

End User Event Survey September, 2009

Some general (and specific) comments for Idea Sharing

(survey organized by Eric Johnson (UMAPP); completed by PPAI Regional Associations)

Our distributor attendance was down this year, but we believe that is because in the past we have not charged non-member distributors to attend. This year we charged a \$50 fee. We did offer a membership special—join at the expo and receive membership through 2010 (they received four months' membership free)—this generated about 25 new members. (AzPPA)

CAAMP did our first annual end buyer show in 2008 and it was a good first attempt as we had about 30 suppliers and about 140 dist/end buyers. We did our second one this year about a month ago and we had about 50 suppliers and about 200 dist/end buyers. It is a huge success for us and gives the distributor the opportunity to bring clients to the largest showroom in the Carolinas! We had great feedback and we will continue this show format in the future. You could also think about a suite show format for the end buyer show as we did for Discovery with a different exhibitor in each suite on one or two floors of an Embassy Suites hotel. This is a great private presentation for the distributors and their clients and can be easier logistically and financially.

CPPA has never hosted an end user event. We have discussed it in the past and polled our supplier exhibitors and most of them asked us not to change our show format. We have many larger distributorships in our area that host their own end user shows, so our suppliers get hit pretty hard around here for those. That being said ... we have had some discussion about hosting a "mini" end user event for our small distributor members—like a hotel room show with cocktails and maybe 12–15 suppliers. But we haven't gotten very far on that.

We here at GCPPA have not ventured down that road.

HPPA has traditionally done two end user events per year for the past several years. In the Spring, we have done a "fashion show/runway" type at lunch—moderately successful, but a pain in the rear to pull together. So we will change to an apparel trunk show this year, but still as an end user show. Our second end user show Christmas in July has 10–12 carefully selected gift vendors at dinner. We have had 50+ end users the past three years and it is VERY well received. We will continue to do it as it consistently draws a total crowd of about 125+.

HPPA has held two end user events since 2006 as part of our two most popular meetings (Wearables Expo and Fashion Show in March and the Holiday Extravaganza in July). We put only the first name of the end user on the name badge and put GUEST OF Member instead of their company to protect their identity. We also offer a reserved table of 10 for a discounted rate so that way the distributor can have an entire table reserved for his end users. The first year we had only two distributors bring one end user guest with them to each of the events. As our members got used to having end users at the meetings and feel more comfortable about how we protect their identity, it has grown in popularity. This past year we had five reserved tables of ten, plus one distributor rented a limousine to bring all of them to the meeting.

We might expand that to three locations next year. The show is held two days in two cities, approximately two hours apart: Chesapeake and Richmond, Virginia. We call it our Twin Showcases. This year between the two locations, we had around 500 end user guests. We had about 175 distributors. (I don't have our official numbers as yet, but this is pretty close). We will absolutely continue this event and have plans to make one of our shows in the western part of our state an end user show as well. As far as other plans, we try to incorporate educational aspects to our existing end user shows. By that, I mean that we provide educational suggestions, or events with our shows for the end users. This year we did a "Top Ten" list of ways to best utilize our show; it was very well received. We've also done an education session on

Branding. We've discussed possibly having suppliers sponsor a short "Case Study" session during the show that we will probably implement next year. (MAPPA)

MiPPA is going to be moving its signature booth show from the Fall to the Spring to piggy-back on OPFA and TSPPA to give the suppliers a complete run of the southern half of District 3 in one week in an effort to save costs and travel time. We will then try and do the same thing in the Fall with a holiday showcase. (Stepping up our efforts to compete with the traveling shows and give suppliers a great regional show.)

NEPPA hosts a very successful end user show every other year (since 1992), alternating with a distributor-only booth show. Distributors who choose to invite clients really enjoy the show—this format provides an opportunity for smaller distributors who aren't able to host their own client shows to expose their clients to many products that they may not have thought to present to them. Some distributors do not like the end user format and attend for the distributor-only show hours at the start of the show. We do plan to continue this event every other year.

We opened our Spring and Fall Showcases (booth tradeshows) to end users at 1:00 PM, for the final two hours of the show. Suppliers were informed during registration and throughout the process, then reminded by announcement at 12:45 PM on the PA system. Each event brought 50 or more end users. The distributor community is gaining trust gradually and some suppliers prefer not to see end users at all. End users were issued distinctive badges and identified as "Guest of DISTRIBUTOR NAME." The main thing is to clearly communicate the format, indicate whether distributors need to accompany their guests, establish a pre-registration and clearly identify end users by distinctive badges. (NWPMA)

Our policy has been not to entertain one, yet it seems like every year we kick the idea around and decide, once again, not to incorporate it into our annual show. It just doesn't seem to be a good fit for our northern-California members.

