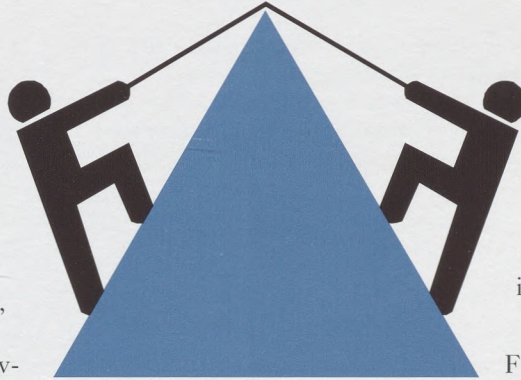


You and Your Association: Are You Bringing Youthful Energy ... Or a Mid-Life Crisis?

By Richard G. Ensmann, Jr.

You've experienced, or at least heard about, mid-life crisis, right? Mid-life crisis happens during that unsettling period of time when goals are uncertain, boredom and frustration set in, and day-to-day life just doesn't seem right anymore.

Associations have mid-life crises, too. They occur when members become bored with association activities or disenchanted with association goals. Association mid-life crises sometimes occur after an especially active generation of members begins to "retire" from active involvement.



Mid-life crisis doesn't have to happen to you or to RCI. If you're aware that a crisis is looming, you can take steps to renew and reinvigorate your involvement, and keep RCI on the cutting edge of the industry. But the first step is to recognize the impending mid-life crisis.

Take this simple "crisis quiz." From each pair of statements below, select the one that better describes the involvement and energy you bring to RCI, and then rate yourself with the numerical value (1 or 0) following the statement you selected.

- 1 I enthusiastically participate in most RCI activities. (1)
I rarely attend RCI activities. (0)
- 2 I actively participate in discussions during meetings and conventions. (1)
I'm bored by most meetings. (0)
- 3 My skills are used by RCI. (1)
I feel that my involvement is unnecessary. (0)
- 4 The methods used by RCI to achieve its goals are new and invigorating, changing with the times. (1)
RCI's methods of achieving its goals involve the same processes members used many years ago. (0)
- 5 I see and talk with other RCI members regularly. (1)
It's been a while since I've visited with other members of RCI. (0)
- 6 I have specific responsibilities and assignments with RCI. (1)
I'm never sure what the leadership or committees of RCI need from me. (0)
- 7 RCI activities seem to run quickly and efficiently. (1)
RCI seems to move at a snail's pace. (0)
- 8 I'm willing, even eager, to take on leadership responsibilities with RCI when a need arises. (1)
I'll do anything I can to avoid leadership responsibilities with RCI. (0)
- 9 RCI brings new leadership in on a regular basis. (1)
It's pretty much the same people who have been leading RCI for many years. (0)

- 10 I feel satisfaction about the milestones I'm helping RCI achieve. (1)
I feel that most of the major RCI milestones have already been reached. (0)
- 11 I'm quick to celebrate RCI successes during meetings or conventions. (1)
When a project is finished, all I want to do is pack up and leave. (0)
- 12 I exchange ideas and information with other members on a regular basis. (1)
I'd never even think of calling other members for help or information. (0)
- 13 RCI activities leave me feeling excited and energized. (1)
RCI activities are dull. (0)
- 14 I'm always on the lookout for new members. (1)
No one would even know I'm a member of RCI unless I told them. (0)
- 15 I feel that my involvement makes a real difference in the health of RCI. (1)
I feel that my involvement is relatively useless. (0)
- 16 I'm constantly learning new things from my involvement with RCI. (1)
I don't use RCI as a source of new ideas and continuing education. (0)
- 17 I'm continually aware of the vital social and economic needs RCI is trying to address. (1)
I have no idea whether RCI is trying to address critical needs. (0)
- 18 I'm involved in coaching or mentoring other RCI members, especially new ones. (1)
I don't like being called upon by other members for help and guidance.
- 19 I'm quick to volunteer when a need arises. (1)
I let other people volunteer when a need arises. (0)
- 20 Even though I have many demands on my time, RCI's work is a priority with me. (1)
I feel like a member of RCI's "sandwich generation," constantly caught between the demands of too many people and causes. (0)
- 21 Things happen at RCI because of me. (1)
Things happen at RCI in spite of me. (0)
- 22 I help RCI keep abreast of timely data, information and trends. (1)
I rarely send information and data to RCI Headquarters. (0)
- 23 I believe RCI is lean and efficient. (1)
I believe RCI is slow and ineffective. (0)
- 24 I'm aware of RCI's mission statement, and I strongly support it. (1)
I can't describe the contents of RCI's mission statement. (0)

Add your scores. If they total 21 to 25, congratulations. You and RCI appear to be vibrant, vital and young in spirit, and you're trying to remain closely involved in RCI's work. If you scored between 16 and 20, not bad. While you might boost RCI's activity in the year ahead, you've already got a great start. While RCI's goals and programs might stand a little sharpening, they're not engulfed in the throes of crisis. If you scored below 16, however, RCI may have the makings of a real "mid-life" crisis. What's more, you may be bringing a touch of boredom or uncertainty to RCI's important work.

If you believe there is a mid-life crisis looming at RCI or any other association you are involved with, make a

commitment to renew your involvement now. Pitch in on a project or offer to serve on one of those committees you claim needs new life. Even if you need to give RCI's activities just a modest boost, you can always find ways to reinvigorate your involvement.

RCI, remember, is people—people working together toward common, vital goals. Members who commit themselves only halfheartedly to RCI's work can never find true strength and unity. But active, enthusiastic members can build an association that is far stronger than the sum of the contributions of its members. Strive for the latter. The result will be the strength and energy characteristic of an association in its perpetual youth.