

President's Letter

by Robert Boyle, IANY President



Robert "RB" Boyle

Our New Year's resolutions are bound to look a little different this year. The goals we set in 2020 fell short, extremely short, within a couple of months.

However, there is hope and optimism ahead, so we can set realistic goals for our upcoming season. We expect the spring and summer will be productive and less constraining as we get back to "normal."

Consider strategies now, such as getting staff in place. Normally this is challenging, so getting the word out regarding hiring should be done as soon as possible.

Set your marketing strategy now, updating printed materials, ads and your website because you may be too busy this spring and summer to handle all that.

Have extra time? Brush up on courses and enhance your credentials. These will give you additional expertise that you can use for marketing and public relations.

Check with your accountant regarding your company's qualifications and regulations for the Paycheck Protection Program.

If you aren't already involved with IANY, become an active member. You can benefit the industry by helping to influence policies locally and enhance your own business through sharing of ideas and education.

Don't miss our General Meeting including a cocktail hour which will be virtual on **March 3**. We will have a guest panel with mystery guests that you are guaranteed to learn a lot from.

RB Boyle is owner of RB Irrigation and president of the Irrigation Association of New York.

Join Us For IANY's General Meeting

Join us on Wednesday, March 3, 6:30-8 p.m. for IANY's General Meeting. **The event is free to attend and will be held virtually via Zoom.**

The schedule for the event is below.

6:30 p.m. – Cocktail time

7:00 p.m. – Guest speaker

7:15 p.m. – Industry panel

To register for the event, please email your name, company and email address to nicolepreisner@irrigation.org. Zoom links will be sent a few days prior to the event.

We hope to "see" you there!

Thanks to our sponsor Borg and Borg Insurance!

Happy Birthday to Us



With this issue, IANY's newsletter enters its 21st year.



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Attend Our Upcoming Education Events

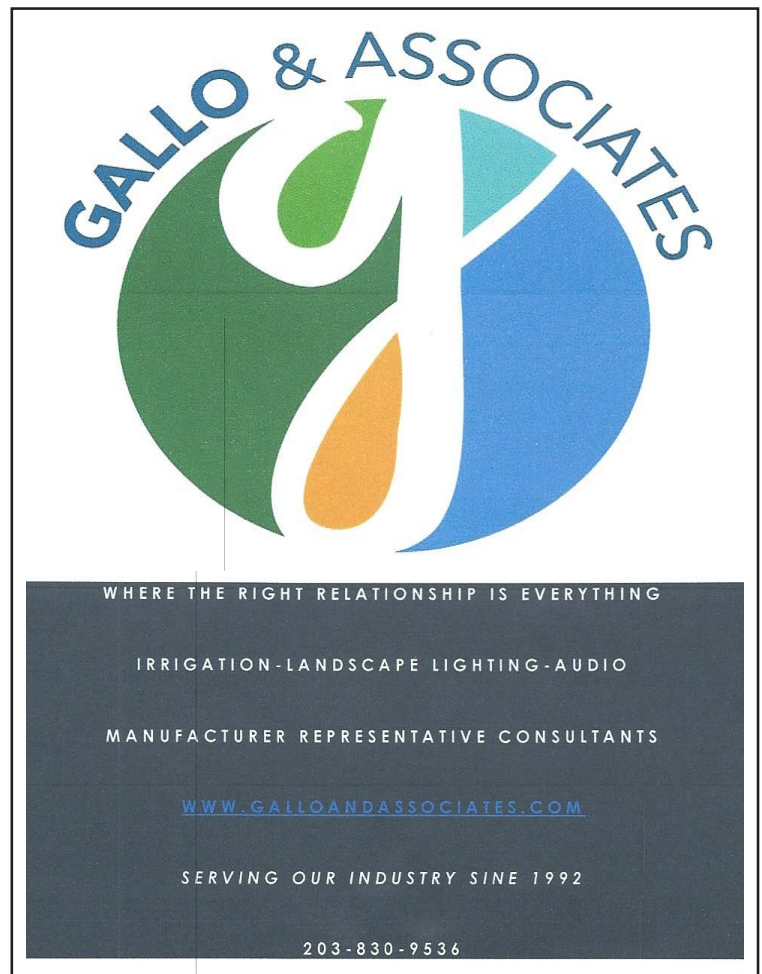
The Irrigation Association of New York has a few education events coming up. Take a look at our upcoming events.

