



# Reaping the Rewards of the **CPMR** Experience

EDITORIAL | JACK FOSTER



**If the value of MRERF's CPMR program is to be judged from the opinions of recent graduates, then the three-year program is a bargain at any price.** Comments from several of this year's MANA graduates of the accreditation program give high marks for everything from the instructors to curriculum to the wealth of networking opportunities provided for participants.

For those who may not be aware of what the above acronyms mean, the **Certified Professional Manufacturers' Representatives (CPMR)** designation was developed under the direction of the Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF), Arvada, Colorado. The program was developed exclusively to address the professional advancement needs of already well-established independent manufacturers' representatives. More than 1,700 manufacturers have earned the CPMR designation and more than 275 are in the process of completing their requirements.

The program involves multi-level course work taught by a team of instructors from the business and academic communities. Individual classes address a range of topics including sales, management, financial, planning, communication, marketing, productivity, strategic planning, ethics and technology.

The program is aimed at seasoned representative firm principals or managers. Candidates for certification spend a week on the Arizona State University campus each year for three years taking course work and passing examinations designed to make them more productive and effective in their own firms and on behalf of customers and principals. After certification has been granted, annual continuing education credits must be earned to maintain the designation.

# 'Many people die at twenty-five and aren't buried until they are seventy-five'

## Quality, Improvement and Networking

The program has shown its value to participants on a number of levels:

**Program quality.** The high quality of the program is maintained as a result of input from a variety of sources including the CPMR committee, attending students and manufacturers who audit the program.

**Program improvements.** An integral part of the program is the critiquing process that follows each session. Students are asked their opinions of the subject matter and how it was presented. It's the norm that changes are made in the curriculum as a result of these critiques.

**Networking opportunities.** There are any number of opportunities for attendees to look at the issues faced by other industries. Not only do common issues surface, but lifelong personal relationships are forged that in fact can lead to the creation and use of an unofficial board of directors by a rep firm.

MANA members should note that since your association is actively engaged in supporting the efforts of MRERF in promoting the CPMR designation, the Bill Krause CPMR Incentive Program is available to them.

Since MANA is committed to a policy of continuing education for its rep members and endorses the CPMR program, the association's board of directors voted to show its support by instituting a five-year incentive program for rep members who enroll and satisfactorily complete the first year (101 segment) of the CPMR program. The course is designed to make complete businesspersons out of owners and managers of manufacturers' representative firms.

## Student Critiques

If the Bill Krause incentive isn't sufficient to pique your interest, comments from several of this year's graduates should provide an incentive for reps. For instance:

Since he's from Philadelphia, it's more than okay for Frank Fein, CPMR, Associated Marketing, Inc., to invoke the words of Ben Franklin as he relates the value of the CPMR program. According to Fein, "When Franklin said, 'Many people die at twenty-five and aren't buried until they are seventy-five,' he was referring to the importance of learning. In other words, when you stop learning, you stop living, and that's not something I was willing to do.

"I found that CPMR was a wonderful learning opportunity for anyone in business and specifically for anyone in the rep business. During the course of the program we covered everything of value to us — financial, sales and marketing, and more — and even had the opportunity to learn how to value our businesses.

"Certainly based on what I learned, I would wholeheartedly recommend this program to any businessman and certainly to any rep. You become so much more aware of what it takes to be a successful rep. My son has been with me in the business for the past five years, and I've already recommended to him that he take the program. Most reps today have college degrees, but this is so specific that it really fills out your education. It's a real complement to what we learned in college.

"A side benefit has been the relationships we've developed in our study groups. We've been together for the most part for three years. We've developed friendships and keep in touch, and I'm sure we will continue to do so in the future. Even though we're in different industries, there's always something we can learn from each other."

