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STRENGTH IN THE CHAPTER

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Most IRWA members have heard the saying, “Chapters are the lifeblood of the Association.” This is true because chapters represent the most essential segment of IRWA, and are where members have the greatest opportunities to participate in local activities.

Do you regularly attend your chapter events, but have never served on a committee? A healthy chapter depends on the involvement and participation of a variety of members. Getting involved doesn’t mean you need to have specific skills in leadership or communication. However, after serving on a committee or project for a while, you are sure to acquire new skills.

Those who are active in their local chapter have told me that once they volunteer, they receive far more benefits than they ever imagined. Regardless of where you are in your career, chapter involvement gives you another chance to learn, grow and network with your fellow peers.

Chapter Presidents work hard to motivate as many good people as possible and share the work involved with running the chapter. However, it’s sometimes difficult for them to ask for help. That’s why I always encourage members to volunteer – even before being asked. See if you can team up with a seasoned volunteer to

observe what they do and how they do it. If you’re concerned about whether it’s a good fit, see if you can test the waters before making a commitment.

If you notice that your chapter leaders are serving in multiple roles, it’s very likely they are carrying a heavy load and could use some help. Some of them may feel it’s easier to do things themselves, but no one wants to be a one-person show. Stick around after a meeting and find out what areas might need an extra hand.

The most successful chapters challenge their members by offering them new responsibilities. For example, they may ask a longstanding committee chair to serve on a different committee. The transition may be uncomfortable at first, but the chapter will benefit in the long run by having seasoned leaders in a variety of roles. As members move from one committee to another, they develop broad-based skills which not only benefit the chapter, but help ensure the individual becomes more valued by their employer as well.

The strength of our Association rests with those whose actions most directly influence our individual members. Through personal relationships at the chapter level, our members can uncover some invaluable benefits and unique opportunities for professional growth.

LOCAL CHAPTER OPPORTUNITIES

If you have never served on a chapter committee, check out the different opportunities available. Depending on the size of your chapter, here are some of the committees you might consider joining:

- Education
- Membership
- Professional Development
- Nominations/Elections
- Young Professionals
- Local Public Agency
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Pipeline
- Valuation
- Surveying and Engineering
- Environmental
- Asset Management
- Relocation
- Communications and Marketing
- Newsletter

For more information, visit www.irwaonline.org. Under the “About Us” section, click on the Chapters link on the right side and select your local chapter.