



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

TEI International President
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A Year of Challenge... and Accomplishment

What a remarkable organization TEI is! In the midst of the deepest economic recession in seven decades, Tax Executives Institute is fortunate to have member after member stepping up, daring to get involved, and making a difference. As I reflect on the impending end of my term as International President, I wish to begin by thanking all those TEI members who took up the challenge I presented when I took office last August.

The list is gratifyingly long: From chapter presidents who balanced the increasing demands of their “day jobs” to the members of the Institute’s Board of Directors who faithfully executed their fiduciary duty in helping TEI advance its mission. From our committee chairs who planned excellent seminars and conferences and oversaw the development of technical submissions and liaison meeting agendas to members who posted questions or comments on TEI’s website, sent emails or picked up the telephone to share the ideas and concerns, or sidled up to the microphone at educational programs to ask questions. And from a staff that remains second to none to the 10 men and women who served with me on TEI’s Executive Committee whose talent and dedication to the Institute cannot be overstated.

Not one of us has “spare” time any more. We can’t “find” it; we have to “make” it. These are challenging, unprecedented times, but in every part of TEI — from the smallest chapter to the largest — our members have responded to the challenge. You don’t have to be a leader to lead; you just have to dare to make a difference. I applaud all those who did.

What are the results of the Institute’s efforts this past year? When the Board of Directors approved TEI’s goals and objectives for the year, it grouped them into four categories — Membership, Advocacy, Education, and Management. While the following summary is by no means exhaustive, I believe it effectively demonstrates the value of “reaching for the stars”: You often get there.

Membership

“Growing the membership” is a challenge even in good economic times. In-house tax professionals have many choices of the organizations they can join. Nevertheless, organizations such as TEI must grow to survive, and our efforts to attract new members, to keep our current ones, and to encourage greater member participation must be ongoing. Accordingly, this year we undertook to compile the best recruitment, retention, and member development prac-

tices of our chapters into a *Chapter Membership Guide*, which will be distributed at this year’s Leadership Seminar. (It will also be posted on our website.)

We also continued our efforts to expand the involvement of **Chief Tax Officers** and other senior tax professionals in TEI. CTOs, like all members, have many choices of which organizations to join and which meetings to attend. While the heads of most tax departments are members of TEI (and, significantly, support their staffs belonging), we believe that we can do more in terms of recognizing and responding to the unique needs and interests of this group of members. Thus, we initiated a no-fee CTO Forum series of web-conferences and telephone seminars, focusing on management and tax issues of special interest to the leaders of tax departments. By the end of June, we had three CTO programs, and the response to them has been good. As the economy improves, we look forward to holding in-person CTO meetings.

The other end of the spectrum from CTOs — those contemplating tax careers — also merited TEI’s attention this past year, as we continued our **outreach to students**. I am exceptionally pleased that several chapters expanded their scholarship programs, some with the help of matching funds from the Institute. Also noteworthy are the Institute’s efforts to assist members in transition and to promote diversity in the tax field by participating in campus outreach programs with TaxDiversity and other firms.

Advocacy

Timely, effective advocacy has long been a part of TEI’s mission. From testimony on IRS regulations, to liaison meetings such as government officials in Ottawa and Washington, to comments on proposed provincial and federal legislation, TEI’s reputation for excellence was enhanced by our efforts this past year. (To confirm that, all you have to do is scan the table of contents of each issue of *The Tax Executive* or log on to www.tei.org.) Special note should be made of the following projects:

- We significantly increased our interaction with international organizations with two submissions to the **Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development**, such as two formal submissions (and many informal discussions), co-sponsorship of OECD Tax Conference (which was held in Washington in early June), and participation in the OECD’s consultation on Business Restructuring.

