

Making a Difference in a Changing World



Adapted from a talk presented at Niagara Falls Chapter 29 educational seminar in November 1999.

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IRWA is recognized as a world leader in providing professional development to right-of-way practitioners. Our education program is second to none. However, as time brings change, we must be able to adapt in order to maintain the leading edge standard for the right-of-way industry.

In this "information age," we face tremendous changes on a daily basis. For example:

- We live and work in a multi-cultural environment.
- Formal education has a very short shelf life.
- Every day 100 new scientific papers are published.

- Every 15 minutes, technology makes a breakthrough.

- During one's lifetime, a person can expect to make up to five different career changes.

Change can be overwhelming, especially if we are unprepared to face it.

We've all heard of the little boy who came home from school and said, "Dad, I think I flunked my math test today." Dad says, "Son, that is negative, you must think positive!" To which the little boy replies, "Dad, I'm positive that I flunked my math test today."

With a positive attitude,

we can manage these changes and gain from the experience. What I would like you to think about is how you can deal with these ongoing changes?

Well, I have an answer for you. The door of opportunity awaits you. It is called volunteerism.

Volunteering can be a wonderful experience. A friend of mine once said, "You can give money or give from the heart." With the IRWA we have a lot of opportunities to give from the heart. By doing so, it provides you with an opportunity to grow and helps the

organization at the same time.

Harvey Mackay, who is a prolific author and successful executive, wrote an article entitled, *Volunteerism: You Often Receive More Than You Give*.

I want to discuss this article with you because with volunteering, I believe that it can and does help us in dealing with changing times.

Mackay's Points

1. *Getting active in an organization can help you in areas where you may be weak.*

As mentioned earlier, the IRWA has an excellent educational program. The goal of education is to "expand one's mind." If you want to enhance your knowledge, you can attend IRWA courses and seminars or you could volunteer by being a course or seminar coordinator.

By volunteering as a course or seminar coordinator, you can accomplish four things:

- You will enhance your education skills,
- You will improve your organization skills,
- You will save money since the registration fee is usually waived for the coordinator, and
- Your new knowledge will make you more efficient in handling new challenges.

2. *Because volunteerism almost always includes fundraising, you have an unusual opportunity to hone your selling skills.*

What better way to receive on-the-job training than on someone else's payroll?

By volunteering with the IRWA, it is an opportunity to enhance your selling skills by marketing education courses,

seminars, memberships and other benefits such as networking.

3. *When you do volunteer work, you can learn how to run a meeting, prepare reports, serve on committees, supervise others and a thousand other skills that can help you in your own career. Sometimes, it is impossible to learn these things on the job.*

IRWA has numerous committees and this allows you to work with a team and be active on matters that are of interest to you. IRWA has committees on Asset Management, Environment, Ethics, Membership, Professional Development & Education, Relocation, Surveying, Transportation, Valuation, Liaison, INEC, Pipelines, Utilities, Local public agency and our newest committee which will be formed next year is telecom's. There is also a forum for our younger members called the Young Leadership Council.

As a volunteer, you can develop your leadership skills in a number of ways including being on the local chapter executive, serving as region chair or vice-chair or being on a local, regional or international committee as chair or vice-chair.

4. *Most of the people who sign up for these volunteer chores stay active for decades.*

Here's an opportunity to learn teamwork and have the satisfaction of providing a vital service. You'll make new friends and you'll be able to develop other contacts within the community itself. By being involved with any of the IRWA activities, it will assist you in developing your teamworking skills.

With respect to making

new friends, Faith Popcorn in her book, *Clicking*, talks about new trends that drive business. One of the trends is "clanning." Clanning links us up with others who share our interests, ideas and aspirations. A common interest gives members an immediate rapport. This does happen within IRWA.

With developing contacts, you will be able to establish your own network within the IRWA. The benefits of this type of networking are amazing. A recent example, my employer is in the process of developing its policy on the "disposal of surplus real estate." Through my IRWA contacts, I received five different policies for comparison purposes.

We are in changing times and it can be daunting. The International Right of Way Association can provide you with opportunities to cope with these changes. By volunteering, there is no doubt in my mind that you will benefit from the experience and it will help you in overcoming the daily challenges. ■



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