Join us on March 10-11 for two virtual education classes. Bobby Winter will be leading two classes virtually on Wednesday, March 10 and Thursday, March 11.

- Basic Irrigation Design and Flow Losses, **Wednesday, March 10, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.**
- Electrical Course, **Thursday, March 11, 10 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

Both courses will be held virtually via Zoom. To register, complete the registration form on page 4 and submit payment.

The IANY will be hosting a Drip Course on **March 23, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.** at the Science Museum of Long Island (1526 N. Plandome Rd, Manhasset, NY 11030). The course will be held on the Leeds Pond Preserve grounds, a Nassau County Park. This course will be taught by Art Elmers from Netafim. The course will begin in the classroom and cover how to choose which product to use and how to properly install. The hands-on, installation will be outside. Attendees will install drip tubing in a vegetable row garden, a raised bed area and large bedding area. The drip installation project will be recognized in a press release once completed. Those who help and install will be recognized in the press release. Please note that social distancing rules will apply. Lunch will be provided. To register, complete the registration form on page 5 and submit payment.



Beware Of Social Engineering Scams

By Armando D'Accordo

Social engineering attacks are on the rise, and education and awareness are your best defense. Here are some tips to keep you safe.

Any email, website or phone call asking for your password should be ignored because no legitimate company will be asking for your password. Also, always make sure you're on a legitimate website before entering a password. Whenever possible, use multifactor authentication to protect your sign-in process.

Another common red flag is anything online that asks you to execute content. This can be a download from a website or a Microsoft Office document that needs you to "Enable Content." In many cases the content is a virus, so again, think before you click.

Another extremely important indicator to be wary of is requests for money transfers or changes to payment account information. Even if the requests come from a trusted email contact, you should still be cautious. Business email compromise

scams have caused \$26 billion in losses since June 2016, so verify information by phone. Do not respond to the email.

Remember some basics:

- Apple will not call you about your iCloud account.
- Hotmail will not email you asking for your password.
- That pop-up that many people get saying your machine was compromised and you need to call Microsoft is never legitimate.

When in doubt, ask an expert before you call, click or act on any email asking you to provide information or warning you of a threat to your email or PC.

Another concern is a suspicious URL. Emails are filled with spam and phishing attempts, but these tips will help:

- Be sure you have a good spam filter.
- Never use free email for business.
- Always hover your cursor over a URL to see if it matches the site you want to go to.



Irrigation Association of New York
2021 Virtual Winter Education Classes
March 10-11, 2021

REGISTRATION FORM

Electrical Course

Wednesday, March 10, 10 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | 2 IA CEUs

This course will cover zone valve wiring and troubleshooting. Students should have a multimeter and wire stripper available for the course. Valves and solenoids are recommended (one Irritrol or Hunter and one Rain Bird valve with solenoid and 9-volt battery)

Instructor: Bobby Winter

Member price is \$40. Nonmember price is \$50.

Basic Irrigation Design and Flow Losses

Thursday, March 11, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. | 4 IA CEUs

This course will cover zone valve wiring and troubleshooting. Students should have a multimeter and wire stripper available for the course. Valves and solenoids are recommended (one Irritrol or Hunter and one Rain Bird valve with solenoid and 9-volt battery)

Instructor: Bobby Winter

Member price is \$80. Nonmember price is \$100.

Register for both classes for a discount! The member price for both classes is \$99 and \$125 for a nonmember.

Register by Monday, March 8. Complete and submit this form to attend one or both classes. **The education classes will be held virtually via Zoom.** Please note that these are not online courses that you can do on your own time. You will sign in to a live Zoom broadcast with the instructors.

