

The President's Message

Size Doesn't Matter



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As Ray Herrick and I prepared for my term as FEDA President, one of the topics we talked about is the makeup of FEDA's membership. There are more than 287 members in FEDA ranging from small to large, with the average size being about \$12 million. Our members are located in 46 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Canada. Our focus ranges from institutional work to public bidding, high-end independent concepts to national chains and retail stores. There really are no two FEDA dealers alike. However, my goals as FEDA President are more focused on what we have in common, the issues we all face, and what we can do to improve the state of our industry and our businesses.

Perhaps the most important role of FEDA and its leadership is advocacy. FEDA must continue to be the voice of our membership when it comes to channel issues (such as manufacturers selling on a direct basis); legislative matters (including the interior design industry's push for regulation); and the setting of industry standards (for example new technologies like REVIT). Collectively our voice is stronger than that of any singular voice and that is why advocacy will remain a key tenet of FEDA's mission.

Closely tied to advocacy is education. We must educate our channel partners, legislators and other foodservice stakeholders in how channel issues can affect the dealer community as well as the industry at large. We must take the lead in making sure the dealer model is taken into account in key channel debates and

emphasize the value FEDA members bring to the foodservice industry.

The other side of education is the Association's role in providing educational opportunities for FEDA members to not only learn but also share ideas in order to improve the profitability of our dealerships. Ensuring our employees are well trained and have the proper tools

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to provide quality and professional advice, products and services, is in the best interest of all foodservice dealers and will also remain a key item in the FEDA mission.

Two new areas we will get involved in are social media and the recognition of foodservice manufacturers that are the best at supporting dealer-based distribution. The details on both of these initiatives are yet to be worked out. However, we have formed a committee (that will be led by Joe Schmitt) to look into social media; particularly how to use it to better serve, communicate with and engage the membership. The details regarding the manufacturer recognition initiative will be finalized in the coming months, culminating at the FEDA Executive Retreat this fall.

There is a lot of work ahead for FEDA. However, we have a great staff, led by our wonderful Executive Vice President, Ray Herrick, an energetic Executive Committee and a Board of Directors made up of some of the finest

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Wasserstrom". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

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President's Message continued

and brightest people in our industry. Together we will continue to advocate, educate, offer opportunities for networking and recognize those that help our businesses succeed. Without regard to your size or focus, FEDA and its leadership are here to help you and your business continue to grow and thrive. □

Association Highlights continued

Education To Go

Members, when was the last time you visited the Members Only Section at feda.com? There, you'll find a number of industry-specific educational tools for everyone on your staff, from podcasts on business management, negotiating and installation to 30 product education segments. Need help? Email member services consultant Amy Risinger (amy@feda.com) □

Shipping continued

"We want our customers to call if they have questions because it gives us an opportunity to help, and we think it's one of the things that differentiates us from our competitors.

Dale Edman, Wasserstrom's Vice President of E-commerce

equipment before manning the lines.

"We're lucky to have reps that have been in the industry for so many years," he says. "We want our customers to call if they have questions because it gives us an opportunity to help, and we think it's one of the things that differentiates us from our competitors. Some prefer to encourage online chats and email but we want our customers to call. That's why you'll notice that our phone number is on every page, in addition to our home page."

Within 24 hours after an order is placed, customer service reps also follow up with a call of their own, particularly on larger orders. In addition to reviewing the order for accuracy, reps use the time to see if additional services are needed for delivery, and inform the customer of any extra charges. Wasserstrom is an example of one side of a dichotomy "we're seeing when it comes to how distributors are approaching ecommerce sales," says Walsh. "By merging its fullservice model with its ecommerce platform, it's controlling the information and using its expertise to make sure customers get what they want how they want it. But there are some in the industry who believe that ecommerce falls under a different level of service. The customer places the order online and they deliver; they don't give advice. The problem is, because they're relying more heavily on customer input, they're more apt to get burned." □



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