

Community For Change

Recently, I attended a meeting of my regional aviation group, Colorado Aviation Business Association (CABA). This is a very active regional association that works very hard to build a community of aviation professionals. Like many aviation regional associations it is populated by members of all walks of the aviation industry.

What struck me about this particular meeting was an introduction by Michael Turner, a member of the Board of Trustees of CABA. In his opening remarks he looked around the room and started the meeting by pointing out attendees in the room and their respective aviation affiliations. There were of course pilots, flight department managers and maintenance technicians. Then there were a wide array of other providers - aviation insurance professionals, attorneys, aircraft sales professionals, airport personnel and tower staff. This was quite an impressive showing for a monthly meeting.

Michael's point in bringing all of the roles to everyone's attention was his thought that our industry is changing. Of course there are regulatory changes as well as staffing changes, and those that are affecting security and access. However, his emphasis was on the community of people that it takes to create, and affect positive change.

Change does not occur by accident and making the most out of change comes from the people who roll up their sleeves and help guide the industry through new circumstances. The aviation industry is not alone in this, as it seems that every industry is faced with changing landscapes given the economics of these last couple of years. These alterations make the role of the regional aviation associations more important than ever.

It is through these associations that grass roots efforts are undertaken to promote the healthy growth of aviation. These regional groups have significant input with their state and local politicians, as well as national politicians. Getting the ear of these decision makers is vital in maintaining their awareness of the aviation industry.

There are few industries that have been impacted as significantly as ours has been over the last several years. Even before the economic downturn, we as an industry found ourselves battling on political fronts, with user fees and access, as well as on security issues.

Many of these battles are ongoing; however the solid footing that is underway is in large part due to the tireless work of the aviation regional associations. These associations are not just mobilizers for political battles, they also serve to create awareness for school kids and young adults about jobs in our industry.

Over the years, I have attended many events sponsored by these associations around the country promoting the viability of aviation, and hoping to attract men and women to become pilots, maintenance technicians and aviation managers. The regional associations also develop real communities of change. After all, it takes people who care, and are passionate about their industry to champion change.

As I listened to Michael, I felt very proud to be involved with this important group. I urge everyone to look around their community and find the regional and local associations that are promoting their industry. Get involved. You will find it not only beneficial for networking, but rewarding as well.

So often we can tend to think globally or act nationally in our businesses and then overlook what we can do locally. Building a network of success begins at our own doorsteps. Don't miss the incredible power of these local relationships.

As a Board member of the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA), I continue to be enlightened about the strength of the regional and local groups. In fact, in great part it is the work of these groups that has nurtured the industry's turnaround we are beginning to collectively enjoy. For example, the work of the "No Plane No Gain" campaign could never have been as successful without the grass roots efforts of these small aviation associations.

If you are not already a member of a regional association, ask around and see

who to contact to be a member. Attend a local airport pilot lunch group or maintenance tech group. It may be small in numbers, but in collective thought it may be very powerful.

Membership cost is usually nominal (sometimes with these small groups the cost is no more than for your lunch at the monthly gathering). I assure you that you will find there are many issues that can be positively affected by grass roots participation, and you will be most welcomed into the group.

Speaking as an aircraft sales professional, very often a call or visit to a flight department can be seen as an intrusion on their busy schedule as they prepare for a flight or are just returning from one. These local associations and their working groups allow you to get close to these flight department personnel in a very non-invasive way.

Getting to know the flight department groups in ways that are viewed as helping them to work through issues that affect their industry can be a very powerful way to build friendships that may never have been built without the introductions made at these meetings and events.

Don't just sit back in life, stand up and be an active, positive part of the community for change. See you at the next meeting!

➤ **Jay Mesinger is the CEO and Founder of J. Mesinger Corporate Jet Sales, Inc.** He is on the NBAA Board of Directors and is the Chairman of AMAC. Additionally, Jay served on the Duncan Aviation Customer Advisory Board for two terms, is a member of EBAA and a member of the Colorado Airport Business Association (CABA). If you would like to join in on conversations relating to topics like this, and other trends in the business aviation market, join Jay on the cutting-edge of business aviation by sharing your comments on these various social networking platforms - Jay's Blog www.jetsales.com/blog, Twitter and LinkedIn. For more information visit www.jetsales.com

