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CHAPTERS:

Targeting GENERATION NEXT

AFE Chapters are sowing seeds into the future of the facilities engineering and maintenance profession

BY TALISA THOMAS-HALL

As an account manager for Matrix HG, Inc. in Concord, California, Dale Franklin, Sr., is unmistakably a man about business. Upon first meeting him you quickly realize that he is well versed in the facilities engineering profession, easily citing industry facts, numbers and processes. But sit down with the success-driven Franklin for a moment and you'll discover a man with a heart of gold and a passion for the mission behind AFE. He has poured that passion into growing AFE's Golden Gate Chapter 15 through reaching out to 'generation next'.



Dale Franklin with an AFE colleague at the AFE Chapter Awards Ceremony held at Facilities America in October. Photo courtesy of AFE.

"Facilities engineering students and apprentices are the keys to the future of AFE," he said. He's not just talking the talk. His personal investment in the profession literally begins at home with three of his four children either studying or employed in the facilities engineering and property management professions, and Franklin himself having been a chief facilities engineer prior to making the transition to the sales, marketing and business development side of the industry.

Actually, there are two AFE members with the name Dale Franklin — senior, and his son, who is a student member. So

with such deep roots in the profession, it is no wonder that Franklin has risen to the position of president of the Golden Gate Chapter. He was also recently honored as the 2011 Chapter Member of the Year during the AFE Chapter Awards Reception at October's Facilities America conference.

Franklin's platform for successful Chapter growth is the act of supporting the next generation of engineering and maintenance professionals. Franklin puts this emerging group at the forefront of his Chapter's outreach initiatives.

Establishing a Value Proposition

Establishing the Chapter's value proposition was paramount to the Chapter's success in attracting a core group of students and young professionals. "The incoming generation connects differently than its predecessors," Franklin said. "The concept of networking has a different appeal. I wish I'd understood the value of AFE membership earlier in my career. The resources and best practices accessed through [AFE] membership are invaluable to those in the profession... it opens a world of best practices and solutions."

Franklin sees the grassroots work of AFE Chapters as the breeding ground for preparing and nurturing this next generation of professionals. Chapter 15 uses its Chapter meetings as opportunities to connect with members including students and young professionals.

By creating a diverse mix of members with experience and longevity in the field, newcomers have the benefit of learning from those who have witnessed and worked through the changes in the facilities engineering profession, and have collected a wealth of best practices to share.

The emerging generation is accustomed to having instant access to information, so the concept of Web-based services isn't new. However, everything available through an Internet search engine is not necessarily reliable, so access to trusted information and training from more experienced members is of great value.

AFE Chapters are able to introduce students to professional information through AFE webinars and the *Facilities Engineering Journal* — and members also can have access to www.afe.org, 24 hours a day.



ABOVE: Franklin proudly displays the Chapter of the Year Award presented to Chapter 15 at Facilities America. With him are (left to right) IDEAL INDUSTRIES Vice President Glenn Hollister and Wendy Thomas, IDEAL INDUSTRIES sales manager; AFE Executive Director Wayne Carley, PhD; and AFE Chair Tom Baxter, CPS. IDEAL INDUSTRIES was a major sponsor of the AFE Awards Reception. *Photo courtesy of Cliff Muller.* **RIGHT:** Franklin with AFE Senior Director of Membership and Operations Talisa Thomas-Hall during a recent visit by Franklin to AFE headquarters in Herndon, VA. *Photo courtesy of AFE.*



Additionally, the Chapters provide professional stimulation through eye-opening facilities tours that provide access to new technology and genius approaches to everyday challenges and core areas, such as sustainability compliances and imperative procedures for critical facilities.

Regarding AFE's value proposition to the student or young professional, Franklin stated it best: "Networking! It's all about relationship building and making those important connections with the right people. You never know who you'll meet today that will be an asset tomorrow."

Investing in the Future

Those who know Franklin describe him as a person who knows how to connect and interconnect people in ways that some can only imagine. He uses this skill to invest in the future of facilities engineering professionals. "These buildings we fix and maintain — it's all coming down one day. But if we take what works best and invest it into the future, we've left a worthwhile legacy," he said. He truly believes it is his responsibility as a Chapter leader to provide this emerging generation with an exposure to knowledge and information that will enhance their career path and help to develop them into future leaders.


This conviction drives him to reach out to local universities to support student participation in AFE Chapter 15 events. Under his leadership, Chapter 15 has sponsored dozens of student memberships. As AFE issues dues allotments to the Chapter, Franklin pours the revenue back into sponsoring students; not because he has to, but because he feels it's the right thing to do, and a good investment in the future of the facilities profession.

Franklin's work to integrate students into this professional community is relentless because he knows the value it has to their professional path. What motivates him? "Seeing young folks get excited. I want to see them reach out for help and use

the knowledge that's available through AFE and its members to better their future," he said.

Baby boomers represent over 50 percent of AFE's membership base. The association is proud of the longstanding commitment of its members, but realizes that the incoming students and young professionals hold the key to the association's future.

This 'next generation' absorbs the history, conveys the story, and brings new perspectives on the facilities industry to build upon the legacy that's been established. With this in mind, Franklin's philosophy of introducing AFE early in their careers makes perfect sense.

"What does success look like? Look at the relationships that have been established...in the end it's all about serving one another," he said. Franklin has challenged each Chapter to sponsor at least 25 student memberships by January 1, 2012. "If we serve our young and up-and-coming professionals now," he said, "they will serve our profession well in the future." 

Talisa Thomas-Hall is AFE senior director of membership and operations. One of her primary responsibilities is to serve as the staff liaison to chapters and regions. She can be reached at 571-203-7236 or via email at tthomashall@afe.org.