

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Your new president of the ARA-New Jersey has made it through his first month's tenure. I'm still all in one piece and raring to go. With that in mind, I'd like you to know that a new vision, one that will envelope areas of joint concern, has been proposed by this new administration. Myself and the board will be working towards the following goals:

1. A sorely needed upgrading of the current weak conversion law in the state of New Jersey under the guidance of "The Politician," Max Fisher, chairman of our Legislative Committee.
2. An ARA-NJ Web Site that all of you may participate in (cost to be determined.) This project will be guided by members on our board with expertise in this area..
3. An educational training program for you and your employees headed by ex-prez Joe Mihalko, chairman of the Education committee, who we now call, "The Professor."
4. A Safety Program being put together by our "OSHA Enforcer," Dave Hinck., Safety Chairman.
5. A long overdue ARA-New Jersey Membership Directory is being put together by our Membership Chairman, Kalki Joisier, who we've plucked out of the associate membership pool.

Rounding out our group of Board members, all of whom will work to help us meet our goals in addition to their specific responsibilities are: Vice President, Brian Higgins; Treasurer, Tom Lade; Secretary, Megan Jones; Social Chairman, John Futcher; National Liaison, Steve Kohn; and Associate Representative, Roy Peragallo (elsewhere in this issue is a sidebar with the telephone and FAX numbers of your Board members).

I know we have an excellent team and I intend to take advantage of their talents and our members should, too. I want to clarify that Associate Members should make their suggestions or express their concerns to the Board through their representative, Roy Peragallo.

Our regular Membership (excluding Associates) stands at well over a hundred rental stores now thanks to the new policies of the national ARA. I want to take this opportunity to welcome the first timers and extend an open invitation to you all to attend our meetings and functions.

Thanks, too, to John Futcher, for putting it together, and everyone who participated in our January Holiday Party. We had a great time. Next year we'll have twice as many members attending. Right?

You betcha!

Tony Perrotta

Have I got a story ...Did you hear ...

Joe Mihalko's great customer story ... He rents an item to a customer for a one day rental. A week later the customer has yet to return the item. He puts in a call to the customer and leaves a message. The customer calls and says, "Why are you calling me? I returned that item the next morning."

"Really," says Joe, "well, where or who did you leave it with.

"Well," says the customer, "I left it at the Donut Shop next door! You really don't expect me to pay the rental on that Item do you? I only had it for a couple of hours!"

If you did not attend the Holiday Party at the Ramada in East Brunswick you missed our own ARA-NJ Drag Queen. Not only did John Futcher come out of the closet but he got up on the dance floor and performed for us!

Although Orlando was soggy, it didn't stop the annual ARA-NJ dinner party. Jazzing it up at the House of Blues, twenty members got together and closed the place down (waiting out in the rain was more like it). All had a great time. If you missed it, catch up with us next year in Vegas!

You had to be there!

Also that night, Chris from Party Corner, in spite of himself, was "in the hole" and Steve from Millers racked up 50 points. Of course we assume, even after his side comments, "THE PRESIDENT RIDES FREE," that Tony, our fearless leader, did pay (He was holding the checkbook).

Did anyone see anything new and exciting at the show? Fax me and I'll feature it next time. Also send comments to me on the new buying group. I would like to print views of both regular and associate members. This was a hot topic at the convention. 908-806-0029.

Happy 49th anniversary to Carl and his wife. Next January is the BIG 50! Enlighten the folks, OK, Carl.

Kudos to Steve Kohn of Millers Rentals & Sales. He did a great job as our Region II Director!

This is Megan - the Gossip Guru. Until next month ... I'm listening for more!

TENT SAFETY

(This article is continued from the Tent Safety piece that began last month)

Ensure tents are set up safely. Improper anchoring is a leading cause of tent failures and thus insurance claims.

Action Points to consider:

1. Instruct staff that if tents are tied off to objects other than stakes, caution must be used to ensure that damage is not done to customer's property and that objects used are secure themselves, be it fence, pole, or tree.
2. Be sure your staff is qualified to tie appropriate and secure knots of all types.
3. Be sure your staff uses adequate stakes for weather conditions. Many tent people recommend double or triple staking corners or lace lines. Not using a stake for every pole is an important reason for tent failure that results in accidents. Be sure to use appropriate stakes for soil conditions. A longer stake may be more appropriate for a soft-mulched garden while a rock drill and eye-bolts may be the only reasonable answer to rocky locales
4. Be prepared to act properly in a timely manner to severe weather. There is only so much you can do to protect tents in a storm. Trying to react in the middle of a storm can be even more dangerous to your staff and customer's property.

Action Points to Consider

1. Discretion may be the safest and least costly reaction if weather conditions are expected to exceed manufacturer's wind load specifications. Know those specifications and be prepared to field and adequate and qualified staff to secure and recheck that which you can control is done correctly or remove any or all tents as weather conditions require.
2. Follow manufacturer's guidelines for making tent installations. Remember, when you fail to follow manufacturer's installation guidelines, you and your insurance company stand alone to shoulder all liability claims due to tent failure accidents. Manufacturers have tested their product. Furthermore, through their customer's experiences, they have more collective product knowledge than you could gain with years of installations. Use that experience to your benefit.

Dave Hinck, Safety Chairman

WEB SITE CREATION 101

by Steve Kohn

Last month I started to talk about web sites. In this issue we are going to cover 2 of four issues concerning the creation of your company's Home page.

The first step is "**Defining your objectives.**" So many people neglect this basic step. Start by writing down specifically what you expect to gain from having a web site.

- Do you wish to provide information about your company?
- Do you wish to sell a service or a product?
- Do you want to highlight some of the work you have done?
- Are you looking for customer feedback?
- Will you accept orders over the internet?
- Will you use your site as a sales tool?

For example, if you are aiming to attract more contractors to your site, you would list displaying photo's of equipment for rent as an objective. If you are looking to sell used equipment, then your objective would be to increase sales through publicizing what is available.

By defining your objectives first, you lay out a plan of the things you will need to do to make your site a success. So many of us are quick to get into things without really understanding either the financial cost or time involved. Starting your objectives in advance will save you a lot of time and money down the road, in the same way a business plan acts as a road map for a new business.

One of the main objectives of my company's site was to provide a place for customers to visually see the items we rent and to answer specific questions about them, including pricing. This objective might not be on your list. Many rental stores have opted not to display their prices on the web. You have to decide what is best for you.

Other companies' sole objective is just to let customers know their location and hours of operation. Other companies use their site to show what they do for the community and feature stories about their employees.

The key to remember is to stay focused on your objectives.

Take a moment after reading this article and list your objectives. This will help you as we progress in this series of articles. If your objective is to have a Web site just because everyone else has one, then stop reading. This article is not for you.

Our second lesson for today is "**Define your Target Audience**". Once you have objectives, ask yourself who you think would benefit from coming to your web site. Take the time to write down who this audience is. As a rental store owner, you might consider the following:

Target Audience: Contractors, Homeowners, Hotels, Restaurants, Brides, Companies, Other Rental Stores, Meetings, Event Planners, Clubs, Churches, Organizations, and Active customers

These are just a few of the possibilities. The key to remember is be specific. Try to add to and revise your target audience as much as possible. Web sites that become popular also tend to become more diverse. With diversity comes the need to expand your target audience. Underneath your objectives, write down who you think is your target audience.

A web site can be an excellent tool to increase business for your store. Done properly you can expect results quickly.

In the next issue, I will cover ***Research and Site Preparation***. Stay tuned.

