New CEO's game plan includes Reddit

David Dyjack felt like an anxious host about to throw a party, and worried that no one would attend.

Just one week after joining the National Environmental Health Association as executive director, Dyjack posted his first invitation to "Ask Me Anything" on Reddit, the popular and sometimes controversial online community.

No need for concern after all. Dyjack answered about a dozen questions during the daylong session on May 13, ranging from using resources and eating responsibly to careers in environmental health. (He was not online all the time, but stepped away for other work.) The AMA generated more than 150 comments and was "upvoted" by 83 percent of those who followed the conversation.

"Many of the questions were thoughtful and thought-provoking," Dyjack said. "Overall, I was extremely pleased with the experiment." An added bonus: He and NEHA received feedback and inquiries about the AMA from college campuses, PR firms and other associations.

Dyjack estimated 60 percent to 70 percent of the comments were genuine. Some Reddit users can get nasty, but Dyjack said he was prepared for any "less than noble communications" by his years of working in academia and Washington, D.C. Before joining NEHA, Dyjack was associate executive director for programs at the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

NEHA is reviewing all social media vehicles, including Reddit and Twitter, as one way to raise the visibility of the environmental health profession, the association and the upcoming annual conference in July.

"We believe that environmental health is a contact sport," Dyjack said, which includes speaking out about best practices and taking on controversial issues. "We need to contact constituents nationally and globally in a way that makes sense to them."

Attorney brings energy to two groups

Rich Meyer has two jobs with two different associations, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

In his day job, Meyer is senior vice president and general counsel for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the $194 million-revenue group where he has worked for 17 years. But more recently, Meyer was elected board president of the $1 million-revenue Energy Bar Association, making him only the second association employee to hold the position in the organization's 68-year history. (The first was Sue Kelly, now CEO of the American Public Power Association.)

Board president is a role Meyer accepted with the full blessing of his employer. And he brings a lot of his own energy to the energy lawyers' association.

"I like to do things for excitement, for fun," he said. "I'm not the guy who is going to watch paint dry, just retire in peace. I have no interest in that."

Meyer, 65, has been an energy lawyer since 1979. He spent 10 years of his legal career working for the federal government before taking a job with Texas Oil & Gas. He moved back to Washington, D.C., in 1998 to join NRECA, focusing primarily on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as the association's regulatory counsel.

Meyer's involvement with EBA stretches back to 1980, although he became more active in the organization in 2000 when he joined the board of the association's charitable foundation. He later became president of the Foundation of the Energy Law Journal, EBA's scholarly journal.

The new board president's top priority at EBA is to have "the best membership drive they ever had." And the best way to achieve that, he believes, is to focus on the basics.

"Instead of having everyone argue or discuss 'how do we do that?' (or) 'what programs can we have?'—well, let's keep it simple," he said. "We have 2,500 members or thereabouts, so how about everybody try to get one new member? That's such a simple way of doing it and it makes it real personal."

Meyer will serve as EBA's president for one year before passing the baton to president-elect Emma Hand, an attorney with the law firm Dentons. During that time, though, he won't be neglecting his NRECA day job.

"My goal here (at NRECA) is to bring value to everything that I or my staff touches," he said. "So instead of people avoiding lawyers, they seek us out, because we are going to help them get to where they need to be. And we can only do that if they trust us and we in turn know what we're talking about."

In other people news

Former American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers President Charles Drevna has been named a distinguished senior fellow at the Institute for Energy Research, a nonprofit foundation that conducts research and analysis on energy issues.

In his new role, Drevna will advise IER on a variety of energy topics, particularly fuel and refining issues.

Drevna retired from AFPM earlier this year after leading the association since 2007. He was succeeded by Chet Thompson, an attorney who formerly represented AFPM as external counsel.

Richard Johnson will continue as CEO and president of the Parenteral Drug Association for another six years, under an agreement announced in May. Johnson was named president of the Bethesda, Md.-based group in 2009 after a 30-year career in the pharmaceutical industry.