

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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“If tomorrow you are better than you are today, you are successful.” —Grand Master Bong Soo Han



# People, Passion, Performance

BY THOMAS H. PHOENIX, P.E., BEAR, BEMP, ASHRAE PRESIDENT 2014-15

Ten years ago, in 2004, ASHRAE held its Winter Conference in Anaheim, Calif. As usual, we had a packed calendar, but at that meeting I managed to find some time for an afternoon visit up to Santa Monica.

Why did I go to Santa Monica? Well, I studied martial arts for several years, and one of the styles I was practicing at that time was the Korean martial art of Hapkido. As it happens, the person who brought Hapkido to the United States from Korea, Grand Master Bong Soo Han, lived and operated his studio in Santa Monica. Because I had traveled all the way from North Carolina, Grand Master Han invited me to a private lesson, and I couldn't pass up this opportunity.

During our training session together, I was questioning my ability to complete one of the techniques he was showing me, and I made a comment like “I think I might be too old for this.”

Grand Master Han immediately paused our session, looked at me, and asked, “How do you measure success?”

Now, pondering this question, my goal was to not say anything stupid. So I decided to try the old spelling bee technique and get some clarification. I asked, “Well, success where? Professionally, personally? Exactly what are you looking for?”

Grand Master Han held my gaze and simply repeated, “How do you measure success?”

After a moment, realizing I would never come up with a good answer, Grand Master Han finally replied,

“If tomorrow you are better than you are today, you are successful.”

As it turns out, that statement is an old Zen philosophy, and I have never forgotten that moment. It has always stuck with me, and I have measured any success since then by looking at the day-to-day improvements in my life. We are one day away from the start of a new ASHRAE year. How will we measure the success of that year?

The answer is simple and is the same answer that Grand Master Han was looking for from me. One year from now, June 2015—when I leave the office of presidency, ASHRAE will be better than we are today.

So how do we achieve this success? By focusing our efforts and resources in three key areas.

## People

It's universally recognized, and often said, that ASHRAE's greatest asset is our volunteers. We have 54,000 members around the world.

Some people join ASHRAE to get the Handbook and the Journal for free. Or to get a discount on standards or meetings fees. And that's fine—we count those people as members, and we're glad to have them.

However, the members who have the greatest impact for us are our volunteers—those of you who become part of our ASHRAE family. The ones who invest their time and talent into making ASHRAE a premier engineering organization.

Our family is the people who will build the Society into a stronger, more viable, more innovative organization in the future. These people are you. Now, we need to find a way to see how many others we can bring into our family.

At first glance, this might seem like a daunting task. Volunteerism everywhere is down, and disengagement, even at the corporate level, is at epidemic proportions around the globe. Statistics show that 70% of employees are moderately to fully disengaged. Why is that? How can we do better than that?

You hear a lot these days about how people today are very selfish with their free time, and how they don't care. They are not interested in putting in any extra

effort or doing anything outside of going to work. The truth is, however, that is just an excuse. People, of all ages and all professions, will always make time for something they perceive to be valuable.

So, how do we engage our members? How can we use our volunteers more efficiently and respect their volunteer time? What are we going to do to demonstrate that participating in ASHRAE activities is a valuable use of their time?

In a recent Board of Directors' survey, more efficient use of volunteer time ranked as one of the most important issues facing the Society. Volunteers drive ASHRAE, and we must make sure volunteer time is used as efficiently as possible. There are 3,000+ volunteers who work at the Society level, and another 7,000 or so that work within our chapters. If we can earn a small percentage gain in the productivity, motivation and recognition of these people who work so hard for the Society, we will make a huge impact on our overall productivity.

Implementing ASHRAE's new strategic plan will require the creation of a number of ad hoc committees. One of these committees we will organize this year will look at ways to improve volunteer participation. As an example, part of that study will include a review and analysis of the format for our Winter and Annual Conferences. The time that is required to participate at these meetings has been identified

as one of the main reasons that many of our good volunteers do not want to advance into leadership positions at ASHRAE. We need to look at this issue, and several others, to make sure we are using our volunteers effectively, and there are no hurdles to attracting the best future leaders.

My friend and former ASHRAE vice president, Larry Staples, often says we need to be "ASHRAE Evangelists."

"An ASHRAE evangelist," he says, "is a person who believes in ASHRAE completely, a person who actively contributes to Society goals at the chapter, regional, and national level, and who is a *passionate* advocate of and for the Society."



