

ESTA Directions June 2003

*by Mike Wood*

ESTA's commitment to establishing a personnel certification program for the entertainment technology industry is gathering momentum. As you've read in the last few issues of Protocol, particularly in the March issue, the work behind the scenes is moving forward apace. As a reminder of that news, at the March meetings the ESTA Board approved the draft business plan and the formation of a Certification Council to lead the process forward. The ESTA Certification Council will represent the diversity of the industry and its members will include key leaders in entertainment business, labor, associations, and academia.

I'm pleased to report that there has been immediate support from key sectors of the industry in participating in the Council. It is apparent that the participation of organized labor has to be a key component of a program like this and I'm delighted to report that IATSE has accepted the invitation to take a permanent seat on the Certification Council. A number of other key organizations are also ready to come on board and I'm confident that the full council will be in place by the summer. In fact, because of the month or so gap between me writing these words and you reading them you will probably have already seen more press releases announcing the appointment of council members. There is a more detailed article, written by Lori Rubinstein, elsewhere in this issue of Protocol which covers this news in more detail.

You may recall that this year the ESTA Code of Conduct was opened up to complaints from the general public as well as ESTA members. I wanted to remind everyone that the Code represents a commitment by all members of the Association "To maintain the highest level of ethics and responsibility in their relationship with the public, other members and customers." The good news is that the Ethics Committee has received very few complaints and none of those have led to use of the sanctions available. Unfortunately I believe it is naïve to think that this means that no members are infringing the code, one hears stories and rumors of questionable conduct from time to time but, very often, no complaint is filed. The Code of Conduct and the Ethics Committee cannot act until the formal complaints procedure is started – so, if you have a problem with a member company which you believe is serious enough to warrant review under the Code then please consider the complaints procedure. I'm not looking to encourage frivolous complaints but the reputation of the whole industry suffers if inappropriate behavior is left to continue unchallenged - enough said.

Business is tough for many members right now and one area which can be a real problem is getting appropriate business insurance for your company. The number of insurance companies prepared to write business in our sector has been shrinking and, even if you can find the coverage, the rates have been rising. Remember that ESTA may be able to help – either through the ESTA Insurance Program or through advice on companies who can give appropriate quotations. The office has contacts that can help all member categories – Dealers, Manufacturers and Affiliates.

Finally, it's almost time to vote on the Dealer's Choice and Manufacturer's Choice Awards which, as usual, will be awarded at the Annual Dinner during LDI in Orlando just before Thanksgiving. Please take the time to send in your vote – these awards are respected and prestigious and they need your vote to keep them that way.