Name _____ City _____

Company _____ Phone _____

Street _____ Email _____

Please check which class(es) you will attend:

Basic Irrigation Design ___ Electrical Troubleshooting ___

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Please make checks payable to Irrigation Association of New York.

Mail this form and a check to: Irrigation Association of New York, P.O., Box 237, Greenlawn, NY 11740 or email this form to Nicole Preisner at nicolepreisner@irrigation.org and pay via PayPal at www.iany.org.

Need more information? Contact Bobby Winter (balawn@optonline.net, 631.665.4545) or Nicole Preisner (nicolepreisner@irrigation.org).



Irrigation Association of New York
Drip Course led by Art Elmers, Netafim
March 23, 2021 | 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Leeds Pond Preserve | Manhasset, NY

REGISTRATION FORM

Drip Course

Tuesday, March 23, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Instructor: Art Elmers

Join us at Leeds Pond Preserve for a hands-on drip course and installation! The course will begin in the classroom and cover how to choose which product to use and how to properly install. The hands-on, installation will be outside. Attendees will install drip tubing in a vegetable row garden, a raised bed area and large bedding area. The drip installation project will be recognized in a press release once completed. Those who help and install will be recognized in the press release. **Please note that social distancing rules will apply.**

Lunch will be provided.

Sign-in will start at 8:45 a.m. and the course will begin at 9 a.m.

Member price is \$60. Nonmember price is \$70.

Register by Friday, March 19. Complete and submit this form to attend the course.

Name _____	City _____
Company _____	Phone _____
Street _____	Email _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Please make checks payable to Irrigation Association of New York.
Mail this form and a check to: Irrigation Association of New York, P.O., Box 237, Greenlawn, NY 11740 or email this form to Nicole Preisner at nicolepreisner@irrigation.org and pay via PayPal at www.iany.org.

Need more information? Contact Mike Dwyer (mdhwa@optonline.net) or Nicole Preisner (nicolepreisner@irrigation.org).

EVENT VENUE INFORMATION

Leeds Pond Preserve
1526 N. Plandome Rd.
Manhasset, NY 11030

Beware Of Social Engineering Scams

By Armando D'Accordo

Continued from page 3

- If you get an email saying you have a package waiting DO NOT click the link. To safely check on a package status, type or paste the number into Google. (You only need the number; if it is a valid tracking number Google will find the status.)

When you are searching for a company on a search engine like Google, your antivirus or URL filtering software should rate the search results. If the site has a green check mark it is safe, if not, do not click on it. If your software does not do this, ask your IT firm about it.

To recap: Be cautious online and with email, educate yourself and your employees, and think before you click or call anyone who sends a call to action via email, even if it is someone you know. Also consider additional layers of security and educational programs that have ongoing training and tests to keep you alert and informed.

Armando assists business clients with technology solutions that facilitate increased cybersecurity and business continuity. He is an industry leader and an accomplished speaker and was recently named to the 2019 Who's Who in Technology and Cybersecurity.



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Connect With The Right Customers

by Jeff Carowitz, Strategic Force Marketing



Jeff Carowitz

Want to be happier in your contracting business? Get more of the right customers.

The right customers are anxious to engage in your services, eager to listen to your advice and willing to pay fair rates for quality work.

The wrong customers make decisions on the basis of price. Why do they do that? Not because they're all lousy cheapskates. They don't have another basis to make a decision, so they go with what's in front of them: price.

Do you want to help prospects make better decisions? (Choosing you!) Invest more marketing time in customer education.

Everyone is looking to make a sale, yet few are looking to inform. Most contractor websites contain very little information that helps prospects make wise choices. What's out there is either aimed at the do-it-yourselfer (explaining how something is done) or is just lists of products and services. It's no wonder that consumers are spending so much time reading online reviews. There's so little other information that's helpful.

