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Growing Pains?

By Michael T. Scanlon, Jr. – SSA President & CEO



*"If you want to be a big company tomorrow,
you have to start acting like one today."*

–Thomas J. Watson, Jr. IBM

Does your company own and operate two to nine self storage facilities? If so, this article is specifically addressed to you.

The Self Storage Association's National Facility Database (NFDb) informs us that there are more than 4,000 self storage companies in the United States that own and operate between two and nine facilities. That is a huge number of firms that inhabit the territory between a one-store owner/operator and the companies that comprise the membership of SSA's Large Operators Council (LOC). [For your information, LOC members must have 10 or more stores or a minimum of one million square feet of self storage space in order to qualify for membership.]

With this in mind, the SSA is formalizing a new membership organization, the Mid-Sized Operators Group (MSOG), that will begin in earnest next year. We plan an aggressive membership and marketing campaign to make all companies with 2–9 facilities aware of the formation of the MSOG and the benefits of joining for 2012. The MSOG will meet twice each year at SSA conventions to discuss common problems, to hear from outside expert speakers and industry panels, to participate in roundtable discussions with peers and to seek solutions to the unique problems faced by companies of this size, particularly in this economic environment. If you are a mid-sized organization with "growing pains," you ought to consider joining SSA's MSOG in 2012.

The five public companies in our industry (the four REITs plus U-Haul) already work very closely with the SSA, largely in support of our legislative programs—all of which affect your business as well. Also, we work with the public companies on regulatory issues such as the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements that go into effect in 2012.

In addition, the SSA has been working closely with the 121 larger companies with 10 or more stores that comprise the LOC to establish a fund that will enable the SSA to standardize data collection and dissemination in 2012; this same fund will also assist the SSA and state associations improve lien laws and fight sales taxes.

The SSA is serious about seeking to address issues of particular concern to the mid-sized companies. Many of these companies are in the critical growth stage facing some issues for the first time: expanding human resources needs, management information needs and systems, operations and policy manuals, consistency of service over a larger company footprint, regionalization, entering new states and trying to understand different lien laws, and new regulatory requirements. These are just some of the "growing pains" that must be addressed quickly by CEOs of mid-sized companies with 2–9 stores.

SSA's new Mid-Sized Operators Group (MSOG) will begin in January 2012. Companies that fall into the 2–9 store ownership category will be asked to join this fall when we send out our SSA 2012 dues notices. If you want to be a big company tomorrow, perhaps it's time to meet regularly with your peers from across the nation to start learning how to act like a big company right now.

For more information call Stacey Loflin at SSA, 703-575-8000 ext. 105 ❖