

South Western Flash

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Upcoming Events of Interest

Dealers of Tomorrow

Workshops:

- Aug. 5-6 - Emporia, Kan.
- Oct. 14-15 - San Antonio, Tex.

Plumbing and Electrical Seminars

- Aug. 21-22 - St. Louis, Mo.
- Aug. 25-26 - Wichita, Kan.

North American Retail Hardware Association's Nation Convention

- July 28-30 - Monterey, Calif.

South Western Association

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Association correspondence to your attention via e-mail. Please register your e-mail address at:

www.swassn.com/register-email.htm

Educational Opportunity

Plumbing & Electrical Seminars

August 21-22 – St. Peters, Mo.

August 25-26 – Wichita, Kan.

These seminars are designed to present product knowledge through a combination of classroom and hands-on training, as well as teaching selling skills to retail salespeople. Both beginners and experienced store personnel will benefit greatly from Bob Aiken's 35+ years of retail electrical and plumbing experience. The seminars are fast-paced, entertaining, interactive and informative. Attendees will leave with a better understanding of plumbing and/or electrical products and their uses, and be able to sell the correct items to consumers.

Day 1 – How to Sell Plumbing Supplies

- How a plumbing system works
- Types of shock arrestors and why they are needed.
- Valves-different types and their specific uses
- Selling and repairing faucets
- Different types of pipes and where you can use them- CPVC, PVC, Copper, PEX, PE, ABS and PB
- Soldering
- Installing a garbage disposal, dishwasher, air-gaps, ice-maker and under-sink drainage.
- Water heaters

Day 2 – How to Sell Electrical Supplies

- How an electrical system works
- The difference between 120 Volts and 240 Volts
- Dryer and range wiring – 4 wire vs. 3 wire
- Understanding electrical panels and grounding
- Breaker types and uses – what can be used where
- Fuses – types and uses
- Cables, cords and uses.
- Metal vs. plastic boxes, and how to select the right size and type.
- Wiring a variety of residential circuits.
- Understanding receptacles and switches, including GFCIs and AFCIs, single-pole, double-pole, three-way switches.

Who Should Attend

Anyone involved in selling plumbing or electrical products in a retail environment.

Registration Fees

Members: \$350 for first person - \$325 for each add'l from same company;
\$225 for Day 1 or Day 2 separately.

Continued on next page

Dealers of Tomorrow - 2008 Seminars

Mark your calendar and make plans now to attend the 2008 Dealers of Tomorrow Seminars. Scheduled for Tuesday-Wednesday, **August 5-6**, in **Emporia, Kansas**, and Tuesday-Wednesday, **October 14-15**, in **San Antonio, Texas**. These programs are planned by dealers for dealers with the goal of providing education today to prepare your key personnel for leadership tomorrow.

This workshop is for owners, mid-level managers, department managers, and key dealership personnel, and will teach participants how a dealership's operating approach and employee attitudes can affect the dealership on a day-to-day basis and impact its future success. Consider bringing several staff members so they can share ideas and return to implement them at your dealership.

Dealership and Department Development

This year's programs will focus on two distinct but related half-day programs presented by **John Spader**, of Spader Management Group. John Spader has worked closely with individual businesses in a variety of industries located in several countries as a small business management resource provider and Spader 20-Group facilitator. He is one of the primary instructors of the popular Total Management Workshop and also presents various other workshops and seminars related to business management.

The two programs will be *"Four Key Stages of Dealership and Department Development"* and *"Hiring, Managing and Developing People for High Performance."* "Four Key Stages" is a higher-level viewpoint of the dealership and its departments, designed to help people step back and look at the whole dealership or department from a strategic point of view. Its focus is on understanding where you are now, where you want to go and how to get from here to there.

One of the assessments in this session provides the key questions and benchmarks to evaluate when deciding if the dealership should focus on stability or growth, including the roadmap to growing a balanced and sustainable business. This program will include strategies to deal with communication issues in a multi-store structure to help employees provide a consistent level of service to customers.

