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A Little Help From Your Friends

By Karleen Kos

Recently the post office returned a brochure we had sent to a nonmember on the Portable Sanitation Association International mailing list. The markings indicated the company – in existence a couple of months ago – had gone out of business.

It happens. In fact, the U.S. Small Business Administration says 50 percent of small businesses fail within the first five years. While the list of reasons may vary from source to source, there is one that jumps out at me: About 85 percent of businesses that fail were not members of their industry trade association.

Of course there are no silver bullets. I cannot promise that membership in the PSAI will inoculate 100 percent of portable sanitation companies from the challenges businesses face. What I can say, though, is that – as a business

leader – you are going to be many times better off as a PSAI member when you face those challenges.

In addition to the pressures facing all businesses, there are unique concerns facing the portable sanitation industry. They affect every portable restroom operator and supplier, regardless of the company's size. Lack of respect for our work, downward price pressure and inconsistent regulations are just a few of them. No one individual or company can possibly solve these problems alone. Each company leader needs his or her industry trade association for the messaging power, collective wisdom, and relationships that can help create a sustainable and successful business.

In March, the PSAI Board of Directors adopted a new long-range strategic plan for the organization. It looks over a five-year horizon, anticipating the changing industry and the evolving needs of PSAI members. The plan creates specific approaches and deliverables that will preserve lives and improve experiences by providing clean, safe portable sanitation through our global member companies.

The plan calls for the PSAI to advance initiatives related to:

- Public information, education and advocacy
- Standards and industry guidance
- Training and credentialing
- Supporting members' business success

In the coming months you will be hearing more about our plans – and importantly – you will see the PSAI evolving to serve its members even more effectively in the changing environment. Nonmembers will inevitably benefit from our work, too, because our aim is to advance the industry for everyone's benefit.

So why bother with membership in the PSAI? Member companies will be able to impact these important initiatives and help drive the industry forward. On the other hand, "saving" the dues and going it alone deprives your firm of the camaraderie and expertise of fellow PSAI members. Longtime association participants tell many stories of how the advice of other members has led to better decisions and fewer costly mistakes. The positive return on dues investment can be as high as 500 percent. The decision to skip being part of a vibrant, forward-moving, member-focused association like the PSAI can be fateful – as the 85 percent who failed may now realize.

There has never been a better time to get involved in the PSAI. Join us on the way to the future of the portable sanitation industry! ■