



nerej

By Rovert Baldwin - Welcome to the new RIBA

September 08, 2011 - Rhode Island

Our membership drive is in high gear, and that includes not only recruiting more candidates for membership but also getting current members to understand and use the full menu of benefits they are entitled to. And many members don't realize the full "bang" they can get for their buck.

RIBA exists to strengthen the residential construction industry in Rhode Island and to support those who work in that industry. I'm sure that all members know about our insurance programs, notably health insurance plans and our endorsed workers' compensation program with the Renaissance Group.

People both inside and outside RIBA know our award-winning monthly magazine, The R.I. Builder Report, the voice of our association and the source for the news you need to keep yourself up to speed on matters that affect your business. Another very visible service is our annual membership directory and buyer's guide, distributed at our Home Show each spring, and in which each member gets a free listing.

There is, however, a long list of less visible services that can help your business in practical, everyday ways.

When you join RIBA, you also become a member of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), a powerful organization that lobbies for our industry in Congress and among the federal regulatory agencies. NAHB also provides education and professional certifications, legal and business advice, and price discounts through its "Member Advantage" program. For example: Need a new truck? Members can get \$500 off the purchase or lease of most new GM vehicles through Member Advantage.

From job estimating and accounting software to OSHA compliance and how to manage employees, RIBA offers classes and seminars to boost your business and to help you comply with the Rhode Island Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board's continuing-education requirements.

RIBA provides a number of ways for you to showcase your products or services to other members and the public. Along with advertising opportunities in The R.I. Builder Report and the membership directory & buyer's guide, members get free listings on www.ribuilders.org.

Then there's the Home Show, our biggest event of the year, attracting tens of thousands of visitors to the R.I. Convention Center every spring. This is a golden opportunity for members to showcase their products and services to a serious audience of homeowners. (Visit www.ribahomeshow.com for details.)

And there's much more. Get your construction documents from RIBA, including purchase and sales agreements, building and remodeling contracts, job estimate and cost sheets, walk-through forms, lead-paint acknowledgments, leases, rental applications, and International Residential Code books. RIBA staff members are available to notarize documents for members free of charge, and the association offers meeting rooms to member companies for industry-related business meetings at a

reduced fee.

As a member, you have access to building-permit statistics for current and prior years. And you can use RIBA's Identity Program and get decals for your truck, car or office, and logo artwork for your stationery, ads, signs, t-shirts, etc. All members receive a membership certificate suitable for framing.

RIBA is here to help make your business more profitable. Your ideas for new products and services are always welcome. Take advantage of the many resources available to you as a member of RIBA, and tell your non-member subs, suppliers and other contractors about it too!

Speaking of vital member services you don't see, RIBA represents you and your business interests at the state house. You might not know that RIBA's leaders, staff, lobbyists, and many members work very hard before, during and after each General Assembly session to protect you from legislation that can harm our industry and your business. You might not notice that we do this, but you sure would notice it if we didn't.

You can thank RIBA that your taxes aren't higher and the regulations even more burdensome.

As the 2012 session of the General Assembly approaches, watch RIBA be proactive instead of reactive on state and industry issues. We'll be forging solutions, not "putting out fires."

Among the top legislative issues we'll be tackling is the outrageous increase in local motor vehicle taxes, something that hits you right in the wallet every year. One member showed me the tax bill on his two year-old vehicle, valued at more than what he paid for it! Even now, several members of our board of directors are working with lawmakers to remedy this situation.

To do all this, RIBA needs your support. Renew your own membership and get others to join. The admission requirements are tough, but so much the better: It proves that you and your fellow members are the best!

As for the association itself, the future is bright, especially with our new executive director, John Marcantonio, and his many years of marketing experience. At the September board of directors meeting, we will adopt a new business plan for RIBA that will chart our course for the next few years.

As RIBA helps lead our industry to a brighter and more prosperous future, be part of it!

Robert Baldwin is president of R.B. Homes, Inc., Lincoln and is president of Rhode Island Builders Assn.