Focus On Your People

The second half of the training, "Hiring, Managing and Developing People for High Performance" will focus on the most important component of your dealership – your people. In this action-packed half-day, we will use case study employees to illustrate the powerful Hiring and Developing Winners (HDW) Process developed by Dr. Michael O'Connor.

We will review how dealerships have traditionally created job descriptions and conducted performance reviews. Then, we'll learn how to implement the Hiring and Developing

Winners process by completing a HDW-based performance evaluation on the same case study employees.

Special bonus activity: A unique part of the program in Emporia, Kan., will be a tour of PrairieLand Partners, Inc. (formerly Deer Trail Implement), a John Deere dealership whose facilities were recently built and have been featured in industry magazines. This is your chance to see this modern, efficient dealership firsthand.

Thanks to our sponsors, we are able to provide this timely training at a very reasonable price. The programs are presented by Federated Insurance; other sponsors are: High Plains Journal, NAEDA Financial, Ltd., Fastline Publications, Equipment Insurance International (EII), IRON Solutions, LLC, and DIS. Program details have been mailed and posted to the SWA web site – www.swasn.com.



**John Spader -
Presenter**

Plan to attend this informative program in either location. You'll learn the skills and concepts you'll need to take you to the next level. And, you'll have the opportunity to meet and network with other dealers/managers like you. "Dealers of Tomorrow" is a special initiative of SouthWestern Association. The mission of the Dealers of Tomorrow is to provide education for the next generation. Be a part of this exciting program. For more information, please call the Association office at 800-762-5616.

Plumbing and Electrical Seminars

Continued from page 1

Nonmembers: \$450 for first person - \$425 for each add'l from same company; \$325 for Day 1 or Day 2 separately. Fees include lunch, breaks and handout materials.

Don't delay - \$50 surcharge added after August 1st.

Contact Olivia Holcombe at SouthWestern Association, 800-762-5616, for more information.

Technician Training Program

SouthWestern Association has partnered with OSU-Okmulgee to establish a technician training program for equipment dealership technicians. Students enrolled in the program are sponsored by equipment dealers in the SouthWestern Association territory.

For more information on the program contact: Tag Webb, SouthWestern Association Regional Manager - 918-232-2830; Steve Doede, OSU-Okmulgee Dept. Chairman - 918-293-5392 or Jeff Flora, CEO, SouthWestern Association, 800-762-5616.

Youth Employment Update

By Lesley Sifers, Tax Favored Benefits

Summer is at hand. Many dealerships will add youth workers to payroll for summer jobs. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) addresses allowable hours and permissible jobs for young workers - defined as those under age 18. The Department of Labor website, dol.gov, contains a wealth of information on this subject. PLEASE NOTE: When the DOL refers to "agricultural jobs" they are referring to work on FARMS - not at implement dealerships.

Here are some important points to understand (as they relate to your industry) when hiring people under age 18.

Permissible Jobs by Age

Age 13 or younger: Besides baby-sitting and delivering newspapers, a child is permitted to work in a business solely owned and operated by his/her parents, including a family farm. However, they cannot work in any occupation declared hazardous such as a family-owned coal mine.

Age 14: Work in offices, stores, restaurants, theaters and amusement parks is permitted as long as job duties do not include hazardous work.

Age 16: These youth workers can work in any job not declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor but with restrictions on certain work activities such as driving or use of certain types of equipment.

Partial List of Hazardous Jobs:

- Manufacture or storage of explosives (fireworks are explosives)
- Driving a motor vehicle or being an outside helper on a motor vehicle
- Mining
- Logging or sawmill operations
- Roofing operations and all work "on or about" a roof
- Use of power driven equipment (saws, hoists, shearing, punching, etc.)

There is a longer list at the DOL website. Beware! Just because the job activity you are planning is not on the list doesn't make it acceptable. The problem is that young people don't think before they act. **Continued on next page**



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Helping Dealers Succeed

If a worker under age 18 is injured on the job, they are covered by Workers Compensation. OSHA may have to visit you to assess what the young worker was doing when injured. They may decide to add that activity to the list of “hazardous jobs.” Be very, very careful about job assignments for workers under age 18.

