



## Robert Toth Candidate for 2nd Vice President

**How long have you been a member of the IAAI?** Since September 11, 1993

**How many IAAI annual meetings have you attended?** 23

**Which years?** I have attended 23 of the last 24 IAAI AGM's/ITC's, missing only Grand Rapids, Michigan in 2000

**What IAAI Committees have you served on; Which years?** I was a Director for the IAAI from 2003 - 2009 (2 terms). I have served in the past as a member of the CFI Test Maintenance Committee, Communications Task Force, and a Chapter Liaison. I currently serve on the Ethical Practices and Grievances Committee, and the F&I Peer Review Committee / Practitioner Sub-Committee

**Do you regularly attend your State/Provincial Chapter meetings and activities?** Yes

**List any offices held in your State Chapter.** Director - Chapter President.

**Please list any International offices held, special projects or Committee work, indicating years of service.** For over 10 years I have authored and contributed articles in the Fire and Arson Investigator Magazine. I have instructed at FLETC and Huntsville, Alabama for the Complex Arson Investigation for the Insurance Industry course since 2009. I have instructed at several IAAI AGM's and ITC's. and am a proctor for the Expert Witness Courtroom Testimony (EWCT) program.

**If you are elected, will you take an active role in the IAAI, and with your present position, attend all annual meetings and board meetings during your term of office?** Yes

**Describe, in 100 words or less, why you feel you are qualified for this position.**

I am not a conventional thinker; and with 6 years of director experience followed by 10 years of private business - while still actively involved in our organization, provides me unique perspective on how our organization can better serve its membership and humanity in a global sense. Blessed to travel the world, speak to and instruct other investigators and kindred organizations in the investigation of fires, allows me to bring a broader- fresh perspective to the boardroom to better serve our members, widen our impact globally, and break new ground in how we serve our investigators and fellow man worldwide.

**Why do you want to become a Director or Officer of the IAAI?** As a member of this organization since 1993, I feel it is time to give back - pay it forward as it were. I have been blessed and honored to have made many life-long friends who have mentored me through the years and guided me through my career. What they have taught me, would have never occurred without our common ground as fire investigators and members of the IAAI. The opportunities for these relationships are one of the most understated values of IAAI membership - the opportunity to grow and learn with kindred souls, and through those associations, advance fire investigations skills on a personal level, as a career, and as an industry worldwide. To be able to advance, not only what we do as investigators and an organization but to champion and nurture why we do what we do is the main reason I seek the 2nd Vice President position in the IAAI. My 6 years of experience on the board, taken out into private industry around the world for the last 10 years, while speaking and teaching other fire investigators, has given me new perspectives on moving our organization forward and attracting current and future investigators into our organization with innovative thinking and solutions to address the needs of our industry.

**What do you believe are your best leadership traits and how would you use them as a Director or Officer of the IAAI?** I have a sincere enthusiasm and passion. Not only for what we do as investigators and as an organization but more importantly why we are here in our respective roles.

I am **decisive**. Prepared to make the tough decision and understand that difficult and timely decisions will have to be made from time to time for the good of the entire organization. Understanding that these decisions will not please everyone, (that is not a realistic goal) but that they will be made in the best interests of the organization. Most importantly; decisions made in a timely fashion without succumbing to "organizational paralysis from analysis;"

**Honesty and accountability** direct my moral compass. The underpinning for any successes, personally, professionally, or organizationally, come with honesty, effort, and reliability. I hold myself to strict standards of honesty and accountability.

Finally, I feel I am **creative**. I'm not tied down to a "this-is-how-we've-always-done-this-in-the-past" mindset. True, one can certainly appreciate the successes of the past and build on them, but creative leadership requires working together to develop and inspire innovative ideas for today and tomorrow. Creative leadership comes from acting with passion and purpose, having a mindset of discovery and exploration for creating a better organization in the future, building creative teams, and not making changes for the sake of making changes, but to pursue groundbreaking innovation.

