

Portland Executives Association – Founded on an Idea

The roots of Portland Executives Association began in the printing and publishing district of San Francisco in 1919, shortly after WWI and immediately following the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. It was to have one purpose: It would be restricted to business information and by recommendations to membership by member firms. The organization was founded on the idea of members helping other members to succeed.

The concept of a leads and networking association that would promote business among a diverse group of companies expanded first to Oakland, then to Tacoma & Seattle. In November 1920, the Seattle group headed to Portland to meet with interested parties. As a result, the first meeting of the Portland Executives Association, initially called "*The 100% Club*," was held in December 1920. It was named "*The 100% Club*" because members were to be "100% for each other and 100% in participation."

This idea was spread by volunteer members who wrote to business friends in these cities, explaining the plan, arranging a meeting, and then attending that meeting and helping in the organization in that neighboring city. Seattle arranged the Portland meeting on November 20, 1920, attended by seven firms, and there the club was born. On November 29, 1920, a meeting attended by 10 member companies was held to organize, adopt a constitution and by-laws, elect officers and launch into an effective unit. The first regular meeting of the *Portland 100% Club* was held on December 6, 1920. The association's first president was Merle Campbell, founder of what was to become USI Insurance, which remains a member 100 years later.

Associate members of existing firms were approved in the 1920s, with limitations on their membership. These limitations were updated in the 1950s and again in the 1980s.

In 1925, the association saw an urgent need to change the name of the organization to avoid even the appearance of connection to the Klu Klux Klan, which had a similar-sounding "100% American" list of Klan-sponsored companies at that time. In January 1926, the association revised its articles of incorporation to the Executive Club and eventually was named Portland Executives Association in January 1929. The first "Ladies Day" was held in 1932, with women admitted as members beginning in 1976.

Luncheon meetings were originally held at the old Multnomah Hotel, eventually moving to The Benson Hotel in April 1965.

The association had many ups and downs over the intervening years. Membership levels and participation varied greatly over this time. The Great Depression, World War II and the upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s impacted membership levels. Membership has been as low as 56 members and as many as over 180 members.

The first woman president was Jody Kilgore of Eastside-Westside Moving Company in 2004.

Today's Portland Executives Association is open to all community members in good standing. A strategic planning effort from 2005 to 2010 was formed to provide longer-term goals in compliance with its mission. During this time, four core values of the association were identified, adopted by the Board of Directors, and approved by membership.

Those values are:

- *Business Opportunity:* We deliver value to our fellow members in the leads we provide and promote their business growth in all our actions.
- *Collaboration:* We promote and support a diverse and unified membership – respectful of our traditions – and work together to meet our common goals.
- *Integrity:* We act with honor in what we say and do – financially, personally and professionally – we work together to meet our common goals.
- *Professional Growth:* We commit to the ongoing success and professional growth of each member company of Portland Executives Association.

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