Hours Restrictions

Age 14 -15: When school is NOT in session, the limit is 8 hours per day, not to exceed 40 hours per week. Between June 1st and Labor Day, these workers are permitted to work before 7:00 AM but not later than 9:00 PM. When school is in session, days and hours are more restrictive.

Age 16 and older: No restrictions on hours or days of work.

Driving

No employee under age 17 is permitted to drive, for any reason, as part of a job. If age 17 or older, driving is permitted under certain, very limited, circumstances. Go to www.wagehour.dol.gov and access Fact Sheet #34 for complete information. You should also talk to your insurance carrier before permitting anyone under age 18 to drive as part of their job.

State Laws

All states have statutes addressing child labor. While the majority of states mirror the federal law, some do have additional requirements and/or restrictions. REMEMBER: Always abide by the most restrictive regulation or law when there is a discrepancy between state and federal requirements.

You can access information about your specific state laws on the internet. Here are some helpful websites:

Missouri - www.dolir.mo.gov

Kansas - www.dol.ks.gov

Oklahoma - www.labor.ok.gov

Texas - www.twc.state.tx.us

Louisiana – www.laworks.net

free booklet summarizes state law,
call 225-342-7824

New Mexico – www.workforceconnection.state.nm.us

Arkansas – www.arkansas.gov/labor

Nebraska – www.dol.state.ne.us/nwd/

Once you are at the website, search for “youth employment” or “child labor.”

Posting Requirements

Federal law requires a specific posting for Child Labor. It also appears that Oklahoma has a special state poster that you can download from their website.

I strongly advise everyone to research their specific state requirements regarding youth employment.

Tax Favored Benefits is the SouthWestern Association endorsed partner for employee benefit programs, retirement planning, and 401(k) services. They can be reached at 800-683-3440 or 913-648-5526.



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Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan Program (B&I GLP)

Current low interest rates present an opportunity for SouthWestern Association members to position themselves for the long term with lower interest costs, longer repayment periods and improved cash flow. These value drivers have significant benefits for such items as: Refinancing existing debt, acquisitions, expansions, major remodeling, new facilities and buying out an existing shareholder.

The purpose of a B & I loan is to improve, develop and finance business/industry growth and improve economic growth in rural communities by bolstering local lenders through higher guaranties and longer repayment periods. Higher guaranties reduce the risk for the local lender and allow them to provide affordable long-term/low-interest rates, which may be fixed or variable depending on the negotiations with the lender. These loans are normally available throughout SouthWestern's territory (with the exception of cities of over 50,000 and most metropolitan areas).

A borrower may be any normal business or future business engaged in: Retailing, manufacturing, or a service-related enterprise. These businesses must provide employment with the intent of improving the economic climate in the area where the business is or will be located.

Loans are guaranteed 80 percent for the first \$5 million and 70 percent between \$5 million and \$10 million. There are possibilities of obtaining guaranteed loans for up to \$25 million.

Maximum terms are:

- Real estate - 30 years
- Machinery and equipment - 15 years; and
- Working capital - 7 years.

Eligible uses include business acquisitions, creation of jobs, expansion, major repair and expansion of facilities, machinery, leasehold improvements, start-up costs and working capital, refinancing and, under most circumstances, the purchase of existing shareholders' stock. Ineligible uses would include such items as refinancing existing government loans, payment of existing shareholder loans, lease payments, loans to charitable and non-profit organizations and illegal businesses.

The application process involves providing three years of tax returns, a current balance sheet and income statement for the business, personal financial statements, financial forecasts and a sound, well-documented narrative for your loan. In 2006, more than \$600 million of these loan guaranties were NOT used; it would appear 2007 and 2008 may represent higher unused amounts. In other words, there are loans available!

For additional details about these loans contact: Larry Dow, 816-536-4212, ladowllc@everestkc.net.



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Market Share & Profitability

By John Walker, President, After Market Service Consulting Co., Inc.

Look For John Walker as a future trainer for the SouthWestern Association On-Line Campus

Question to Ponder When Reading This Article: If manufacturers expect their dealers to hold double-digit market share shouldn't the dealer expect to have the opportunity to hold double-digit profits on the equipment they sell?

