

The Florida Swimming Pool Association:
A Professional Organization That Makes a Splash

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In the American business market, there are countless companies in varying fields of industry. Due to the extreme number of independent companies, a specific business's ideas and opinions on standards can often be lost in the crowd if not properly grouped together and organized for the good of an industry. That is where the idea of the professional organization comes into play. A professional organization like the Florida Swimming Pool Association, or FSPA, is an organization with members from all areas of the swimming pool industry in the state of Florida and it provides fairly broad benefits and opportunities for its members. Although the FSPA does provide a vast set of benefits, every organization has the opportunity to improve and grow for the future.

To fully understand the purpose of the FSPA, a trade or professional organization must first be properly defined. A professional organization “[helps] to define and set standards for their professional fields and to promote high standards of quality through awards and other forms of recognition” (Committee on Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research [CFIR] et al., 2004, p.137). They do this by creating “codes of conduct and codes of ethics to clarify the responsibilities of members to those they serve and to one another” (Perlis & Shannon, 2012). In addition to setting industry standards, they also “develop professional excellence [and] raise public awareness” all while continuing on their mission to provide educational opportunities and helpful information to their members and the communities around them (CFIR et al., 2004, p.137). The FSPA is a great example of a professional organization, but they are not content with just operating within; they often branch out to make an impact on the swimming pool industry as

a whole. Yearly, they help determine not only standards for their own members in safety and quality of work, but standards for the entire state of Florida. The FSPA and their members do this through lobbying efforts in the yearly trip to Tallahassee to meet with legislators and discuss the impact of certain laws and how they can be improved for the future. Although this is impressive in itself, it is not the only role of the professional organization and the FSPA in American business.

The main role of the FSPA, and professional organizations as a whole, is to improve businesses in a certain industry and to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of those within it. An organization and its members “are able to support and help one another in reaching [their] professional goals” by “[sharing] ideas [and asking] for advice” during organization sponsored “events throughout the year that allow [the members] to connect with [their] peers” (Cherwin, 2010). Mr. Rick Howard, owner of Rick’s Pool Service, Inc. , member of the FSPA since 1992 and a recently elected member of the FSPA Hall of Fame, stated in an interview that “[the] FSPA has put me in contact with industry leaders, very successful people. Learning how they operate and manage their companies, then trying to use that information and incorporate it into how I operate has helped my company grow” (personal communication, June 25, 2016). Mr. Don Ball, owner of The Pool Works, is a pool builder and has been a member of the FSPA since 2004 (personal communication, June 24, 2016). When interviewed, he stated that he initially wanted to join a professional organization for “[the] opportunity to develop myself and my business at a higher level” (personal communication, June 24, 2016). He went on to state that “[meeting] and getting to know business owners with similar areas of expertise” has benefitted the success of his business and “[the] networking with like minded business owners has been invaluable” (personal communication, June 24, 2016). The role of the professional organization in American business

goes along with its purpose. These organizations allow industry professionals to grow their companies and improve the industry as a whole through networking and educational opportunities.

Like other professional organizations, the FSPA has a mission and a set of benefits to accompany it. To go along with their mission of “Advancing Florida’s swimming pool industry” (Florida Swimming Pool Association [FSPA], 2014), the FSPA hosts safety events throughout the year to help educate Florida’s communities about swimming pool safety, and they even participate in *The World’s Largest Swimming Lesson*. FSPA Members receive many benefits including networking opportunities, a united voice to state legislators for future legislation and industry standards, as well as access to provided educational classes taught by industry professionals. Mr. Rick Howard said that “[the] benefits have been many, but the biggest has been the educational opportunities, both in classrooms and getting to know other professionals in the industry” (personal communication, June 25, 2016). He also stated that he was initially enticed to join the FSPA because he “wanted to be part of a professional organization that was trying to raise the bar of the pool industry. Later that changed to wanting to give back what I have learned to help better the pool industry” (personal communication, June 25, 2016). He has taught on occasion at FSPA events to help others learn some of the knowledge he has gained over his years of operating in the swimming pool industry. Mr. Don Ball stated that he has experienced the benefit of being able to “[stay] on the cutting edge of the changing laws and codes” and the benefit of “[having] access to insurance discounts has been great” (personal communication, June 24, 2016). Overall, the benefits of being a part of a professional organization like the FSPA are too numerous to truly fathom but can be broadly summed up in

categories such as education, shared advice and experience as well as unity, and a chance for an industry's collective voice to be heard.

