



Geo-Strata

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Geoenvironmental Engineering

ALSO

Geosynthetics: Past, Present
and (Possibly) Future



A LESSON LEARNED

Editor's Note: This issue, John puts down his GeoCurmudgeon pen to share his experiences with hopefully and finally choosing the right name for the organization.

What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet....

Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Sc. 2

While a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, there's still plenty in a name. For many people, "ASFE" – our association's name – brings to mind an extraordinary history. But for many who are unaware of that history, ASFE means nothing anymore. It requires an explanation, and not a simple or exciting one either. Of course, if you're a *real* ASFE traditionalist, an organizational name change is something to be expected.

The association formally began on May 1, 1969, as Associated Soil and Foundation Engineers. In May 1975, it was changed to Association of Soil and Foundation Engineers, because "Associated" made it sound more like a firm than an association. The second name change occurred in January 1988, when the group became ASFE, Inc., retaining the acronym while eliminating four words – "Soil and Foundation Engineers" – that seemed to confer second-class citizenship on the environmental professionals who were steadily comprising more of Member Firms' personnel rosters. The group's legal name still is ASFE, Inc., but since 1988 – with a few exceptions – "ASFE" has been accompanied by an explanatory tagline, creating a "trading-as" name. So, in January 1988, ASFE, Inc. started trading as ASFE/The Association of Engineering Firms Practicing in the Geosciences.

In December 1992, after ASFE modified its bylaws to permit nonengineering firms to become members, the name changed for the third time, becoming ASFE/Professional Firms

Practicing in the Geosciences. That lasted for almost seven years, when the ASFE Board decided it had had enough with taglines, and changed the group's name to ASFE. That lasted for five years while trying to find something reasonable for the letters "ASFE" to stand for.

The fifth new name – ASFE/The Best People on Earth – was adopted during the January 2004 Winter Leadership Conference and lasted until the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year, when it was again changed to...ASFE. The sixth name lasted for one year, until, after a strategic planning session, we came up with the seventh name, still in use: ASFE/The Geoprofessional Business Association. At the time, however, the Board unanimously agreed that we should eventually jettison the ASFE part and keep Geoprofessional Business Association, since that's what the organization is all about: geoprofessional business. And, it's SO much easier to explain.

As someone who has been with GBA since almost day one, I firmly believe it's past time for this newest change. It's time we started calling ourselves Geoprofessional Business Association for purposes of self-identity and greater awareness and recognition among members, prospective members, and nonmembers.

The full changeover will likely take two to three years because it involves doing so much. Am I sad to see "ASFE" go? Sure I am. But I am really a lot happier about welcoming GBA. This time, I believe, we've gotten it right.

~~ASFE~~
Geoprofessional Business
Association (GBA)

AUTHOR

John P. Bachner is the executive vice president of ASFE/The Geoprofessional Business Association (GBA), a not-for-profit association of geoprofessional firms; i.e., firms that provide geotechnical, geologic, environmental, construction-materials engineering and testing (CoMET), and related professional services (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoprofessions). GBA develops programs, services, and materials to help its members and their clients confront risk and optimize performance. Contact john@asfe.org