David Kanicki, Managing Editor of *Farm Equipment Magazine*, wrote an interesting editorial entitled, "Who's Marketing Your Brand?" This is a topic we have discussed numerous times in our own articles. In fact, it was just eight months ago we wrote, "Sell your dealership!"

Dave wrote the following: "You can have the best products the market has to offer and the catchiest advertising in the industry. But, if your people aren't selling and reinforcing the dealership's brand at every touch point with customers and prospects, then all you're doing is selling colored equipment." How true this statement really is.

There is sameness in products being offered by manufacturers in all industries who are offering products for their dealers to market. This sameness of product within the marketplace does not go unnoticed by the customer and therefore, when they are searching for this product, their main issue becomes the price of the product. In that scenario, the product has become little more than a commodity.

It is like buying an airline ticket. All airlines are the same today. They fly the same airplanes. The only difference in the product is the color of paint on the outside. They all offer the same type of service - Horrible! They all treat their customers the same way in the air, on the ground or over the telephone - Horrible! They all advertise the same features - the price of the ticket! So is it any wonder that before most of us buy a ticket we shop two or three different airlines for the best price we can get? This type of sameness in any industry with distributed products will continue to drive down the dealer's margins.

Add to the above the manufacturer's insatiable appetite for increased market share and you discover another factor for decreased margins on equipment sales.

Multiple Product Lines

Over the years, mergers, consolidations and leverage buy-outs should have had an effect upon the number of product lines offered to customers. This has not happened. Some manufacturers have two or three lines of product production and distribution. The only difference between these products is paint color and nomenclature, or decals on the product. Some manufacturers simply paint a line of equipment a different color and go to one of their competitors and thus allow a new set of dealers to compete with the existing line of

dealers. Some manufacturers select a second or third source of distribution along with their main line of dealers, thus creating an in-line source of competition, without a change in brand name or color of paint.

Despite all of this created market sameness, we have not seen a decline in manufacturers' requirements for increased market share, nor according to the industry Cost of Doing Business Studies, have we seen increases in dealer's gross profit on the sale of the equipment.

So are equipment manufacturers marketing only commodities in today's marketplace? The answer is no! Commodities are items such as oil, wheat, corn, soy beans, pork bellies, steers, etc. A commodity by definition does not require service after the sale. It is here that only the equipment dealer can fill this particular void. While manufacturers are not selling commodities, they are working hard to sell sameness without themselves providing service.

Those dealers today who have moved away from selling sameness and who focus upon what their customers want more than anything else are becoming both successful and profitable.

They have broken the traditional mold of equipment dealerships. They have realized that what customers really want from any equipment dealer is to avoid now, and in the future, "unscheduled down-time" on the equipment they purchase.

To do this, successful equipment dealers have learned to market, promote and advertise their dealerships to those customers and prospective customers they do business with. Today, with so much "market sameness" the biggest difference most customers see is in the dealer and the services the dealer provides after the sale and that is as it should be.

We have a dealer friend and client who we have worked with over the past 10 years who took our advice and articles to heart and made some totally positive changes in his operation of the dealership. His product has "sameness," in that there are at least eight similar lines of product throughout his territory. He is not truly located in a major metropolitan or industrial area or an area that other dealers might be jealous of as an area of opportunity.

This dealer was embarrassed when we began asking questions of his employees such as: 1) How many

Market Share and Profitability

Continued from page 7

technicians does the dealership employ; 2) How many years of experience working on the dealer's line of product do these technicians have; 3) How many years has the dealership been in business; 4) How many employees does the dealership employ, etc.

The dealer was embarrassed by the fact that his employees did not have the answer to these questions. Therefore, when the customer asked the question: *How will I be better off if I buy from you rather than from your competition?* No one had the same answer to any of the questions.

Building a Dealership Team

Could you, Mr. Dealer, be absolutely certain that everyone in your business would answer these questions in the exact same manner? How many of your employees can recite your dealership's Mission Statement? If not, what steps will you take to correct this major problem? This dealer did take the necessary steps and it paid off for him extremely well over a period of time. If you are interested in receiving an eight-page document on how to market the features, advantages and benefits of your dealership e-mail us at: amsconco@aol.com and we will send you, free of charge, this document.

