Civic Activities and Tight Reins

Taking Part in Your Community is a Contractor Must—But So is Striking a Balance

by Ernest W. Fair

Civic activities are a must in every contractor's business life but unless he exercises tight control over them disaster can be the result.

Here are experience proven suggestions for striking the proper balance in order to be certain that value is returned without excessive cost from any contractor's participation in all such activities.

Take the values you envision from your participation in any such activity purely on a practical and realistic basis. Often you tend to over glamorize or romanticize your participation in many of these activities.

Budget the time you can give to these activities on a basis of allotment of a given number of hours out of each working week. Try to stay within that time budget no matter what pressures are brought upon you by others to exceed it.

Stop and think twice before agreeing to participate in any activity solely as a favor to someone or to win points.

Pick those activities you know most about; then you can deliver more with less time spent at it than where the activity is something entirely foreign to your own experiences.

Go easy on joining only those activities in which your immediate friends and associates participate in large numbers. Such activities generally don't sufficiently broaden your acquaintance generally in the community.

Make the effort to bring a return to both your personal and business life or else limit further participation. There are other things which can fulfill both goals and they are the best places to spend your efforts.

Denote time and effort where realistic results are produced; not at windmill tilting because it may happen to be the current popular thing.

Participate in all civic activities on a flexible basis so that you can adjust time spent to the current demands of your business.

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Dollars have to enter into any such activity. So it pays to weigh carefully what you do from a financial standpoint.

Concentrate your activities where the greatest percentage of membership is active; too many deadheads in an organization means that your own load will be greater than it should be.

Give preference to those activities that are generally recognized by the local press as being worthy of support when their big drives are launched.

Look for continuity in the projects where you spend effort; work spent on short lived endeavors is often profitless. The only exception can be where an immediate emergency situation arises which desires the support of everyone.

Avoid committing all of your spare time to work in civic activities. You need some of your out-of-working hours for yourself, your family, and just general relaxation.

Keep to the lowest possible commitment any activity that involves time which has to be taken away directly from your own business activity.

Check carefully into each such activity brought to your attention. “That sounds great, count me in,” is a nice response one can give to a sudden suggestion from a friend or associate, but it can be a wasteful and sometimes dangerous step as well.

Be sure that it is a legitimate organization and not a front for something else. Many groups are often not what they seem from outward appearance.

Weigh the dollar costs involved to yourself personally and to your business life before you commit yourself to any type of civic activity.

Be sure that the others in the activity are the kind of men and women you like and with whom you can work effectively. In any other atmosphere your efforts will be handicapped.

Avoid joining any group solely for the public relations value to yourself or to your business. Take such benefits as a side value and not as the main one.

Weigh carefully commitment to any highly controversial activity no matter how you may feel about its purposes. Participation in some of these could seriously affect your firm and yourself as well.

Let everyone know about ALL of your committed activities; doing so will save many pressures aimed toward your taking on more of them.

Finally, keep some time open for the unexpected activity which may suddenly arise and to which you could contribute a great deal of value.