



*My View*

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## INNOVATION

Since our 2011 Annual Meeting, I've talked to many attendees, particularly those who were there for the first time. I asked them "*how was your experience*"? To the person, the response was something like "*wow, the people there had so many good ideas!*" I was not surprised at this response. I've been hearing for years that the part of the Annual Meeting attendees value the most is the "What Works" segments.

Every year as I prepare for the Annual Meeting, I have a brief anxiety attack: "*what if no one has anything new to report? What if we've run out of ideas about how to do it better?*" And every year my fears prove unfounded. Like clockwork, staff members from each Affiliate bring many new ideas and new ways of doing things. It's amazing to me how we can find so many new ways of operating our programs and achieving our mission!

Beyond being interesting and exciting, the fact we as an organization are constantly generating new ideas, new materials, and new programs is a major indicator that we are a very healthy organization. I believe that strong organizations are constantly innovating, and weak organizations are rigid and do the same things over and over again (it's called a bureaucracy!). In fact, I believe that the single biggest indicator of an organization's health is its' ongoing ability to change and innovate. If had only one question I could ask an organization to assess its' health and to "take its' temperature", I would simply ask those in charge: "*how are you different today than you were one year ago?*"

I believe the "**innovation factor**" is such an important indicator of organizational health because it indicates that the organization is....

- **Mission Focused:** an organization which is continually trying to improve is an organization which is focused outward on trying to meet its' mission rather than on trying to preserve the status quo.
- **Humble and Willing to Admit Mistakes:** an organization which is constantly changing and improving is an organization which knows it's not perfect and is willing to learn.
- **Energetic and Alive:** an organization which innovates is an organization filled with energetic and vital people.
- **Successful:** an organization which changes and innovates is an organization which people will want to be part of and which will separate itself from the competition.

If we apply the "*how are you different today test*" to our organization as a whole and to each affiliate individually, I have no doubt we would all pass with flying colors. Every year at the Annual Meeting each Affiliate shows the rest of us how it's "new and improved" and each brings something(s) new which leads the rest of us to say "WOW."

Let the innovation continue!

Wayne Fortin, Founder

What do you think? Contact Wayne @

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