

**S**ince assuming the chairmanship of the APRO membership committee, I have been asking myself if APRO provides a real value to its members. The APRO board and staff also have asked this question. We have done surveys and talked to members face to face during the past year. The resounding answer has been *yes*.

I have been an APRO member for almost 25 years. In that time, I have been an upstart franchisee, a parent raising two children inside our first store, a Washington State Rental Dealer Association president, an APRO board member for six years in the 1990s and APRO president for two years. During my presidency, I began my term fighting off the industry attacks by Henry Gonzalez, Congress and the IRS. I am now serving on the board for a second time.

During all those years, the one constant value of being an APRO member was—and is—its members. The shar-

Convention and Buying Show, the Mid-Year Conference and the Legislative Conference. Also, you need to use all the tools that APRO supplies. Some of these tools are *Progressive Rentals* magazine, Rental Training Online, APRO's *RTO Almanac*, legal advice and *Rental Viewpoint*. If you would just make the effort to read and attend as many of these meetings as you can, you will get a lot more out of your APRO membership than doing nothing at all. In the words of George Zimmer, I guarantee it!

Recently, APRO lost two of its largest dealers. This was a loss of a lot of revenue to APRO and the coverage of a lot of stores. However, I want to remind you that these are only two members and they were only involved in one part of APRO—passage of federal legislation.

As stated earlier, I was APRO president when the whole federal mess started. The attacks by the government may not have ever happened if one of these members had not sued so many of their customers in Minnesota. This prompted a legal aide attorney named

# DOES MY APRO MEMBERSHIP HAVE VALUE?

By Kevin Quinn,  
APRO's Membership Committee  
chairman

ing of information between dealers is irreplaceable. In no other industry will you find this sharing of information between people in the same business as you do in the RTO industry. We also share the same concerns about the treatment of our customers and how poor customer service can affect the image of our industry.

As an APRO member, I have tried not to miss any opportunities to talk to other dealers about their businesses and share my thoughts about mine. At my first APRO meeting in 1982, I learned about damage waivers from one dealer and how to build a business foundation by having your employees help you build your business plan for growth. The knowledge I gained in that meeting alone made our company 100 times more money than the cost of the airplane ticket to the meeting and the money I spent on APRO dues all these years. Just this past year, I borrowed an advertising idea from another APRO member that will bring our company a 14 percent growth in revenue in 2005. I could go on and on about what I have gained personally from my APRO membership, but I think you get the picture.

APRO membership value is there for the taking. All you have to do is get involved in as many APRO functions as possible—functions such as the APRO

David Ramp to file class-action lawsuits against this member. Ramp was a friend of a consumer activist who was the niece of Congressman Gonzalez. She brought this to her uncle's attention. Ramp was also the friend of an IRS agent who wrote a tax memorandum decision against the RTO industry in the lease versus sale issue. This member quit because it claimed that there was no value in APRO.

I find it ironic that if this company would have listened to one of APRO General Counsel Ed Winn's seminars where he warned us not to sue our customers the industry may not have had a federal mess. Or maybe this company found no value in the money, time, sweat and fears that the grassroots movement of all the smaller dealers—who comprise the majority of APRO membership—did during this time. A membership value is not only worth what you receive at the time you need it, but it is also what you might learn and receive in the future. I am sorry to lose any member; but remember, APRO membership gives you value if you want to use it and you only get one vote no matter how much money you spend. This is what makes all APRO members equal.

APRO will still have a solid framework of legislative protection on the federal and state level. We must never



forget the lessons we learned in the 1990s. We must also never forget the power our members have in this arena. It is our members who stopped the attacks in the past and today; it was not one or two large dealers with lots of money. I hope one day that they can see the true value of an APRO membership.

APRO members are what give this Association its true value. We are growing in the number of member companies every day. We still have the second largest RTO company as a member. We also are getting more and more members from all the franchise groups. They must see sharing ideas with more dealers as good for business. They also are independent dealers. Small dealers around the country are seeing that this Association is not here for or run by the big guys. We can all learn something from each other. The two members we lost did not share any ideas about this business; they only wanted to tell us what we must do.

I want to leave with one thought: When you stop listening to other people's ideas you stop learning. When you stop learning, you stop growing.

I think we all want to keep growing! Remember that the time and money you spend at an APRO function or the money you spend on dues may make your company grow, but you will never know if you don't go and talk to other dealers or try the tools your membership offers. Those who have are still members today.

Thanks for being a member and an asset to APRO. ■

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