This dealer built a team. He disseminated information, and made his personnel feel important and a part of the total business. Therefore, every chance they got they sold the "whole dealership." They marketed the fact that all personnel would be there for the customer after the sale. They sold customers on the fact that with their dealer's equipment in operation, the dealership would do everything possible to limit, to minimize or even guarantee negative "unscheduled down-time."

Did it work immediately? Certainly not! The marketplace was filled with non-believers. Customers had to be shown that they were being given more than just words. Ten years later, after a lot of hard work and difficult change, the dealership walked off with the manufacturers' top award of excellence. The dealer's market share was higher than the next three dealers on the list. Profitability on equipment sales - we won't tell you the actual number - were high double-digit figures.

Make a Profit

Could any equipment dealer do this same thing overnight? That is highly unlikely. It will take time. From time to time someone will have to bite the bullet, as this dealer did, and walk away from a sale. (The market share manufacturers don't like this!) Does this dealer hold his margin on equipment sale? Does this dealer charge for 24-7-365? Yes, he does. Is the dealer's labor rate higher than his neighboring dealers? Yes, you bet it is. Does the dealership run a tight well managed ship? This dealer knows how to do it right. He is in business to give his customers what they want after the sale. He is in business to make a profit for the dealership, himself and his employees.

This puts the dealer in the position to pay good wages and provide his employees the necessary training to do the job far better than his competitors.

Dealers and equipment sales personnel, if you are going to accept low margins on equipment sales to achieve market share, then you had better believe that you must sell the customer the total services of the dealership. If we are unwilling to do this, then the question of dealer survival is left to chance. Equipment sales personnel recognize that 87.9 percent of your customers surveyed state they are willing to pay a bit more for the equipment if they are assured that your dealership will truly stand behind the product after the sale. Of course, in most dealerships this translates to higher gross profits and to higher commissions paid.

Our dealer in the example believes in what he has been doing for the past 10 years. He is enthusiastic about the results he and his personnel have achieved. His personnel follow his lead, they believe in his concept of doing business. They work as a team to achieve the success they believe in.

"The difference between a professional and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of believing!" - Vince Lombardi

Member News

Jim Waters, Waters True Value Hardware, Salina, Kan., was recently named as one of the "Best Hardware Store in Town" recipients by True Value Co. The program recognized 13 retailers across the country. Members were invited to nominate their stores and fill out an online entry form. Entries were then evaluated by retail consultants, regional managers and True Value executives, with judging based on each store's success with the five P's of retailing: people, product, promotion, price and place. Jim and his staff were recognized at True Value's spring market in Orlando, Fla.

The Hardware Industry's Top Guns

In addition to the recognition of "Best Hardware Store in Town" by True Value Co., *Hardware Retailing* magazine, together with Reed Exhibitions and the National Hardware Show®, recently awarded one of their four Top Gun awards to **Jim Waters**, Waters True Value. The award singles out members of the independent home improvement retailing community for their dedication to the industry and their innovation in the marketplace. Jim owns seven hardware stores in Kansas and is a fourth-generation owner of the company. He is also a past president of Western Association. *SouthWestern Association congratulates Jim and Waters True Value on these achievements!*

Who Knows What Nature Has In Store?

Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

By Mike Jenkins, Federated Insurance Co.

How can you better protect your operation?

- Ask your local fire, police and emergency management department for information to help train employees on emergency actions to be taken for various types of natural disasters.
- Incorporate this information into a written emergency action plan for your business.
- Appoint leaders within your company to be responsible for implementing action plans.
- Train employees on the appropriate actions to take by conducting drills and testing equipment.
- Hold on-site sessions with local authorities.

Other ideas that may help protect your employees and property:

- Establish emergency communication and evacuation plans for employees.
- Establish facility shutdown and security procedures.
- Establish procedures to move records and inventory. Keep back-up records in a separate location.
- Work with a structural engineer to improve the strength of buildings.

