

SouthWestern Flash

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Dealers of Tomorrow - Oct. 7-8 -
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Austin, Texas

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*Mark your calendar and plan to attend
these events!*

SouthWestern Association

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from SouthWestern Association?*

If not, send us your e-mail address.
We will forward important Association
correspondence to your attention via
e-mail. Please register your e-mail
address at:
www.swassn.com/register-email.htm

SouthWestern Association Announces Fall Area Meetings

The SouthWestern Association has set the following area meetings for Fall 2004:

Kansas/Oklahoma/Missouri

Monday, Oct. 11	Colby, KS	4:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, Oct 12	Great Bend, KS	8:00 - 11:30 a.m.
	Wichita, KS	5:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Wed., Oct. 13	Oklahoma City, OK	11:30 - 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Oct. 14	Springfield, MO	8:00 - 11:30 a.m.
	Columbia, MO	4:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 15	Kansas City, MO	8:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Texas

Monday, Nov. 8	Harlingen, TX	11:30 - 3:00 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 9	San Antonio, TX	8:00 - 11:30 p.m.
	Houston, TX	5:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Wed., Nov. 10	Dallas, TX	11:30 - 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 11	Lubbock, TX	8:00 - 11:30 a.m.
	Amarillo, TX	5:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Highlighting the agenda for the area meetings will be information on two new programs for SouthWestern Association members: Toolchex Tool Reimbursement Program and the OSU-Okmulgee Technician Education Program. A presentation of Jerkins Creative Consulting services and training opportunities will also be included on the agenda.

All morning meetings will include a continental breakfast. Meetings beginning at 11:30 a.m. will include a light lunch. Meetings beginning at 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. will include hors d'oeuvres. There is no cost to members to attend the area meetings.

Complete information on the fall area meetings will be sent to dealers in the coming weeks. Dealers with questions are asked to contact Olivia Holcombe at the Association office - 1-800-762-5616.

Hardware Industry News

Ames True Temper, one of the industry's leading manufacturers of garden tools, has entered into a purchasing agreement with Castle Harlan, a private equity firm based in New York. The transaction is valued at \$380 million.

Castle Harlan will purchase a majority stake in Ames True Temper from Wind Point Partners, a Chicago equity firm. Wind Point acquired the company in early 2002 for \$165 million from U.S. Industries of Iselin, N.J. Richard Dell will stay as CEO of Ames True Temper.

Federal Legislative News

Congress has recessed until after Labor Day. Before leaving Washington, however, lawmakers dealt with a flurry of tax-related legislation. A sampling:

Small Business Legislation

The House passed the Tax Simplification for America's Job Creators Act with two provisions that would affect small businesses. One would allow businesses with less than \$5 million in annual revenue to continue using the cash accounting method and index the cap to inflation. A second provision would extend through 2007 the Section 179 small business expensing limit of \$100,000 and phase-out threshold of \$400,000.

Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) introduced legislation to allow small businesses that earn less than \$10 million a year to use the cash method of accounting. It would eliminate a current provision that prevents companies with inventory from using the cash method of accounting. The bill is not expected to reduce the amount of taxes owed.

Sens. Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Max Baucus (D-MT) reintroduced a modified version of The Heartland Investment & Rural Employment Act. Although primarily an agricultural relief bill, it includes provisions that would increase the number of eligible shareholders in S corporations from 75 to 100 and allow all family members owning stock to elect to be treated as one shareholder.

Minimum Wage and Overtime Pay

There was no further action on raising the minimum wage or overturning Department of Labor rules on white collar exemptions to overtime pay ... and that could be problematical for employers. The new rules go into effect Aug. 23. If the exemption rules are overturned later, the action could be retroactive. In the meantime, the minimum salary threshold for overtime goes up to \$23,660 a year or \$455 a week. Any employee paid less than this must be paid overtime for more than 40 hours a week. The salary threshold is not being challenged. More information is at www.dol.gov/fairpay.

