

# Reaping the *Benefits* of Trade Associations!

*(Editor's Note: The focus of our "International Marketing Forum" may not always be entirely international in scope. If you have ideas about subject matter, give us a call, anytime, at 414-332-8002 or 202-974-5280.)*

**By: Craig Messerknecht,  
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I'd like to take this opportunity today to talk with you about trade associations. These groups offer many opportunities, some that better position and promote your company, and some that position and promote your industry and profession.

## Benefits

The benefits to you and your business range greatly. At the highest level, trade associations serve as an advocate for your industry to the public and government. This advantage has been evident over the last year, as the

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SPI has spoken out to correct public misconceptions about the health hazards of plastic, an increasingly popular media topic.



Having this voice for an industry is even more critical right now as many changes are being

made in government legislation as it relates to everything from safety and environmental regulations to global trade agreements, business stimulus programs, and tax credits.

Associations also are repositories of information including white papers, news on the latest trends, professional development materials, and other educational benefits. This information gives members actionable ways to improve their business and individual knowledge.

## Types of Trade Associations

Other benefits gained from a trade association depend on its size and focus. Some are very niche focused, such as the **American Mold Builders Association (AMBA)**, some may



encompass an industry such as the **Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE)** and some can represent an entire sector of business such as the **National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)**.

Associations of any kind should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Your membership in more than one organization broadens the benefits received. AMBA can offer updates specific to your job, whereas groups like SPE and NAM allow you to network beyond your peers with prospective customers, partners and suppliers.

## Business Growth

Often cited as the biggest benefit to association member-

ship, networking can serve as a springboard to business growth. In



addition, you can serve on committees that allow you to take an active role in influencing legislation, industry standards, etc. Participation at this level also enhances the reputations of you and your business as thought leaders in your industry, giving you added credibility with customers and prospects.

And this credibility in the marketplace brings us back to theme of my column: marketing. When faced with a limited marketing budget, associations can do some of the talking and promoting for you. They already have a narrative for your industry and discipline that will help in explaining to the world what you do. Even simple actions like linking your web site to the association's web presence, or using their logo in customer communications can go a long way in solidifying your leadership position in the minds of the people with whom you'd like to improve business relations.

## The Power for Our People

Some associations take marketing support a step further, such as AMBA. They offer members access to marketing and public relations consultants who will work on everything from marketing plans to drafting press releases. They also exhibit on behalf of their entire membership at trade shows and distribute leads post-show, so you can still benefit from an industry event even if your budget doesn't allow you to be there in person.

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## The International Marketing Forum

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AMBA is the only trade association focused solely on moldmaking, which makes it particularly important to all of us. They present up to three webinars a month, free to members, that are tailored to running your business better. Their narrow focus allows more agility in programming, which is how they very quickly offered a webinar on the issues GM was having, helping members know how to best protect themselves as suppliers. The

AMBA fall conference this year is in Washington DC, where association leaders and members will meet with their Senate and House representatives to have their concerns heard. Issues small businesses face are not as widely understood by Congress, and opportunities like this, as well as letter writing campaigns and platform pieces available for your use, build influence in the future of your industry and the regulations affecting it.

There are many other great associations out there. (You can check some of them out, via direct links, anytime, at: [www.dme.net/dme/resources/links.html](http://www.dme.net/dme/resources/links.html)). These organizations are eager to help all of us advance ourselves, our companies and our industry. Consider creating a combination of involvement that best suits your needs. It's just one more way to get a leg up on the competition, while supporting your industry at the same time.

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**GBC Mission Statement:** ...to increase global awareness and competitiveness by providing resources to SPI members, while fostering growth of the plastics industry worldwide.

**GBC Meetings:** (Future meetings of the Global Business Council will be announced in this column as appropriate.)

**References and International Events:** GBC is comprised of more than 100 SPI members from all segments of the industry. **GBC Committee:** Dave Lawrence, D-M-E (Chair); Richard LeNoir, Basell USA Inc. (Vice-Chair); John Blundy, Incoe Corp; Al Cotton, NYPRO Inc.; Steve DeHoff, Stress Engineering Services; Larry Doyle, The Conair Group; Van Durham, Injection Technologies; Al Hodge, Standex Engraving Corporation; Rob Kittredge, Fabri-Kal Corp.; Peter Langerak, Dupont Polymers; Bruce Lecky, Drader Manufacturing Industries Ltd.; Michael Lynch, Illinois Tool Works, Inc.; Jess A. Mellenthin, Plastic Ingenuity Inc.; Wylie Royce, Royce Associates; Charles Sholtis, Plastic Molding Technology; Ursula Tober, Ticona.

**International Events:** *Plast-Imagin*, March 23-26, 2010, Mexico City, Mexico, Banamex; (E.J. Krause & Associates, Inc.) Telephone 52-55 1087 1650, Fax: 52-55 5523 8276; [www.plastimagin.com.mx](http://www.plastimagin.com.mx)

**(Editors Footnote:** We invite YOU to become a resource for and contributor to *THE MOLDBAKER JOURNAL*. **How about a Q&A, for example?** We freely invite readers to offer your own suggestions as to subject matter for the "International Marketing Forum," and to make recommendations as to other topics we might try to cover in these pages. Our focus in future may not be completely about global marketing, but we need your input to determine the best kind of news and information to bring to the Moldmaking Profession.)

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