

Silver Lining

ASNT IS NOT THE LARGEST technical organization, and the number of active volunteers within it is a small *subset* of the overall membership. We cannot afford to overlook one of our greatest assets — older members — much less purposely ignore them or drive them away.

As we have been hearing, the median age of members is climbing. This reveals the need to encourage younger people to become more involved in the Society, not just because we will eventually age ourselves out of existence but because we need fresh perspectives. If other members are anything like me, they are getting older and set in their ways. We don't just need to step outside of the box — sometimes we need the box to be completely upended. New members, particularly younger members, can not only avail us of new ideas and renewed energy but, if we are lucky, may also provide us with a view of the box from a different angle.

Our aging workforce (or, as the aircraft industry has named it, the Silver Tsunami) has two sides.

On the one hand, we need to make a serious effort to renew our greatest resource, people. We need to encourage more NDT schools or consider building our own. We need to convince industry to use apprentices for on the job training. We need to get the science of our industry into the junior and senior high schools (as with the High School Science Teachers Workshop, which will be in the hands of our sections). There are many things we need to be doing and can be doing to address this.

On the other hand, we need to remember that there are advantages to having a mature workforce if we learn to make use of that maturity. Though our wave of silver may bring us some problems, we need to remember there are also important benefits. Time, experience, wisdom and corporate memory are a few.

As we age, our family lives, jobs and day-to-day routines tend to change and mature. Many of us have more time to devote to volunteer efforts. We have

“ there are advantages to having a mature workforce ”



spent many years in our field and have learned and experienced things that should be shared.

We have seen a lot of change and have learned along the way that change is not inherently good or bad: it just is, and if something needs to be changed we have the wisdom and maturity to approach it in a constructive manner.

We have spent many years in the Society. We know where it came from and why we do things the way we do (as well as maybe why we shouldn't), and we can help it go where it needs to go.

We need to volunteer locally with our section or at the national level. We should volunteer at schools or generally in our communities. We should mentor. Mentors are special because they share a part of themselves, not just what they know how to do. Their time and personalized attention gives others a feeling of significance and may help discover hidden potential. Mentors often introduce concepts that may not be heard of from any other source, our industry being a perfect example.

Let us keep in mind that the Silver Tsunami is our Silver Lining.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jocelyn Langlois". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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