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WHY JOIN RCI *and* WHY VOLUNTEER?

Some of you may remember Archie “Grandpappy” Campbell on the TV show “Hee-Haw.” He always told the story about volunteering for service in the Army. He said three of them went together—he and two MPs—and he still had splinters under his fingernails from when they dragged him off of his back porch.

Volunteer organizations such as RCI always face the challenge of promoting membership and developing leadership. While we certainly do not have to deal with any Archie Campbells, emphasizing volunteerism must be at the heart of our future plans. RCI’s success has and will depend on the time, contributions, and energy of its members. Organizations like ours cannot function without volunteers.

Each year, RCI offers an Affiliated Chapter/Region Leadership Development Training Workshop for our region and chapter vice presidents. I have been privileged to participate in this workshop in several capacities; and without exception, every attendee has exhibited a tremendous dedication to RCI and a desire to contribute to its success. The common thread is a willingness to volunteer and serve.

We have been growing, but too slowly, in my opinion. We have been active, but there are many other goals we need to achieve. Our volunteers are tireless but not superhuman. Our greatest strengths—our diversity, dedication, and experience—can easily become weaknesses if overtaxed. Our goals, ambitions, desires, and successes are beginning to stretch the “people resources” of our membership. A volunteer organization without growth will always lose efficiency, begin to slow down, and eventually overburden its leaders and volunteers.

The question then is this: Are we content with the status quo and our present position within the industry and with continuing to serve our members as well as we

can? Or do we meet the association’s challenges with renewed effort and new ideas?

For example, if we can reach and provide benefit to all disciplines in the building envelope industry, even a conservative, rule-of-thumb estimate would place our potential membership pool at more than 300,000. One or two percent of that pool would not be an unrealistic goal for new RCI members and potential future leaders.

A survey, published in 2012 by the Corporation for National and Community Service, found that 64.5 million adults volunteered 7.9 billion hours of service, worth an estimated \$175 billion; but more importantly, it found that potential supporters of professional organizations value skilled volunteer services more highly than monetary contributions. In times of recession or economic difficulties, cash contributions usually decline, while time investments increase. It also was interesting that volunteering has trended upward among Millennials and Generation X’ers over the past 11 years, increasing nearly 5.5% during that period.

So, in order to expand and improve our membership, RCI must become more joinable. We must meet individual needs, unite toward common goals, and ignite the passion to work and lead. We must purposefully create opportunities to donate our time or talents and encourage more involvement. What motivates people to volunteer? In the simplest terms, people join an organization and volunteer because it meets their personal and professional needs, because of personal relationships (friends and associates), or because of their beliefs (their passion for the cause). All we have to do now is meet those needs and offer those opportunities.

Sounds simple enough. RCI needs your support and participation. Are we up to the challenge? Don’t be like Grandpappy Campbell.