

You Are Your Own Super Power

By Jim Gauntt, RTA Executive Director

There is an old adage, “You only get out of an association what you put into it.” Well, that’s not entirely true.

Associations work—period. They work every day and for every member. They promote their industry; solve unseen problems; lobby for changes; maintain economic data, forecasting models and a dynamic website; publish news; advocate for cooperation and understanding; create meaningful educational events.

The list grows longer each year. And, the work goes on regardless of whether every member recognizes the effort, does anything to help, or shows up one single time to a committee meeting, seminar or conference. All members reap the benefits of the work of those members who show up.

There is a grain of wisdom in that old adage. And, as our president, Bill Behan, pointed out so eloquently in his note to our 100th Anniversary Conference attendees recently (reprinted on page 19), every member possesses a unique super power.

It’s the power to make a difference, to influence and to serve others—yes, even working with competitors who will also share in the industry’s successes.

There’s yet another thing those who wield that power have that others don’t. They do get more out of the association than others.

There’s certainly the satisfaction of knowing how their service and commitment is selfless in helping the industry achieve its goals. It’s a good feeling to be able to say, “I did something that makes our industry better or more influential. I did make a difference.”

Setting altruism aside, though, that’s not the biggest benefit.

The single-most important thing members gain is not available to those who remain on the sidelines. It’s not stature in the industry or a plaque for years of service. These hero-members personally take the rudder and steer a course that has the power to galvanize an entire industry.

The best RTA example of this hails back 35 years to 1984 when the late Gerry Reynolds, by sheer force of will, helped corral a fragmented group of highly competitive and distrustful companies into

a like-minded group of individuals who developed a spirit of mutual cooperation and support for the greater needs of the industry as a whole. And, in doing so, they forged RTA’s anchor—the 2-cents-per-tie dues program.

We can herald the fact that Gerry and those who supported the new program showed up. They rolled up their sleeves. They put on their “industry-first” hat and did the hard work that changed the course of history for RTA and the tie industry. Without them, who knows what would have happened and where we would all be right now?

So, as we enter into another transformational period in RTA’s history, our next 100 years, I ask a simple question: What will *you* do to make an impact on your association and your industry?

There have been and are now countless numbers who play vital roles in our ongoing

industry success story and assist in RTA’s efforts to remain on the cutting edge of advocacy for the advancement of the wood tie. In 2018, wood ties held 98 percent of the market of new ties installed and have been averaging 95+ percent for several years now (See page 6, table 2). Could there be any dispute of what this industry and you can accomplish when we unite under the RTA banner?

YOU empower us. You are the RTA team. Your expertise and experience open the door to new possibilities for the entire industry.

The industry needs you. RTA needs you. You can and do make a difference as you participate and carry this mutual success story into the future.

After all, we couldn’t possibly be celebrating our centennial (WOW! 100 years in service to the wood tie industry.) if it weren’t for members just like you, who stand up and say, “I will help. I will make a difference.” ■

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