

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW

By Butch Winkler

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When I was elected to the Board of Directors of the National Automatic Merchandising Association in 2007, I had been in the office coffee industry since 1981 and a member of NAMA for 20 years. I thought I knew all about the many ways NAMA helps our industry. I was wrong, and I'll bet there are many others who have no idea of the countless programs, resources and cost-savings activity delivered by NAMA.

Serving on the Board has been very satisfying, since it offers both the opportunity to give something back to an industry that means a great deal to me, and the ability to have a hand in drafting the policies that will help shape the future of our business. What is frustrating, though, is encountering operators who ask what NAMA has done for them lately – or, perhaps worse, those who seem to have no idea what it does at all. And there are people who appear to believe that the whole thing is a sort of club, and membership on the Board is primarily a social opportunity accompanied by attractive perquisites. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, neither NAMA or its numerous programs or accomplishments would be possible without the generous time donated by the NAMA board of directors and officers, who volunteer their service to focus on strategy and policy and help guide the organization. The board meets three times a year, and in addition, the committees on which they serve meet (in person or by teleconference) several times a year. Board seats are held by individuals, not companies, and the directors serve at their own expense, receiving no compensation for this service.

The National Automatic Merchandising Association now has 73 years' experience representing not only vending but also coffee service and contract foodservice. NAMA presently serves more than 2,500 member companies employing nearly a million people. Simply put, the association exists to protect and promote the best interests of all our industry's constituents, delivering a wide array of tools to help its members succeed.

Perhaps nowhere is the contribution NAMA and its 30-plus state councils make to every single member of our industry more evident than in the millions of dollars saved thanks to the Government Affairs Department. Working with the state council partners, NAMA has achieved sales tax relief in 25 states resulting in real tax savings for the industry of at least \$600 million every year. Just think about that for a moment: millions and millions of dollars that you didn't have to pay in taxes all thanks to the hard work of NAMA and its state councils. The NAMA Government Affairs Department also works on a host of other issues, from container deposit legislation to food and beverage product restrictions. It has worked to preserve the design of the \$1 bill, saving operator members hundreds of millions of dollars in retooling costs.

From NAMA's work introducing the \$1 golden coin into circulation in January 2000 to its work with the Federal Reserve to preserve the quality of currency in the hands of the public, the result translates into millions of dollars of savings.

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KNOWLEDGE

NAMA's Knowledge Source Partners deliver advice about a wide range of subjects for free. With just one phone call you can get answers about everything from employment law, health and nutrition to marketing and human resources. These well-regarded professionals have been selected by NAMA because of their reputation and knowledge of the industry. As a result they already understand our business, and you don't have to worry about their credentials.

It doesn't end there. NAMA has arrangements with its business partners so members can save on everything from gas to shipping. As I write this, we have been working in conjunction with the business partners to reevaluate and correct shortcomings in our business insurance coverage. Now that's a return on investment!

NAMA also delivers a host of educational programs and resources which are especially critical during these difficult economic times when everyone needs to learn how to do more with less. You can attend educational seminars in sales, new technology, food safety or route driver certification, or keep in touch with one another and with the industry by reading InTouch or the new e-newsletter KITN (Keep in Touch with NAMA). You can also learn more about how to do virtually everything better, thanks to the comprehensive industry reports that NAMA issues every year.

You can sign up for advanced educational offerings like the Supervisor Development Program, designed to help mid-level managers learn to do their job more effectively. You can sit for the NAMA Certified Executive exam to earn your NCE, which is available to members in all segments. Certification is the mark of excellence denoting accomplishment, initiative and professionalism; it demonstrates to clients and colleagues that you are among our foremost executives.

The Coffee Service Committee, which I chair, is committed to providing members with a variety of tools to help coffee service operators prosper. The Quality Coffee Certification Program teaches operators to brew the certifiably best coffee possible and currently boasts more than 700 graduates. Coffee service members also have their own pavilion at the Expos. A new annual Coffee Summit provides members a place to meet with colleagues and learn key insights about how to tap into this rapidly growing segment of our industry. This summit will be held in different regions in the coming years in order to bring NAMA OCS to you.

Most members know about NAMA's National and Spring Expos because they are the industry's premier events showcasing the latest technology, products, and offering wall-to-wall education sessions and unmatched networking opportunities.

Especially important at present is the enormous progress NAMA has made in changing the way people think about our industry through its national health and wellness initiatives, Balanced for Life and Fit Pick. Designed to position the industry as a partner in addressing rising obesity rates, these campaigns have generated hundreds of positive articles about our industry. Combined with the national network television segments that NAMA arranged as well as all the positive newspaper, television and radio stories that NAMA has placed, the positive publicity for our industry has been equal to or better than a multimillion-dollar advertising campaign.

So if you haven't taken a look at what NAMA has to offer – if you've wondered what the association has done for you lately – I urge you to take a few moments to find out. NAMA is sure to have something that can help you. While you're busy running your own business, NAMA will be there, watching the horizon for the next set of challenges and developing the next set of programs and services to help you solve problems and move up to the next level.



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