
MANA Local Chapters Prove You Are Not Alone

“The more you give, the more you get.”

While that may be a familiar refrain, it’s never been more accurate than when applied to MANA’s Local Networking Chapters.

There are 26 such chapters located across the United States and Canada, stretching from Atlantic to Pacific and Montreal to Florida. According to MANA members active in the chapters, these networking opportunities have been major contributors to the success of their agencies — not to mention valuable support systems when it comes to facing a myriad of challenges and concerns.

For instance, consider the matter of confidence. According to Roseanne Brunello-McCay, Mountain Rep, Phoenix, Arizona, the Arizona chapter “provides a great opportunity for sharing ideas among reps including discussions of

problems and concerns affecting your agency. It provides a great boost to your confidence when you realize after talking with other reps that they face the very same problems you do. You’re not alone. And a benefit is that someone else may have already encountered and

solved your problems, and they’re willing to share that information with you.”

In the Dallas, Texas area, Alan Larson, Alan Larson Company, notes that “I find our meetings to be especially helpful when it comes to communicating information from some of the larger agencies to the smaller agencies like myself. We’re just a three-man operation, and I find many times that valuable, helpful information can be slow in getting to us. As an example, last

month we had a meeting where several reps who attended the MANA, NEMRA, ERA Keystone Conference in Florida reported information from the meeting, and that was very helpful.”

Larson notes that the Dallas Chapter has recently gone from a quarterly to a monthly regularly scheduled meeting, and “it’s our hope that this move will grow attendance and participation among MANA members.”

Also from Dallas, Sam Elliott, CPMR, Network Agency Sales, Inc., reports that “I’ve been able to pick up so much information that it’s difficult to pinpoint any one area.” He recalls that the Dallas effort began about four years ago when one area rep sent out a

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Roseanne Brunello-McCay

Characteristics of Success

The more successful MANA Local Networking Chapters share several important characteristics that allow them to continue to attract the attention of their reps. Since the chapters became more formalized around five years ago, here are some of the important traits they share:

- Chapters meet regularly at the same time and location. While some chapters have their activities revolve around dinner and even breakfast meetings, the more successful chapters have found that luncheon meetings seem to work best. Whether it's the flow of traffic or the fact that reps have to have lunch every day, these sessions appear to regularly boast the most consistent attendance.
- Chapters have a clearly defined rotation of leadership. Local reps who serve as president, program director, etc., serve for a clearly defined period of time. Once their term expires, new personnel take over. This ensures that no one individual runs the organization and has to devote an inordinate amount of time to the chapter. At the same time, it ensures that fresh leadership and ideas are always at the ready.
- A plan or agenda is followed for each meeting. Whether the meeting calls for a single presentation, panel discussion or roundtable treatment of a subject important to reps, the agenda is planned ahead of time and followed for the meeting.
- At the conclusion of each meeting, a report of the proceedings is provided to interested parties. The most effective means for completing this communication has been by posting the report on the MANA web site (www.manaonline.org) in the section designated MANA Local Networking Chapters. Why not visit that site right now and learn what your fellow peers are talking about.

query asking if there would be any interest in the regular rep meeting. "From that beginning, the meetings have evolved into a valuable-information sharing exercise. We exchange the kind of information you wouldn't get from any other channel, whether it's about the market, customers or principals. While



Sam Elliott

there's been no hard and fast rules related to how often we meet, historically the schedule has been something like three to four times yearly."

As an outgrowth of his involvement in the Dallas Networking Chapter, Elliott notes his completion of the MRERF CPMR program. "It's not likely that I would have gotten involved in it were it not from the personal experiences that several MANA members related during the chapter meetings. Even though they worked in the markets other than what I work in, what they told me about CPMR showed me how valuable it could be."

In the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota area, John King, King Sales Company, looks back at his first



John King

chapter meeting on a date that few will forget — September 11, 2001. "The meeting had been scheduled well in advance, and incredibly, we had very good attendance. Since that time, attendance has been good with a major benefit of the meetings being

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He continues that the dialog and interaction among attendees remains very beneficial whether the subjects discussed are market problems, insurance or contractors. "People feel better about talking face-to-face with others when there are no competitive concerns and that's what we've achieved at these meetings," he explains.

He notes that attendance has been in the range of 30-55, and meetings are generally held about once a quarter. "We don't want our members to feel pressure to attend another meeting. The quarterly meetings have worked well for us."

In Canada, Les Rapchak, Tech Sales Company, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, points to the benefits of the Toronto Chapter as an occasion when "you

can gain a confirmation or a better feel for what's going on in the marketplace. If things are tough for you, it's somewhat comforting to learn that's what everyone is experiencing. The meetings also provide a great opportunity to learn from reps dealing in other industries. Maybe their solutions to problems are things we can learn from." He adds that the Toronto meetings are scheduled every two months or so, usually over lunch.

If the words of fellow reps carry any weight and spark interest in others for local networking chapters, they should contact Jerry Leth, MANA's manager of membership, e-mail: jleth@manaonline.org. □



Les Rapchak