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As MBREA president, looking forward to the coming year - by Marcus Johnson

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Marcus Johnson, MBREA

As an appraiser and the incoming MBREA president, I look forward to the coming year. It will be challenging and like any new year, comes with some uncertainty, but also plenty of hope. Come December, I would like to look back and see a clear path of progress with respect to adding new appraisers to the profession, supporting the MBREA's legislative initiatives and getting as many members as possible started in the MBREA's designation process.

As we enter 2017, I think most appraisers in the region experienced greater demand and in many cases, a sharp increase in their workload as sales and refinances increased. Many appraisers report that turnaround times were extended for both commercial and residential jobs and this is a source of frustration for clients as well as appraisers.

We are all aware that the profession is aging and fewer people are becoming appraisers. The licensing requirements and learning curve in this profession discourage potential new entrants and despite legislative initiatives to reduce some of these burdens, waiting for the government to enact a change will not fix this issue in the short term. While it is critical to support those working to make these changes, right now it is appraisers who need to step up and deal with this issue.

I think many appraisers would agree that had they started training someone 1 or 2 years ago, the cost and effort in doing so would be well worth it. The issue is getting over the initial hump and starting the process because the industry needs new, younger appraisers before the shortage becomes so dire that users of our service, specifically banks, increasingly seek out alternatives to appraisers.

The conundrum to taking on trainees is well known. When appraisers are busy, they lack the time to train people; when they are slow, they lack the need. However, this cycle has been in place for as long as I have been in the profession and I think it is time to recognize that the only way forward that can reduce this problem is to commit to taking on a trainee with an eye on the long term benefits.

The costs can be significant in terms of time and money. However, by committing the time up front and working with the trainees to ensure a fair compensation package, I don't think the issue is insurmountable and the costs can be recouped. Long time appraisers need to consider this from several angles. First, there is the obvious benefit of adding an appraiser who can eventually help grow your business. Second, I believe an increase in the number of licensed appraisers will be a benefit to the profession and help replace those who will inevitably exit the profession or reduce their workload over the next 5-10 years. Finally, we need to remind ourselves that we were all trainees at one point. Someone invested resources in our training, albeit under potentially less difficult circumstances that exist today, but made a commitment nonetheless. It is meaningful to give back and now is the time to do it.

When I think back to my training, at first it doesn't seem like it was that much work for those who got me started. However, as I think more about what is involved in training I realize it took a lot of patience and time and I am very grateful for the opportunity. It is time for all of us to first take a look back and appreciate what we received and then take a look forward and start acting with some deliberation so that we can give something back and maintain our profession.

We can continue to bemoan the difficulties and costs associated with the training process, continue to wait for new changes in current training requirements or simply ignore the problem. Instead, I propose that we as a profession look ahead. I urge each established appraiser to take a hard look at this problem and come up with some creative solutions to address it.

Subsidizing the required courses, committing time each day to work with the trainee(s) and figuring out a compensation plan that can work for both the appraiser and trainee may seem painful at first, perhaps even impossible. But this investment will pay off. We can slowly grow the profession or at a minimum stop its declining numbers.

So please, take a moment to strongly consider taking on a trainee. I think by this time next year you, and the person you train, will be glad you did.

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