

Representing The Wiping Materials, Recycled Clothing, New Textile By Products and Fiber Industries



President's Column

Bill Schapiro, SMART President

“The SMART Regional: A Brief History”

For many years, SMART scheduled two major conventions each year. One yearly meeting was usually held in a warm-weather venue and a mid-year meeting in the spring was held in a major U.S. or Canadian city. These two meetings would run multiple days complete with wiper and grader chapter meetings, board meetings, general membership meetings and a golf tournament, as well as other entertainment opportunities. Many members would take advantage of the tax benefits and plan their family vacations around these conventions. Business relationships became lifetime friendships over the course of the two to four day event.

With the advent of communication improvements such as e-mail and web sites among others, the need for multiple day meetings was lessened and SMART began scheduling only one convention each year. Our next one, by the way, is the much anticipated meeting in Chicago in August 2008.

**SMART 2008
Regional Meetings**
Toronto and Houston
Dates to be Determined
Watch future editions of
SMARTTalk for details.

In the meantime, in 2003, the idea of the Regional Meeting was born. These meetings were seen as a way to fill certain needs unmet due to the elimination of the mid-year meeting.

The original concept was to take the SMART “show” on the road. Meetings were scheduled in areas that were easy to access by plane and thereby achieve a one day, inexpensive “in and out” experience. The main idea at the time was to give perspective members a glimpse of what SMART had to offer and provide an efficient one day networking opportunity for members as well.

In 2003 the first meetings were held in Charlotte, Chicago and Houston. These meetings were considered a success, with each having an attendance of 35 or more companies.

In recent years, the Houston and Toronto meetings became wonderful and spirited traditions attracting crowds of 100 people or more. The main attraction, more than any other, was a terrific opportunity to network with many present and perspective clients in one evening at an airport hotel venue offering easy access. Of course, the large number of graders and wiper dealers in these areas made it convenient to combine the evening of networking which would typically begin at 5 p.m. with visits to customers during the day of the meeting

Big turnouts were also achieved in 2005 in Las Vegas and in 2006 in Atlanta. It was not uncommon to see attendees networking until midnight or later, and at this month's Houston meeting, the crowd was standing room only, such that yours truly didn't have a permanent seat for dinner, but I was more than happy to go table to table and say hello to a diverse and lively crowd.

The Regional Meetings are now established and institutionalized and an important part of the SMART experience. But the concept is still evolving. Some have mentioned that they would like to see more discussion of industry issues. The yearly meeting has four days of chapter and committee meetings but is held only once a year.

It seems that there is a demand to expand the Regional Meeting an extra half day to include wiper and grader chapter meetings or to add a one hour question and answer session before the evening dinner with SMART's Executive Director Peter Mayberry and/or SMART's Director of Government Affairs Jessica Franken as moderators.

Between now and our next Regional Meeting in Toronto in May/June of 2008 SMART's board and convention committee will be considering ideas to improve what has already become a very successful but still evolving concept. If members have any ideas on the issue please know the SMART office welcomes your input. You can contact the SMART office at 703-538-1000 or email maryann@smartasn.org.

In the meantime, I have to end this note so I can catch up on the many new contacts I just made in Houston.
