

# Make New Friends, But Keep the Old



Those are lyrics I sang countless times during my tenure as a Girl Scout. This mantra is a great life lesson for a school-age kid—especially one like me, who went to four different elementary schools. But as we sang the song at the end of each troop meeting, I certainly wasn't thinking of all the ways this simple piece of advice could apply to my life—ways that extend far past the simple message of friendship.

In an industry like water treatment, new "friends" are appearing all the time, in the form of new ideas, new treatment methods and new technologies. For a business to survive—and to keep customers satisfied—it is key to stay up to date on the latest and greatest advancements in the industry. As these new friends pop up, it is also important not to forget your background, both in terms of the experience that will help you evaluate new technologies and the tried-and-true treatment methods that may be just the answer to a customer's water quality issue.

In his article, "Softening Technology Trends" (page 6), Steve Fox of Next Filtration Technologies Inc. expounds on just this issue. Currently, the market is being flooded with new ideas about water softening and conditioning—the latest technologies range from capacitive deionization to template assisted crystallization to magnetics. Gaining knowledge about these technologies, whether you decide to adopt them at your company or not, is crucial. "Regardless of the reasons driving consumer interest in alternative technologies, you must have answers for every potential customer who contacts you," Fox writes. "Be prepared to give professional answers that will instill confidence in you and your business."

Fox is also quick to point out, however, that "ion exchange is not going away." This proven technology has served customers' needs for decades, and more efficient systems are becoming available. This is where "keeping the old" comes in—dealers must use their knowledge and experience to evaluate which applications are prime for a new technology, and which are better suited to the traditional.

Another trending topic in the water treatment market is water efficiency. Newer, more efficient versions of all types of water softening and treatment systems are being introduced, and the latest fixtures, from faucets to showerheads to toilets, offer the right balance of efficiency and flow. Embracing these new technologies will certainly help conserve water—in fact, in her article, "Chasing Gallons" (page 8), Barbara Higgins of Plumbing Manufacturers Intl. notes that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 3 billion gal of water could be saved per day if all fixtures were updated the latest water-efficient models. While these new technologies are excellent ways to conserve water, it is important to remember some of the more traditional ways that people can save water—from simply taking shorter showers and turning off the sink when not in use to installing simple water reuse methods like rain barrels.

Softening and water efficiency are just two examples of industry sectors in which it is important to stay on top of the latest technologies, while also leveraging traditional methods that are still applicable today. As you learn about new technologies, keep the motto in mind—don't forget the past, and always keep an eye toward the future.

*Kate Cline*

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