THOMAS H. PHOENIX, P.E.  
ASHRAE PRESIDENT, 2014-15

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Thomas H. Phoenix, P.E., is principal and vice president, Moser Mayer Phoenix Associates, Greensboro, N.C. His presidential theme is, "People, Passion and Performance." Phoenix started his career in HVAC more than 30 years ago as an engineer with the Division of Plant Operation of the North Carolina State Board of Education. After a few years he had an opportunity to enter the design and consulting field of the HVAC business and has been working in that discipline ever since. In 1989 Phoenix established the engineering department, and became a partner, in the architectural/engineering firm of Moser Mayer Phoenix Associates. Phoenix's design portfolio includes schools, research and testing laboratories, industrial manufacturing facilities and classroom, residence hall and food service projects for colleges and universities. He is a recipient of an Exceptional Service Award, a Presidential Award of Excellence, the Region IV Rudy Ferguson Award and a Regional Award of Merit.

## Passion

That's one of my favorite words and our second key area of focus.

Where I live, in the Piedmont Triad area in central North Carolina, we are fortunate to have as one of our most active residents and citizens, Dr. Nido Qubein. Dr. Qubein is a successful businessman and renowned motivational speaker. In 2005, he was asked to take over as president of a struggling small college in our area. Under his leadership, High Point University has now become one of the fastest growing private universities in the United States.

I have heard Dr. Qubein speak many times, and at one of those talks he made a statement that was so exciting to me that I immediately found a pen and paper and wrote it down to keep.

He said, "Passion ignites energy. Energy ignites a purpose. Having a purpose leads to success. But, nothing happens unless there is passion."

At ASHRAE it is the passion to work on that golf tournament because you know that the funds you raise will go toward research to improve energy efficiency in buildings around the world.

The passion to fight through the stress of a myriad of opinions on ventilation rates in a standard because the information is needed to ensure good indoor environmental quality.

And the passion that keeps a small group of people working together for countless hours to plan a successful Chapters Regional Conference for their region that just might attract another new member to get involved in ASHRAE.

When we passionately advocate for ASHRAE (to use Larry's words again), we can bring in these new people with their knowledge and a new drive to succeed.

One of my heroes, a man who defined passion, is Jim Valvano. Jim was a successful college basketball coach and broadcaster; but he was diagnosed with terminal cancer at the age of 46. The world was stunned to find out that this man so full of energy was so gravely ill.

Right before his death, in his now famous speech at the ESPN ESPY awards in 1993, Jim announced the creation of the V Foundation for Cancer Research, an organization with which I have been involved as a volunteer for many years.

Since its founding, the V Foundation has raised over \$115 million for cancer research. That research is now guided by an elite, all-volunteer Scientific Advisory Board of top physicians and research scientists who recommend the research projects that are funded. All of us who are volunteers, working in all of the activities related to the V Foundation, are proud to carry out Mr. Valvano's vision for the future.

Our motto is "Don't Give Up. Don't Ever Give Up."

It's no coincidence that the two organizations I care the most about are set up in very similar ways. They have two very different missions, but ultimately, they share one vision: make the world a better place.

Working to help find a cure for cancer or working to build a more sustainable world. It's all about doing the right thing. Using the resources you have to best help mankind. Using the talent inherent in our membership. Putting the best minds together in one place to share ideas, stir creativity and set standards. That's what we do and that's the passion we must continue to build upon.

And, you know, people with that kind of passion can deliver superior performance.

## Performance

Performance is our final key area of focus.

For ASHRAE, performance has many meanings:—the performance of our volunteers and staff, the performance of the buildings we design, construct and operate and the performance of our Society.

Regarding the performance of ASHRAE, we recently adopted a new strategic plan with four goals: connect, educate, extend and adapt.

These goals serve as broad statements of what we most want and what we hope to accomplish over the next several years. I look forward to seeing the initiatives put in place to build the performance of our great Society.

Measuring and improving building performance has been a priority of ASHRAE for a number of years now, and all indications are that building performance will continue to be one of the top driving forces in our industry. ASHRAE already has many efforts under way in the area of building performance; but this year we are looking



ASHRAE Strategic Plan  
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for a renewed focus on this issue. Existing standards and guidelines are being revised, and new standards are being produced, to help guide the industry, and many research projects are under way to expand our technical knowledge. Let's look at some of these efforts.