**What steps do you believe should be taken to grow membership?** As with anything you wish to grow - it starts with a seed. That seed is planted, it is cared for, nourished, watched over, and given what it needs (at no cost to the seed) and sometimes for years before it bears fruit and provides that return on your investment. So too is growing our membership. We are quickly closing in on 10,000 members. There exist over 100,000 "seeds" for organizational growth that live in the registered users on CFITrainer.net. This

platform would be the simplest and most cost-effective place to put our efforts. Being intentional and cultivating a (digital) relationship with users of CFITrainer.net can easily be accomplished. Our organization should consider offering free, limited, membership benefits for a year for those who have completed some pre-determined number of training hours on CFITrainer.net. In that year they are nourished, watched over, and given what they need to allow them to see the benefits (fruits) of full membership in the organization. Nurturing that growth in the first year could be virtually cost-free. Following up at the end of year 1 with a renewal notice for membership could easily result in growing numbers in the IAAI.

Another way would be to provide incentives for current members to bring in new members. We should be exploring no-cost options and enticements to offer to new members and the current members who brought them to the organization.

**How would you propose to improve relationships and communications between the International and Chapters?** You cannot improve one without the other. Relationships and communication go hand-in-hand. Developing a relationship will not happen unless the communications improve. Improve the conversation, and the relationship will naturally follow without any extra effort (I have already eliminated one-half of your question). So, let's focus on communications.

With all the tools available to communicate, what we have seemed to have lost is personal contact. Nowadays we can communicate in text, email, IM, emoji's, voicemail, blogs, vlogs, tweets, snaps, chats, VOIP, electronic bulletin boards, FB, LI, and the list goes on. Before all this, we had telephone, letters, or face-to-face, all more personal and relational. The current administration has instituted efforts to improve those more personal contacts and communications by requiring directors to attend, when possible, state chapter training and AGM'S. I applaud them for this direction. To enhance that even further, and to supplement the efforts of our chapter liaisons, we should consider assigning chapters to each director and executive to make a personal phone call on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly) to the chapter presidents for no other reason than to check in and see how our chapters and members are doing. A personal call from a director or executive can start the ball rolling to improving conversation, communication, and relationships.

**What are your recommendations for future funding of CFITrainer.Net?** Sell Ads. Place between each module, in each program, a 50 second or more video ad associated with IMI, or any kindred organization.

Provide a fee-based option for ad-free training on CFITrainer.net

Use CFITrainer.net modules as an "infomercial" of sorts to bring full-day training courses to groups or organizations. For instance, during the Basic Electricity module, users should be able to click a button) to request information on bringing a full day/ half day training course to their location based on the Basic Electricity module. Once that interest is expressed, a personal phone call to that person should be made and get the conversation/relationship started on creating a training class for their group or organization. This same tactic can be used for many of the other modules such as; Digital Photography; Civil and Criminal Prosecution: Testimony; Ethics; Explosions; Fire Dynamics; Fire Investigations; Fire Protection Systems; Interviewing; Fatal Fires; Managing Large Fire Losses; Vehicles, and the list goes on.

Develop relationships with higher education institutions (2 and 4-year programs) that can use CFITrainer.net to supplement the curriculum in these schools. During the process, these colleges and universities could enhance their "footprint" by advertising their degree programs on CFITrainer.net to an audience that has already shown an interest in forensics, fire investigations, and sciences. I have entered into preliminary discussions with a university on this very topic. They currently offer a hybrid program where the students conduct most of their study online and attend classes in-person only once a month. If our organizations can work together with a common goal bringing more people into our industry and work toward advancing and raising the level of education for fire investigators - we all win.

**Other than training fire investigators, what two or three other elements do you consider as critical to the mission of the IAAI?** Protecting lives and property from the destruction of fire through active participation in any opportunity that advances that message and promoting our global leadership in the industry of fire and explosion investigations.

We can do that by developing information, press releases, and talking points that we can send to media outlets throughout the world when and where major fire events occur. Through this type of media blitz, IAAI will be the "go-to" organization that people/media will seek out for answers and insight into how fires start, develop, grow, reach such catastrophic proportions, and how expert, qualified investigators work to answer the questions that every one of these large events generates. A good media campaign, with selected IAAI representation, should be able to provide personnel who can provide hours of information without having to speak specifics of any single event. This type of "preplanned" opportunities for exposure in the media - you cannot put a price on it. However, the exposure that it could bring to our organization and the mission of IMI is priceless.