

Water dealers gain knowledge and support through industry associations

Jump in... the Water's Fine

By Jerry Horner

Local water quality associations afford significant opportunities to grow the water improvement industry one person at a time. Strengthening water-conditioning businesses is beneficial for every participant and consumers interested in water quality. A single water treatment dealer may find it difficult to battle a governmental behemoth over the rights to install certain water improvement devices. In nature, large packs of small animals will band together for protection against the larger, stronger, voracious carnivore.



Think back to your school days and remember that it was the big (usually insecure) ruffian that always took advantage of the smaller kids. Fast-forward and you will find that little has changed. Governmental agencies often find water conditioning equipment to be an easy target, or "low-hanging fruit," that is vulnerable to even a small, usually sneak attack.

Recently, there has been a myriad of proposed and actual restrictions to automatic softeners, portable exchange softeners, drinking water systems and many other related products. The main purpose of these restrictions may be to meet certain technical mandates, and subjecting particular items to arbitrary legislation can get them one step closer to their goal. Like so many public agencies, their concern is likely not to be what is best for the public or society at large. Thus, it is our right and responsibility to fight for what is best for our businesses, families and community.

Stay Informed

Local water quality associations can provide a wide range of educational opportunities. Simply being a member and getting involved keeps you up to date with the latest industry news. Websites maintained by many associations provide pertinent, detailed

consumer and dealer water treatment information. Some even offer professional certification programs that can give you that needed credibility edge. Technical support programs take advantage of a vast network of member experience and diversity to help answer questions and allay consumer concerns.

The ultimate educational tool emanating from local water quality associations may be the annual convention and tradeshow. Traditionally, you will find a plethora of educational opportunities waiting around every corner. Start with the various seminars that will cover subjects that can stimulate business growth and expand product horizons. The well-informed professionals conducting these training seminars are great resources, helping you discover innovative ways to expand your water conditioning sales. You may find information that is specific to your geographic area, such as the most efficient way to remove arsenic. You can attend technical, sales, installation and many other topic-rich forums. Exit the seminars and you will find that the educational opportunities have only just begun.

The annual or general session gathering, task force conferences and roundtables provide excellent opportunities to gather and share mutually beneficial information. Peek into the tradeshow venue and you may discover your favorite technical resource. The tradeshow floor is the perfect place to sit down and spend quality time gaining the educational edge that can snowball into an enhanced or new area of business. Take advantage of this opportunity as there is usually plenty of time, and technical sages enjoy discussing their areas of expertise with genuinely interested colleagues.

Industry Influence

Typically, you will find regional water quality associations engaged with local governmental and water agencies. They work with these agencies to help create sensible policies that encourage efficiency, technical advances and protection of the environment. Taking part in these discussions ensures that the water conditioning industry's interests are addressed and given appropriate consideration.

When restrictions are proposed or placed on water conditioning equipment, it is usually a local dealer that initiates the contact with one of the associations. Using their limited yet significant resources, an association of dealers, vendors and like-minded professionals can intervene in the regulatory process. It can often be as simple as making contact and educating the specific governmental agency.

In extreme cases, the regional association will have the needed influence to involve the national Water Quality Association. Periodically, a newsletter may be used to keep members apprised of current events and legislative challenges. The legislative support and proactive action provided by local associations can ensure at least proportional attention and make a huge difference in how our industry is perceived.

Get involved and find the many resources and programs available to expand your business. Water improvement associations are actively involved in promoting the use of water conditioning equipment. Some offer consumer water testing and technical assistance services or will refer the inquiries to members. Member-finder services direct consumers to professionals who have earned an extra degree of credibility and may display the association's logo with pride.

The positive public relations generated by local associations may originate from the pledge to adhere to a published code of ethics. Consumers are drawn to companies and organizations that encourage professional commitments that include honesty and integrity. Direct access to a water-conditioning library, literature, DVDs and other related resources are typically available through these associations. These activities and resources help to stimulate the demand for water improvement equipment and educate end-users about the capabilities and benefits of our products.

Strength in Numbers

Local water quality associations act as a center point for marketing, sales and legislative and educational resources. Consumer demand and awareness are fostered through many aspects, not the least of which is the open format available to the public. By joining together, water improvement professionals gain credibility

and opportunities not attainable by a single company.

The strength in numbers is similar to a rope that is made of many filaments that are secured together to construct a hearty, vibrant cord. Jump in and add your voice until all of us together create a crescendo that is heard throughout our spheres of influence. *wqp*

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