Every year when ABSA membership renewals arrive we acknowledge, on some level, that we are a member of a national biological safety organization which, hopefully, has an impact on us and on our jobs. But how important is this membership to us? When the dues are paid by the employer, I think we feel less ownership of that membership than if we had to pay for it out of our own pocket. However, the future accomplishments and activities of ABSA depends on the membership’s feeling of ownership, and it is this degree of involvement that is needed to have the greatest impact on our organization.

Putting ideas into practice requires a concerted effort between the members, the Council and the committee chairs. When we hired a management company in 1992, our involvement became less intense, especially for the ones planning the conference, but we still require members to be involved. There are many of the members who are active and work diligently to improve the organization, but we could do so much more if more members would get involved. The more people contributing, the more the possibilities.

In our jobs we are focused and committed to every project until it is completed, and then we stay involved as the program dictates. The same principle applies to members working on projects for ABSA. The success of our Organization is analogous to our success as a biological safety professional.

The best ways in which we can contribute are:

1. **Participating in a committee.** Being on the committee list doesn’t count. We have to participate. When a task or project is presented, it is our responsibility to respond as requested.

2. **Contributing articles to the Journal.** I hear people say they plan to submit an article or they have already determined that the subject matter is not interesting or within the mandate of the Journal’s mission. The subject matter for the Journal has been expanded by the new Journal editor to include all biosafety related topics. So please submit your articles.

3. **Serving as an officer.** The Nominating Committee selects candidates based on their previous contributions to ABSA. It is an honor to be recognized by the membership as being thought to be capable of contributing to the future of ABSA. I encourage you to accept the nomination when asked.

We also need to be involved in our affiliate organizations. Affiliates are able to provide current information, sometimes more efficiently than the national organization, because they usually meet quarterly, whereas the national organization meets only once a year. The affiliates also play a vital role in disseminating pertinent information, such as federal regulations, to their community members whose jobs may have only a small focus in biological safety, but need the information just as much as the biological safety professional.

Commitment of service at the local community level can be just as important as at the national level. The national organization and the affiliates are important to each other, and although we could function independently, we would be narrowing our scope of available information and service.

Active involvement of the membership is the cornerstone of a strong, healthy organization, and it takes more than just a few people. Get involved!

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