# Don't miss this opportunity!

## MSHPBA Affiliate Member Only Luncheon



Thursday, February 28, 2008 • 11:30 am – 1 pm Georgia World Congress Center • Room C306

Please join us for lunch and an update on what's going on in the MidStates Affiliate including exciting programs in store for 2008.

Please RSVP to the MSHPBA affiliate office at (636) 449-5075 by **February 25.** 

Valid for MSHPBA members and prospective members.



16020 Swingley Ridge Road, Suite 300 Chesterfield, MO 63017 www.midstateshpba.org

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### **HPBExpo Registration Update**

Registration is easily completed on line at www.hpb-expo.com or by fax (download the form from the website). Online registration will remain open for badge pick-up onsite until February 25.

To make reservations, please contact hotels directly. A list of hotels and phone numbers are available at www.hpbexpo.com. If you have questions about an existing reservation, please contact the HPBA/The Housing Connections at (866) 365-1113.

Another great year and another great Outdoor Living Showroom Display, sponsored by *Casual Living* magazine. For new, fresh ideas on how to best present a variety of outdoor products and accessories in your store, be sure to visit the showroom display in the Registration Lobby.

Reno-Sparks Booth – Expo 2009. Located in the Registration Lobby, stop by and see what's new for next year's venue. Reno staff available for questions regarding air travel and much more.

#### **HPBExpo** Deadlines

February 25- Final Pre-registration deadline. Must have registered by February 4 to receive badges via mail.



#### **EXPOSITION**

Thursday, February 28 – Saturday, March 1, 2008

#### **EDUCATION**

Wednesday, February 27– Friday, February 29, 2008 Saturday, March 1, 2008 (NFI Exams ONLY)

## The Importance of Communication By Barbara Wold

Most people feel they are good communicators, but truly effective communication takes work. Below are some guidelines that can help in becoming a better communicator.

- 1. Always concentrate on what the customer is saying.
- 2. Look your customer in the eye.
- 3. Listen carefully to everything the customer is saying.
- **4.** Don't interrupt let him/her finish the entire thought.

- **5.** Don't judge the customer by appearance instead focus on what the customer is saying.
- **6.** Show sincere interest in what is being said.

Spending more time communicating rather than just "selling" will enable you to find out exactly what your customers want and help you serve them better.

A retailer doesn't have to be that interesting to create a great customer experience; they just need to be interested in the customer.

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### From the desk of the MidStates HPBA President



#### **Robert Huta, President**

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you an Atlanta for the HPBExpo. It's right around the corner, February 28th through March 1st, and is the event that everyone in our industry

should attend this year. If you haven't made plans to be there, make them. I and the rest of the MSHPBA board believe attending this event is so important we have decided to not host a summer workshop in support of the Expo in Atlanta. We want our members to travel the relatively short distance, compared to a western expo, and spend their education time and dollars making the most of the great learning opportunities available in Georgia.

While you're at the Expo, don't forget to come by the MSHPBA luncheon. The event gets better every year and if you've not been to one, you're in for a treat.

Your board will be meeting this summer, just like all businesses should from time to time, to work on strategies for serving you better. In the up coming months expect to hear from the MSHPBA asking for your opinions on what you want and need from your trade association. As always, it is our goal to provide to you great member services, represent you to local and state governments, and promote the Hearth, Patio and Barbeque industry. More specifically, we are focused on bringing to you a great Burn and Learn event in 2009. We will be considering all aspects of the event to make sure they work best for our retailer members who are on the front lines of our industry. Everything from location, educational format, educational topics, extra recreational events and length are on the table. If you have any thoughts on what you want from a summer conference, we are listening.

I'll see you soon! 🌢



Fireside Update is published for members of the MSHPBA. Submission of articles is encouraged and welcome. Address correspondence to: friga@drakeco.com or call 636/449-5075.

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(Term expiration year in parentheses)

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## HEARTHMASTERS Keeps the Fire Crackling!



Don't let your friendship burnout. Join HearthMasters and keep the spark alive with the insiders

#### you've known for so long!

HearthMasters is a social organization formed in 2000 to recognize the long and productive careers of those involved in the hearth, patio, and barbecue industries. Friends and associates that have been in the industry for at least 20 years can stay in touch with one another. To help members keep track of each other, HearthMasters publishes a newsletter twice a year, an annual HearthMasters Membership Directory, and our recent survey indicated that everyone would like to enjoy a breakfast this year at the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Expo (HPBExpo) in Atlanta. In addition to the breakfast, HearthMasters has a lounge at HPBExpo to give members the opportunity to put their feet up, catch up on the news, and have a refreshment.

