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2007 Best of Success: Speakers Shine in Phoenix at Fourth Annual Conference

by Chris King

Tom Watts

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Best of Success Conference well attended by who's who of roofing industry.



Roofing Contractor publisher Jill Bloom opened the Best of Success Conference in Phoenix by introducing a "who's who" lineup of guest speakers.

Roofing experts arrived from points across the United States with tools proven to work in the industry. With them they brought knowledge of the business including the experience factor from Seattle, sales training from Chicago, guerilla marketing from Florida and quality leads from Atlanta. There were commercial code updates from Florida, succession-planning tips from New York, the latest news on immigration law from Washington, D.C., and a summary of the current initiatives of the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) from its president in Kansas City.



Nearly 200 contractors, suppliers and distributors attended the fourth annual Best of Success Conference held in Phoenix.

And after an all-star distributor panel had finished its discussion on industry trends, the fourth annual Roofing Contractor Best of Success Conference had again

provided contractors and other roofing professionals what they were looking for: tips on how to be more successful.

Best of Success was held for a second consecutive year in Phoenix, and the Valley of the Sun provided a beautiful backdrop for nearly 200 information-hungry contractors. "In my 24 years in the roofing industry, I have yet to get so much information in such a short period of time," said Walter Millet of Altec Roofing Inc., Jupiter, Fla. "It's pretty cool stuff. The conference offered so many things that will help your business grow." "This was the best conference I have attended involving roofing contractors," said Kevin Kennedy of Evans Roofing Co., Elmira, N.Y. "This is the best of the best."

The spacious conference room at Pointe South Mountain Resort was filled each day with contractors looking to improve their businesses, learn from their peers and capitalize on networking opportunities.

Contractors from California to Maine and from Wisconsin to Louisiana gathered to take in educational seminars and panel discussions from the industry's top commercial and residential roofing experts. But equally important was the chance to meet other non-competing contractors during breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"I love the conference because we can share and receive information at a national level," said Ken Kelly, president of Kelly Roofing, Naples, Fla. "When contractors get away from their hometowns, we open up. I have to take a week or two off just to digest everything I've learned."

Bruner Mallett of Mallet Roofing Co. Inc. near New Orleans said his company lost nearly everything during the floods caused by Hurricane Katrina, and he looked at Best of Success as a starting point to get his business up and running again. "We're not going out of business," Mallett said. "But we have been struggling to get back. We've learned a lot. This conference is telling me to get into distribution."

Opportunities to discuss industry trends didn't end when the sessions were over, as attendees who gathered in the courtyard for a networking reception continued to talk about best practices until long after the sun had set. "The real value is networking and taking the best practices back to Owens Corning," said Lindsey Switzer of Chicago, a sales rep with Owens Corning. "The value is the experience the speakers have and networking with them. I love hearing from other contractors across the country."

As she has for the previous three Best of Success events, Roofing Contractor Group Publisher Jill Bloom opened the conference by expressing her gratitude to the sponsors, speakers, attendees and advisors who had helped shape the event before introducing a who's who list of speakers. Rick Damato, Roofing Contractor's editorial director, opened the first day with a bit of scripture, pointing to Luke 12:34: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." He commended attendees for investing in the industry and their companies in the face of an economic downturn. "Some segments of the building and roofing industries have cooled down considerably," Damato said. "It may stay this way for a while. The companies that will prevail are the ones that stay the course and don't lose track of their core competencies."

"These are exciting times in the roofing industry," said Damato, pointing to the overall performance of steep and low-slope roofing systems, immigration reform, and consolidation in the supply chain as key trends to watch. He also singled out environmentally friendly roofing systems. "Green, sustainable, recyclable, cool — these are all terms that have been in vogue for some time in the roofing industry," he said. "I believe these things are exceedingly positive for the good health of not only the environment and our building owner clients, but for the roofing industry as a whole."

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Seminars were informative and to the point. Rick Davis of Chicago led off the parade of panelists with his take on "How to Sell in a Down Market." Moderator Jay Butch, director of contractor programs for CertainTeed Corp., introduced a series of marketing-oriented sessions featuring Ken Kelly of Naples, Fla., on "Guerilla Marketing," Bob Kulp of Stratford, Wis., on "Selling to Groups and Increasing Your Closing Ratio," and David Welch of Atlanta on "Working Together to Get High-Quality Leads."

Other speakers included Jade Sund of Broomfield, Colo., whose session was titled "Speak So They Listen," Ted Jorve of Seattle on "The Experience Factor" and Kevin Kennedy of New York on "Succession Planning." Craig Silvertooth of Washington and James Aldrich of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., conducted a session titled "Immigration Law and Impending Legislation." Other speakers included Kirk Herold on "Safety: The Top Priority," Wally Scoggins on "Reroofing the Superdome," and John D'Annunzio on "Code Update." Bob Daly, the current president of the NRCA, updated attendees on the organization's efforts to bolster the industry and help its members. Also on the agenda were panel discussions on commercial maintenance and distribution trends.