MANA's Chairman of the Board and District 5 Director, John McNellis, CPMR, focuses on two major benefits he experienced from the CPMR program. "Many of the processes that were included in the curriculum were processes that were already incorporated into our operations. What the program did, however, was to solidify their validity. In some cases what was covered was made more definitive, and

## Important elements of the incentive program:

- Rep firm must be a MANA member in good standing for two years.
- Must be a current member when you apply for and complete the CPMR 101 course.
- The first five members from each of MANA's 10 districts that apply will be eligible for the incentive.
- You must apply to MRERF and be accepted into the 2008 CPMR 101 program before applying for the MANA Incentive Program.
- You pay the full CPMR tuition at the time of admission; MANA will reimburse those who successfully complete the 101 course.
- Only members who apply for the Incentive Program before they take the 101 course are eligible for the \$500 reimbursement.
- There will be a maximum of 50 incentives awarded each year through 2010.

Full details of the CPMR Incentive Program (including the application form) are available in the member area of the MANA web site. Contact Helen Degli Angeli toll-free: 877-626-2776, local: 949-859-4040 or e-mail: [helen@manaonline.org](mailto:helen@manaonline.org) for additional information.

I was able to take it to a quantitative level that was very beneficial. What I'm talking about here is something like the line profitability analysis that is very important to our operations.

"A second point that impressed me is how the subjects in the curriculum have been brought up to date with the changing times. For instance, explaining how technology has changed and impacted our businesses. Two other areas that impressed me were the 'Leading the Total Professional Rep Firm' and 'Services Marketing' presentations by Doug Austrom."

When asked what caused him to embark on the CPMR program, McNellis, McReps Incorporated, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, who has been a rep for two decades, explains, "After speaking with other reps that I respect very much, I thought it was time for me to do it, and I'm glad I did." He adds that while it might have been the influence of other reps that pushed him to take the plunge, one of the major benefits of the program was the contacts he made with other reps. "I'd say that networking is half the real benefit of CPMR. Whether it's talking to a rep from another industry over breakfast, lunch, dinner or a break, you learn so much."

In addition to recognizing the networking benefits of the CPMR experience, two of the three graduates from Nelson & Assocs., Santa Fe Springs, California, emphasize the pertinence of the curriculum.

"We have been able to implement many of the concepts that were incorporated in the classes," explains Tony Cass, CPMR, RCDD. He continues that whenever anyone asks what the letters after his name mean, he's prepared a full description and can even provide them with a brochure describing the program. "I wouldn't hesitate for a moment to recommend the experience to other reps."

Sounding a similar note is Frits Kluvers, CSP, CPMR, who maintains, "CPMR offered an effective, holistic approach to being a manager. All of the courses offered a broad approach that prepared me to ascend the ranks of the business."

While he says he wasn't surprised by anything he learned, "There were a number of subjects I was exposed to that you never really think much about on a daily basis. For instance, I never really thought about what it takes to value a rep firm. Now I know what's involved."

Even after amassing a quarter-century of experience as a manufacturers' representative, the need for more experience, education and training never escaped Matt Perry, CPMR, Koehler Borden & Associates, Terrace Park, Ohio. "That's why I embarked on the CPMR path," he explains.

Looking back over the program, Perry notes, "CPMR provided me with a great opportunity to look at the big world picture and think out of the box in terms of my business. Many reps, including myself, worked our way up through the ranks as territory salesmen, and we really haven't had all that many opportunities at training in rep management. That's what CPMR offered us. I look back at all we learned about principal and territory evaluation and the benefits of negotiating longer contracts — the experience has been invaluable.

"A side benefit has been the experience of being able to meet reps from other industries and learn that chances are they face the same issues I do. I know that if anything develops in the future that I need feedback on, the members of my study group will always be there for me to consult with."

According to Perry, "Like so many others, I was working along and things were going well, but with the urging of my partner — who had already gone through the program — I thought it would be worthwhile. My partner was planning on retirement, and originally we thought we'd just go with the flow and see what happened. But at his urging I began the program, and I'm glad I did. After just the first year, it was clear to me that this was something I had better continue with. Sure, it's difficult to take time out of the territory and away from your business, but with all the tools we have available to us today, it's fairly easy to keep up with things. I'd say that any manufacturers' representative who has not availed himself of this opportunity is missing a real chance to invest in his future and that of his business."


One lasting impression David Savant, CPMR, received over the course of his involvement with the CPMR program was his belief that "While there will always be a place for manufacturers' representatives in the business world, the fact is that there's a growing trend among manufacturers to seek out reps who are more sophisticated and more professional who can provide added services (marketing expertise, inventory, etc.) beyond making sales calls and getting orders."