Social Security

House members introduced bills that would lead to privatization of Social Security. The Social Security Personal Savings Guarantee & Prosperity Act would allow workers to allocate some of their Social Security taxes to tax-free personal accounts. The Individual Social Security Investment Program Act would allow workers born after Jan. 1, 1950, to voluntarily invest their half of the Social Security payroll tax in private accounts; workers born after Jan. 1, 1982, would be required to privatize.

Commercial Faxes to Customers and Vendors

The House passed legislation to allow businesses to send commercial faxes to customers and vendors under an established business relationship exemption; the Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee approved

identical legislation. If the bill passes, which it is expected to, it would overturn new Federal Communications Commission rules that would require businesses to get written and signed permission to send faxes.

The Federal Trade Commission opened a new e-mail box to receive samples of deceptive spam. The agency uses the e-mails to generate enforcement actions against fraudulent business offers and other scams promoted via e-mail. Consumers can forward unwanted or deceptive spam to spam@uce.gov.

Source: National Retail Hardware Association, Aug. 2, 2004

Agriculture Industry News

Biodiesel Popularity on the Rise

Two more biodiesel facilities have opened up at petroleum loading racks, streamlining the process of distributing biodiesel nationwide, according to the National Biodiesel Board.

With its grand opening on Friday, July 30, Peru, Indiana's Countrymark Co-op became the nation's first soy biodiesel rack injection unit with custom-blending capabilities. Another site for rack-injected biodiesel has recently opened up in McFarland, Wisconsin.

In April, the nation's first facility to offer pre-blended B2 - two percent biodiesel mixed with petroleum diesel - and B5 at the petroleum loading rack at a terminal in McPherson, Kansas was opened.

In the past, petroleum distributors obtained pure biodiesel (B100) and petroleum diesel fuel from separate supply sources and blended themselves.

Access to pre-blended biodiesel increases operational efficiencies for the distributor while maintaining integrity of the product, and will significantly increase availability to consumers, the National Biodiesel Board points out.

Although the majority of biodiesel customers are large fleets at public utility companies, the farm is becoming a market for the fuel. United Soybean Board research shows 31 percent of farmers use biodiesel, with up to 50 percent using it in some states.

"Farmers believe in biodiesel and want to use their own product," said Bob Metz, chairman of the National Biodiesel Board and South Dakota soybean grower.

"They've invested millions of dollars in biodiesel commercialization through the soybean checkoff. By using biodiesel, we are investing in the life of our farm equipment while helping the biodiesel industry thrive. The result ultimately will be sustained higher soybean prices."

Source: Environment News Service, Aug. 3, 2004

Military Leaves of Absence for Employees

As the possibility looms larger that the U.S. Armed Forces may be increasing the number of personnel needed for service because of the Iraq conflict, employers of all sizes should be aware of the rules and regulations regarding military leaves of absence.

HR Executive Special Reports points out that under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), employers must grant leave for military service and offer employees their jobs back at the conclusion of the leave. The report also states that the USERRA applies to all employers, large or small.

USERRA provides expanded rights for group health plans and pension benefits. Employees on military leave are entitled to the same benefits provided to employees on other forms of leave. If your company has a health plan, you must offer it to employees taking military leave up to 18 months. You don't need to pay the premium, but USERRA limits how much you may charge for the insurance.

Seniority continues to accrue while employees are on military leave. In addition, USERRA prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals who perform, apply to perform or have military service obligations.

Source: HCI Business Report, July 21, 2004

U.S. Equipment Sales Increase

The Indiana Prairie Farmer has reported recently that total U.S. sales of agricultural tractors are expected to increase 6.2 percent in 2004 followed by 2005 sales growth of 3.4 percent. The information is from the semiannual "State of the Ag Industry" forecast of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM).

The U.S. market for self-propelled combines is expected to increase 25.1 percent in 2004, but level off in 2005 with 0.2 percent growth expected.

Sales increases are expected for all types of tractors sold in the U.S. in 2004. For 2005, the only decline expected is for four-wheel drive tractors of 1.3 percent.

