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The B&O Railroad Museum: Getting Back on Track (B)

When the sun rose on the sunken roof of the B&O Railroad Museum, Courtney Wilson immediately called Stefanie Fay, his trusted director of development and sponsorship programs. As she recalled, she sprang into action:

The first thing I did was change the main phone number on the website to my home phone number. I needed to make sure people were going to be able to get through to us.ⁱ

As Fay had anticipated, her home phone soon began to ring off the hook. She fielded calls from news stations ranging from local TV channels to CNN. She made arrangements with each station for interviews, which Wilson conducted from the museum's parking lot. When the news broke, Fay began to receive calls from people and organizations who wanted to provide financial assistance to the museum. She responded by calling a bank to establish the "Roundhouse Restoration Fund" and placed a link on the museum's website to facilitate contributions.

Wilson and Fay also began receiving calls from public insurance adjustment companies that wanted to handle the museum's claim. Hiring a public adjustment firm for such a large claim would have been the conventional approach to such a situation. Fay felt she could handle the claim herself. Wilson explained:

Stefanie had her hardhat on and we were all freezing to death in the office and she came to me and she said, "Court, I want you to let me have this job. I can do it." And knowing how capable she was, I said, "Okay." I knew she could do it.

Staff reactions to the collapse varied. Most staff were initially concerned about their jobs, and although Wilson assured staff members of their employment, he knew that the eventual fate of the museum operations and options for reconstruction would be determined by the extent of the insurance coverage.

The First Week

A few days later, Wilson convened the museum's board to determine the future of the museum. He had learned that the museum possessed business interruption insurance that would cover operating costs and ancillary expenses for one year. This would provide enough money to continue paying the staff.

ⁱ All quoted material in this case was gathered by Maria Farkas and Marlys Christianson in interviews conducted with the B&O Railroad Museum staff in October 2006