

CAFA article

Happy 10th birthday CAFA!!

As is usual with newly started organizations, there are always a few teething troubles. Founder members were grandfathered in with the CAFA certification and members joining after that, had to sit an open book test from the FBA. The original amnesty was probably too generous in hindsight and it led to some people joining just to obtain CAFA certification, but not remaining active within the chapters

Currently, new members have to earn their certification by achieving CPDs, which is much less obtrusive. I feel that this only really attracts the committed professionals and will be the right course of action for a long and healthy future.

In those early years, goals and objectives have been set to establish CAFA as the organization for the committed and long serving advisors with whom the farm clients want to be associated. All the groundwork has basically been achieved.

The National board of directors has worked tirelessly to achieve small budget surpluses, helping to eliminate accumulated deficits and return the organization to a positive equity situation. These are all accomplishments of which CAFA can be proud.

It is now the time to increase the membership.

The potential is there for CAFA to be a GREAT organization. The potential is also there for it to be recognized as the umbrella organization for the strong group of agricultural advisors that makes up the vibrant and varied membership. The networking and education opportunities that are available at chapter meetings and provincial conferences are well broadcast and recognized. There is a wealth of information available to members through newsletters and online. Professionals can meet other ag advisors in different fields, but share the same common interest; working with producers and farm clients.

My mandate on being elected to the National Board was to try to “get the word out about CAFA”. ***Until our farm clients know that there is an organization out there that ensures that its members provide honest/confidential advice at the same time maintaining high professional standards, then this is just another organization for professionals.***

Our farm clients have to recognize that a CAFA member is set apart from other professionals by their willingness to commit to the standards and certification set by CAFA.

So how can we enhance the CAFA brand?

Use the logo on your business card; use the logo on your letter heading; use the opportunity to advertize yourself and your company/organization on the CAFA website; when speaking at conferences etc., promote CAFA. All of these things will help to get the message out into the marketplace.

Personally, I don't think that the message can be overstated!

Then do everything you can to make your own chapter stronger. Take your turn at sitting on the chapter executive. It's not very onerous. Our own 6 member executive meets about 3 times during the year. We meet for one hour over lunch. At the last meeting in June, we planned the entire 2011/12 winter program, as well as appointing positions on the executive – **in one hour!!** We came up with a theme for the meeting series, as last year and then came up with eight different aspects and potential presenters. This takes a huge amount of stress away from the chapter chair for the rest of the year.

To reiterate; this organization has the potential to be GREAT.

Many CAFA members have their professional designates and have lots of credibility in their own professions, their workplaces and locality. ***When these ag. professionals recognize the CAFA brand as being important to their clients and vice versa, then and only then, are we close to realizing the potential of being a GREAT organization.***

So please step up to the plate and help strengthen your chapter. The strongest chapters have active executives. Serve for a year or even two and encourage others to participate. Even get involved in a community event. I have participated in serving a locally grown breakfast in an elementary school in conjuncture with Ag in the classroom. Hugely rewarding experience!!

Play a part in increasing our membership. Introduce someone into your chapter. Very few will be convinced to take out membership after a couple of meetings, but maybe after a period of time of differing experiences, they might realize that there is worth in having the CAFA certification.

So please play your part in CAFA. Help realize the potential !!