Fourteen hundred distributors/end users pre-registered in 2009! Over 200 supplier lines showed. Some of our members join specifically to attend this show with their clients. Many of them say that just one order from the show pays for their yearly association dues. (PPAChicago)

PPAF does not have an end user event although we have been talking about trying to put one together.

We are going to talk about an end user event at our Fall board retreat. (PPAM)

PPAMS has an end user show in Nashville, TN, each year in February. It is actually part of a road show that we do each year. We start in Tunica, MS; then go to Nashville; and end up in Knoxville over three days. The Nashville show is the only end user leg of the trip. The other two are regular shows for distributors only.

If you are looking at having an end user show, you need to set forth some rules about suppliers not handing out contact info to end users, *etc.* We had one incident of that this past February, and we have addressed that. You also may want to set some rules with respect to distributors speaking to, or soliciting other distributors clients while on the show floor.

There was consideration of doing an end user show in upstate New York, but we decided against it. We are contemplating doing a survey in that area to get a sense of our members' reactions to this type of event. SAAGNY has not done any end user shows or ventures in the past, but we are probably going to discuss doing something in the near future. (Discuss it in the near future ... not necessarily do something!)

SPPA has never done an end user show, but our Tradeshow Coordinator does want to do this.

It started as an extra day added to our Spring Expo and became a stand-alone four years ago. Distributors must be members to attend and end buyers must be invited by a member. For the last couple of years, it has been our largest show. Our numbers were off a bit this year, but typically 100+ tables and nearly 1,000 end

buyers and distributor salespeople. That compares to our former big event—the closed-to-distributors-only Spring show which draws 300 distributor salespeople. Suppliers are thrilled with the traffic, both the numbers and the less measurable quality of attendees. In exit interviews with both suppliers and distributors, we learn that business is generated as a direct result of this show. I gather that from a supplier's perspective, it is unusual to be able to track a sale back to a conversation on the show floor. It is not scientific, but reasonable to assume that a supplier rep knows more about a particular line and conveys their enthusiasm for it to the end buyer better than anyone else could. Catalogs are all the same, but a conversation with a supplier makes that supplier stand out. (I originally was opposed to the end buyer show, so it is amazing to me how much our end buyers buy on impulse rather than objective.) They also love to see the merchandise and touch it. The end buyer sees it as an advantage. It is a charged and exciting atmosphere. We see order sizes increase and see sales of specific things the buyer saw at the show—often something I would not have thought to show them. We hold the event at Steeler Football Stadium, Heinz Field. The venue is a crowd pleaser. From my point of view as a distributor, it has been a great touch point with clients. It helps strengthen relationships. It is not as big a money maker as the Spring show for the association, but is a revenue generator. We are exploring ways to make it make more money for the association. Our annual golf outing includes distributors, suppliers and end buyers (much smaller scale).

Some distributors would never invite an end buyer and others do so every year. I think that when my clients see the personal relationships we have with key suppliers and invite the client to participate with us and meet those suppliers that they (the clients) finally get it. They understand that it is a partnership and that they belong to it as well. Other ideas we have discussed, but not yet done: end buyer fashion show, end buyer education. (TRASA)

TSPPA. In the past, we had an end user event called Project Runway. It was an evening fashion show the first year where distributors were able to bring their customers to the fashion show, but not the tradeshow the next day. The first year, we only got about 10 end users to the event. I thought for the first year it was okay, but not GREAT. The next year, we changed the format to cut costs and had the show in the morning for distributors only, at lunch we had the fashion show and then in the afternoon, we opened the tradeshow up to end users as well. This was a lot better format ...

One of the things I want our board to consider is potentially exhibiting at an event(s) to educate the business community about promotional products—similar to what PPAI does at NY Ad Week, but on a smaller scale (or perhaps even as an extension of the ADvocate program). I sort of have this vision of us participating at a local conference and providing an educational session as part of the conference program.

We have never put on an end user show, but are planning our first in February. Kinda holding our collective breath for this one, since the main stipulation is that the DISTRIBUTOR SALESPERSON must be an individual MEMBER in order to bring a customer(s) to the show.