



## Second Century

# The Idea Behind Ideation

*A few columns ago, I asked for you to light up the CEO mailbox here at HQ with your thoughts and ideas. And you responded! Thank you for that. The emails I have received can generally be categorized as Pleasantries, Complaints, and Opinions.*

The Pleasantries have been fantastic. There is so much passion and enthusiasm for our hobby. I truly believe there has never been a better time to be a ham radio operator. Especially through the pandemic restrictions that we have all had to deal with, our hobby has endured and thrived. Community has never been more important. I have enjoyed reading your stories and kind words. These have become a source of daily fuel for me, reading all the great things members have done, and are doing! So, please, keep your emails coming.

Next are Complaints. Some truly are complaints I want to hear, so improvements can be made. The worst make demands or threats. One of the similarities among many Complaint emails is that they are based on bad information. These emails say, “ARRL did this, and I don’t like it,” or “ARRL didn’t or won’t do that, and I don’t like that,” and in many of those cases I find that the Complaint is based not in fact, but rather an Opinion or piece of conjecture that was said or written someplace — likely an internet or Facebook group — and the author is reacting, and reacting strongly, without finding out the facts first.

I’ve mentioned that ARRL looks at things through the lens of, “Is this good for amateur radio?” A public attack or a Complaint that includes a threat to leave ARRL has no positive effect on the hobby, and certainly does nothing to further an interest or cause. Taking an extreme position leaves little room to translate Complaint feedback into an idea. More about ideas in a minute.

Last, but not least, are Opinion emails. Some people think they’ve communicated ideas in their emails to me, but in many cases, they haven’t. I work very hard to read through these emails, trying to determine exactly what it is the author is trying to achieve. These emails tend not to ask questions or make demands, but they often judge whether something related to amateur radio is good or bad, from the author’s perspective — they’re offering an Opinion.

Sometimes the ARRL staff can translate an Opinion into an idea! One example is the COVID accommodations made to the rules for ARRL Field Day. That idea came from an Opinion email, and participation during

Field Day was spectacular! We expect it to be even better this year. So, translating Opinions into ideas is a worthy pursuit. Perhaps if there was a process for creating an idea, we could build better collaboration between members and HQ!

The common bond that exists between the Complaints and Opinions: Members want to be heard. But to what end? One would hope that the time and effort members put into writing these emails would lead to action at ARRL HQ! When you receive hundreds of emails a week, and some include strong opinions from both sides of an issue, how do you decide which action to take? This also requires a process.

*Ideation* is a formal process of brainstorming: collecting ideas, evaluating them, prioritizing them, and then implementing them. Ideas can be simple or sophisticated. By creating a funnel through which all ideas can flow, ARRL can support the “Culture of Yes” we are striving for. The final decision may end up being a “No,” but every idea has merit, and will have a place at HQ for consideration.

Ideas create the fuel that drives ARRL. To get this process started now, rather than waiting for a system to manage it, we have established a page at [arrl.org/ideas](http://arrl.org/ideas). There you’ll see a briefing on how to translate your idea into a submission. You can click the button to launch your email client, manually cut and paste into an email, or into a word processor if you want to submit via regular mail. We are excited to see your ideas! We will work on ways to make you aware of the status of your idea (just acknowledgment is a start). And there may be ways to create working groups that include *you* as we move forward with implementation.

Your ideas, small and big ones, will inspire a culture of improvement and innovation. So, get involved, be a connector, stay radio active, and see you on the air!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David A. Minster', followed by the call sign 'NA2AA' in a smaller font.

David A. Minster, NA2AA  
Chief Executive Officer