

It's Not Broken, So Why Change?



Rick Pollock

The headline for this message may seem a bit odd, particularly since this is the time of year when we all make resolutions to change. But, given the global economic uncertainty of recent years, the current signs of stabilization and forecasts for improvement make it easy to say, "Let's stay the course."

Positive results make this approach even more inviting. After all, ASSE is on solid financial footing, our membership is growing, and our products, services and benefits are in demand. Yet, now is not the time to grow complacent. In fact, more than ever, we must be forward thinking. We must continuously scan the current environment in order to proactively update the Society's strategic plans and anticipate business demands, economic trends and our members' professional needs.

A Changed Environment

Recognizing this need, ASSE formed a task force last year to examine the Society's future as well as its governance structure. The Society last reviewed this structure in 1993, which led to changes that were implemented in 1995. Our governance structure has not changed since then, even though the environment in which we operate has evolved immensely. Consider these facts:

- In 1995, 49% of us had unrestricted access to the Internet while 33% had no access. Today, almost all of us have full access.

- In 1995, we largely relied on OSHA regulations or voluntary consensus standards as part of our practice. Today, we must review and be aware of a wide range of global standards.

- In 1995, most professional development was conducted face-to-face. Today, more than 30% is conducted online, and that percentage will continue to grow.

- In 1995, we focused primarily on safety issues and regulatory compliance. Today, sustainability has taken center stage, and our responsibilities have expanded to include security, environment, global management, business strategy and wellness.

- In 1995, our profession focused little on accreditation and credentialing. Today, unqualified practitioners are a

key concern, and we must act to protect our profession.

Times clearly have changed, and so have ASSE members. Consider these facts:

- In the mid-1990s, ASSE's membership was smaller, and members were younger on average, more male and white. Members were more likely to attend chapter meetings and volunteer for service. Employers often paid membership dues, sent members to professional development events and supported volunteer activities. Today, less than 30% of members engage with their local chapters even once per year. In addition, most members now pay their own dues.

- In the mid-1990s, ASSE had only a few divisions. Now called practice specialties, these groups have grown in number and are producing significant content that is expanding our body of knowledge. They also have spawned branches and common interest groups (CIGs). Today, more than 60% of members pay additional dues to belong to a practice specialty or CIG.

- ASSE's competitors in the mid-1990s were U.S.-based SH&E organizations. Today, the Society's competition is global, and it is no longer limited to nonprofit organizations.

The Mandate for Change

All of these facts demonstrate that ASSE membership and the environment in which the Society operates have changed dramatically. To remain relevant and achieve our vision to be a global advocate for SH&E professionals and a premier leader of the profession, ASSE's leadership team also must evolve and adapt as the environment changes in order to ensure that we remain focused on strategy and policy.

It's easy to maintain the status quo, but that is a route we cannot accept. Instead, we must focus on being current, proactive and nimble. Ours is an ever-changing world, and we must be ready, willing *and* able to adapt.

Best wishes for a successful 2013.

Richard A. Pollock, CSP

Now is not the time to grow complacent. In fact, more than ever, we must be forward thinking.

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

Andy Warhol

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or join him on LinkedIn or Facebook. www.asse.org/getconnected.