

Networking - and the Dominos Shall Fall!

February 20th's HRAC morning coffee started out the way many coffees normally do, with time to talk and get to know others within the multifamily rental housing industry. What made this coffee special however was that was all it was about - Networking, or perhaps better referred to as relationship building.



Individuals and organizations become involved in associations for perceived return on investment. While that normally starts as a very tangible fiscal return on investment such as a legislative advocacy program, educational program or products and services the association provides, over time that calculation for return on investment typically changes to a personal one; and that is where networking comes in.

Talk to someone who has been involved in an association for many years and they will tell you for them its about meeting people and developing contacts and growing relationships. But why is that? Why does the ROI calculation change over time and become about relationships. It is because developing and maintaining a business as well as furthering one's career is fundamentally about people. People make decisions! People buy things, people sell things, and people change direction. Nothing happens without another individual touching it somewhere along the way. So what better way to understand and operate within the business world, than to get to know the people within it.

That is what February's morning coffee was all about. Getting to know others within the apartment industry.

To facilitate this, coffee participants were tasked with an exercise. First, find one person you do not know in the room and go stand beside them. Second, talk to them and learn something about them, not so much what they do or where they work, but learn something about them. Learn what makes them unique. Lastly, now introduce the person you just spent 5 minutes speaking with to the entire group. Once you do that they will do the same thing for you.

So what did this exercise accomplish?

Well it forced people out of their shells. No standing in the corner. People had to talk and get to know one another.

What were the results?

People didn't want to leave! I have been to several coffees over the years and without question hung around, and talked to each other longer at this coffee than any other I have ever attended.

What did people take away?

Developing relationships is important part of business and professional career development, but it is not the job of one person alone. Relationship development is a group experience and everyone within an association shares responsibility for making it happen. This means when you meet someone you have a responsibility to introduce him or her to someone else, and so on, and so on.

It is the domino effect that takes relationship development to the next level. So next time you are out at an event remember to say hi to someone you don't know. Take a few minutes to get to know them and then introduce them to someone else you know. Start the dominoes falling for someone else and they will start falling for you as well. Pretty soon the dominoes will fan out and you will recognize a bigger return on investment out of your association membership than you ever thought.