeted attacks on a person or organization, occurring after detailed research in order to make them seem especially real. These messages are extremely malicious and can lead to very damaging consequences.

Where do I find the PAB in Outlook for Office 365?

While viewing your email:
1. The Phish Alert Button is shown as a text link toward the top of any open email.

 or

2. You can also find it in your toolbar. Look for the orange “Phish Alert” icon.

Report:
Report suspected phishing emails by clicking the Phish Alert link or clicking the toolbar button.

Confirm:
The pop-up box you see will prompt you to confirm your action. Once confirmed, the email in question will be immediately forwarded to your organization’s IT team.

Stop. Look. Think. Report!
Remember, you are the last line of defense against email-based criminal activity. Never click on a link or open an attachment in any unexpected or unsolicited email. If you are uncertain, follow your organization’s security policy—or ask your IT team for advice.

KnowBe4
Takia Glover

Takia initially joined the ezFedGrants helpdesk team in 2017 as a business analyst. Her dedication to work, desire to experiment and finding new ways of achieving goals and out-of-the-box thinking is unparalleled as she quickly learned the system and became a key helpdesk member. She successfully managed the legacy helpdesk tracker while assigning tickets to other help desk analysts and simultaneously responding to her own help desk inquiries. She rapidly became an expert in the ezFedGrants system earning a well-deserved promotion to become help desk team lead in June of 2020. Not one to be content with her current knowledge level, she is still constantly learning and improving her understanding of the ezFedGrants system. She consistently impresses our users and clients and receives very positive feedback from them. The help desk has received a multitude of kudos from users indicating that “the best thing about ezFedGrants is the responsive help desk.” Takia’s leadership as the Help Desk Team Lead is largely responsible for these achievements. Takia has been instrumental with training new employees on help desk policies and procedures. Her system knowledge and customer-focused attitude has led to very high customer satisfaction scores.

Geoffrey Seidel

Geoffrey is a Programmer Analyst supporting our customers at the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) South East Fisheries Service Center (SEFSC). We are delighted to get this note from our big fish customer Mr. Charles J. Weber, IT Unit Lead, NOAA NMFS SEFSC: “To Geoffrey Seidel for continuing to develop the Cruise Data Tracking System (CDTS). Through his efforts, several reports have been built along with many field and table additions that give users the ability to track cruise related documents, view present and historical vessel and manning schedules, and more recently, the addition of automated notifications that will alert the FPC and VC of impending deadlines to ensure all timelines are met. Thanks, Geoff, for continuing to improve this application and its capabilities.”

Michael Hartsook

Michael is a Sr. Software Developer supporting our customers at the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) South East Fisheries Service Center (SEFSC). Mr. Michael Holley, IT Specialist, NOAA NMFS, had the following to say about Michael: “I want to bring attention to the consistent excellent work of Michael Hartsook. He has been an exceptional developer from the moment he started working with us. Not only did he have to learn the inner workings of a national program for the Vessel Operations Program and the suite of applications related to it, but he has diligently continued to enhance and grow the program. It would be obvious and blatant to say it, but he has been very successful in adopting and moving this program forward. Michael Hartsook is a great developer and hard working. He has working knowledge of our systems and is very independent. He has helped me on multiple occasions as a sounding board and is always willing to help out those around him. Michael is an asset to this team and the VOP Program.”

Mr. Wayne Hoggard, Program Manager, NOAA NMFS, refused to remain silent and further supported the above assertion: “As you noted, Mr. Hartsook picked up the reins and has implemented many of the enhancements that were historically only wishful thinking. I too, really appreciate his enthusiasm, work ethics, and willingness to think outside the box on ways to improve VOP and engage the Small Boat Community. Glad you felt the urge to highlight his work, sometimes I take for granted the effort that goes into supporting VOP.”