- We reinvigorated TEI's **state and local advocacy**, for example, with three amicus briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court and increased liaison activity.
- We submitted detailed comments on **Canadian Tax Reform** to the Advisory Panel on Canada's System of International Taxation, whose report adopted many TEI recommendations.
- We actively engaged the IRS in respect of the **Cost Sharing Regulations**, filing comments, testifying at public hearing, and meeting privately to discuss concerns.
- We filed comments with Securities and Exchange Commission on the proposed roadmap concerning the adoption in the United States of **International Financial Accounting Standards**.

We also took steps to ensure that the Institute will be actively engaged in the **U.S. tax reform** debate. It is too early to predict what TEI's substantive positions will be (or whether our broad-based nature will enable us to engage on all the issues members desire us to do). I remain confident, however, that our pragmatic view and unwavering commitment to sound tax administration and policy will enable us to positively affect the outcome.

Education

The economic downturn had a significant effect on TEI's educational program this last year, as travel restrictions and other budgetary constraints limited many members' ability to attend our conferences, seminars, and courses. A low point in the year was the cancellation of a partnership seminar owing to very low registrations. Our disappointment at our lower attendance figures, however, was offset by pride in how our local chapters responded to the challenge, expanding their offerings and making it possible for members to stay up to date.

At the Institute level, too, we responded. For example, we tailored our programs to cover topics befitting the times in which we live. We also launched a series of no-fee distance learning programs in cooperation with Thomson Reuters (the Institute's exclusive affinity partner for tax research) and other firms. Styled *TEI Talking Points*, these programs have covered a variety of topics (from consolidated return developments to in-kind contributions to company retirement plans), and have enabled us to advance our educational mission despite the economy.

In addition, we are working with Thomson Reuters to provide both online training (including qualifying ethics training) and expanded webconferences to members at significant discount. A related point: The financial support of Thomson Reuters and our other sponsors have enabled us to hold the line on both registration fees and dues while expanding our array of member benefits.

While the economy's effect on our **in-person programs** cannot be ignored, it should not detract from the Institute's hosting a complete curriculum of successful educational programs. Our two conferences were a veritable who's who of top practitioners and key government officials, and the feedback we received from participants confirm the ongoing high quality of our programs. I am especially proud of the Institute's decision to institute a full-day

program (working with Baker & McKenzie) devoted to managing foreign tax audits, which was added to TEI's perennial IRS Audits and Appeals Seminar. The program was outstanding.

Management and Stewardship

Last but not least, we made significant progress on several important management initiatives. For example, we implemented the **Social Responsibility Plan** that the Board of Directors approved last year, expanding our chapter sponsorship program, making a series of charitable donations, and encouraging greater volunteer efforts by our members and staff. We should also be proud of these efforts.


At TEI's office in Washington, we streamlined our **bookkeeping system** (including the implementation of a new chart of accounts), and also took concrete steps to enhance the customer service we provide to members and other participants in our programs and activities. We also implemented an action plan to ensure staff quality and continuity through the development of **professional development/succession plans**.

In terms of dollars and staff time, perhaps our most significant project this year is the design and implementation of a new **association management system and website**. While we are a few months away from the launch of the new website, we are confident it will provide our members (and other visitors) with a more pleasing experience. Based on feedback from a task force of members, we are enhancing chapter functionalities — each chapter will continue to have its own site — more robust collaboration features, and more content. We will also streamline the membership application and approval process so those seeking to join the Institute will not find technological barriers in their way.

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On behalf of the Institute, I thank every member who contributed to our membership, advocacy, education, and management efforts. From experience, I know that getting involved and striving to make a difference — is not possible without the support of our employer, colleagues, and family. I owe a debt of gratitude to Hydro One Networks, my coworkers, and especially my wife, Carmela, and our children.

All told, TEI accomplished a great deal this last year. Because of the involvement of dedicated members, we have made a difference for our members, the agencies and organizations with which we interact, and the tax system itself. Have we accomplished everything we set out to do, or done it as well as we had hoped? The candid answer is no. But the unfinished business ahead should not detract from the good work that has been done under what has been trying circumstances for many if not most members. It has been my honor to serve as TEI president. Thank you.


Vincent Alicandri