

by Cindy Stewart

Meet Nancy

I'd like to introduce you to my friend Nancy. She's married and has two teenage kids. She's a product developer for an ingredients firm. Nancy received a bachelor's degree and master's degree in food science from a top university.

Nancy is 45 years old, has been working in the profession for 20 years, and has been a member of IFT for 25. She plans to retire at 65 and is ambitious and optimistic about the next 20 years of her career. She works in a matrixed organization, and even though she has one manager, it feels like she has six. Meanwhile, she has seven direct reports, most of whom are new professionals.

Nancy has four major goals in 2018.

First, she'd like to get a promotion. She's taken on a lot more responsibility and has never stopped her continuous learning journey. In lieu of a promotion, she's also open to (and actively looking for) advancement opportunities at other companies.

Second, she'd like a vacation—preferably to Hawaii, and without her kids—where she would like to read an entire book for enjoyment and learn to parasail. She's feeling burned out. After all, she's managing up, managing down, mentoring, coaching, delivering on competing priorities, and never misses a deadline.

Third, she'd like to retain five of her seven direct reports,

who she knows are all anxious for advancement. She's worried about finding qualified and work-ready replacements for any that might leave (and the two she may have to let go).

Lastly, Nancy would like to have time to pursue her

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Certified Food Scientist (CFS) certification. She'd like to demonstrate that, 20 years post-education, she's still deeply committed to staying current on the state of food science and brings a multi-disciplinary skill set to her role.

Nancy goes to about half of her local IFT Section meetings, which compete for her time with her kids' activities and the work she often has to take home at night. Her participation in the Carbohydrates Division connects her to peers across the globe who she calls upon for advice all the time. Meanwhile, budgets ebb and flow, and she only gets approved to attend the IFT Annual Event approximately every other year. When she does, it's a whirlwind of getting to technical sessions, visiting both suppliers' and competitors' booths, customer meetings with her counterparts in sales, and catching up with old friends.

Nancy has to consume a lot of information to feel like she's staying on top of her game. She reads some of the articles in

Food Technology magazine each month, but she has also started reading *Harvard Business Review* because of her evolving responsibilities and career goals. She likes short articles that get to the point. She wants to be the most informed person

in the room. She also insists on quality time with her kids, the occasional date night with her husband, and getting to the gym a few mornings a week.

Nancy is busy. Her headspace is filled with scientific knowledge she has to draw upon daily, product trends and ideas, the concerns of her team, the demands of her manager, the performance of her products, the needs of her kids, her aging parents, her marriage, her health and nutrition, and her friends.

Nancy is many of us. She's also none of us. Nancy is one of four personas developed through extensive research conducted by IFT. We're utilizing this approach to better understand our members—to better empathize and better serve them by putting faces, names, and personalities around clusters of 17,000 unique individuals—a common customer engagement practice. And while these personas mostly exist behind-the-scenes at IFT, they serve as guiding

lights for how we communicate to IFT members. I introduce you to Nancy not because she's more or less important than the personas of Henry, Sarah, or Ken, but to share with you the very human heart of IFT's mission.

IFT's mission is to advance the science of food and its application across the global food system. We have 17,000 ways to actually achieve this mission: via Nancy and each of you. This is how it works. We help Nancy pursue her goals by being a thoughtful, responsive partner throughout her career and professional life, with its ups and downs. And Nancy carries forward the mission by contributing to the profession, to the global food system, to science, to her peers and future leaders, and by giving back to IFT.

Nancy is as real as any of us. Knowing her, knowing you, and serving you is how we achieve our mission. So, to Nancy and to each of you: we hear you, we know you, we're with you, we support you, and we thank you. **FT**



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