### Building Energy Quotient (bEQ)

ASHRAE's building energy assessment and labeling program, bEQ, is one of the most advanced and potentially valuable programs that ASHRAE has currently available. This past year we made a number of changes to the program to make it more attractive and open it up to more users; but, unfortunately, we have quite a ways to go before bEQ gets the recognition it deserves.

In May, I attended the EE Global conference sponsored by Alliance to Save Energy.

I attended a panel focused on "Moving Beyond Codes: What are the Most Promising Advancements in Disclosure, Rating and Labeling Processes?" There was a discussion on the panel about asset and operational ratings. It was the unanimous opinion of the panel that a proper rating system would have both. That's good news because we use the exact approach with bEQ.

The bad news is that bEQ was never mentioned. I also recently saw a conversation on LinkedIn where a poster said he wished the

ASHRAE bEQ program would take off so we could have a better energy rating program from which to choose.

Obviously, we have a great deal of solid marketing to do. Increased exposure of the benefits of the program is something we really need to work on. We have got to find a way to really get the word out, and quite honestly, it can't get bogged down in our typical procedures.

We need to put significant resources behind this as soon as possible. Or we risk missing a great opportunity and losing all of the work of the last few years.

### Building Energy Disclosure Standard

In the area of standards, we are working on a proposed standard on energy disclosure, which was authorized at the 2013 Annual Conference.

Standard 214P, *Standard for Measuring and Expressing Building Energy Performance in a Rating Program*, will provide a standardized approach and methodology for measuring and expressing building energy performance in a rating program. It also will standardize the format and label associated with building energy rating programs and establish minimum requirements for rating program documentation. The standard will apply to new and existing buildings.

The hope is to have a first draft of the proposed standard by May 1, 2015, for public review, with a publication date of January 2016.

### Research

ASHRAE has eight active projects that fall into the energy conservation category. The total dollar value of these projects is \$1.25 million.

One of those is research on energy targets via Research Project 1651, "Development of Maximum Technically Achievable Energy Targets for Commercial Buildings (Ultra Low Energy Use Building Set)."

Today, with so much talk about net zero energy buildings, it is important to understand the technology limits of building energy efficiency. For some building types, such as schools and public assembly, it may be possible to achieve net zero with the inclusion of on-site renewable energy

sources in certain climates. For other building types, such as supermarkets and hospitals, this goal is not feasible with existing technology unless unreasonable quantities of on-site renewable energy sources are used.

With the high cost of these sources and with the site constraints that often limit their use, the best strategy may be to reduce energy use prior to evaluating the impact of including on-site renewable energy sources.

This project, using building energy simulation modeling, hopes to find the lowest predicted energy consumption for a variety of common building types to serve as low energy targets of what can be achieved now and in the near future.

The impact of first cost of the various technologies is not being considered and the resulting ultra low-energy



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targets must be viewed as what is the maximum technically achievable.

The value of establishing such ultra low-energy targets for buildings is two-fold:

1. It will help advance design guides, standards, and codes by providing an ultimate goal.
2. It will indicate to building design professionals what can be achieved and challenge the creativity of those professionals to achieve similar results in actual designs with the real-world constraints of first costs.

The research is being funded in part by the U.S. Department of Energy. The project is expected to conclude in January 2015.

So think about this: every time you add something positive to a collection, the value of that collection increases. Even if it is just a small positive, many small improvements eventually turn into a huge improvement.

### Conclusion

We at ASHRAE are very good at bringing together disparate groups of people from many disciplines, sitting

them down at a table and hammering out solutions to problems. It's how we write our standards, how we produce and distribute appropriate technical information, and how we conduct new research. It speaks to the greater good of what we do.

But, we need more of our best minds talking to each other. Collaborating, sharing, mentoring, learning. Instilling the passion in all of us.

Presidential Member Lynn Bellenger said, "People will judge us on our performance, not our promises."

Well, we make promises every day. That our standards are appropriate. That our Handbook is properly researched. That our Society is building a more sustainable world.

So, how do we make sure that we are remembered for our performance and not just our promises? As Grand Master Han taught me, we can be successful if we are better tomorrow. Better next week. Better next month. Better next year.

We *will* be successful because our **people**, our **passion** and our **performance** will make ASHRAE better in the future than it is today.

Thank you. ■

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