Patrick Serengulian and Raghu Chikkala

Mr. Walter W. Wolf, Physical Scientist, NOAA National Environmental Satellite Data and Information Service (NESDIS) Satellite Application and Research (STAR), has set up a kudos churning factory for our Cloud IaaS Team. In yet another compliment to Patrick Serengulian (Cloud IaaS PM) and Raghu Chikkala (Cloud Technical Lead), he had this to say: ” Patrick, Raghu, and Kelly, I just want to commend you all on an excellent NCEI Lunch and Learn presentation. The material hit the mark and was well presented. Excellent collaboration between the two teams. Job Well Done!!!”

Anis Pandor

The heroics of Anis Pandor (ServiceNow Technical Lead) and team on our Department of State CPIC project are delighting the customers no end, with this compliment from Rosalina Wackford, IT Specialist, DoS Information Resource Management (IRM): “I just want to acknowledge Chris and Anis for all of their efforts, and incredible work in resolving this issue. We have been working very hard on it, and am closing the day with this great accomplishment.”

HARMONY: DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENT WHEREIN EMPLOYEES MAINTAIN AN IDEAL BALANCE OF WORK, FAMILY, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND PERSONAL ENRICHMENT
As DIG fosters innovative thinking, DIG activities have transitioned to the newly formed Technology Solutions Group (TSG). DIG takes on new vigor, focus, and purpose, now led by Navin Maganti, Solutions Architect, with guidance from Mahe Rangareddy, CTO. With Alpha Omega acquiring Confiance and winning new contracts, DIG has expanded thought leadership and expertise in new IT competencies. These include Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Business Process Management (BPM), and Cybersecurity.

Alpha Omega delivery teams will need to focus on the value life cycle involving: 1. Value Identification, 2. Value Socialization (with the team and customer stakeholders), 3. Value Implementation, and 4. Value Validation (with the perceivers of value, our customer stakeholders). It makes common sense for each project team to proactively make DIG a significant partner in each stage of the project team's value journey.

1. **Value Identification**: DIG acts as a sounding board for projects to think outside-the-box. DIG offers valuable insights on industry trends, technology deep dives, solution pathways, and problem troubleshooting. It is in the best interest of delivery teams to proactively engage DIG as a partner to identify unique and significant value propositions above and beyond what our contracts dictate.

2. **Value Socialization**: Delivery team leads and PMs will need to socialize value propositions with the customers, sometimes directly and sometimes subtly, to gain traction. DIG brain trust can advise PMs and delivery leads on how best to gain traction with the customers in implementing the value propositions.

3. **Value Implementation**: Even as delivery teams implement value propositions, they can leverage DIG to obtain solution contributions as external partners.

4. **Value Validation**: DIG enables delivery teams to espouse the benefits of value propositions to our customers. DIG acts as an external partner to obtain feedback from how the customers perceived value propositions’ rollout. DIG shares these success stories with others as part of continuous improvements.

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**Upcoming Training**

**AWS re:Invent** is the world’s largest, most comprehensive cloud computing event. This year, for the first time ever, re:Invent is available as a free 3-week virtual event.

**Register today and join the Nov. 30 – Dec. 18 re:Invent 2020!**

https://reinvent.awsevents.com/?&trk=em_a134p000006BIQmAAK&trkCampaign=AWS_reInvent_2020&sc_channel=em&sc_campaign=GLOBAL_STRAT_T1_reinvent_DG1_20201130&sc_medium=em_312010&sc_outcome=Strategic_Events&sc_content=AWS_Event

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**ENGAGEMENT: CREATE STRONGER ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL) BY CONSISTENTLY DELIVERING AT-MOST VALUE; CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES AND SOLUTIONS IN THE EASIEST & MOST FRICTION-FREE MANNER.**
No Changes to Health FSA Maximum Limit

The limit remains at $2,750 for 2021. The Health FSA (FSA) and Limited Purpose FSA (LPF) maximum annual election limit for plan years beginning in 2021 is $2,750. There is no increase from the 2020 limit – this was announced recently in IRS Revenue Procedure 2020-45.

