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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
Brian R. Usher, PWLF
APWA President

Editor’s Note: Because of the unique timing of this year’s Congress & Exposition (overlapping between late August and early September), the traditional interview with new APWA President Brian R. Usher will be included in the upcoming October issue. In this issue, President Usher’s first column introduces a new APWA initiative that was launched at Tuesday’s General Session during the Phoenix Congress. For more detailed information about the new initiative, see page 6 in this issue.

On Tuesday at our 2015 Public Works Congress & Exposition, APWA proudly rolled out the new look and vision for our future annual event, PWX. Since I first attended an APWA Congress in 1987 in Chicago, the look and feel of this annual event has remained fairly stable. So, we don’t wear suits to daily educational sessions or on the exhibit floor anymore, we don’t smoke in the training rooms, and we no longer use 35mm slide projectors or acetate overheads for presentations. Today we use tablet computers and mini-projectors, use mobile apps and electronic scheduling to plan our days, and we text, Facebook and tweet, but the vision and format of the PWX logo, APWA is excited about this new look, this new experience for the future. Staff is already working with the hosts of our upcoming PWX shows, ensuring they understand this new and exciting vision. The Minnesota Chapter has been working closely with staff all this year as they finalize their preparations for PWX 2016 in Minneapolis, and the Florida Chapter is already well along in planning PWX 2017 in Orlando.

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“PWX: Not just a new look – a new vision”
PWX Changing the Game

With more than 100 years of annual meetings to its credit, the American Public Works Association has hosted its last “Congress & Exposition.” Now, the association’s annual meeting will be known as PWX, APWA officials announced at Congress in Phoenix last month. Recognizing monumental changes in the makeup of the workforce in the last decade, APWA is launching PWX, the new brand name for the APWA International Public Works Congress & Exposition.

“But PWX won’t be just a new package for an old program, there will be significant changes from the Congress we have known,” said APWA’s Interim Executive Director Larry Frevert. “PWX will incorporate more technology, will embrace and engage the younger generations in the profession, will cater to all the learning styles of the five generations, and will be a setting that will encourage cross-generational dialogue, so everyone can learn and benefit. This is an exciting time of change and PWX is a symbol of our recognition of these changes.”

“PWX will not only allow for the younger professionals to engage with the current public works leaders, but will give them more opportunities to share what they know,” said David Dancy, APWA Director of Marketing. “Millennials have grown up with phone applications, social media, gaming software and all the latest trends in technology; it’s second nature to them. These are the new wave of tools being used in public works, so younger public works professionals do not just come in to learn, they have something very valuable to offer the workforce.

“In the next five years, for the first time in history, the workforce will consist of five generations, all with significant differences in their work behavior,” Dancy continued. “The terms Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Gen Y), and Gen 2020 (Gen Z or Linksters) vary from sociologist to sociologist. Whatever you call them, all five generations will be working side by side in the workplace in as few as five years, and Baby Boomers will begin to give way to the Millennials as the largest generation in the workplace.”

Why PWX?

“We all know that PW stands for public works, and in simple terms, PWX is an acronym that stands for Public Works Expo,” said Dancy. “In addition, the ‘X’ is also the phonetic pronunciation of the letters ‘K’ and ‘S’ in the word ‘works,’ so one can also view PWX as a short acronym for the term public works.

“However, the X has an even more significant context,” continued Dancy. “X is embraced by our younger generations because it is part of their culture—X Games, Xtreme, Xbox, X-Men and even Generation X. Everywhere you look, the X is a popular letter that symbolizes today’s youth. The X in PWX represents the ongoing changes happening in public works today, and it welcomes in the new generation of public works professionals.”

Dancy noted that the APWA Meetings and Marketing staff have been working on a rebrand for the APWA Congress for many years. The APWA International Public Works Congress & Exposition is very descriptive of the event. Because of the length of the name, most people just refer to it simply as “Congress” or the “APWA Congress.”

“About 15 years ago we began branding it as ‘The Best Show in Public Works’ which was easier to say and a more catchy description,” Dancy explained. “However, that brand really hasn’t replaced the term Congress. With PWX, we would like to retire the term Congress as it is an old term that most people don’t associate with. PWX will bring real change to the annual meeting and attract and engage younger professionals.”

What to expect with PWX

“With PWX, you can expect real change that will take the show into the future,” said Dana Priddy, APWA Director of Meetings. “Our vision is to have a show that engages all generations, that incorporates new learning methods, that encourages more collaboration, and uses technology to allow more people to access the show.

“We want to get away from the traditional room sets with PowerPoint™ presentations and make learning new things fun and exciting,” continued Priddy. “When you leave PWX, we want you to walk away wanting more. These changes will challenge your status quo and provide you with ideas to share with your colleagues that will make a difference in the quality of life for your community.

“At this point, we’re changing the game—reviewing all of the latest meeting and event strategies, technologies and formats and incorporating new ideas for learning into the show,” said Priddy. “We’re engaging several groups including young professionals and the Council of Chapters to help us define what PWX will look like in the future. We’re very excited to roll out a new brand, fresh ideas, and a fantastic show. We invite everyone to be a part of the very first PWX in Minneapolis in 2016.”