Focus on buyer concerns. Most businesspeople want their websites to talk about what's important to them: products, services and the company's biography. Conversely, buyers are looking for information that will allay their fears and help them make a wise decision.

What types of things do they fear? Mainly, they fear bad experiences: contractors who don't show up, shoddy or incorrect workmanship, misunderstanding the scope or vision for the

Continued on page 7

Connect With The Right Customers

by Jeff Carowitz, Strategic Force Marketing

Continued from page 6

project, poor follow-through or leaving work incomplete, or being cheated or overcharged. I could go on! Rework your site so you're addressing these things head-on.

Make a list of what buyers ask about. What are their objections, worries and concerns? Get that list on paper. Then compare it to the information you're offering on your website. I bet you're addressing only a fraction of the issues. Start developing content pages on these concerns. Be sure you're actually surfacing real problems so you can write attention-grabbing answers. For example: Will an irrigation system raise my water bill? Will this shrub require frequent pruning? Don't hide from issues. Instead, be the only one — the expert — who is addressing them.

Develop a buyer's guide. Teach consumers how to evaluate contractor proposals, point by point. Guide them through how to make comparisons, what to look for, options to consider, etc. Make it an easy checklist. Give it a great title like "12 Things to Consider Before Hiring an Irrigation Contractor." Avoid making this another sales pitch. Focus instead on sharing valuable, unbiased advice. Email your guide to potential prospects before your consultations. (Nothing does more to demonstrate your expertise before you arrive.) Include it with your proposal.

(The recipient will find it handy when it's time to decide.) Put it on your website. (It will draw amazing search traffic.)

Be patient. Customer education is not a quick-fix strategy. One-and-done won't cut it. Continue to address new questions and bring fresh expertise. Keep adding content and distribute it through your website, YouTube videos and social media.

Increase close rates and make faster sales. When you're attracting and educating potential customers with helpful information, a virtuous cycle begins. First, you'll have more of the right people coming to you directly, as your expertise will be apparent from the content on your website. Good information accelerates trust because they can see you understand their problems and that you know how to solve them. Prospects will give your company stronger consideration among multiple proposals and might even be willing to wait to work with you over someone else who can start right away. Helpful educational content makes it obvious that you're worth what you're charging.

With over three decades of experience in our industry, Jeff Carowitz helps leading firms with strategic planning and marketing implementation. Connect with him at Jeff@StrategicForceMarketing.com.

Business Goals You Can Set For 2021

Lorraine Hart, President of Ideal Consulting Services



Lorraine Hart

This past year has been a rollercoaster ride for many businesses. As we are into the new year, there is reason to be optimistic for the future. We still need to have a plan for our business for 2021. There still may be unpredictable employee, customer and economic challenges that will require a business plan with a degree of flexibility.

Organizational agility and adaptability have been the theme of surviving this past year. Having a formal, written short- and long-term business plan that you can regularly refer to will help you prioritize your time, manage your money and stay focused on goals.

If you are planning on growing your company, set your hiring goals now and start the hiring process for all of your needs for the upcoming year. As the current situation improves, people will be actively looking for jobs.

Set budgets for marketing. This includes advertising, trade shows and membership fees. Due to the current pandemic

situation we are still facing, focus on social media, newsletter emails, signage and direct mailings.

Most importantly, review your website and keep it up to date, fresh and functional. With the internet constantly evolving, a website that still just sort of "looks good" may not perform as well as a marketing tool today. Websites need search engine optimization for better ranking with Google and other changes to attract more visitors.

Contact us for professional help planning for the future of your business.

Call to schedule your free business consultation.

For more information contact Ideal Consulting Services/ Websites by Ideal at 516.826.6725.



The New Cost Of Doing Business

By Tom Tracey, CID, CIC, CLIA, President of Dimension 2 Associates & Past President of IANY



Tom Tracey, CID, CIC, CLIA

I was speaking to some of my fellow irrigation contractors a little while ago. That's something we have not been doing much since the pandemic started. I miss the interaction and advice gleaned from my friends in the trenches. It made me think of the importance of our association's formal and informal gatherings. I think of all the knowledge I have received by being a member of the Irrigation Association

and the Irrigation Association of New York. I wondered what I've been missing lately.

