

Help Bring Democracy Back to PRSA



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I don't typically use my periodic mailings to rally behind a cause but today is an exception.

For years – and I mean years – I have taken a leadership position within PRSA to end the requirement for national officers and board members to be accredited (APR). The motion to do so has come up a number of times before the PRSA Assembly, which casts the deciding votes on matters of governance, and has failed to be enacted.

I have always felt that being accredited should not be a stepping stone to leadership within PRSA. The APR was always intended to be a means toward certification of the PR profession, not a means to become a board member.

I'm accredited as well as a Fellow of PRSA, its highest honor. Does that make me a hypocrite? I don't think so. I went through the rigorous APR examinations because I wanted to become a better PR practitioner. It was like taking a college course and earning a degree. Accreditation allowed me to learn more about my chosen profession and it has served me well. I'm all for it.

But I'm not for APR allowing me to be a national board member and officer of PRSA (which I've been). It's like being required to have a law degree to run for the U.S. Congress. One thing has nothing to do with the other.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn this week that the national PRSA board has taken a position – finally – to allow non-APR members onto the national board. And I thought it could finally happen – that qualified PRSA members who aren't APR could now actually add their credentials and experience to our national board.



I remember the time that Richard Edelman paid a personal visit to the PRSA national board to persuade it to take the position that APR should not be a requirement to be a board member. The board at that time ignored Richard's viewpoint. Today's board, to its everlasting credit, now shares Richard's viewpoint and those of many respected PRSA members as well.

It was with a touch of sadness today that I opened my good friend Jim Lukaszewski's broadside email which makes the case for keeping APR as a requirement for national leadership. Jim, say it ain't so.

I admire Jim greatly for his wisdom and contributions to our profession. But Jim, you're wrong on this one. If we were to keep APR as a requirement for national leadership we'd be eliminating so many PRSA members who will not be able to contribute despite their stature, experience, and capabilities. And that includes Richard Edelman.

I urge all my readers to join me in helping to end the running of PRSA by no less than 20% of total PRSA membership. That's right. Only 20% of all PRSA members are APR. Talk about

elitism.

Let's end this elitism now. Let's allow any qualified PRSA member to become a national officer or board member. If you're a PRSA member urge your Assembly delegates to follow the lead of the national board and open up national leadership to all qualified members. The Assembly meets in October to vote on this motion. What's at stake is a democratic PRSA.

Thanks for reading this.