

More Than A Member

How Sue Ackley Has Found Value in Getting Involved with AOCA

by Emily Schmitt



Sue Ackley served as the first female president of the Automotive Oil Change Association (AOCA) from 2004 to 2006. During that time, she led the association to meet its mission of providing its members with the business tools, resources and education to professionally and successfully deliver convenient automotive oil changes and other preventive maintenance services. But, she also learned the value of AOCA membership, especially in taking an active role in the association.



Sue Ackley

Below, Ackley shared more about the value of AOCA membership and what sets AOCA apart from other associations. You can learn more about Ackley's quick lube, Oil Change Plus, which she operates with her husband, by visiting: www.oilchangeplusrepair.com

Can you tell us a little more about your background?

I was the first female president of AOCA. I served from 2004 to 2006.

As far as my background in the quick lube business, we got in the business in 1995. I set out to learn how to do every aspect of our business, because when someone doesn't show up, who else is going to do it? I am that extra person, sometimes more often than I had planned.

Early in my quick lube career, I served on the board of the Texaco Xpress Lube Council, and my husband and I won Operator of the Year for Texaco in 1996. We always took pride in the cleanliness and the look of our stores. For 12 years I ran our four stores, until one day I had lunch with the president of Energy Petroleum, the largest oil distributor in St. Louis. We discussed the petroleum business, and before I knew it, I was accepting a position as a sales rep. So for the past eight years, I have sold oil, fuel, chemicals and diesel exhaust fluid. What better sales rep than someone who has used all these products on a daily basis? I only sell them what they need, and I can give them a testimonial on the products.

Can you expand on your involvement with AOCA?

I joined AOCA in 1995. 2015 will be my 20th anniversary with AOCA. As well as being in the quick lube business, I've always been involved with AOCA. By being on the Convention and Membership Committees, after serving as a board member, vice president and then president, I find it extremely rewarding. It upsets me a little when you hear people complain, but many are not willing to get involved. If you want to complain, get involved and become a member! That is the only way to make our organization better.

Why is it important to get involved with AOCA?

The people who get involved certainly make a difference, and they are the ones that make AOCA what it is. Unfortunately, it's often the same people who get involved time and time again.

I would like to encourage everyone to do something. Join a committee, do an article occasionally, introduce people at conventions. There are so many things you can do. I understand everyone is busy; not everyone can be the president, but there are still small ways to get involved. AOCA needs your help. Getting involved doesn't have to take a lot of time — you could even send an email to [AOCA executive director] Meredith Young sharing ideas, or call [AOCA president] Jim Grant and discuss your thoughts. He is always willing to take a call or call you back. That is part of being president and enjoying your unpaid job!

As an active member, how have you found your involvement in AOCA to be helpful?

There are both professional and personal benefits. What is most important to me are the great people I've met and the wonderful long-lasting relationships I've made. This year, the majority of people who sent their feedback to AOCA about iFLEX said that the networking was awesome. That, to me, has been the best thing about AOCA: the networking, discussing products, discussing what has helped your business and so much more. After attending iFLEX, if you can name just one thing you learned, you've already paid for your trip right there.

I think that attending iFLEX is very inexpensive compared to the value. It's a great feeling. You leave knowing you've made a difference; you may have helped others and also brought something back to help your own business.

AOCA members are supportive of one another. It doesn't matter if you are a thousand miles away or 10 miles away, AOCA members are always willing to help you. When meeting new members at iFLEX, I always introduce myself, encourage them to discuss their business and offer to help in any way I can.

What advice do you have for new members?

It doesn't matter what oil or chemicals you use, just be the best, be honest, have integrity and the customers will come. Customers will frequent your establishment if you give great customer service, and in the end you will earn a nice living.

Feel free to contact me anytime at ackleco@earthlink.net. I welcome anyone who needs advice or help to get in touch with myself or any AOCA member. ♦

EMILY SCHMITT is editor at the Automotive Oil Change Association. For more information on membership in AOCA, call 800.230.0702 or visit: www.aoca.org