One topic that came up was the New York State requirement for employers to pay sick days. Some of us have been doing this even before the law came into effect. Sick days, vacation days, personal time off and holidays have been built into my labor rates as "labor burden." I know that other contractors may not always pay such benefits. I heard that some contractors were not aware of this new law. So, I Googled it to find this overview from the New York State website:

On April 3, 2020, Governor Cuomo signed legislation establishing the right to paid leave for New Yorkers. New York's paid sick leave law requires employers with five or more employees or net income of more than \$1 million to provide paid sick leave to employees and for employers with fewer than five employees and a net income of \$1 million or less to provide unpaid sick leave to employees. This new law is in addition to the New York State provisions already in effect providing emergency paid sick time due to COVID-19.

On September 30, 2020, covered employees in New York State began to accrue leave at a rate of one hour for every 30 hours worked. On January 1, 2021, employees may start using accrued leave.

Every year, contractors face new laws in their state, county and town. Some of these laws and changes may be easily discovered if you use a payroll service. However, those contractors that go at it alone can find themselves in trouble. It is very important for business owners to know their expenses, the laws and how it pertains to them. Compliance with these laws is usually an "unfunded mandate," which means that the government makes the law, but the cost goes to the employer. Business owners that are aware of these costs will ultimately need to pass them on to their customers. There are other laws, such as the *Family Leave Act* that are paid out through employee deductions. It is critical to keep aware of the all the new laws and how they will affect your bottom line. If you ignore these laws, you could also be exposing yourself to employee lawsuits, fines and penalties.

The real bottom line is: Every year in business is a new opportunity. An opportunity to make more money or to lose more money. The more you learn, the more you earn.

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Five Offseason Marketing Tips

by Stacie Zinn Roberts

Just because your business slows down in the offseason doesn't mean your marketing should slow down too. Marketing in the offseason creates a top-of-mind awareness of your company so that when your customer is ready to buy, they think of you first. If you wait until spring to market your business because you assume that is when buying decisions are being made, you're probably already too late.

Here are five tips to keep your marketing working to grow your business all year long.

1. Email marketing. Every time you onboard a new customer, you gather email addresses as you record their contact information. The offseason is the time to begin turning those email addresses into assets that work in your favor. Create an email marketing campaign, launch a digital newsletter and send special offers for booking services ahead of the spring rush. If you have a blog or are just starting one, send an email to your customers asking them to subscribe. Use that email list to let your customers know you're on social media. Provide links to your accounts and ask them to follow you.

2. Social media. You've been taking photos all year long of your best projects, right? Turn those photos into social media posts. In the offseason, folks staring out their windows at snow will relish some scenes of green grass and trees with foliage. If you don't already have Facebook, Instagram and Houzz accounts, create them now in the offseason. Research which hashtags are popular in our industry and use them. A few to start with are: #landscaping, #backyarddesign, #irrigationsystem. Be sure to tag your location so local customers can find you.

3. Think beyond traditional holidays. Everyone sends Christmas cards (print or e-cards) or holiday gifts — and you should too. But don't just think about the traditional holidays. Build promotions around other significant dates, especially ones that tie into landscaping and irrigation. Though it is past, Groundhog Day (Feb. 2) is the perfect time to remind your customers that spring is coming and they'll need your services

soon. Use Groundhog Day to suggest they get on the calendar now, offer discounts or simply use it as one more marketing touchpoint. Earth Day (April 22) provides another option to get your clients thinking about landscaping, especially if your company has a sustainability focus.