Please join us for breakfast on Saturday, March 1, 2008 from 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. there is a \$25.00 charge, in the HearthMasters lounge, Room 308, at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. We look forward to seeing you there!

Anyone interested in joining HearthMasters should call Debbie Scerbo at (703) 522-0086 or email scerbo@hpba.org. A membership application is also available on the HPBA website www.hpba.org (click members).

## Making Your First Impresstion (continued from page 3)

Another current trend in window designs is see through window displays. For many years, windows had a solid backdrop, which did not allow the customer to see inside the store. Today, stores are doing a better job of lighting the inside of their store, and by allowing the light to shine out through your windows, the customer is attracted to come and see what is there.

Window displays which stop at the five or six-foot level, or backdrops, which are made of latticework, will provide the necessary depth to your display. In building displays, each should stand out and demonstrate your own creativity.

Now that we are at the entrance of the business, we can include the mall stores in our discussion. Again, lighting plays a crucial part in getting the customer to come in. If you are a strip center or mall store, consider using a photographer's light meter to measure the amount of light coming from your storefront. How much light is enough? More than the other stores so you are the most powerful draw.

Looking into the store, in addition to having sufficient lighting throughout the sales floor, make sure the upper walls and corners of your business are very well lit. These are the usual downfall areas of stores, and you want to take advantage of every situation possible.

Each type of store should consider creating a front "lobby" area. This area should be free of displays, allowing the customer the chance to step in and "absorb" the atmosphere of your business. Too often, the front of stores is a clutter of displays with little room for customers to pass each other. At the edge of the lobby area, you can begin to invite customers to further investigate your store with displays.

Many stores sell products that can be displayed with a frontal and side view. While there is not enough space for all merchandise to have frontal display, remember that too many items displayed by the side will look more like a storage area than a store.

And as a last point, walk through your store from the back to the front. Is the store just as appealing as when we were walking in the front door? Or, are we just seeing the backside of every display and counter. This is the last impression you will make on the customer; make sure it is just as pleasant as when they walked in.

How have we done with the first impression? I think the 53% like what they saw, and will be back again.

- The front of your business is the most important impression
- Lighting plays an important part in the attraction of your store
- Your store should have a "lobby" area 🌢

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## When You Embrace the Entreprenuerial Spirit ...

- 12. They never stay stagnant but continuously move physically and emotionally towards what they really want.
- 13. They enjoy challenges and see these as opportunities to grow rather than personal assaults.
- 14. They know how to motivate themselves to achieve their goals. They don't seek or enjoy parental coaching from sales 21. They have a "Must make it happen" attitude and believe manager or boss. They create an all star coaching relationship with their manager or coach vs. waiting till they must enroll in remedial coaching.
- 15. They are not motivated by fear, they are motivated by passion. They know that procrastination and threats from management are not sustainable for a successful future as these only bring resentment and anger.
- **16.** They wake up each morning ready to create something wonderful. This acts as a self-motivator and instills leadership skills.
- 17. They can break down large goals into doable steps in order to minimize overwhelm.
- 18. They know the metrics and milestones for success in their business.





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- ing the results they want so they are not working harder, they are working smarter.
- 20. They do not change their goals in order to justify their actions.
- that attitude is 95% of success is aptitude is the other 5%.
- 22. They don't make excuses or whine, they get out and find a way to make things happen.
- **23.** They see problems as opportunities whether the problems are their own or their customers. Blame is not an issue and finger pointing never comes up.
- **24.** They know what is at stake in each customer encounter and create a "team" of those they need for information and cooperation in order to solve the customer's problem.
- **25.** They easily adapt to change and see this as a way to grow rather than more work.
- **26.** They know how to create customer outcomes that address the needs of their customers and gain conceptual agreement from those customers in order to be a priority with those customers.
- 27. They sell feelings and emotions not only to their external customers but also to their internal customers.
- 28. They are continuously identifying what is of "value" to their customers rather than trying to sell a product or service.
- 29. They are willing to learn new industry information, acquire new skills relating to their field and stretching themselves to become more, not only for themselves but also for their cus-
- **30.** They acknowledge their feelings vs reacting to them.
- **31.** They take risks-some small, some larger. They realize that some things will go perfectly and some things will need some re-adjustment and change.
- **32.** They might get beaten but they never get beaten down. Tomorrow is always a new day and why wait till tomorrow.
- 33. They know that what they think and what they say and what they do must be congruent because this is how they truly serve their customers.

