

Mike Doyle is the President of the CAGC – the Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors - representing the business interests of the seismic industry within Canada. The CAGC website may be found at www.cagc.ca.

As I write this at the end of 2015 to be published in February of 2016 there is little to be optimistic about in our Industry here in Canada. Commodity prices remain low, our Governments are adding on more regulatory and environmental hurdles and more stakeholder processes. The developed world has suggested (in principle anyway) a shift away from fossil fuels however such changes will come at a cost to consumers (and tax payers) in the form of higher energy bills and additional costs such as carbon taxes. It seems obvious to me that as an interim step the world needs to switch to natural gas as much as possible in the meantime as energy systems are slow to change and often involve much cost. Even here in Alberta there is currently a moratorium on building windmills on crown land. So much challenge lies ahead. The uncertainty also lies ahead for Associations as we tend to be one line in someone's budget and can be an easy scratch. Bill Whitelaw wrote a bit of plea for us all as follows:

Daily Oil Bulletin Industry; December 147, 2015 Associations Face Uncertain Future by Bill Whitelaw CEO, June Warren-Nickle's Energy Group

(Full disclosure: the author is a director on the boards of two industry groups.)

As our industry contorts and convulses, the dimensions of its various upheavals manifest in different narratives. Many such narratives overwhelm and subsume others — and often rightly so.

Narratives, of course, are the story arcs of a particular subject: how we talk about things, debate them, understand the myriad voices involved and, ideally, have a sense of where they will track to.

How as industry we discuss the consequences of unemployment, for example, is critical. The magnitude of layoffs is producing, and will continue to produce, unanticipated and unintended consequences, many of which we're currently unable to discern. Already reeling from precipitous commodity price drops, the sector now must contend with a complex policy confluence of climate change and royalty reviews, compounded by the political uncertainty of new governments pushing the boundaries of the energy, economy and environment Venn diagram.

These are critical narratives. They're also overwhelming and all-consuming.

These are important narratives because history — which is always just one step behind us — will tell us more quickly than we might care for, about how well we navigate them through innovative and creative means. In a very real way, how as an industry we understand these narratives, and their various actors and the interplay between them, will determine how we emerge “on the other side.”

But there are other, less discernible, narratives that are equally important and yet they get virtually no airplay or talk time.

What distinguishes the WCSB from many other global basins is the quality of the various industry groups and associations that for the most part serve the sector in the background. This involves both the work they do individually, and increasingly, aligned with each other.

We all know them by the crazy alphabet soup collection of acronyms — the names by which we describe them in an industrial shorthand.

CAPP. EPAC. PSAC. CAGC. CSUR. CHOA. SPE. CSPG. CSEG. CAODC. PTAC. COSIA.

And so on.

These groups advocate and lobby on behalf of their members, industry itself and increasingly, ordinary Canadians.

They create safe forums for a competitive industry to debate and discuss issues, and find common and unifying ground.

Their membership structures and related mandates are as diverse as the sector itself. They speak on behalf of technologies; address issues of the environment and sustainability; and co-ordinate on operations dynamics as seemingly mundane as safety and field efficiency.

Perhaps most important of late is they help shine a light for ordinary Canadians about the importance of our sector to the country's well-being. They are our voices at townhall meetings; they're consulted by various regulators and governments contemplating their own sector build-outs, and they provide neutral insights and perspectives on important issues. Often, they're also the voices that speak most eloquently in international contexts on our sector's behalf.

But will they survive?

In many ways these groups are victims of their own success, to the point that the value of their various "brands" goes virtually unrecognized by those in the best positions through financial influence to insure their survival.

Often, that's the C-suite — the leaders in these days of every-dime-is-a-hostage thinking. Advocates of supporting these groups at lower levels within organizations are increasingly afraid to articulate the value of membership lest it brand them internally as free spenders.

These industry groups are often powered by an incredible volunteer passion. Those volunteers and paid staff, whose ranks are thinning, do the good they do for industry through the way they synchronize and synthesize important dialogues from technology and innovation to social licence and policy development.

In short, they offer a special kind of ROI: return on insight.

Our industry's leaders face many investment decisions in the next several months. These decisions will be critical to the industry's reset and rebuild.

This is an outreach, on behalf of those industry organizations and associations, to ask that they get valued as part of our sector's investment efforts.

These groups are part of our collective sectoral narrative. Without them, we get what we pay for ... or in this case, don't.

Let us hope for the New Year to be one of recovery for all of us.....

From Brainy Quotes

It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.

Epictetus