For other types of agricultural machinery covered in the AEM survey, manufacturers predict U.S. year-end 2004 sales growth on all but one category, a 5.6 percent decline for chisel plows.

Mixed market growth is expected in 2005 for both the U.S. and Canada. In 2005 the U.S. market is anticipated to be led by sales of farm loaders.

Source: Farm Equipment Manufacturers Association, July 21, 2004

2004 SouthWestern Association Golf Tournament

The SouthWestern Association will host a golf tournament Thursday, September 23 at Falcon Lakes Golf Course in Basehor, Kansas. The four-person scramble tournament will be a benefit for the National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame. The Ag Center is a privately funded nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to educating society on the historical and present value of American agriculture and honoring leadership in agribusiness and academia by providing education, experience and recognition.



The tournament is priced at \$125 per person. **Price includes a special industry seminar featuring Charlie Gause, industry expert and contributor to the Professional Retailer. Also included in the per person fee are green fees, cart, practice range, lunch and beverages. Jeff Flora, SouthWestern's CEO, will provide an industry update.**

Schedule:

Registration - 9:00 a.m.

Special Seminar - 9:30 a.m.

Lunch - 11:30 a.m.

Shotgun Start - 1:00 p.m.

Awards Reception - 6:00 p.m.

Entries will be accepted on a first come, first served basis, up to 80 players. Registration by September 15 is requested. Entry forms are available from SouthWestern Association. Contact Olivia at SouthWestern - 800-762-5616.

Hot Summer Buy Special!

Bic Clic Stic Pens

Now Only \$.36 each (300 minimum order)

No Set-Up or Screen Charges

Special Good Until Sept. 30, 2004

Special Bic Pen offer from SouthWestern Association.

Pens are \$.36 each with a minimum quantity of 300.

Choose from many colors for your barrel, your retractable plunger and the tip of the pen, along with your choice of color for your imprint.

Contact Shirley at SouthWestern Association for more information - 1-800-762-5616.

Regional Meeting Dates Announced

In 2005, the SouthWestern Association will offer five regional meetings for members in place of one large annual meeting. The dates and locations for these meetings are:

January 24 - San Antonio, Texas

January 25 - Dallas, Texas

January 26 - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

January 27 - Amarillo, Texas

February 25 - Kansas City, Mo. (in conjunction with the Western Farm Show)

2004 Compensation and Benefits Survey

The SouthWestern Association and the North American Equipment Dealers Association (NAEDA) are conducting the 2004 Compensation and Benefits Survey on behalf of dealers. This survey is used to obtain minimal dealership demographics as well as help dealers measure and compare financial compensation and employee benefits at dealerships throughout North America.

Your participation in the survey is greatly appreciated. Most dealers should be able to complete the survey in 10 to 15 minutes. The SouthWestern Association will provide a compilation of the survey in October. The deadline for completing the survey questions is Aug. 13.

The survey questions can be found on the Internet at:
<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=U22YRFAUN5H>

October 7-8 - Austin, Texas

Dealing With the Future - What Every Dealer of Tomorrow Needs to Know

The dealers - and managers - of tomorrow must understand the financial and operational needs of their business to be successful. That understanding begins today.

This workshop is for owners, mid-level managers and department managers, as well as those new to the equipment industry, and will teach participants how a dealership's operating and financial parameters can affect the dealership on a day-to-day basis.

Presenter Bill Bohmer will provide a financial review that will cover the most common operating indicators that nearly all dealerships should review on a monthly basis to develop sound financial returns. We will discuss departmental expense categories to illustrate the interdependency between all departments and how these affect the dealership as a whole.

For more information just call Olivia at SouthWestern Association - 816-561-5323 or 800-762-5616.

Need Business Forms?

Look to your SouthWestern Association for all your business forms needs. SouthWestern sells a wide variety of business forms for nearly every computer system. Both custom imprinted and stock business forms are available through SouthWestern at very competitive prices. Contact Pam for custom imprinted and Shirley for stock forms at the Association offices - 1-800-762-5616.

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For All Your Technology Needs...