## **Making Your First Impression**



## The value of an attractive storefront

by Tom Shay, CSP, Speaker, Author, Entrepreneur, 4th generation merchant

This article is an excerpt from e-ret@iler, Profits+Plus January 2008.

Perhaps, the biggest decision has been made. The customer was listening to a talk show on the radio this morning and has decided to buy the product mentioned. They have also decided to shop in a store instead of shopping on the Internet. The guestion to be decided today is which store will the customer select.

Perhaps you would be surprised to know the customer places a high value on their initial perception of your business. C. Britt Breemer in the book, "Predatory Marketing", offers information stating 53% of shoppers base their initial perception of your store and their decision to buy based upon the

Our efforts today are to have your store make the impression on the customer so they will select yours, as well as create an image that will invite the customer to return time and again.

Storefront stores will fall into one of three categories: free standing business, strip shopping center, and mall location. Each of these formats has their own advantages and disadvantages. For example the store in a mall location has the advantage of customers coming to the mall to shop other businesses, and benefiting from the additional walk by traffic. However, these businesses traditionally face the competition of other stores located in the same mall. Bright lights and attractive front entrance displays are key items for this business.

The free standing business may not face the close by competition, but has to create the draw to bring the customer to their location. They must utilize their storefront exterior, roadside signage, and parking lot to their full potential.

And the strip store faces a blend of both situations, being able to draw from neighboring stores, but still needing the attractive exterior to draw customers from the adjoining street or highway.

Let's look at maximizing the opportunity as the customer approaches the strip or stand alone store. If the customer is driving by at night, the exterior signage should have all bulbs or neon fully functional to act as a magnet. Remember for most shopping centers, the parking lot fixtures provide only a minimum of light. Your store must pull the customer into it.

And while we are discussing exterior signage, if you are utilizing a message board, you need to change the message at least once a week. Don't be caught on a Tuesday morning

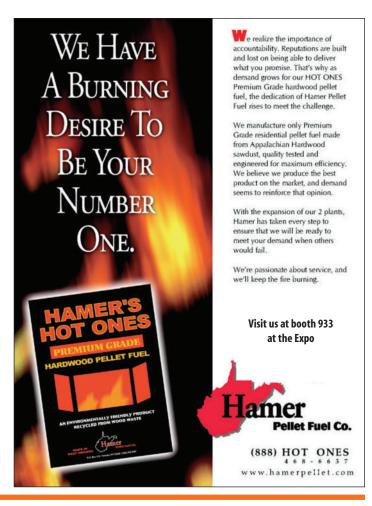
with a sign announcing last Friday's sale.

If the parking lot is sizeable, consider creating markers on each of the light posts to remind customers where they parked. If you are a book store, signs indicating the mystery section, drama section, computer section, and so on will provide an entertaining preview of their shopping experience

As we approach the storefront, the next draw should be the front display windows. They should be a "teaser" to show people some of what you sell, but provide enough curiosity so the customer will want to walk in and shop further.

The window should not be packed with merchandise that will invite the customer to spend excessive amounts of time outside the store. The more time a customer spends looking in the windows, the more likely the customer will decide not to enter the store as windows have told them enough about what you are selling.

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### Second Fiddle-Rethinking your management strategy

"Second fiddle", was the answer given by Leonard Bernstein of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra when asked what was the most difficult instrument to play. You might think his answer had something to do with the difficulty of the musical score traditionally assigned to the orchestra's second violin. But Bernstein made it clear he was not talking about music. He was talking about teamwork.

"Nobody wants to play second fiddle."

As a business owner you know full well the importance of your second fiddle, your store manager. Store managers know the importance of their second fiddles, whether they are buyers, stockers or cashiers. The store where an owner or manunable to gain the support of them is a store that will not be around too long.

But it works both ways. Those who play second fiddle typically play it best when they know they are appreciated and that their efforts take them closer to their career goals, however humble or sophisticated.

As an owner, ask yourself what would happen if your manager were suddenly not available to manage your store. Would the store continue to function?

The answer needs to be both yes and no. Yes, because the owner would know the responsibilities of his manager and could step in to take his place.

