

ESTA Directions September 2001

by Mike Wood

On time for once, I had already written this column before leaving for the PLASA trade show in London in early September. Re-reading it after the atrocities of 9/11/01 I felt I had to revise it to reflect something of what we had all been feeling that week. Watching events unfold from London and being away from friends and families was surreal. It's now nearly two months later and you have all read and re-read reports of the news of that day in every magazine and newspaper published. This journal won't repeat that news, however we think it is important to put on record the experience and the support ESTA and its members both gave and received at that time. Accordingly you will find reflective and poignant articles by MaryLisa Kinney and Frances Thompson in this issue.

Everyone deals with the grief and shock of these events in their own way - I've watched as some people become introverted and solemn, some get angry and others weep. To be frank on that Tuesday evening I just sat in my room for two hours and cried. I'm not ashamed of that. However, human beings are resilient, one of the goals of these terrorists is to destroy world commerce and trade - we won't let that happen in our industry and we won't let them win. ESTA members won a number of awards at PLASA for innovation and presentation - it was a somewhat bitter-sweet award ceremony but we should still all be proud of what we can achieve. Let's get back to business.

Exactly one year ago in this column I talked about the upcoming Market Survey and the hard work that Lori and the committee had put in to make this happen. Well it *did* happen and the first results are in. Those of you who participated will have seen the figures and the fruits of those labors. Speaking with my company hat on briefly - we participated in this survey and are very pleased with the results. The figures challenge some assumptions and force the asking of some pertinent questions; that's good - that's what the survey was intended to do. The figures are clearly not 100% accurate yet as not everyone participated, but they'll improve as we all get more familiar with the process. More importantly, the trends the results show are even more important and significant than specific dollar figures. Read Lori's article in this issue for more information.

You may have read in 'ESTA Essentials' that Frances Thompson has a new role with ESTA. Frances will be taking on a Special Projects role, assisting Lori with her growing and diverse workload. Lori particularly welcomes Frances' industry knowledge and communication skills - I know that she's certainly helped me with understanding some of the subtle (and maybe not so subtle) differences between US and British English! Frances has done stalwart work for ESTA in a plethora of different roles over the past years including Manufacturer VP, Affiliate Director and Chair of the BizEd Committee and this role allows that dedication to continue - thank you Frances.

Frances' move left a vacancy for the office of Affiliate Director and this is being filled by Greg Meeh of Jauchem & Meeh Inc. Greg was runner up in last year's election and will serve through the end of 2002. Greg's broad experience over 30 years covering regional and Broadway theatre, industrials, grand opera, modern and classical dance and political conventions will be a great addition to ESTA.

It's the season for surveys, the second customer service survey program was again extremely successful. There was a full report on this in the last issue of Protocol and thanks are due to everyone who took the time and trouble to fill out the forms. As an addendum this year, so as to give some additional incentive, everyone who filled out surveys was entered in a drawing for an ESTA jacket. Eddie Kramer got to pull the lucky ticket from the hat and High Output were the

lucky winners. I know it is a lot of work filling out all those surveys but it is really appreciated by the recipients of the comments.

Congratulations are also due to the finalists in the 2001 Dealers' Choice Customer Service and Manufacturers' Choice Dealers of the Year Awards. The awards will be presented to the winners at the ESTA Annual Dinner at LDI in Orlando. The full list of 22 finalists is detailed in this issue on page ???. These awards continue to be hotly contested and it is rightly treated as a great honor to be voted on to this list by your peers.

Finally the ESTA office has now relocated to its new home – I don't know what it is about the building at 875 6th Avenue but the staff just don't seem to want to leave it. The last move, 5 years ago, was all of 12 feet sideways to the adjacent suite and this time, feeling slightly more daring, they moved vertically – 12 floors down. So now they are in an area of increased air pressure (Karl, in case you wondered, it's about 1/8" Hg or 5 millibars) we expect less light-headedness and the coffee will be slightly hotter. Thanks to those New York members who were of enormous help with the move – and everyone is welcome to call by for some of that hot coffee!