

Networking Upgrade



In this issue of *Water Quality Products*, you will find an abundance of tips and ideas for networking of all kinds: from lead exchange groups and community service groups ("A Community Affair," page 16) to social media etiquette and hosting "TweetUps" to bring connections made online into live gatherings ("Today's Successful Networking," page 14).

The upfront benefits of improving your networking skills are obvious: more leads, more sales and more diverse business. Better networking in both traditional and online channels will also result in some unexpected incidental benefits, however, such as more credibility in the regulatory realm.

It is impossible to know what is coming down the regulatory pipeline, although states like California often give us a hint of what to expect in the future. No matter what your viewpoint on specific regulatory matters—if you have a good networking track record, your voice is heard with more clarity and clout in the discussions and debate. Again, California provides us with a recent example.

Members of the Pacific Water Quality Assn. (PWQA) recently toured the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) municipal water district recycled water production facility in Chino, Calif. During the visit, PWQA members listened to a presentation discussing salinity management. Twelve PWQA members also had the opportunity to discuss concerns with the IEUA team regarding the proposed ban on sales of new water softeners within the IEUA water district.

There were misconceptions among the technical staff of the IEUA regarding the need and benefits of softeners and softened water. PWQA had the opportunity to explain misconceptions and to further explain results of softened water. In addition, the subject of water softening versus water conditioning and product alternatives was discussed. Martha Davis, executive manager of policy development for the IEUA, brought up the current study on the Evaluation of Alternatives to Domestic Ion Exchange Softeners conducted by Arizona State University and HDR Engineering, which the IEUA is tracking. Making an extra effort to connect has resulted in a much greater probability of future regulations that are effective and beneficial for both the IEUA and the water industry in the region.

Similarly, I recently received a letter from a portable exchange dealer in California who asserted that dealing with regulatory issues shouldn't turn into a battle of water industry versus regulations. Regulations in California have been good for his business and others like him—a fact that is rarely reported, he pointed out. If you have an "us versus them" mentality about other business owners in your community or those involved in regulatory action, you aren't doing yourself any favors. Instead, use resources like community groups to turn those people into resources. Learning how others are reacting to regulations and uniting with shared goals surely results in a better outcome than demonizing regulatory actions and those who support them. Making networking a priority instead of alienating the people who could work together with you and the rest of the industry enables productive change that is good for citizens, the environment and your business.

Rebecca Wilhelm

Rebecca Wilhelm, managing editor
bwilhelm@sgcmail.com

coming up next month

- Equipment Rentals
- Small Systems
- Pumps
- Membranes
- Groundwater
- WQA Sales Column
- Sales Column
- IOA Column

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Scranton Gillette Communications, Inc.
3030 W. Salt Creek Ln., #201, Arlington Heights, IL 60005-5025
tel: 847.391.1000 • fax: 847.390.0408

editorial staff

wqpeditor@sgcmail.com

Editorial Director Neda Simeonova

Managing Editor Rebecca Wilhelm

Associate Editor Caitlin Cunningham

Associate Editor Elizabeth Lisican

Graphic Designer Dan Soltis

advertising & sales

Integrated Media Consultant Don Heidkamp
dheidkamp@sgcmail.com 847.391.1047

Regional Sales Manager Michael Mansour
mmansour@sgcmail.com 480.941.0510, ext.16

Classified Ad Sales Manager Donna Aly
daly@sgcmail.com 480.941.0510, ext.13

Reprint Coordinator Adrienne Miller
amiller@sgcmail.com 847.391.1036

List Rental Contact John Ganis
914.368.1024

Advertising Manager Shirley Marcinko
smarcinko@sgcmail.com 847.391.1028

management

Vice President/Publisher Dennis Martyka
dmartyka@sgcmail.com

VP Custom Publishing & Creative Services Diane Vojcanin
dvojcanin@sgcmail.com

VP Events Harry Urban
hurban@sgcmail.com

VP Information Technology Joel Hughes
jhughes@sgcmail.com

Director of Circulation Mike Serino
mserino@sgcmail.com

Director of Creative Services & Promotions Sandi Stevenson
sstevenson@sgcmail.com

Promotions Manager Zarina Majid
zmajid@sgcmail.com

Custom Media Manager Adam Terese
aterese@sgcmail.com

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