AVS Recognition for Excellence in Leadership Presented to Vincent Smentkowski

The AVS Membership Committee is recognizing Vincent Smentkowski, GE Global Research, for Excellence in Leadership. The AVS seeks to recognize individuals who not only excel in science and/or engineering, but who also, through mentoring, have enhanced the careers of future generations who might not otherwise have considered or had access to opportunities in science, engineering, and technology. Their leadership in the effort to develop fully the world's human resources is critical to the best scientific and engineering progress. Recipients of this honor will have their profile displayed on the AVS Website, featured in this Newsletter and will receive a certificate of recognition. **Click here for eligibility & nominations criteria**.

Q: Describe a typical day in your life.
A: I get up before 5:30 a.m. and help our youngest daughter (who just turned 11) get ready for school. I am at GE-GRC before 7:00 a.m. At GE, most of my time is spent performing surface analysis of materials; you name it, I have probably analyzed it. I recently inherited an ALD apparatus, so I am now depositing conformal films and marketing this capability. I mentor a number of researchers (both at Niskayuna NY and our global sites). Many colleagues come to me for input/guidance on their research or to find out which technique they should use to address their question. After work, I am typically at one of the local ice arena's as both of our daughters are competitive figure skaters. Following dinner, we help our daughters with their homework. After our daughters go to bed, I typically work remotely from home both running instruments remotely and writing reports.

Q: What are your leisurely interests and activities?
A: Spending time with my family, relaxing by the pool and/or hot tub, vacationing in St. Maarten. I enjoy designing and building "custom" woodwork. I also sharpen figure skate blades and provide guidance to parents who's children are entering into the sport of figure skating (I am the past president of the Albany Figure Skating Club).

Q: Choose one word you feel explains you best.
A: Passionate.

Q: What do you feel you are best known for?
A: Finding unique ways to solve difficult problems. Thinking outside of the box and/or trying things others say are impossible or too complicated.

Q: What is your favorite part of your job?
A: Building teams (including external researchers) to solve real world problems.

Q: Is there a quote you live by or that inspires you, if so what is it?
A: "A good chemist has fun at his work. He doesn't work, he plays. Oh, it's serious play, but still it's a pleasure to do. You don't feel like your're being put upon to go to work."
"Do the stuff that's fun. If it isn't fun for you, then don't be a chemist."
Quotes from the late Dr. C.S. Marvel which were published in *C&E News* during 1988-1989.

Q: Who has encouraged you throughout your career and/or life? Inspired you?
A: All of my colleagues, friends, and family.

Q: How did you become affiliated with AVS?
A: I obtained my Ph.D. working with Professor John T. Yates, Jr. I spent a lot of time reading *JVST* articles (remember, this was the 1990's, so printed copies not online), submitting articles to *JVST,* participating in local chapter meetings, and hearing about the Society from John, visiting scientists, post-docs, etc. My first talk at AVS was based on my Post-Doctoral research which was performed at Argonne National Labs. The talk "A Novel Reflectron Time Of Flight Analyzer For Surface Analysis Using Secondary Ion Mass Spectroscopy And Mass Spectroscopy Of Recoiled Ions" was presented on October 16, 1996, at the 43rd International Meeting of the American Vacuum Society which took place in Philadelphia PA. The room was packed and a press release "Novel TOF Technology for Surface Analysis Unveiled" written by Mary Fitzpatrick was published in *R&D Show Daily* (Philadelphia PA), October 14-18, 1996, p. 8. I have attended the annual Symposium and Exhibition every year since this meeting! Early in my career, I realized that a unique benefit of the AVS symposium is the diversity in research topics provided by the divisions and groups. Regardless of the research I was performing, I was able to attend the same symposium and obtain honest, unbiased, feedback on ideas.

Q: What has been your paramount experience with AVS?
A: Serving as the Program Chair for the AVS 61st International Symposium and Exhibition where I worked with my Co-Chair Anthony Muscat, the AVS Staff, and the full Program Committee to assemble an exceptional symposium and implemented the AVS Ambassador program.

Q: What is the next big step in your career you plan on tackling?
A: A benefit of working in industry is solving real world problems to have better products to make society better. A disadvantage is not being able to talk about much of what we do. Right now, I can not disclose the research I am currently performing. Hopefully, I will be able to share bits and pieces in a few years

Q: If you could leave one piece of advice for our future generations, whether it is science related or not, what would it be?
A: Think outside the box. Build the strongest team(s) you can by leveraging expertise of colleagues. Have fun with everything you do!