

Directions June 2004

By Mike Wood

The momentum generated by the Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP) continues. Firstly the Certification Council has a new member, PRG (Production Resource Group) has agreed to take a seat and Jere Harris, PRG's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer will be joining the council from the July meeting with Fred Gallo, President – Scenic Operations, as his alternate representative. As one of the world's leading suppliers of entertainment technology equipment and solutions which operates in just about every sphere of the entertainment industry PRG will bring an important broad perspective to the group.

Secondly there have some further significant contributions to the ETCP start-up fund; Local 1 has contributed a magnificent \$50,000 in addition to the funds already pledged by IATSE and other Locals showing that support for the program by organized labor is broad and strong.

So far the donations received have taken the fund to nearly \$500,000 – a very impressive amount for such a short space of time. However there's still some way to go to reach the goal of \$750,000. Remember donations don't have to be \$50,000 to be worthwhile, most of us don't have the ability to invest such a large sum, but we can get to our goal now with smaller donations and I urge you to consider this cause and the benefits it will bring to the whole industry. To further ease the pain donation pledges are payable over three years to match the cash flow needs of the emerging program. Just to remind you, it is expected and budgeted that the ETCP will become self-sustaining in its 4th year and, in fact, will be able to fund its own expansion into other disciplines as the program grows.

Support has been so strong and the working groups have been making such good progress that the Certification Council has been able to place the contract for the psychometricians to start work on the first of the rigging assessment exams, those for permanent and temporary rigging systems. So this is still on schedule for roll out and the first examinations at the end of 2004.

In the March issue of Protocol I talked about the proposal from Stan Schwartz, Executive Vice President of Rosco, to study the buying habits of our customers. Since that time the study titled "How Customers Specify And Buy Expendables, Equipment and Systems In The Entertainment Industries." has been put together and an extensive survey taken. Many thousands of responses were received to the survey from all areas of the industry and, at the time of writing, the results are being collated into a final report.

The report will help provide answers to many questions about the trends in buying and specifying habits of a broad cross-section of the entertainment industries which will be of interest to marketers in the industry. For example, topics covered include: How important is the Internet becoming? How do people buy consumables, and is it different from how they buy capital goods? How influential are trade shows and advertising in helping people make equipment purchasing decisions? How do our customers actually *want* to go about their purchasing?

This significant and important report – the first of its kind ever carried out in this industry - will be published in July and is available through the ESTA office – see elsewhere in this issue for details of how to get a copy.

Finally, it's time to vote on the Dealer's Choice and Manufacturer's Choice Awards which will be awarded at ESTA's Annual Dinner during LDI in Las Vegas in October. Please take the time to give this due consideration and send in your vote.

