

Executive Director Report | August 4th, 2017

Presented by George Dockins to Convention 2017 delegates

Growing up as a child, I had no fear. But something along the way happened.

One day, I looked in the mirror and saw a complete stranger. I realized that I'd become an extreme introvert, horribly shy. Like many of you, I've struggled. Struggled with confidence, self-esteem. There was a time that if I had to talk to more than a couple of people, anxiety would overcome me.

I remember going to a high school basketball game, I would have to stand off to the side, out of sight, until I could build the courage to walk across that floor and up the bleachers. You see, I knew all those people in the stands would completely lose interest in the basketball game and their attention would be drawn to me, likely judging my appearance in some way. Has anybody else experienced this?

As an adult, I would go to the grocery store and I couldn't walk in front of the checkout stands. Why? Because the people in line would be staring right at me, passing judgement on me.

It is so good to be here with you again as your Executive Director. This is just my example of how powerful trust can be.

We are all here for the same reason. We're here because we share something.

It's not just to network, socialize, and take care of union business.

These are all important, but ultimately, we are here because we share the same beliefs and the same values.

We believe that all work has value, and that all families and all people deserve a livable wage.

We come from all walks of life. We do different jobs. We navigate the world through different lenses, with different obstacles.

But the amazing thing is, we know each other. We're connected.

And I believe when you surround yourself, like you have today, with people who believe what you believe, something remarkable happens.

Trust emerges.

I trust you, and I know that you trust me.

This trust has allowed us to build a good organization. Since 1948, our union has fought many battles, had many campaigns, faced cuts, and came out stronger than before.

But in this world that we're facing, good isn't enough. The next three years will test us.

We need to really hold tight to this connection between us, and trust that all of us, the visionaries of this organization, will take us from good to great.

The fact that I am standing before over 600 of you today is proof that when we surround ourselves with people who share the same vision, who believe what we believe, share a mutual trust and the same core values, we can overcome any obstacle.

There's no doubt that the trust and feeling of community in PSE helped me to become a stronger, more confident person.

I've talked with many of you who have similar experiences, how PSE helped you become more knowledgeable and more confident.

We must continue to trust one another as we face our future.

I said a moment ago, that I'm not satisfied with being just a good union. I want us to become great.

How do we go from good to great?

It starts with leaders like all of you: humble, ambitious, not for yourselves but for PSE, acting for the greater good of our union brothers and sisters.

I believe you are the right people. Right here. Right now, to lead us to greatness.

Together, we are not afraid to confront the brutal facts; that is the first step to becoming great.

It is not possible to make good decision after good decision if you don't first understand the truth of your situation.

Just as important is having faith that we will prevail. We always have.

We have a wealth of talent in our union. Just look around the room.

When the recession hit in 2008, we confronted the brutal facts.

We took necessary steps and as many other organizations suffered through, we came out of that recession with more members, more resources, and more discipline.

I'm going to ask Tom Krabbenhoft, Education and Training Manager, and Mary Howes, Associate Director of Field Services, to come forward and share insight into what we are facing as brutal facts.

This isn't the last fight we will face. This is just the next fight.

We've prevailed for decades because we know that we will prevail. We don't guess. We don't hope. We know our union will prevail by going from good to great.

The Greek parable about the hedgehog states, "the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."

The fox tries all the possible tricks he knows in order to catch the hedgehog.

He plays dead, chases it, sneaks up on it, but every time, he fails. The hedgehog outsmarts the fox every time by doing one very simple thing:

It rolls up into a ball, exposing its spikes.

In our context, the fox is an organization that pursues many separate goals at the same time.

As a result, the strategies and thoughts are often scattered and they struggle to focus.

However, organizations that act like the hedgehog will simplify the work into a single vision, to focus on.

For us it looks like this.

<Hedgehog Diagram>

PSE has deep roots. Our work touches many corners and has had many goals. But by focusing on the member experience, we will go from good to great.

Through a single focus on member experience, PSE will clearly and convincingly demonstrate PSE membership has measurable value – enriching lives and raising the standard of living for families.

Learning to focus on a single, powerful purpose will require discipline.

If it doesn't contribute to the member experience in a meaningful way, we don't do it.

I believe if we lack the discipline to stay focused on this common goal, we will most certainly fail.

How will we stay disciplined? I challenge you to apply extreme focus on the PSE member experience.

We have to embrace and transform our technology and every other tool available to us to meet the expectations of our members – providing personalized, real-time experiences that keep us connected.

We are moving forward with momentum, but we need more people to join us, moving in the same direction, to transform and protect our union.

We need all 30,000 members pushing in one unified direction. Just imagine the momentum we would have.

We talked last year about the member experience, about how we are going to find out what's important and why unions are relevant.

We talked about discovery, alignment, implementation. What we learned and know to be the truth disturbs me.

If Right to Work happened today, 28% of your members would choose not to pay dues.

Possibly 9,000 PSE members out of 30,000 would drop. That's a brutal fact.

Yet, we know we will prevail.

Let's look at what we are doing. In March, the board came together and established new three-year goals.

Your staff worked in collaboration with your Board of Directors to move towards the member experience.

This is just beginning. Moving forward there will be a team of board and staff working together to fine-tune these goals but I want to take a moment to highlight some of their work to date.

In no order, strategic goal...

ADVOCATE

Empowering our members in the workplace and community by advocating with you for quality of life and political power.

Important: we will work with you. We must partner to be successful with this goal!

AWARENESS

Increase the value of PSE membership through branding, recognition, and education of our members as well as the public, legislators, media and our employers.

We have been successful raising awareness of members' contributions at work and in communities, but it must be part of our hedgehog. We will continue to refocus this goal.

EDUCATE

PSE will invest in a comprehensive adult learning program that will grow occupational skills and knowledge, union leadership, personal development and personal enrichment for all members.

How many of you remember **Leadership Academy**?

Starting this fall, we will be bringing back regional leadership academies as well as classes on personal and professional development.

MEMBERSHIP VALUE

Providing innovative programs that guarantee all members know why they should belong.

In my opinion, we have failed to bring true value of membership to our 30,000 members and to educate them on the value a union does bring them.

This must change.

VOICE

Continue to actively listen to our members and encourage and empower them to have a voice and give them tools to be successful.

We will continue listen to you. It's the only way will we know what's important to you.

These goals your Board of Directors have outlined will best position us for the next three years.

As I draw my remarks to a close, I want to go back to trust. Trust is a distinct human feeling.

A person can do everything they say they are going to do; that doesn't mean you can trust them.

It only means they are reliable.

Trust comes from sharing common beliefs and values.

The reason trust is important is because when we surround ourselves with people who believe what we believe, we are:

- More confident to take risks
- More confident to explore; and
- More confident to accept challenges

Because we know that in a short amount of time, PSE will be thrust back to our roots as a completely voluntary organization.

That's right. That's what PSE was all about for the first 20 years of our history.