

Gary Blakeley

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I am seeking election to the NCBA CLUSA Board of Directors to share my experience with fellow members and strengthen the role of Cooperatives in the USA. In my current role, as the CEO of the PAGE Cooperative, I serve over 450 newspapers who participate in a Cooperative that was created almost 40 years ago. In those days, the newspaper industry was vibrant and profitable, and the Cooperative was formed to assist the smaller independent papers who lacked the buying power of the large nationwide chains to obtain fair pricing.

Fast forward to today, and the newspaper industry faces unprecedented challenges that have resulted in reductions in revenue, staff and morale. This was the environment when I assumed by role. My actions as PAGE CEO are an example of the contributions which I would bring as a member of the Board of the NCBA. Namely, how I have adapted practices to meet these challenges in the PAGE Cooperative and also my perspective on how Cooperatives can maintain their vital role in Industry.

I was appointed CEO in 2019, and each newspaper that PAGE serves, represents its own community of readership and employees in different geographic and socio-economic regions of the USA. Yet, the benefit of the Cooperative as outlined in the Rochdale Principles created in 1844 remain very applicable for PAGE today. For example, we demonstrate a concern for the community, we deploy education training and information for members, and we have full member economic participation.

As the PAGE CEO, I have created an overall framework of messages and programs with the theme that we are "stronger together" and to "maximize your membership". I developed digital communication channels across the membership, by converting our newsletter to digital, increasing its frequency, implementing a chat feature on our website, and increasing by 10-fold, the number of educational webinars we offer to Members. Since becoming CEO I have expanded our portfolio of solutions beyond our core products to better reflect the needs of members including digital revenue solutions, insurance, advisory, IT, and even real estate.

Our service to members at the PAGE Cooperative is both nationwide and local. Our members are dispersed across the USA and are diverse from small operators, newspaper families, minority owners and new entrants.

While we effectively use teleconferencing at PAGE, I learned during my time at Freedom Communications, the benefit of supporting members on site. In my role as VP Operations at Freedom, with an organization of 125 people, I traveled to meet with managers at our facilities across the USA and was responsible for a diverse

management team, where I recognized performance and promoted from within. I applied this experience to PAGE Cooperative where I travel to meet with members and address firsthand their business issues and advise with best practices on how the Cooperative can help them.

I would be privileged to serve on the Board of the NCBA and bring my experience from a Cooperative operating in a vital industry undergoing turbulent change.