

## **So IFMA wants to hear ROI stories...**

*By Cheryl Waybright, CFM, CFMJ, FMA, RPA, NCIDQ Certified*

### ***Why am I a member?***

Maybe the answer to this is the human need to “belong” or to “associate” with those who share similar interests. Much of why anyone joins and becomes a member of an association is personal and the benefits derived from membership and involvement is again, personal. Some of us are told to join by our employer. Some of us choose to join and whether the employer covers the costs or not, we continue to maintain our membership.

I might be a member because I actually took a course about and learned the definition of facility management while an undergraduate back in the ‘80s and our professor was a member and told us about this “new” organization. Maybe the reason I joined IFMA was that as an interior designer by education and training working in a facility management department, I found that I wanted to do more than interior design in my career. Most likely, it was in 1988 having been out of college less than a year, I did not know to run from Dave Cotts’ big hand shake, smile, and coaxing “now you really should join this association – it will help your career.” I still have that business card and IFMA flyer that he handed to me that day. He was “President of IFMA”. Wow! (Membership Committees... get them while they are young and impressionable!)

### ***What is the return I have received from the investment of my time as an IFMA member?***

I think the better question is “*Why am I still a member after over 15 years?*”

My reflections on personal ROI derived from my investment of time as an IFMA member come at a very thoughtful time in my IFMA "career". My retirement from eight years of international board service was last month and this year, I celebrated my fifteenth anniversary of membership shortly before attending my 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive annual conference. Did I say celebrate? Well, so much for the illusion that I remain a youngster in this profession.

To me, the return on my time as an IFMA member is what I call my global extended family of learning, development and friendship. Associate as a verb is defined as “to join in a relationship.” So much, if not all, of my ROI is about the people I have met and now call mentors or friends or simply, professional acquaintances. I would have never participated in or accomplished so much within IFMA and our profession had it not been for the people. From Dave Cotts and his urging for me to join IFMA in 1988 to Dr. Larry Spaine, as my employer, for supporting my joining and getting involved in the leadership of the Public Sector Council to Dr. Doug Aldrich for throwing my name into the leadership ring in 1995 and Fred Hess for appointing me an RVP that year to Fred again leading my nomination to Secretary in 1997 to Bob Baird nominating me as a Foundation trustee in 1999 and all those in between.... I thank them all for the faith they have had in me and for seeing something I did not. Although I did not have BellSouth's support to go forward to the helm of the Association when I was on "the track", I still have tremendous ROI.

More important thought is the stability derived from “belonging.” I have been employed by four different organizations over the last sixteen years, sauntering back and forth between "in-house" and "out-house". Fortunately, all of my employment changes have been calculated and driven by me, my need for change or professional growth opportunities rather than by having been downsized or outsourced (or run off for some other reason). Constant by me at all times were and are the passengers on the good ship IFMA - headquarters staff, council/chapter peers, vendors/suppliers, IFMA volunteer leaders, and others that are extensions of the IFMA community. If one considers me successful in my career, I must attribute that success to those on board the same ship.

I guess the short answer would have been “networking”.

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### ***Why have I been a volunteer leader?***

Certainly, it is NOT because of the IFMA paycheck. There is typically no direct financial gain to being a volunteer leader of IFMA or any association. But that IFMA paycheck, though lacking in numerals other than zero, has been full of opportunity. Networking. Honing leadership skills. Learning. Just to name a few.

The answer to this could also be that I was still young and impressionable when the Public Sector Council was formed in 1991. I did not know any better and said yes when I was nominated and elected to be Secretary of the Council at our inaugural meeting in San Diego. And went on from there.

It could be that it is in my genes. That I can't stand to be on the sidelines – that I want to be in the game. But does it really matter why? "Just Do It" comes to mind.

### ***What is the return I have received on the investment of my time as an IFMA volunteer leader?***

Although much of my "time served" for the Association and the Foundation has been in the background, I did have the opportunity to stand in front of many IFMA audiences and I always worked into my presentation the statement "ask not what IFMA can do for you, but what you can do for IFMA" to draw from a quote by a famous American leader.

I followed that statement with comments on how one will get more out of IFMA the more one puts into it. I believed it then and I believe it now. Noting that IFMA paycheck again, the opportunities to meet people from many corners of the globe and multiple backgrounds far outweigh any financial gain.

But for me, the most significant ROI is that hopefully, I have left a single legacy over the years. That somewhere, there is an individual that was motivated by what I had to say whilst promoting the association and profession and became an IFMA/FM leader him/herself and has advanced his or her career personally while contributing to keep the good ship IFMA on its steady course.