



Value Of CPMR Crosses Borders

Among the more than 200 independent manufacturers' representatives in attendance at MRERF's CPMR program at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, earlier this year were several Canadian reps. Interviews with those reps illustrate a number of points:

- The need for continued education and increased professionalism is greater today than ever before.
- While there are obvious differences in how business is conducted on either side of the border between the United States and Canada, reps share many similarities in the course of their daily activities.
- The value of networking among CPMR participants remains one of the greatest benefits when reps from various industries congregate.

Two 101-level CPMR students heard about the MRERF program last fall at the jointly sponsored MANA, NEMRA, ERA Keystone Conference, and both came away from their first year of classes full of praise for the program.

In speaking about the benefits of CPMR, Mary Reando, RD Associates, Toronto, Ontario, is ini-

tially reluctant, "because I'm not sure I want to give away such a beneficial secret to my competitors." Having overcome that reluctance, however, she says that "What I learned was extremely applicable to what I do on a daily basis. I was able to implement what I learned immediately. For instance, several tips were provided on how to listen (to customers) better, taking more time in the planning process and creating a program sheet before meeting with customers. In addition, now I'm looking at office operations differently than before. We're also considering a product line analysis. All these steps will help us become a more efficient agency."

Networking with fellow reps is also a benefit, according to Reando. "It was great to be able to meet formally and informally with reps from other industries. Even though they dealt with different industries, we shared common problems and concerns."

She adds that as a Canadian rep some material was more applicable than others but even in the area of the law, "many of the contracts we deal with from U.S.-

based manufacturers are covered by the laws of that state. As a result there was much to be learned."

She continues that looking back at what she learned, "I'm kicking myself that I didn't start this earlier."

While agreeing that not everything he was exposed to in the legal presentation was applicable to what he does in Canada, Eric Post, Millennium Marketing, Inc., Mississauga, Ontario, says the presentation itself was so good, it was the one that he rated the highest among all others. "I don't know how much of what I heard was translatable, but if the session had lasted all day I would have been in attendance."

Post, who also heard of CPMR via his attendance at the Keystone Conference, highly recommended the networking opportunities that were presented to him. "The reps I met there are people I want to stay in touch with. There's much to be learned from talking among ourselves."

While admitting that there's a chance he takes away a little less information than many of his U.S. counterparts, Pat Henderson,

Pacesetter Sales & Associates, Edmonton, Alberta, maintains “the content of the 201 program is entirely appropriate to what I do. The instructors are excellent and you pick up so much from the industry people in attendance,” he explains. He adds that “Our markets and our customers are very similar to those served by U.S. reps. As a result, what we learned is very usable here.”

Don Flowers, Kern Industries, Edmonton, points to what he learned in the area of succession planning as being very beneficial. “I have a partner who is thinking of making a move in a couple of years, and what I learned at CPMR will help in that process.”

He adds that as a Canadian, “there are some obvious differences in our respective markets, but what I learned will certainly help me. One major difference is that we don’t necessarily have direct contact with some of our U.S.-based principals. But we still have to maintain our relationships.”

Flowers also points to the ben-

efits to be enjoyed via networking opportunities. “We were able to make great contacts and have continued our communications via e-mail. No matter where you’re located, you’re still going to encounter people and issues that run parallel with reps’ concerns in the United States. There’s no doubt you really benefit by keeping in touch with your fellow reps.”

“Because of my age, I have a particular interest in succession planning,” explains Robin Tetrault, Summit Agencies Ltd., Calgary, Alberta. “Between the formal sessions, the course material and contacts I made with people in attendance, I received a lot of help from people who had purchased or sold their agencies.”

From his perspective as a Canadian rep, Tetrault admits that some of the accounting, taxation and legal issues were somewhat irrelevant, but what I really learned was how similar rep agencies are. The networking aspects of the CPMR program pro-

vide great opportunities for anyone wise enough to take advantage of them.”

Just four months after joining his father’s agency, Gord Jopling, Mechanical Sales Company, Mississauga, Ontario, began his participation in CPMR three years ago. “Looking back at what I learned, all three years were absolutely outstanding. You come away with so much information on how to manage a company more efficiently. You meet a lot of very insightful people talking about the specifics of what we all do for a living.

“By the time you’re finished, which I did this year, you find that you’ve developed a very close network of business friends and acquaintances — people that you can lean on in the future. I have about six from my study group that I stay in touch with. I took advantage of one of my contacts by traveling to Arizona a day early to meet with him on business matters. It was the best thing I could have done for me and my agency.” □

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