4. Branded trinkets. Consider sending your customers something beyond the typical (and expensive) hat or T-shirt. Smaller trinkets emblazoned with your logo such as pens, tote bags or coffee mugs are good choices. My favorite idea with a landscape connection is flower seed packets with your company logo printed on them. You can find them online priced at less than \$2 each depending on how many you order, and they're easy to mail. I've seen some that are self-contained postcards/seed packets in one. How cool is that? Imagine your customer's reaction when they receive a packet of seeds in the mail on a dark winter day. It's like sending hope with a postage stamp.

5. Create a marketing plan. In peak season, when you're busy serving customers and running crews, the last thing you have time to deal with is an advertising sales rep. Take the time now to create a marketing plan for the year. Contact your local media outlets to get pricing on ads. Develop a budget. The U.S. Small Business Administration recommends that small businesses with annual revenues less than \$5 million should allocate 7% to 8% of their revenue on marketing. When you have a plan and a budget in place, you'll be less likely to feel pressured to make marketing decisions when your focus is on other parts of your business.

If you use these tips in the off-season, the work you do now will pay off in the year to come.

Stacie Zinn Roberts is an award-winning writer, marketing expert and founder of What's Your Avocado? Marketing and Public Relations, Mount Vernon, Washington, which specializes in green industry marketing. She can be reached at stacie@whatsyouravocado.com.



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Individual lunches will be provided.
Social distancing rules will be in
effect in accordance with CDC
guidelines.





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Meet The New Chairman Of The Long Island Water Conference: Andrew N. Bader

By Mike Dwyer



Mike Dwyer

Andrew Bader has been a commissioner of the Plainview Water District since being elected in January 2010. He is a retired teacher from the New York City school system. He now works in his family's accounting and tax preparation business. This experience and the financial knowledge from his education years help provide insight into the operations of a water district.

Bader's goals for his chairmanship are numerous and include increasing participation and membership in the Water Conference and visiting member districts (post COVID-19). He also plans to work to expand residential adoption of smart

controller technology to reach the goals of water conservation set by the Department of Environmental Conservation. He would like to educate the public about our sole source aquifer system and the challenge of delivering a safe and reliable product.

Assuming this new position during the COVID-19 crisis has posed unique challenges in addition to dealing with rising unemployment and 1,4-Dioxane issues. The Water Conference has been doing virtual meetings to keep members informed. The Water Conference is working on getting the staff that interacts with the public vaccinated. When things improve, the Water Conference hopes to resume in-person meetings, hands-on training and the annual trade show to keep members up to date.



Andrew Bader

Call For Nominations

To maintain the proper balance of experience and new faces on the IANY Board of Directors, the association's bylaws require rotating board membership. Elections are held each spring.

IANY is soliciting nominations to fill expired terms. If you would like to serve on the board or nominate someone to serve on the board, please email nicolepreisner@irrigation.org with interest. After the elections, the board will meet to elect officers for the year ahead.

Connect With Us

We want to connect with you! We want to improve our email records for our members and grow our organization! Please send your most up-to-date email contact information with your first, last and company name in the body of the email to Nicole Preisner (nicolepreisner@irrigation.org).

In addition, we are on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter! Keep up with us there by following or liking our page.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IrrigationAssociationofNewYork/

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LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/groups/8149396/

Don't Forget To Renew!

2021 membership dues have been sent out! Don't forget to renew your IANY membership for 2021.

As an IANY member, here are a few ways you benefit:

- Get your issues addressed. IANY interacts with private and government organizations and other associations to develop legislation and regulations to ensure availability, quality and accessibility of water supplies.
- Expand your knowledge. IANY conducts educational programs to encourage certification and continued education.
- Get exclusive discounts on all IANY events such as educational offerings and golf.
- Find opportunities to grow your business and your network. IANY serves as a catalyst and umbrella organization for outreach, communication and coordination among the diverse parties involved in irrigation.

We hope you will continue to support the industry through IANY membership, and we look forward to working with you in 2021.

Not an IANY member? Become one today! Invest in the future of your business and the irrigation industry by becoming an IANY member. To learn more about membership and submit a membership application, visit iany.org/iany-membership/.



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QUESTIONS?

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