

The Benefits of Membership



How many times have you been denied entry somewhere or deprived of information because you were not a member of some sort of an organization? How many times have you had to pay more money for something because as a nonmember you were deemed ineligible for the member's benefits?

In today's world, it happens a lot. The perks of being a member abound, whether it be access to a wholesale retail outlet, exposure to unbelievable discounts or access to valuable information. I cannot tell you how many times I have been face-to-face with the cashier at the grocery store, separated by a huge pile of groceries, only to feel complete anguish and discouragement when I realize I could have saved more than \$30 on my purchase if only I had one of those "preferred customer" cards.

It doesn't stop with your personal life either; memberships can be valuable to your business as well. As a water treatment professional—whether you are a dealer, manufacturer, supplier or engineer—there are always ways to improve your business. I think one of the simplest ways to do so is often overlooked: industry association memberships.

Associations exist for practically every industry. The *Encyclopedia of Associations*, published by Gale Research Co., lists more than 100,000 national and international nonprofit organizations. From the American Association of Retired Persons to the Zionist Organization of America, there is a group out there for almost any common interest. With so many groups giving individuals the opportunity to gather and share common interests with one another, I can't help but wonder why more professionals do not take advantage of these resources.

In the water treatment industry, there are several groups and associations that can be beneficial to those who join. These groups allow professionals to share knowledge and educate one another on current key issues and developments. In my opinion, association members often seem to have the upper hand because they are able to network and share information with their fellow members. I think that one of the best ways to learn about something is to share experiences with peers who have been in similar situations.

Associations are an excellent resource for education, and members have access to key industry experts. Many also offer training courses and certification testing, which can give your business and products credibility within the industry. If you need dental work or medication, would you want to use items that are approved by the American Dental Association or those that are not? The recent Chinese toothpaste recall comes to my mind.

In a world that is so influenced by government regulations, associations can not only provide a voice for the industry at the legislative level but also represent members' positions on issues that can affect their business. For many small businesses, it could be intimidating and discouraging to take a stand against legislative issues, but that is where the association can help—when one voice is not loud enough, a large group can often be heard.

If you are not a member already, I would like to encourage you to look into joining a national or regional association. An association is like a best friend who will let you in to all of the industry hot spots, give you all of the valuable information you need to better yourself or your business and have your back if you need support.

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coming up next month

The November issue of *Water Quality Products* will feature groundwater, membrane filtration, testing, pumps, WQA Forum, IOA Column and dealer sales solutions. Be sure to visit our website at www.wqpmag.com for daily industry news updates.

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