

APCO, Be the Leader

Challenges Ahead Require Cooperative Efforts

~BY STEVE PROCTOR

I recently read the biography of a World War II rifle company commander, in which he shared the leadership lessons he learned on the field of battle. Those lessons are:

- Lead with character, courage and competence.
- Lead from the front; say "follow me" and move out.
- Stay in good physical shape, develop your team, delegate responsibilities, anticipate problems and prepare to overcome obstacles.
- Never wait until you are on top of a ridge to determine the battle plan. Have a vision of what you want to do before getting there.
- Remain humble; ask yourself if you're doing your best.
- Satisfaction comes from getting the job done.
- A true leader earns respect not because of rank, but because of character.
- Hang tough and never, ever give up.

While nearly 70 years old, these principles are still the foundation to success. In my more than 43-year career in this business, those principles have motivated, inspired and taught me the traits necessary to get through the challenges we face. I have been privileged to have mentors and associates who lived, believed in and practiced those traits. I hope I have been an example and passed some of those traits on to the next generation of leaders.

My reasons for joining APCO were simple. Someone I respected told me that I couldn't make change happen from the sidelines. He said to join the team and get in the game. I joined the APCO team at the chapter level in 1972. Every opportunity afforded by this association has led to a challenge to make our industry better. It has allowed me to network with like-minded organizations, share experiences and develop a vision of what the next issues and challenges will be.

Serving at the national level gave me even more insight into the industry as I traveled around the country and the world and our association expanded its influence. This perspective is beneficial not only for APCO, but for the organizations that support the individuals who serve in leadership positions. Think of the broadened horizons that APCO members bring back to the agencies they work for.

As I look back on the hot topics during my time on the APCO board, our focus was on establishing government relationships, spectrum allocation, working with the Public Safety Wireless Advisory Committee (PSWAC) and National Coordination Committee (NCC), revising the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) rules to ensure compatibility with E9-1-1 calling systems (Docket 94-102), organizational challenges, growth and financial management issues.

Those efforts spearheaded by APCO in the 1990s laid the foundation for our current work. Strengthened government relations evolved into a strategically-located APCO office in the Washington, D.C., area. Docket 94-102 evolved into Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1). The work done by PSWAC and NCC paved the way for allocation of the D-Block.

This evolution was not due to one individual, board or organization, but it came through multiple boards and continued efforts to move the work forward. The efforts in which we are involved in 2013 will become the foundation for achievements in 2025. And so it will continue.

Just as technology has pushed aside familiar borders and boundaries, it forces organizations to challenge conventional thinking. Those changes will come at a rapid pace, and it's going to take visionary leadership to continue to thrive. Adapting to new challenges will require the cooperative efforts of individuals, organizations and executive boards. I believe that, as an

association, we still struggle in that regard. In reality, we all want the same thing: continuity from the initial 9-1-1 call to the comm center to first responders in the field, with the proper channel, bandwidth and interoperability we need to establish an effective response to protect property and save lives.

I extend my thanks and congratulations on a job well done to the presidents who came before me and to those who will follow. While a good number of us are entering the "sunset years" of our career, I really believe the association is in good hands. The next generation of leadership will come from what I call "the Internet generation." They are the individuals whose lives are technology based. They were raised on it. Their perspective is totally different from ours. It is exciting to see them harness that energy and move forward with excitement abounding.

I must issue a reminder, however, to this next generation and to all of us: Although technology will continue to progress in complexity and sophistication, we still have to get the human part right. Organizations and individuals are the critical components needed to manage new technologies and implement them to make us better at what we do. Heaven help us if we allow technology to manage us.

I hope we all have the stamina and the foresight to keep moving, changing and adapting. All that said, my message boils down to this: APCO—whatever the challenge is, be the leader. **PSCT**



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