



For more information on this topic, go to www.watertechnology.com and enter keyword(s): WQA, Aquatech, water quality.

Water Technology® talks with ...

Dar Watts

The WQA president shares his thoughts on working with the association and its members.



▶ We recently contacted the current president of the Water Quality Association (WQA), Dar Watts, who was kind enough to respond to several questions we had regarding his newly elected position, important trends in the water treatment industry, the association's current and future goals and much more. An industry veteran, Watts shares insight into this marketplace from his early experiences.

In 2012, Watts, who is also the current president of SEAS Capital Partners, was appointed as WQA's president after holding several positions with the association. In this interview, Watts reflects back on the past year and shares how his team has been preparing for the annual WQA Aquatech 2013 convention. Watts also discusses member benefits and the show's value to our marketplace.

Water Technology: Please share some of your background in the water treatment market.

Dar Watts: My father owned a small water treatment company. And, that was the family business. I took over that business and never looked back. I continued to grow businesses in the industry and this is all I have ever done.

WT: What were your initial thoughts when elected as WQA president?

DW: I was familiar with the role of president, but what was interesting was the timing of being inducted president. First of all, I was inducted by being told the 25-year executive director was going to retire, so that was something that was kind of an immediate need. It was a built-in opportunity and I was very lucky because that allowed me to take a look at how we could reenergize the association.

WT: Why do you feel you were the best candidate for the position?

DW: I don't know if best candidate really sums it up. I had moved through the chairs of secretary, treasurer, vice president and then president. There are a lot of qualified people in our industry to be president.

I think the association felt I had the best skill set. I have international knowledge, I have acquisition knowledge, I have ownership knowledge and I have some great relationships in the industry. WQA thought I would be the best person to lead us to getting the new executive director.

WT: What did you learn going through different positions and how did it prepare you for the new role?

DW: I think what I learned is that we have a really great staff that's on the ball at WQA. We have some really great members that were in these positions before I came along and they left these positions in good shape. What I've done to those positions is took a look at all the positions on the board of

governors and said we're constantly creating metrics for WQA leadership; we need metrics as a board. So we've created our own metrics by which we grade our own success and leadership by. That's one thing we've implemented.

Another thing we've implemented is making sure our 24 board of directors are much more engaged in the organization so we can tell our story more consistently and more often. Those were things that were enhancements that go to the credit of the current sitting board of directors.

WT: What are some other goals you have accomplished as president?

DW: Clarity of message. WQA is a great association and we've really refined our message and our value proposition. Why should you join and what are the values? We have many issues that we lead on and we have been more clear about our mission and our vision.

We have a five-year business plan that we made public last year. Every year at the convention we update what we've done against that plan. So, we have a very clear mission and we feel like we're accountable

(Concluded on page 12)

(Continued from page 10)

to report against that mission.

We hired a world-class executive director. That reenergized us to go out to membership events to tell WQA's story and where we're heading as an organization.

The education program. We're in the middle of revamping that. We have positioned ourselves that in the next four years we will be the world-class leader in educating people and certifying people regarding water treatment.

Legislative. We have a strong package for our legislative program. You'll be hearing a lot more about our actions on the legislative front. To collaborate with organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency, local legislatures and people in Washington.

WT: What can our readers expect from this year's show and its importance to our

industry?

DW: If you're in the industry, the importance for the vendors is this is where you'll see the most people in one sitting. If you think about it from a dealer's side or an attendee's side, Indianapolis will be very well attended because it's a very good place to have a convention.

But, if you're in the industry, this is the one place you can come for three days to renew relationships, increase your certification, see new products in the industry and other products on the showcase floor.

WT: What are some of the future goals for the association?

DW: It's really about our missions and our vision. I'm excited to be a part of the team that continues to really give clarity throughout the organization and throughout the membership. I just can't stress enough the work that the people on the

board and the governors have done to support this effort.

There are so many things we're doing right now that are positive for the organization and it's just taken everyone involved to get the job done — staff members at Lisle, Illinois, Board of Governors and Board of Directors. We've just really got the magic. We've got the right recipe right now and people are stepping up and have brought clarity to the organization. We're doing some really great things. **WT**