Like any good thing, the FSPA and its benefits have the potential to be improved. Besides the main benefits of membership, most perks of being in the FSPA go unnoticed or unseen. Although the FSPA is active on Facebook and YouTube, they could expand their use and branch out through systems like Twitter and Instagram. They could use this social media presence to distribute knowledge about future events and member benefits that might fly a bit under the radar for some of their members. Social media can also be leveraged to reach people outside of the industry to gain support from the community for different safety events and other outreach programs. The FSPA is already a large organization, but it could easily add more members and a few more benefits. One can easily accomplish both by adding a referral program where if a new business or member signs up for membership and was referred by another business, the referring business would gain a discount on their membership fee the next year. This discount could be increased for each referred business or member that signs up for membership for the next year up to a certain point. This referral program would be an easy way to help grow the organization and to reward current members for helping out. The association could also reward members by providing “more logo materials..., to let others know that [they] are members and are proud of it” (R. Howard, personal communication, June 25, 2016). There is no better way to improve an organization than to inspire some pride and let its members show off said pride. In the end, the FSPA is a rapidly growing organization that provides great benefits to its members. The organization could, however, advertise them more and possibly add a few more unique benefits or incentives if they desired to.

In the American business market, there are numerous companies that all exist in the same field that will never have their voices heard if they are not a part of some type of unified group.

Through professional or trade organizations, these companies can all come together under one banner for the benefit of their industry. A great example of such an organization, the Florida Swimming Pool Association, has members from all parts of the swimming pool industry including builders, maintenance workers, distributors and equipment or chemical engineers. When these different fields come together, they can help educate each other in proper technique as well as in life and work experiences. The FSPA also tries to better the communities through swimming pool education and by fighting for beneficial legislature. Although there might be some ways that the FSPA can be improved, it works very well currently and is definitely one of the most impactful professional organizations in Florida.

References

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Appendix A
The Impact of the FSPA Interview
Interviewing Rick Howard

Bryant Howard: How long have you been a member of the FSPA?

Rick Howard: My company has been a member of FSPA since 1992. We were involved with the NSPI in the 1980's.

BH: What benefits have you experienced by joining the FSPA?

RH: The benefits have been many, but the biggest has been the educational opportunities, both in classrooms and getting to know other professionals in the industry.

BH: How has being a member of a professional organization specifically benefitted the success of your business?

RH: The FSPA has put me in contact with industry leaders, very successful people. Learning how they operate and manage their companies, then trying to use that information and incorporate it into how I operate has helped my company grow.

BH: What initially enticed you to want to join a professional organization such as the FSPA?

RH: Initially I wanted to be part of a professional organization that was trying to raise the bar of the pool industry. Later that changed to wanting to give back what I have learned to help better the pool industry!

BH: Would you recommend joining a professional organization like the FSPA to people you know that are in the industry?

RH: To those who truly care about the pool industry I would absolutely encourage them to join, to surround themselves with other like minded people. I would also encourage them to not only join but to get involved. The more you put in the more you get out

BH: Is there anything you would change or add to the way the the organization helps its members grow their businesses and the industry as a whole?

RH: The FSPA is continually improving the service it provides to its members. I would like to see more logo materials for its members, to let others know that we are members and are proud of it. Maybe signage that says "member since ..." and something about being the main pool industry professional organization for the State of Florida, which it is!

Appendix B
The Impact of the FSPA Interview
Interviewing Don Ball

Bryant Howard: How long have you been a member of the FSPA?

Don Ball: I have been a member since 2004.

BH: What benefits have you experienced by joining the FSPA?

DB: The networking with like minded business owners has been invaluable. Staying on the cutting edge of the changing laws and codes. Having access to insurance discounts has been great.

BH: How has being a member of a professional organization specifically benefitted the success of your business?

DB: Meeting and getting to know business owners with similar areas of expertise.

BH: What initially enticed you to want to join a professional organization such as the FSPA?

DB: The opportunity to develop myself and my business at a higher level.

BH: Would you recommend joining a professional organization like the FSPA to people you know that are in the industry?

DB: I would highly recommend. it will be the best thing they have done. they must become involved though!

BH: Is there anything you would change or add to the way the the organization helps its members grow their businesses and the industry as a whole?

DB: I would become more active with lobbying. I would also like to see a real Public Relations campaign to grow recognition of the association.