No change to the Dependent Care FSA maximum allowable election – it is still $5,000 (for single employees or those married filing jointly) and $2,500 for those married filing separately.

Carryover Provision Limit is $550 for 2021

For plan years beginning in 2021, the maximum amount that me be rolled into the next plan year for plans that have adopted the Carryover Provision is $550. This remains unchanged from the same $550 limit for plan years beginning in 2020.

Commuter Transit & Parking Monthly Pre-Tax Limit is $270 per Month in 2021

The maximum monthly pre-tax limit for Qualified Transit and Parking is $270 (each) per benefit month in 2021. There is no increase to the monthly pre-tax limit from 2020 – this was recently announced in IRS Revenue Procedure 2020-45.

The monthly limit for Qualified Transit remains at $270.
The monthly limit for qualified Parking remains at $270.

Health Savings Accounts Pre-tax contributions limits increase as follows:

- Single . . . $3,600
- Family . . . $7,200

Catch-up Contribution (age 55+) remains at $1,000
Help employees create a gradual work slowdown as the holidays approach. Encourage employees to sign off earlier each day as the holiday approaches. Some organizations gave their employees a free vacation day to take care of the holiday preparation or to just step into the holidays in a less rushed and stressed way. Help them decide how to use that time to celebrate with other company employees or with their families. Many employees have actually worked more and longer in the pandemic. Getting them to shift out of work mode in favor or holiday and celebration mode may take some consistent guidance.

Create activities to replace the impromptu interactions that used to take place in the workplace around the holidays. Plan team activities, such as holiday Zoom background competitions, creating holiday team videos, sharing holiday tradition stories and other things that employees would do had they been still on-site. Give them a list of options to help them use their earlier shutdown time to shift to holiday preparation and celebrations.

Have a recurring discussion about how the employee and his/her family are preparing for the holidays. Be interested in the details of their holiday prep and encourage them to sign off early and use the time to do things to build their holiday energy and spirit. By your interest and support, you encourage them to develop a new sense of work and holiday balance.

Share how you are creating time and space for celebration and holidays in your WFH approach. Seeing you doing and living the things you are guiding others to do, helps employees see that you are serious, and it gives them ideas in how to make this happen. Remember, this is new for most everyone. New things take time to try, adopt and embrace. Be a role model and employees will migrate faster to new behaviors.

Your employees will likely need a little direction in how to shift from WFH to CFH (celebrate from home). So many of the WFH employees have gotten into a productive routine and shifting it once again, even for something like the holidays, can be a challenge. Be there to guide, support and encourage your teams to get into the holiday mood, even if they don’t have the normal workplace holiday events. Not only will your employees have a better holiday, but they will come back to work recharged, energized and ready to respond to the next round of changes that now define how our workplace and world seem to move.

-Jessica Langlais

Human Resources Director

There was a time when work would slow down so the holiday season could gear up. The regular workday gave way to office parties, vacation time and a more relaxed and congenial pace, with more impromptu employee gatherings. Spending more personal and relaxed time in the workplace around the holidays does wonders for employees’ sense of team and organization inclusion.

For many organizations, that is now a thing of the past. But the benefits of shifting from work to celebration are significant and are part of how an organization unites itself to stay energized and get ready for the start of a new year. Since celebrating is important and its approach will be different this year, many employees will need help recreating the office celebration feelings in their WFH situations. This will require managers to help create the shift to holiday thinking, especially because employees are remote.

Here are 4 ideas to consider and try.

1. **Help employees create a gradual work slowdown as the holidays approach.** Encourage employees to sign off earlier each day as the holiday approaches. Some organizations gave their employees a free vacation day to take care of the holiday preparation or to just step into the holidays in a less rushed and stressed way. Help them decide how to use that time to celebrate with other company employees or with their families. Many employees have actually worked more and longer in the pandemic. Getting them to shift out of work mode in favor or holiday and celebration mode may take some consistent guidance.

