

Chairman's Letter

We Can Shape The Future

In the February issue we discussed core competencies. Unless an organization excels at its core competencies, its chance of being successful at new ventures is greatly lessened. However, in today's constantly changing and always challenging business environment, simply burnishing your core competencies may not be enough to survive. I remember an opening session speaker at the PPAI show in Dallas a few years ago saying, "If you're as good as you were last year, you're worse." He was speaking, of course, to the idea that if we stand still, our competitors are getting better and will eventually surpass us.

As suppliers and distributors, we constantly reevaluate our own businesses to keep our finger on the pulse of what our customers need today, and even try to predict what they will need tomorrow. Our Association has an obligation to be just as diligent in servicing us as members.

The Member Needs Assessment tells us that our client buyers want to work with knowledgeable distributors who bring them fresh product ideas. Distributor members feel challenged to respond to these buyer demands. Distributors have a wealth of great ideas but need help in matching those ideas to the appropriate product in a timely manner. Suppliers

want to make sure distributor customers are aware of their exciting new products as soon as possible, so they can be matched with distributor creativity and packaged together to solve the client's problem.

Bringing the selling idea together with the right product in the shortest amount of time can only be accomplished through technology. If PPAI is to continue to facilitate our success in the promotional products marketplace, then our Association must be involved in solving this problem for its members.

For our Association, as for our businesses, technology is a key to future survival. If PPAI is not providing us with technology-driven solutions to our everyday business problems, it will not survive. And if PPAI does not survive, it will be far more difficult for suppliers and distributors to do business profitably.

PPAI stages great trade shows, professionally produced, at a bargain price; it provides top-notch education programs; it sponsors effective legislative efforts; and our Association delivers an increasing array of great member benefits, with exciting new technology benefits on the horizon. Finally, because it is *our* Association, it provides a forum that allows us as members to shape the future.

I have been involved in other industries that do *not* have a strong member-driven trade association. I've exhibited at the sparsely attended, high-priced trade

shows attended by poorly qualified people. I know what the lack of strong legislative efforts and an absence of networking and educational opportunities can lead to. I've seen the results in other markets where decisions were made with little regard for the long-term health of that industry.

For PPAI to continue to excel at its core competencies, it must remain on the cutting edge of providing solutions to our member's business problems. Technology will drive those solutions. For PPAI, as for our own businesses, technology will be a key to both success and survival.



A large, stylized handwritten signature of Michael Woody in cursive script, written vertically on the right side of the page.

BY MICHAEL WOODY, CAS

PPAI CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

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PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS BUSINESS