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President's message: Looking forward to a positive period of growth for RIBA

November 08, 2012 - Rhode Island

It was a great turnout at the annual meeting, with members supporting the election of this year's leaders for the Rhode Island Builders Association. Once again, I thank everyone who worked so hard this past year to position RIBA for what I believe is going to be a great period of growth and positive image.

My dream:

That the Rhode Island Builders Association will grow to 5,000 members.

That a large percentage of our membership will be from the "Youth Corps." By definition, from my perspective, that is anyone under 45 years old. Ouch.

That RIBA becomes to the building industry what Sloan Kettering and the Lahey Clinic are to medicine.

That RIBA becomes the model association for all National Association of Home Builders affiliates.

That if any company involved in any aspect of the local building industry wants to be considered for a "Who's Who" place in the industry, they feel that membership in RIBA can help them attain that goal.

That the RIBA brand is recognized by the general public as the leader in promoting the highest standards: in ethics, integrity, education, business practices, member services and in supporting responsible legislation. This legislation would promote balance in the areas of safety, environmental protection, land use and appropriate regulation. The operative word there is "balance." We need to accomplish this mission without driving costs to unaffordable levels, for both homeowners and businesses.

That's my dream. Keep in mind that this is my message, and RIBA needs your broad-based support to make it happen.

So what's the plan?

We grow RIBA. We promote RIBA to the industry as a central source for our collective advocacy. That includes subcontractors, banks, suppliers and local manufacturers of construction products, etc.

We promote to members and non-members alike that RIBA membership is an important and valued part of our business experience. In short, we ask people to join.

We use the RIBA logo on our business documents, on our vehicles, on our promotional material and on our clothing. I can't even fathom the exposure we would get if even half of our members wore "RIBA."

We offer member benefits and services second to none. We make the value of membership so high that it saves members more than the cost of dues! Stay tuned for upcoming education, services and products that will be introduced shortly.

We grow RIBA's image. By being the best organization in the industry, the public will know that our members are exposed to resources that could put them at the "top of their game" in all areas of operating their businesses.

It goes without saying that we are a male-dominated industry. It is encouraging to see more women in the industry, but there is much work to be done to get more women involved. This will continue to be a work in progress.

RIBA needs your help. A relatively small percentage of members are active in RIBA leadership. I have received numerous offers for help, and I want to take those individuals up on those offers. Please get involved!

Choose a committee of particular interest to yourself and become active. The more members who are actively involved, the more the load lightens on everyone, and we will accomplish more.

Random thoughts:

I wonder how much we as members could affect the local and national economy if we buy our materials, supplies, tools, equipment and services locally. If our suppliers and their vendors identified "Made in the USA" or Rhode Island on products, we could easily compare quality and price, then "buy local" as much as possible. How many jobs might that create, with those employed people then putting the money back into the local and national economy?

None of us is perfect. Have you ever written a list of the strengths and weaknesses of you and your company? Have you taken action to strengthen the weaknesses? RIBA may be able to help. Ask for classes or round-table discussions on the topics that can help you most. Most likely, those problems have already been encountered and solved by other members.

RIBA is here to serve you. Let us know what we can do to make your business more successful. What would you like RIBA to offer that can make your life and business more successful (and easier, if possible)?

Finally, being installed as RIBA president was an emotional experience for me. As I mentioned in my remarks at the Annual Meeting, my father was a founding RIBA member and a past secretary. There is a sense of pride in being part of a legacy, which many members of our organization relate to as we follow our fathers (and mothers) into the industry. I think most people, whether consciously or subconsciously, strive to make their parents proud. I will do my best to make all of you proud as well. Once again, I am honored and humbled to be your president. Go RIBA!

Felix Carlone is the president of the Rhode Island Builders Association.

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