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A little about Olivier...
I am the drummer in a couple of bands (to be able to cover multiple styles of music and situations) but I have a main one that I consider THE band, with which I spend most of my time gigging - 41North!

We define ourselves as follows: "41 North is a Northern Virginia-based Blues/Rock band hailing from Cleveland, OH that can go from a classic power trio to a full band with horns and keys." The band happens to be fronted by a Navy, an Air Force and a Fairfax County Police Detective veterans. We have played any events supporting veterans, first responders, Fairfax County Police...

We are big fans of driving Rock and Blues songs and the proverbial "groove" that makes people dance and sing is what gets us as repeat acts in most venues where we regularly play.

We interpret covers of our favorite artists: JJ Grey, Albert Castiglia, Govt. Mule, John Mayer, Eric Clapton, Otis Redding, Bill Withers and many more. Personally, I have always been a music lover; yet, since graduating college where I was a track athlete, I could not find anything that would get me involved that much. My bass player brother, who knew since we were kids that I always loved the drums, suggested I started... Once, when he visited from San Diego, he actually packed an electronic drum set for me and that was it. If he made that much an effort to get me going, I had to do it. Then bought a drum set, which turned into six sets now and a personal recording studio, took lessons, joined a band... attended jam sessions, met people, and never looked back.

I now love to claim that I am attending University of YouTube to work on my PhD in drumming. I am a huge lover of Jazz, and still can't play it. It is a great goal that I will probably never get to.

Tell us one more thing we don't know about you...
This passion has led me today to converting my music earnings into purchases of used music equipment that I shipped to Senegal (where I am originally from) to provide quality gear to aspiring musicians.

What do you do at AOI?
As a Senior Program Manager at AOI, I have been involved with various business development pursuits including two of our newest engagements within DHS at ICE and TSA. I am currently working to get both of those projects transitioned in so that we can start making an impact at two new clients!

Best part of your job?
The best part of my job is getting to interact with our clients and help others grow their careers.

Favorite non-work activity?
When I'm not at work, I can usually be found working out, eating delicious food, or more than likely playing some sort of sword fight or superhero adventure with my three-year-old son.

Dream Vacation?
I've always wanted to go to Tahiti and stay in an over water bungalow and just do nothing for a few weeks. Although right now, I would be happy going just about anywhere!

I'm looking forward to?
I'm looking forward to the pandemic ending and going back out to restaurants, traveling, and of course finally getting to meet my new AOI colleagues in person!

Meet the Manager
Jennifer Starkey
Sr. Program Manager

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Employee Spotlight
Olivier Boissy

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Who We Are: The Integration Testing and DevOps (IT&D) program supports DHS USCIS (Customs and Immigration services), providing independent testing and validation services to the organization. USCIS OIT gone through a period of rapid growth and evolution, making changes that include the adoption of the Agile framework, adoption of public cloud services such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud Platform, IBM Cloud and other public cloud service providers for its development, testing, and production of various mission critical systems. Specific to IT&D, we're working to automate testing wherever possible.

IT&D works to perform Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) for USCIS OIT applications via the following testing areas - Independent Integration Testing, Automated Testing, Interoperability Testing, Laboratory Operations and Performance Testing. The work performed by this team supports the integrity and reliability of mission critical custom and immigration services.

How We Have Fun: Our team of 22 people brings a diverse set of skills and interests to the team. This is a group that enjoys the outdoors (hiking, hunting, running, daily walks) as well as a range of indoor activity. Our team members have interests that range from being a dedicated “foodie”, to being avid readers, gamers, consumers of Netflix and Hulu, even wine lovers. That said, we have several team members with small children, and they shared that their favorite hobby is “peace and quiet”.

This is a team that does AOI proud by being a trusted partner to our customer, delivering value and working long hours to get the work done correctly.