

National Chimney Sweep Guild
Board of Directors Meeting
July 30, 2008
Report of the Executive Director

It's been a relatively short time frame since our last meeting in May. Several projects were created on the dashboard during the board's annual planning meeting, but activity on those has not particularly ramped up quite yet. None-the-less, there have been several milestones created that will allow us to track progress on those issue over the next year.

The economy is a subject I expect us as a leadership team to be discussing with renewed interest over the months ahead. Regardless of the political implications we are hearing from an increasing number of members who are making tough choices about where the dollars in their business need to be spent. Picking up from our conversation during our May meeting, I would like to see us begin a more focused discussion on what the association trend of "demassification" might look like for NCSG membership in the not-too-distant future. As we know, our current membership model represents an "all or nothing" proposition...you're either a member or you're not. The staff is already beginning to look at opportunities to refine categories of membership that are not mandated by the Guild's bylaws, and I believe we will need to continue to explore options that will better meet the needs of our membership down the road. Hopefully much of this will be determined by the time we begin the budget development process for 2009-2010.

The Start-up Resource Package project has not yet gotten far off the ground. However, as I've shared with the board, we have recently received significant interest in furthering this concept from one of our long-time supplier members that may serve as a catalyst to launch this project forward. More information about this may be available by the time the board meets at the end of the month.

Convention planning is well under way. Based on input from the past year, we are progressing in our intention to return an interactive masonry event to the schedule. We have the space available in Winston-Salem, and Ashley has already begun to assemble the players and develop a concept. Randy and I, as well as the planning committee, have been discussing options to fine-tune the president's and international guest receptions. We may have an opportunity to combine them in a way that improves the quality and perception of both events while finding some cost savings in the process. There's still quite a bit of discussion that needs to take place on this before we make any drastic changes, but this represents a long term intent to more aggressively explore ways we can improve efficiencies and expenses with our event... including opportunities to make our convention more "green."

In August Vic Imgarten and I will be travelling to Prague to represent NCSG at the biennial ESCHFOE political conference. As we've discussed, we are preparing to make a presentation to the group to encourage them to bring their technical conference to the United States in 2011. We've been working on this the past few years that we have been in attendance and came very close the last time we asked. We are feeling very confident heading into this meeting, and hope to report back on a decision by mid-August.

We are continuing to work on a uniform username and password system for the Members-Only section of ncsng.org as well as our primary database. Currently, they require different usernames and passwords, and for those of you who are CSIA Certified, the Certified Sweep-Only section

requires yet another unique username and password...which makes this all very cumbersome and not user-friendly. The database system now allows for these various systems to be uniform. The present hurdle that is being researched is determining the proper "naming convention" that will be logical and user-friendly to the sweeps. I have not wanted to pursue the extended use of technical and business bulletin boards or other additional online services until we have this uniform system in place. It will be tremendously beneficial to them to be able to use uniform login information for their NCSG (and CSIA if appropriate) activities. We may have more of an updated on this by the time the board meets.

One of the items we discussed at our staff planning meeting this year is that, in addition to our noted board and staff priorities, I am going to spend time this next year conducting an "internal audit" of sorts of our overall operations. This audit is going to be based on the 10 categories ("domains") established by the CAE credential that I earned this past year. As I was going through the credentialing process, there were several times when I was struck by the thought that the content outline would provide a good model by which to analyze what it is that we do, why we do it, and how we do it. Similarly, the process will provide me with a methodical format by which to identify those association "best practices" that we don't do, and why we don't do them. There will undoubtedly be valid reasons that our particular situation doesn't call for us to follow certain practices, but I am confident that I will uncover valid opportunities none-the-less. The 10 categories I will be looking at will be, in no particular order:

- *Strategic Management* (general management, marketing/branding, financial management)
- *Planning and Research* (strategic planning/strategic thinking, business planning, use of research/evaluation/statistics)
- *Leadership* (general leadership, ethics, diversity, interpersonal relationships & dynamics, negotiating)
- *Administration* (human resource policies & procedures, technology, legal issues, facilities management, vendor/supplier management)
- *Knowledge Management* (knowledge management systems, professional development programs and delivery systems)
- *Governance and Structure* (volunteer structure, board issues, interest groups and communities of practice)
- *Public Policy and Government & External Relations* (public policy, coalition building)
- *Membership* (member relations, recruitment and retention, globalization...this applies to certification participation as well)
- *Programs, Products and Services* (development of programs/products/services, fundraising/development programs, meeting & event planning, technical publications, ethics programs, standard-setting programs, industry awards & member recognition programs, credentialing programs)
- *Public Relations and External Communications* (PR programs, non-technical publications and other media)

See you soon,

Mark McSweeney