Savant, Pinnacle Sales Group, Inc., Dundee, Florida, who's got close to eight years of experience as a rep, notes that, overall, CPMR was a very positive experience and one that prepared him to meet the needs of manufacturers while complementing his past educational experience, which includes an MBA and studies in accounting and economics. "The integration of all that is involved in running an agency was excellent. The variety of the subject matter and the different methods of presentation were very effective."

**"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."**

Savant explains that while his duties with the agency are not sales-oriented (e.g., he's in charge of non-sales activities such as information technology, human resources and sales reporting), "What I learned in CPMR is very important when it comes to learning all that it takes to run an agency as a successful business. As I consider what I learned, I'd have to say that the more reps who take advantage of this learning opportunity, the stronger the profession and our industry will become."

Since Ben Franklin has already been invoked in this article on CPMR, it's fitting to reference him again: "If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

Could it be this American icon had MRERF's CPMR program in mind well over 200 years ago? 

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 One Spectrum Pointe, Suite 150, Lake Forest, CA 92630-2283  
 Phone: (949) 859-4040 • Toll-free: (877) 626-2776  
 Fax: (949) 855-2973  
 E-mail: MANA@MANAonline.org  
 Web site: www.MANAonline.org  
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## Congratulations to the 2007 MANA CPMR Graduates

**Shawn Bodnar, CSP**  
 Nelson & Associates  
 Santa Fe Springs, California

**David Bowlin**  
 Engineered Products &  
 Services, Inc.  
 Sammamish, Washington

**D.J. Bowman**  
 Wood, Inc.  
 Baltimore, Maryland

**Michael Brase, CSP**  
 Wright Sales Company  
 Encinitas, California

**Tony Cass**  
 Nelson & Associates  
 Santa Fe Springs, California

**David Charney**  
 The Plastics Group, Inc.  
 Lakewood, Colorado

**Marc Chilcote**  
 Gary Chilcote Associates  
 Escondido, California

**David Coleman**  
 A.H. Deveney  
 Eclectic, Alabama

**Bob Dantin**  
 Chaparral Technologies, Inc.  
 Grand Prairie, Texas

**Brett Danyo**  
 Tri State Components, Inc.  
 Sharpsburg, Georgia

**Frank Fein**  
 Associated Marketing, Inc.  
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Royce Herring**  
 W.C. Brooks Company, Inc.  
 Austell, Georgia

**Ian Jones**  
 Trainor Associates  
 Medina, Ohio

**Tom Keller**  
 Cascadia Sales Group  
 Portland, Oregon

**Mike Kimmel**  
 Sales Service Plus, Inc.  
 Plymouth, Michigan

**Erin Kinahan**  
 Pipe Plus Co., Inc.  
 Aurora, Colorado

**Frits Kluvers, CSP**  
 Nelson & Associates  
 Santa Fe Springs, California

**Randy Kumagai**  
 Silver Mountain Design  
 Phoenix, Arizona

**John McNellis**  
 McReps Incorporated  
 Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

**Brian Morgan**  
 The Morgan Group  
 Markham, Ontario, Canada

**Matt Perry**  
 Koehler Borden &  
 Associates  
 Terrace Park, Ohio

**Bob Sachs**  
 Sachs Marketing Group  
 Kettering, Ohio

**Nick Sanchez**  
 Sierra Industrial  
 Engineering Co.  
 Commerce, California

**David Savant**  
 Pinnacle Sales Group, Inc.  
 Dundee, Florida

**Don Swibes**  
 Swico, Inc.  
 Hammond, Indiana

**Chris Tanaka**  
 Sierra Industrial  
 Engineering Co.  
 Commerce, California

**Jennifer Tibbetts**  
 Power Equipment  
 Specialists, Inc.,  
 Wheat Ridge, Colorado

**Maureen Weidner**  
 Marshall Machinery  
 San Clemente, California

**Dennis Zanrosso**  
 The Z Group  
 Canoga Park, California

**Scott Zimmerman**  
 Priest Zimmerman  
 Denver, Colorado

**Shad Zimmerman**  
 Priest Zimmerman  
 Denver, Colorado