A jam-packed conference room at the Pointe South Mountain Resort in Phoenix was filled by nearly 200 contractors, manufacturers, distributors and suppliers.

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communication. "We're part of the distribution chain," Simonelli said. "We hope that you look at us as an extension of you. We want to represent you well at the jobsite, deliver the right product, help with safety, etc. The good contractors have good relationships with their branch manager. You have to communicate and let us know exactly what is needed and any special requirements."

"Where the rubber meets the road is relationships," said Ravana. "Price is up there somewhere in importance, but it's not all about price — it's training, it's help, it's the response when things go wrong. It's the relationship that will get you through."

In the best relationships, information flows both ways, maintained Jenkins. "Our reps ride with manufacturers and contractors," he said. "It helps to know the products, services and applications. It makes our salespeople better to learn as much as they can from others. Our service and our ability to take care of our customers is our strength, and that holds true in a good economy or a bad economy,"

Tool Giveaways



In between speakers, tools were given away courtesy of the event's sponsors.

In between speakers, Bloom rattled off names of contractor's chosen in a drawing, and each took home a brand new tool, courtesy of the event's tool sponsors. Lucky contractors walked away with ultra-compact Lithium-ion tools from Bosch, including the Litheon™ 10.8V Pocket Driver (PS20) and the Litheon™ I-Driver (PS10). According to Cliff Earle, national account representative for Robert Bosch Tool Corp., both can drive 100 3-inch screws per charge. "They are lightweight and powerful enough to accomplish a majority of professional drill/driving tasks all day without fatigue," he said.

National Nail Corp. also awarded tools as prizes in a contractor drawing, including the Stinger CH38 airless cap hammer. "It's a great conference," said Brian Nieber, national product and sales manager for National Nail Corp., Grand Rapids, Mich., who was attending the event for the second time. "I took a lot of notes. The networking opportunities are great. There are things I've learned that will help me as a manufacturer."

Winners in the tool drawings included: Don Pitts of Pitts Roofing Co. Inc., Fort Worth, Texas; Roy Everette of Joe Ward Roofing Contractors, Miami, Fla.; Thom Creekmore of Peak Roof Management Inc., Yucca Valley, Calif.; Bruner Mallett of Bruner Mallett Roofing Co. Inc., Metairie, La.; Timothy Hershey of Thoroughbred Contractors, Shelbyville, Ky.; Jeff Weaver of Starkweather Roofing, Glendale, Ariz.; John Stoll of Rain Proof Roofing LLC, Anchorage, Alaska; Darrel Moore of Lyon's Roofing, Phoenix, Ariz.; Walter Millet of Altec Roofing Inc., Jupiter, Fla.; Peter Kuzma of McGuff Roofing Inc., Muncie, Ind.; David Welch of Ben Hill Roofing, Douglasville, Ga.; Russ Hyman of Gryphon Roofing, Mesa, Ariz.; Marlin Kjelaas of All Weather Roofing Co. Inc., Stockton, Calif.; Roger Fraley of Fraley Roofing Inc., North River Rock, Ariz.; Paul Brockman of Roof Maintenance, Nashville, Tenn.; Jeff Starkweather of Starkweather Roofing, Glendale, Ariz.; Rex Simpson of Gallop Roofing & Remodeling, Wanchese, N.C.; Vicki Simpson of Gallop Roofing & Remodeling, Wanchese, N.C.; Shaun Payne of Payne & Sons Construction, Gilbert, Ariz.; Scot Sund of Viking Roofing, Broomfield, Colo.; James Scardina of Bet Construction, Miami, Fla.; Bruce Diederich of Waukegan Roofing Co. Inc., Waukegan, Ill.; Joe Don Joyce of Foster Roofing, Springdale, Ark.; Kevin Clark of Right Way Roofing Inc., Mesa, Ariz.; Steve Houston of Scott Roofing, Phoenix, Ariz.; and Jim Blair of Blair Construction, Annapolis, Md.

Western States Roofing Contractor Association (WSRCA) also awarded five free memberships during the conference.

Next Year

Details on next year's conference have yet to be announced, but stay tuned to www.roofingcontractor.com for the date and location of the 2008 Best of Success Conference.

"I want to thank you and the rest of your staff at Roofing Contractor magazine for the Best of Success Conference," said Bruce Fryer of Fryer Roofing Co., Fresno, Calif., after the 2007 event concluded. "It has quickly become one of the roofing industry's premier events, and I very much look forward to what you have in store for us at next year's conference. You have set the bar high."

If you have questions about next year's Best of Success Conference, or if you would like to recommend speakers or topics to be covered in 2008, please contact Editor Chris King at 248-244-6497 or Associate Editor Tom Watts at 248-244-1738.



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