**My STLE story**

You never know how far a simple act of volunteering will take you.

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**MY STLE STORY BEGINS IN 1986** when I got a great job selling component lubricant additives for Vanderbilt Chemicals. I have a bachelor’s degree in chemistry, and my company gave me good basic training in our products. I knew all about our chemicals, their strengths, weaknesses and where to use them. But in hindsight, my knowledge was a mile wide and an inch deep. This is no knock against my company training. I believe most companies in our business offer very similar training.

My job is calling on career formulators. These guys select the components, do all the testing and are responsible for the results. They have seen formulations work and fail. If you are going to convince them to do something different, you better know what you are talking about.

To be better at my job, I needed to be smarter, I needed more experience, and I needed more exposure to our body of knowledge. The mile wide part of my education was fine, I just needed more depth. The formulators were all patient and polite and advised me, nudged me and finally pushed me to get involved with STLE.

Getting involved with STLE was easy for me because I live near Houston. We have an active section of about 250 that provides interaction with the entire lubrication community, from students to retirees, from base oils to end-users and everything in between.

My first STLE annual meeting was in Anaheim, Calif., in 1987 where I took the Basic Lubrication course and attended technical sessions. I earned my CLS certification in 2000. My education in the science of tribology continues today and participation with the STLE community plays a valuable role in that education.

I have to thank those formulators early in my career who encouraged me to expand my knowledge base by participating in STLE.

There are many reasons to be involved with STLE, depending on your professional needs. You might be looking for scientific advances, best practices or an opportunity to network with others with similar interests. Your experience likely will be different than mine. Diversity within our community is one of the many benefits of participation.

Have you ever been asked to volunteer? You know, to do something with no direct link to a payment. The folks running the STLE Houston section saw me regularly and soon asked me to help. I’m embarrassed to say that I turned them down. They came back and said—wrong answer, Rob, there’s give and take involved here. So that year I helped run the local STLE golf tournament and had a great time (my foursome got high score and won fishing poles for our accomplishment). I continued to volunteer, moved through the Houston chairs and was section chair in 1998 and ’99. I joined the national board of directors in 2003 and today I am ready to serve as your president.

Don’t misunderstand me, STLE has taken a lot of volunteer time, but I have gotten far more out of it than I have put in.

So that’s my STLE story. I am looking forward to a great year as your president, and I invite each and every one of you to join me in writing your own STLE success story.

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