Those three words go to the heart of STLE’s value proposition.

HAS ANYONE EVER ASKED YOU, “What is STLE?” or “Why should I belong?” What did you tell them?

I get those questions a lot. Some members of our board have what they call an elevator speech ready—a short but meaningful talk that can be delivered in about 30 seconds on the importance of tribology in our world and the reason why they belong to STLE.

As the starting point for the board’s strategic planning process, which I discussed last month in this space, we first had to consider STLE’s value proposition—a short statement of why the organization exists and what we offer our members. In that sense, it is similar to an elevator speech.

Several such statements were proposed, and although the wording was different, they all contained similar elements. Our latest version is, “Connect, Learn, Achieve. STLE improves your ability to compete in the global business environment.”

Let’s take a look at each element.

Connect. STLE offers many opportunities for professionals in tribology and lubrication to connect with others in the same or related fields. If you’re a member, perhaps your first involvement was at a monthly STLE local section meeting. You came to know some of the talented and knowledgeable people involved with nearby industries. Some may even have been your competitors, customers or suppliers.

The second major way to connect is by attending the society’s annual meeting in May, where you’ll interact with about 1,400 others with similar interests. Our meeting this year is May 5-9 in Detroit, and all indicators suggest it’s going to be our biggest event in years.

Additional ways to connect are through our technical committees, international sections and perhaps international conferences (OilDoc, LubMat, ICIT, WTC, UEIL, TAE Colloquium and others). Other ways to connect include our Early Careerist group, the STLE Website with its member directory and our Career Center. STLE also is on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

Learn. The desire to increase my technical knowledge was the main reason why I became involved in STLE. I attended the technical talks at my local section, took education courses put on by local sections and at STLE’s annual meetings, read such publications as Lubrication Engineering (now TLT) and Tribology Transactions, our peer-reviewed journal. Both publications are free to STLE members. I also read books available through STLE. Today there are even more opportunities. Check out STLE University at www.stle.org with its online certificate courses, Webinars and podcasts.

Achieve. Becoming better educated about your field naturally leads to opportunities for achievement, and STLE helps to recognize those accomplishments. We offer four types of certifications—dependent documentation of your knowledge, experience and problem-solving abilities that increases your credibility in the marketplace.

Other arenas for achievement within STLE include publishing a paper, winning one or more awards, becoming a Fellow, giving technical presentations, teaching a course and many other opportunities. Ultimately such achievements can lead to on-the-job recognition with promotions and higher salaries. The recognition “improves your ability to compete in the global business environment.”

Those three little words in STLE’s new value proposition, “Connect, Learn, Achieve,” pack a lot of meaning. However, it is a lot to squeeze into an elevator speech. You might want to trim it a little.