

Membership Means Networking

By Raymond Mirizzi

With the ever-growing pains of providing facilities services with continually reduced financial resources, one could easily ask, “Why get involved with membership in an association, when that only requires more time and resources?” To understand the need for this valuable tool, you must first realize that it is the people who make a business successful. Integrity, knowledge, professionalism, and networking are some basic ingredients for successful employees—and involvement with a professional membership association can be key to their success.

I GET IT

I get it. I have been in facilities-related work for over 40 years.

During my short tenure of just over four years at my current position, resources have been reduced twice, to a total of nearly \$1 million in operating cost reductions. Yes, those kinds of cuts make for difficult decisions and challenging choices—which is the very reason you should be active in an association directly related to facilities services.

In today’s economy you must have a well-trained team who can deliver the very best while operating as effectively and efficiently as possible under extremely lean budgets. APPA provides a place for crucial networking and learning experiences that will help you meet that need.

When I first began my career in facilities services, the stigma of facilities-related jobs was difficult to overcome. The work was necessary, but not looked upon with high regard. The current view that facilities are a critical part of the whole campus operation was not widely held. Energy management was

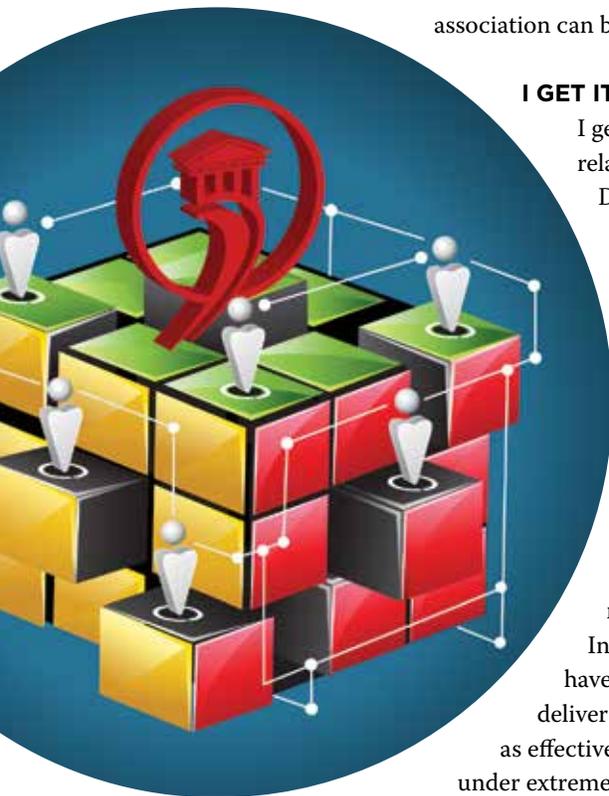
relatively ignored, grounds work was not regarded as skilled labor, and maintenance and custodial positions were rarely seen as professional career choices.

However, I have experienced a phenomenal paradigm shift over the past 40 years. For example, energy management is now viewed as being so important that positions have been developed to focus on that alone. The exterior of a campus has been recognized as having a large impact on recruitment and retention, and building conditions are now seen as a critical element of providing safe and comfortable learning environments for students. Administrators now understand how their decisions impact facilities services, and there is more focus on capital renewal needs than ever before.

IT’S NO COINCIDENCE

I am convinced that these changes are not accidental, but have come about by facilities-related personnel interacting with each other through APPA and bringing about opportunities for sharing, learning, and growing together. APPA’s continual efforts to convince educational leaders of the importance of facilities services have affected every aspect of the educational arena. These efforts have generated a new level of respect, integrity, and professionalism for the industry. So much so that many universities now issue degrees in the field of facilities management, thereby supporting what is now a recognized and respected career.

Institutional leaders today have realized that maintaining their buildings’ structural integrity is crucial, and that maintaining an acceptable FCI (facilities condition index) is critical in keeping operational and replacement costs from climbing into the millions of dollars. There is a need for highly skilled people who know how to maintain both private and public properties. APPA is unique in its ability to provide networking and training opportunities directly related to facilities services for educational institutions through workshops, conferences, materials, and friendship development—all provided by the



people who are directly engaged through its membership. APPA membership is a sound investment and should have a placeholder in facilities operating budgets today.

THE PERSONAL BENEFITS

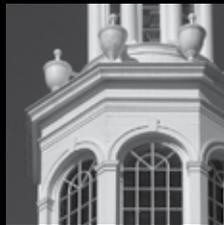
On a personal level, APPA has had positive impact on my career in numerous ways. I was fortunate that the institutions I have been associated with understand the value of being actively involved with APPA. I have attended training workshops and acquired both the EFP and the CEFP credentials, which have had a direct impact on my career. I have had the chance to interact with some of the “best of the best” in the facilities industry. My education, experience, and knowledge, along with APPA’s credentialing programs, earned me the respect, integrity, and professionalism I needed to propel my career forward, and provided career opportunities for me to embrace. Not only have I experienced a paradigm shift thanks to APPA’s efforts, but I have been involved in facilities work long enough to see the same positive

changes APPA brought to my life affect the facilities industry as a whole.

APPA is a worthwhile investment for any educational institution and for its most valuable resource: its people. The other choice is not to invest, which makes it more difficult to achieve the excellence you need in today’s business climate. There is an old aphorism that’s right-on today: “Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well.”

Can you (or your institution) afford to settle with just being good enough in today’s competitive environment? I challenge you not only to become an APPA member—but to become an engaged APPA member—because that is when the real benefits of membership are realized. ☺

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