- Establish safe shelter areas that can be accessed quickly, particularly for tornadoes and earthquakes.
- Determine effectiveness of audible warning systems for tornadoes.
- Determine if your facility is in a flood plain.
- Monitor weather reports for watches and warnings.

Federated Insurance can provide quality insurance protection and risk management assistance for your business. With some forethought and help from your insurer, you will be better prepared to weather the storm.

Spring Storms

Nature can strike a swift blow sometimes, especially this time of year. We can't prevent occurrences of floods, storms, earthquakes and other natural disasters – but we can take steps to manage them to minimize losses. Even the best insurance program possible may not be enough to alleviate the inconvenience and inherent problems following a major loss. However, businesses that prepare for disasters may recover more quickly and see less damage to the bottom line.

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Technology Tips for Recruitment

In the last century, we have seen numerous technological advancements that have changed the way we live, socialize, and work. Within all of these changes, recruitment was not excluded. The dot-com era invented new ways for companies to attract talent, and brought human resources and marketing to design creative new ways to market their job opportunities. Below are a few tips to help you stay connected with technology, that keeps you connected with future employees.

Corporate Websites – Employers appreciate jobseekers who come into an interview prepared. Interviewees who are knowledgeable about the company, the opportunity, and come with questions pre-prepared, catch the interviewer's attention. Where do these individuals go to find out this information??... the web. Lacking a corporate website that provides basic information about the company, including the opportunities you have available, will steer jobseekers to a blank page. Additionally, if jobseekers conduct a simple web search using your company name and you don't have a website that comes up at the top of that search, jobseekers can be influenced by any positive or negative press about your company that has been published to the web.

Utilize Job Boards – Research has shown that individuals use job boards to look for career opportunities... 71% in 2006 according to The Conference Board, a leading business membership and research organization. Posting your openings on a job board can communicate your opening to numerous potential hires. Job boards also provide quick and easy ways for jobseekers to send their credentials directly to the person at your company who needs to receive the information. Job board postings, with their unlimited space, can also allow you to be more creative with your information to attract more traffic to your posting.

Ad Words – Search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Dog-Pile, etc. are often the first place that web users turn to when looking for information. Depending on how well your website is optimized, your site will appear 'naturally' in the results list. However to ensure that your company's website appears at the very top of the list in sponsored spots, you can utilize Ad Word campaigns within specific search engines. For many companies, this is a great way to direct web surfers straight to accurate company info, products, or even your job postings. Many of these systems now even offer audio clips to engage your audience more.

Speaking of engaging your audience, an additional method of using technology wisely is via social networking avenues such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace. These are especially

useful for attracting younger generations. Students spend a lot of time browsing these websites, so why pass up a convenient opportunity to brand your company amongst this audience. Facebook has 67 million users and growing, while MySpace has over 106 million users. Having a recruitment page, creating groups for interns, and advertising company job opportunities, are all creative ways to use these websites in your recruitment plans.

There are many creative ways to use technology to your advantage to enhance your employer brand and recruit talent to your company. We've highlighted just a few of those practices in this article. AgCareers.com has a variety of workshops and webinars this year, where ideas, for using technology to recruit new employees will be shared. For a listing of upcoming events see this link <http://www.agcareers.com/workshops.cfm>. AgCareers.com also offers additional products and services involving technology that can make your company more competitive when attracting talent. For a full listing of our products and services check out this link <http://www.agcareers.com/products.cfm?task=productlist>.

This information is provided by AgCareers, Inc., South Western Association's partner in helping you find qualified recruits. If you haven't contacted them with your job openings, call Beth Hales today at 800-929-8975.

Remembrance

William (Bill) Drennan, 71, of Winfield, Kan., passed away Sunday, May 11 at William Newton Hospital in Winfield.

Before his retirement in 2004, Bill was co-owner of D&D Farm Equipment, the John Deere equipment dealership in Winfield. Bill operated the dealership with his father and his brothers, Jerry and Robert. Bill was born and raised in Winfield and graduated from Winfield High School in 1954. He graduated from Southwestern College in May 1958. Memorial information is available on the funeral home website at www.milesfuneralservice.com.

