

PWNA

A New Beginning

PWNA is alive and well, or at least healing nicely. The organization has gone through some internal restructuring and plans to reemerge as the voice of professional power washers at a time when a voice is badly needed. With some of the problems facing the industry—drought conditions, increasing environmental regulations, and increasing cost of doing business—the timing could not be better. There is strength in numbers, and synergy, the idea that a combined effort is greater than the sum of its parts, is perhaps the most important benefit PWNA offers.

If one calls the office of PWNA today, the St. Paul office of Mike Hilborn, owner of Roof-to-Deck Restoration, Inc., will most likely answer. As vice-president of the organization, Hilborn is both supportive and realistic about the organization. “The PWNA has been up to a lot of changes, he says. “ We have lost a lot of leadership in the past year and are currently at six very committed board of directors. We have slashed our operating costs and are paying down debt. We have committed PWNA to four areas: education, conventions, networking and being a clear voice of the industry. With these changes, there has been a dramatic show of support from many of the founders and industry veterans. I would say that there has been a rebirth of the PWNA. That is, we are trying to grow to be a mature and very valuable association for our members.”

Michael Hinderliter, past president and owner of Steamaway in Ft. Worth, TX, adds, “I personally believe that the groundwork that PWNA was originally based upon still exists, that is, the need to help and promote professionalism of the industry through education. PWNA has provided education, not only for power washers, but also for government officials and the general public. PWNA is still recognized by many and can grow to do much more through good leadership.”

“The association needs to be the voice of the industry,” continues Hilborn. “We all need someone to stand behind us that tells our employees, customers, and the community that there is an organization that holds all of us to a standard. That is one of the pillars of the PWNA.”

Perhaps the most obvious benefit that PWNA has offered in the past has been the yearly conference and tradeshow. The organization cancelled the scheduled event in 2007, opting for a presence at the NADRA Deck Expo in Las Vegas. One of the losses in that strategy was in numbers of attendees, which diminished one of the most important elements of the event.

“I have always found the number one benefit of a professional organization to be the ability to find and converse with my peers in the industry,” comments Hinderliter. “What we missed last year was the conference, one of the best ways to meet face to face and discuss issues, resolve problems others have solved, and plan for the future.”

Joe Walters, of the Joseph D. Walters Agency in Bethal Park, PA has been a part of PWNA from the inception and has done business in the industry for over 30 years. He also stresses the importance of the conference. “The value to a new power washer to attend a conference is

immeasurable. The classes and programs are presented by experienced professionals, who are leaders in the industry. In fact, the classes alone are worth the price of admission. Sharing ideas and learning from other successful power washers from across the country is priceless. The learning process continues as you are made aware of the various certification programs as you progress professionally. Lasting friendships are just icing on the cake.

“The PWNA conference is a great start in working towards success and becoming a professional in your chosen field. Buying a pressure washer is just the start.”

Robert Hinderliter of Delco Cleaning Systems of Ft. Worth, TX, is a founder and past president of PWNA. He points out another value in the organization: “It’s the recognition of PWNA by many Federal, State, and Municipal Environmental Regulatory Agencies. The enforcement of the Clean Water Act is Politically Driven with ‘economic revenue streams’ having a major influence in its interpretation. Contract Cleaners need the united voice of a trade association in order to be heard. Individual Contract Cleaners do not have the influence of a trade association which represents hundreds of contract cleaners.”

Rory Wilson of Derby Pressure Wash Sales and Service in Louisville, KY, adds, “It (PWNA) definitely helps them realize they are not alone in the day-to-day business activities and networking,” and sees another benefit as “Education, so that the new person doesn't make major mistakes and jeopardize their new career!”

Whatever PWNA plans for the future, it will have to overcome a year or so of uncertainty for the present. It is no secret that the organization has seen its share of turmoil and that has led to questions about its financial health. Hilborn comments, “Our current status is that we are operating on a daily basis in the black and the debt is being paid down. We hope to eliminate our debt by the end of the year and make the PWNAs voice stronger and clearer by growing our membership.

“Another short-term plan is to publish a new website that will benefit the members, the public, and the association, and, of course, to have a successful convention.”

A successful convention means a lot to the organization. Scheduled for October 23–25 in the Chicago area (see Industry Calendar, p4), the conference will offer a slate of experienced industry professionals teaching the experienced and inexperienced alike.

Doug Latimer, owner of Latimat, Inc., in Etobicoke, ON, is an original member and past board member who expects a very informative meeting. He mentions that training will be offered in many aspects of the contract cleaning industry including such diversified area as railroad, aircraft, and rocket cleaning, as well as the more traditional truck, home, deck, wood, and kitchen exhaust cleaning

“Topics to be discussed will include many of the aforementioned and will also include roundtables for sharing experiences. They will help us to see our way past the roadblocks we find in our everyday lives in business.”

For members that have been “in the trenches” with PWNA, the organization holds enough value for a second look. Don Flory of Mobile Enviro-Wash, Ltd., in Lawrence, KS, says, “We are excited to see PWNA take off again. We look forward to getting involved in the convention and hooking up with those who have been around a while learning how they deal with new products and job challenges. We enjoy being able to share with others in the trade. We are sticking with the trade organization because it could have much to offer: training, information from member to member, trade shows, new products and demos, and association with great folks.”

Beth Borrego of The Grime Scene in Germantown, MD, offers an opinion, “What the association does for the members is very much about how active the members are promoting PWNA as a part of their business. I don't think it is possible for an association to hand out tangible, ‘hold them in your hand’ benefits for a low price and still manage the organization. It's not fair either to ask the board of directors to do all the volunteer work, and run their own businesses. Members must get involved. It stands to reason that for the PWNA as an association to be active, it needs active volunteers.”

Mike Hilborn concludes, “For someone who has an established business that has taken years to build, the PWNA is more important than ever. With water restrictions, it is critical that our association be a clear voice for our industry with both education and best practices. One law passed could put some or all of us out of business!”

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