

# 6 Month Check Up

by Margaret Herriges, CAE, IOM, MTA Executive Director



Wow! I can't believe I've been at MTA for six months already. You have all been so great to me, thank you! And we've been very busy here at *your* association, preparing the tools we need to be able to make your member experience as valuable as possible.

At each board meeting I do an Executive Director update, but only the members at the meeting hear it. So, I want to reach out with this blog and let you all know what's been going on at MTA since I began October 2nd.

## New Look

You may have noticed a new look for MTA. The logo has been designed to reflect the strength of your history and streamlined to be forward looking. It contains bold fonts and bold colors to make Montana's original "Main Street" small businesses stand out.



## Updated Technology

The very first thing we did was to get our computers updated and networked.

Technology is the foundation to member value, so it was important that we have equipment that worked the way we needed. But this update goes far beyond new computers.

We are in the middle of building an Association Management System. What does that mean to you as a member?

- 1) It means we will have the information we need to measure the health and vitality of MTA and make the necessary tweaks and adjustments to keep this association at the top of its game.
- 2) It means a lot more value to our members because this new system will not only give us a more robust database, it will provide you with online classifieds, an online job board, the ability to register for the convention online and even pay your annual dues online.
- 3) It will make staff more efficient by giving us the reports we need in seconds rather than hours.
- 4) It will give MTA a new website with a modern look and definitely modern capabilities.

## SWIG406

We've been working hard developing a mobile phone app that will drive business to our members' establishments. SWIG406 is an opt in program that you can easily be a part of. The idea behind it is the public downloads the app, purchases an in-app subscription and then starts exploring Montana bars serving Montana-crafted beverages. The app purchaser can visit the individual bars listed on the app, all across the state, and use the app to redeem for a free Montana-crafted beverage. As the bar owner, you need to commit to providing the free drinks. Otherwise there is no cost for you to participate in SWIG406 as an MTA member. This not only drives people to your taverns, it helps us to build the much-needed relationship with Montana craft brewers and distillers and provides some really positive press for our industry. If you'd like to be a part of it, [let me know](#) as soon as possible so we can get your screen developed before our May launch. We'll need a few pieces of information from you as well as your logo.



## Member Growth

A big part of our overall plan is to grow the number of members in the MTA. We have been able to increase our membership numbers by 51 taverns since October. We hope to grow these numbers even more as we will start new member campaigns once we get all the technology in place to enhance your membership value.

## **Bylaws Update**

Reading the MTA bylaws is like reading a newspaper article from the 80's. The information is good, but it's dated. So, we've been working hard with the Executive Committee to prepare a new set of updated bylaws to present to the membership for a vote at the September business meeting. In conjunction with the bylaws update, we are creating a policy manual for MTA that will keep us in compliance and strengthen the governance procedures of the association. An association is only as strong as its foundation and good governing documents are the foundation of every nonprofit organization.

## **Communications**

We have increased our member communications with our weekly eNews. Since October we have published 11 issues, 2 legislative alerts and grown our email mailing list to nearly 400 members. All of this is done in an effort to keep you better informed about the industry. These communications will be an important tool for MTA during legislative sessions. Remember, knowledge is power and we want to be sure we keep you in the know!



The taverns that make up our membership have such great stories to share and that's been one of my goals since I started, to tell your stories to the public. To date we've published four press releases, all which have been picked up by major newspapers. I have two more in the works and there are literally thousands more stories to be told.

## **President's Road Shows**

It's been a privilege travelling to Great Falls, Bozeman and Kalispell with President Dax Cetraro and Government Affairs Consultant John Iverson. We have visited members and future members alike in each of these cities, held meetings with legislators and local officials, all to advocate on your behalf.



## **Additional Projects**

We have been busy modernizing the office bringing it up to this century with new phones, Quickbooks online and more. Our goal is to become more efficient AND save money. For example, we got rid of the postage meter that cost over a \$1,000 a year and moved to an online postage system that costs \$15/month.

If you have a Big Sky Gas rebate coming to you, you'll be seeing that before March is over. If you donated your Big Sky Gas rebate to MTA to assist with our efforts to bring you more value, THANK YOU! Your generosity will help us build great things for all members.

As you can see by the length of this blog, it's been a busy six months! But it's an exciting time advocating for your industry and it's a pleasure to work with all of you. I'm grateful for Sharon McCullough who works side by side with me as much more than an admin, and more as a navigator of this all this change we are undertaking.

I believe that people belong to associations for two reasons:

- 1) For the value you receive, and
- 2) For the community you can build

Value includes advocacy, for sure, but part of your member value is a staff that is here for you, to listen to your issues and be a problem-solver. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance to you.

We've set the wheels in motion this first six months. The next six months will be about making these projects come to fruition, so you see more value in your MTA membership. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.