But the answer should also be no, for if there would be no difference with or without your manager, then you either have a bad manager or one who is not being allowed to prove him or herself. Ask yourself if you think your manager could be persuaded to go to a competitor if the pay was comparable, but the challenge to his skills were greater. Would he welcome the opportunity to make a difference?

From the standpoint of ownership, we always make a point to spend a considerable number of hours on the sales floor each week. Yet, for every hour there were team members in the store, there was someone else, a supervisor, who had total responsibility for the store. We explained this decision to our team by stating that we knew how we would react in a situation, but we needed to see how a supervisor would react. What better way to find out than an occasion when the owner was in the building, but was allowing his people to manage? As a result, we learned what we could expect from our team members and our supervisors whether we were out of the store for an hour, an afternoon or on vacation.

We also reasoned that if we were to give a key to the build-

ing to an employee, and there were several hundred thousand dollars of inventory in the building, we had in effect, entrusted that amount of money to them. Then, why not allow the employee to make a decision when the amount of money involved in the decision would probably be less than one hundred dollars?

The downside to our situation was that our team members "Everyone wants to play first chair", he would continue. often did not learn how unique and beneficial our management style was until they had left and taken a job elsewhere. Of course, we had several who later returned to our team. And for those who only stopped by for a visit, we welcomed the opportunity to hear them tell us about what they missed by no longer being a part of our team.

ager does not recognize the importance of these players or is It is not only an opportunity; it is your responsibility to promote your management technique to your "second fiddle" and his subordinates so that your "orchestra" is in tune. Your customers will greatly appreciate it, and the bottom line of your profit-and-loss statement will reflect it.

- Utilize the opinion of your employees
- Allow employees to make a difference
- Employees can make a difference in your profitability



### When You Embrace the Entreprenurial Spirit in Your Work! by Linda Talley

always a new

day and why

wait till

tomorrow.

The entrepreneur conveys confidence, passion, and mission. A customer must have their needs met but a want is always They are leaders, motivators and customer champions. They make others drool. Whether you work for yourself or for another, there is an entrepreneurial spirit waiting to be awak- **6.** They are an expert in their field of endeavor (sales, cus-

ened and realized. And, when you do, you will be glad because your life will be so much better and so will your business, whether as an owner or employee!

You make yourself an entrepreneur vs. being born that way by being fully responsible for your actions, results. You create your role not only with your customers but also with your company-whether you own the company or not so that you make a real contribution as you continuously grow.

#### **CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTREPRENEUR:**

- 1. Functioning in your position/your territory as if you owned the company. You may not be making the biggest bucks or rubbing elbows with the board, however, you own your actions. No excuses.
- 2. Because you own and are fully responsible for your actions, how you think and feel and what you create, you are the bottom line whether you're talking about product/service sold including money spent to achieve those goals. It's after you recognize this key characteristic of your own accountability that you can earn your customer's respect, trust and business-not before!
- 3. You have a strong belief that no one owes you a living. You are the master of your own ship and the captain of your own trip!

#### **33 OUALITIES OF AN ENTREPRENEUR:**

- 1. They believe in themselves and find opportunities to exhibit their spirit!
- **2.** They respond vs react to people, situations, customers. The constantly evaluate their thoughts and actions to make certain they are moving towards what they really want vs. negative goal setting.
- **3.** They have laser focus on what they really want and can block the "stinking thinking" from side-tracking them.
- 4. They know how to prioritize their life and then use discipline to focus on achieving the results they want rather than worrying about time.
- **5.** They understand what their customers really need vs want.

tomer care, marketing, etc) and if they aren't, will take measures to make themselves such. Tomorrow is

- 7. They are an industry expert through extensive reading, attending trade shows and conferences, not just as an exhibitor but as an attendee.
- 8. They continuously evaluate their customer mix in order to have more than 1 egg in the
- **9.** They continuously look for new business opportunities through networking and prospecting.
- **10.** They are an "unpaid" consultant to their customers.
- **11.** They reduce "emergencies" in their life and business so that can focus on what they really want. Process management is always being refined and reviewed.

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### **Wood Stove Change Out Program** in Michigan

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to do a state-wide woodstove change out program in 2008. They are having a non-profit group called Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) administer the program. Someone from both of those organizations attended a stove change out training workshop in Philadelphia hosted by the EPA. More program details will be determined soon and we ask that you visit the Web site at www.midstateshpba.org often to find updates on the possible change out program.

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