

Plan to Get More from Your Membership

By Joseph Jones

You've invested your money into the association. Now it's time to invest your thoughts into how you're going to make your dues dollars work best for you in return.

In order to get more from your membership, you have to have a plan -- a marketing plan.

First, write down three to five things that you want to get from your HBA membership. HBA membership offers us opportunities to:

- Increase our business.
- Network with others in the building industry.
- Learn how to be leaders.
- Stay abreast of the current trends in the industry.
- Get legal advice.
- Become involved in the legislative or political process.
- Learn how to reduce costs.
- Hire and keep good people.
- Create a marketing plan.
- Obtain insurance, telephone, or other business services at a discounted price.
- Attend training classes.
- Make lifelong friends who share our interests and concerns.

And those are just a few benefits of membership. So, from what the HBA offers, develop your list of three to five things you want to get from your membership over the next year. Let's call these things your goals.

Next, write each goal on a separate sheet of paper. Create a list of actions or activities for each goal that you'll carry out in order to achieve them. At first, just write down everything that comes to mind under each goal. Then, go back and review your list and ask yourself: "Will I really do this?" "Will this action/activity really help me achieve this goal?" Keep the ones that end up with "YES" answers.

Third, attach a deadline for each of the actions or activities on the lists. Personally, I've found that without deadlines, I can put things off indefinitely. Without deadlines we procrastinate and "procrastination is the thief of time." It is also the thief of cash flow, business development, happiness, and a host of other wonderful things in life.

Fourth, set a time aside each week to review your goals and the actions and activities you've written into your plan. Use this review as your planning session for the coming week and as a progress update on your goals from the previous week. Don't let this session slide. It's easy to let a week go by and then another and then another and before you know it, a month has slipped away and you are no closer to your goals than you were 30 days before. Make these planning and review sessions part of your routine. The law of the harvest teaches us that "as we sow, we reap." In order to reap, we have to sow. We have to water and fertilize and weed to keep our crop alive and growing. In order to achieve our goals, we have to put the time into planning, reviewing, and taking action. Once each quarter, I also recommend taking stock of your overall goals and making sure you are going in the right direction. You may have to revise a goal or two, or add something.

If you want your HBA membership to yield a harvest of good things for you and your business, this kind of work will be necessary. Having been involved in our association for nearly 20 years, I've had the good fortune of seeing the truth of what I've just shared with you exemplified by so many fellow members. Those who have gotten the most from the association have been those with a plan. I've also found that their plans included a goal which essentially answers the questions, "What can I give to the association?" and "How can I serve my fellow members?" Those who get the most from the HBA are those who invest themselves in service to the association. And, they have a plan. It's that simple. They've learned that we shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. We need to be able to throw something back.

In closing, I offer this bit of wisdom from my teachers: Failing to plan is a plan to fail. Put another way, "without dreams and visions, we perish." Dreams and visions -- goals and plans for their achievement -- that really matter to us will affect almost everything we do all day long because everything we do becomes related to their achievement.

Joseph Jones is the West Virginia Consumer Market Services Manager for American Electric Power. His articles on marketing have been published in several magazines including "Selling Power." He can be reached at (304) 348-4741.

