

Starting out ... with great gratitude ... and a few comments about EDS

It is a bit daunting but very rewarding to be ERA's new board president, and I am grateful for the opportunity the board has given me. It has been a pleasure to work with the outstanding volunteers on our executive committee of the last two years, and I am looking forward to the important tasks the new executive committee will tackle between now and 2017.

First, some well-deserved thank yous!

On behalf of all ERA members, I extend our deepest appreciation to Mark Conley, our immediate past chairman, and Paul Nielsen, CPMR, our 2013-15 board president and new chairman, for their leadership, and to Kathie Cahill, CPMR, Robert Logan, CPMR, and Dave Norris for their service as senior vice presidents. And it is certainly not too soon to thank our newly elected or re-elected executive committee members — Paul, Kathie and Dave have now been joined by John O'Brien, CPMR, and Chuck Tanzola, CPMR — who, with our staff executives, Bob Terwall and Tom Shanahan, have willingly taken on the responsibility of leading our association through its 80th year and beyond. (And yes, 2015 marks ERA's 80th anniversary!)

Thankfully, although Mark Conley has retired from the executive committee, he is chairing our search committee for a new CEO. This is a huge task in terms of the future of ERA, so it is reassuring that Mark is coordinating this effort.

Before leaving the "thank you" notes behind, our board and every member who attends EDS owes a debt of gratitude to the ERA members of the EDS Board. They are: Craig Anderson, CPMR, who served as president of the summit board this year; plus Kathie Cahill, Dave Norris, Dave Rossi, a past president of ERA, Bob Terwall and Tom Shanahan. Along with board members from the manufacturing and distribution communities, they do a great job of guiding EDS and making it the success it is.

On a very sad note, most of you know that ERA and our industry suffered a tragic loss this year just before EDS opened when Craig Anderson's brother and partner, David Anderson, CPMR, passed away suddenly while in

Las Vegas. For everyone in ERA, our heartfelt condolences go to Dave's wife Tami, his four children, his father Bruce, an ERA past president and Hall of Fame member, and all the Anderson family. (See *In Memoriam* on page 20.)

More about EDS

Having attended EDS for 25 years, I came away from the 2015 summit with some definite impressions that I believe many reps share. It appears this event is evolving from its long-standing format of manufacturer-distributor meetings conducted with reps observing to principals holding more meetings with reps for training and reviews. Gone are the days of reps

as interested onlookers!

This evolution in format is compelling reps to bring more and more personnel to EDS and to stay for a longer time in Las Vegas — at significant expense — so they can respond to the demands of their principals. Of particular concern to me, as well as the EDS Board as I'm told, is the fact that some manufacturers are holding meetings that run for many hours.

We've heard from one president of a major manufacturer that he discourages his

fellow manufacturing executives from holding such lengthy meetings because "they take time away from *our* reps attending *our* meetings, none of which run more than 90 minutes." So at least some principals understand the dilemma these long meetings cause for reps.

And still on the subject of all manufacturer-rep meetings at EDS, it seems fair and just to me that reps should come to these meetings prepared to review their principals. A little constructive, diplomatic advice and evaluation could be of major help to struggling manufacturers.

It's obvious that EDS is changing, as is our entire industry, so if we reps are not also changing, we could be doomed. There will be more on this subject in a future column about that sensitive term, "respect."

In the interim, we have a busy year ahead with plenty to do. Watch for our new "Issue Challenges" project making its debut in this issue. And be assured that I'll welcome feedback, comments and suggestions from all.



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