A “can do” attitude is what Bob Robeson brings to every new computer and technology related task he encounters at SouthWestern Association. With over 30 years of experience in the computer and technology field, Bob has a wealth of knowledge from which to draw when faced with new challenges.

In today’s business world, computer challenges are often broad in scope and involve many types of technology all – working together to accomplish specific tasks. Often these become something that could be termed “communications challenges.” The interconnection between computer terminals, network servers, routers, telephone systems and other necessary equipment calls for someone with a broad background in technology-related products and their applications to serve dealer’s needs.

Longtime SouthWestern Association staff member, Bob Robeson, has the background and experience to meet dealers’ technology needs. He has assisted single location dealers as well as multi-store operations. His expertise includes working with ag, construction, outdoor power equipment and hardware, lumber and building materials dealers.

Network Computer System Moved

Hlavinka Equipment Company, headquartered in East Bernard, Texas, recently asked Bob to coordinate a major technology-related project at their headquarters dealership. The dealership was planning to move their headquarters facility. This meant that all the computer and communications-related equipment had to be moved and reset in the new facility. The equipment at the East Bernard location is critical for the operations of the entire seven-store dealership. The distance between the old location and the new one is only about a mile, however there were two servers, three routers, two network switches, two satellite dishes and a telephone system that all needed to be moved and reset. The company wanted to close the headquarters store at 5 p.m. on a Tuesday and have everything moved, up and running by 8 a.m. the following morning in the new location.

Bob designed a plan to accomplish this task. Under his direction, the communications crew worked throughout the night and into the early morning hours. By 8 a.m. Wednesday morning everything was up and running and the dealership hadn’t lost a sale or a critical piece of information from the system. When Hlavinka employees arrived at the branch locations in Rosenberg, Nome, El Campo, Bay City, Taft, and Tivoli, all in Texas, all they had to do to communicate with the headquarters store in East Bernard was reset their routers and make some small adjustments to their satellites. According to Chuck Harkins, System Administrator for Hlavinka, the plan orchestrated by Bob worked without a hitch.

During Bob’s visit to Hlavinka he set up 20 new computers, various printers and fax machines for the dealership. Bob’s versatile computer and communications equipment background made it possible for him to handle all the issues

that appear during setup. Hlavinka dealership personnel commented that Bob’s expertise saved them countless days of fishing for answers to setup problems.

Web Site Design

In addition to his knowledge of computer network systems and related communications equipment, Bob is experienced with web site design. He has designed sites across industry lines with the bulk of his work in hardware, lumber and building materials and equipment dealerships. Several trade associations, including SouthWestern Association, use his web designs. Bob individually tailors each web site to the customer’s needs, incorporating product photos, animated graphics and other eye-catching details.

As a computer and technology advisor, Bob draws on his 30 plus years in the industry. He has experience working with a variety of popular computer systems including: DIS, RIMSS, Charter, JDIS, PFW, Challenger, and Cruise. He advises dealerships on:

- Networks
- Network Switches
- Hubs
- Routers
- Company E-Mail
- Virus and Spyware
- Domains - ownership and establishment
- Connectivity issues - cables, DSL, T1, PVC
- Software Licensing
- Internet and Email policies and usage criteria
- Hardware and software compatibility issues, etc.
- Remote training
- Servers and PC’s
- Sales Pro, Support ProII, DocRite (Case)
- PartSmart
- Quote Pro (IRON Solutions)
- Computer upgrade questions
- Firewalls and many other technology areas

Professional Certifications

Bob is a Certified Association Executive (CAE) and has earned his CCP (Certified Computing Professional) designation. The CCP designation is the most widely accepted means of professional certification in the computing industry. The Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals (ICCP) awards the CCP designation to qualified candidates. By attaining his CCP, Bob has joined a growing distinguished group of knowledgeable and expert computer professionals.

Contact Information

Bob would like to offer his services to you and your dealership. He would like to talk to you about how he might assist your dealership with any technology issue. Please contact him at SouthWestern Association, 1-800-762-5616 or brobeson@swassn.com