

PRESIDENTS QUARTERLY

The Crossroads of Conversation in the Industry



35 YEARS OF STRENGTH, STRATEGY AND SUPPORT



Three and a half decades! That's a long time in the life of any organization, but an especially long time for an association. And this year, it's the benchmark of excellence our Society can reflect on with pride as we look back at our legacy and look forward to a bright future ahead.

In the 35 years we've been serving professionals in corporate foodservice (and now workplace hospitality), so much has happened. There have been new trends and technologies... calculated shifts and consolidations... unexpected challenges and opportunities... and, of course, plenty of new friends and well-earned retirements.

Throughout that time, we've been a Society focused on strength, strategy and support. That focus has never wavered. And as you see our new 35th anniversary logo on our events, sponsorship and membership materials this year, you should regard it as a symbol of that focus—a badge of honor for all the hard work that has led us to where we are today. Together we have moved mountains!

Speaking of hard work, your leadership and your committees continue that tradition even now. We have been very busy over the past few weeks. Our SHFM outreach strategy, which works to increase our brand awareness and awareness of our industry segment, has led us to engage several colleges and universities so we can start building the next generation of SHFM members. Planning is also well underway for our 35th Anniversary National Conference, which will be held November 4–6 at the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, CT. It will offer an incredible lineup of speakers on the hottest topics impacting corporate foodservice, as well as the broad range of hospitality responsibilities our Client Liaisons face today. Don't miss it!

And even sooner than that, we're proud to announce an incredible 2014 Critical Issues Conference on Tuesday, April 8 in New York City. This is the first official event of our 35th Anniversary year and also the first event with an "H-centric" topic: innovative space utilization for workplace hospitality. (We will build upon this topic after the CIC through our SHFM Locals and at our National Conference, as we begin our journey embracing hospitality more broadly).

Here's more information about this fabulous event:

- The event will take place on Tuesday, **April 8 in the New York City's incredible Citi Field**, one of the finest examples of multi-purpose space utilization — it's more than just a ball park, as our behind-the-scenes tour will show you!
- The theme, **Space & Hospitality: One Footprint, Endless Possibilities**, brings together an exciting one-day program packed with information along three tracks: 1) a broad view of trends and innovations in space utilization, 2) the latest insights in space planning and design, and 3) real-world examples of executions from a panel of designers, architects and clients.
- Become a leader in space utilization for your company — more aware of new concepts and the ways they can impact your workplace environment and culture.
Registration will open in mid-February... be on the lookout for more information. Hope to see everyone there!

Lastly, let me give a very big “hats off” to our hard-working committees. They're all doing a great job of following our strategic plan and moving all the tactical steps. Our volunteers are the strength of the Society and have led us to where we are today, so if you're thinking of participating, I strongly encourage it. Your time and talent would be a welcome addition and committee work is a great way to make business contacts too!

Enjoy this issue of *Presidents Quarterly*. And, as I always say, thank you for your dedication to our Society and our industry!

With warmest wishes,



Sabrina Capannola | President





How has the advent of social media changed Epicurean Group's approach to marketing?

Over the past few years, we've integrated social media into Epicurean Group's overall marketing efforts. Social media is all about conversations between customers, managers and employees, and we use it to strengthen our brand, share company news and connect with our customers. We've found that social media is a terrific way to engage clients and to keep our business fresh with daily posts about culinary, hospitality and environmental news and events. We link to other businesses that share our company's values, and we re-tweet and share information that we know will be useful to our customers and staff. Sharing, tweeting and posting café, catering, and training news in real time also has allowed for a dynamic exchange of creative ideas between our chefs and managers who work in distant locations. Conversations are no longer restricted to quarterly or annual meeting; they're immediate and happen on a daily basis.

How has your company incorporated environmental responsibility within recent years?

Since our start more than 10 years ago, Epicurean Group has practiced social and environmental responsibility. They're part of our core values. For example, the majority of our food purchases are sourced locally and in season, so our food doesn't have to fly across the country before it lands on a customer's plate. To eliminate Styrofoam® and non-recyclable plastics used in our restaurants, Epicurean Group established the GreenTown Co-op, an innovative non-profit buyers' cooperative that is replacing petroleum-based products with compostable materials to reduce landfill waste. We estimate that we've kept 21 tons of trash out of the landfill annually as a result of the co-op. Epicurean Group also is a member of Slow Food and supports their Good, Clean, and Fair sustainable food model and education efforts. Our Go Greener! program educates customers and clients about the ways we are reducing waste in our cafés and what they can do to help at work and at home.

What do you think creates the greatest challenge to corporate foodservice?

If your company, like ours, provides healthy, seasonal, organic local food — as opposed to the “standard issue” pre-made commodity foods that are a staple of most of the mega-companies — then your greatest challenge is sourcing. Sourcing organic, local food in volume is difficult, even here in Northern California. In colder climates, it is even more problematic – impossible in some cases! Going forward, we'll need to forge more direct relationships with the farmers and ranchers who produce our food, which will serve both to eliminate the middleman and support our local communities.

Where do you see the most opportunity to grow the industry?

The greatest opportunity for Epicurean Group is the growing interest in sustainable, healthy food. More and more clients want to do business with a values-based company like ours, one that operates on the principles of quality, integrity and sustainability. We are finding that clients are looking for a management company that delivers on their promise of the best food and service at the best price. Today, clients are much more savvy about quality — they won't settle for the standard commodity food that used to dominate contract foodservice.

What is the most valuable part of doing business with Epicurean Group for your customers?

Our newest clients tell us that they're surprised when we prove that seasonal, local, healthy food can be affordable. We build on that by listening to each client's wants and needs, and then crafting individual, customized programs; there's no “cookie-cutter” approach here. One thing that really sets us apart is our sophisticated event catering, in addition to providing delicious food to our café clients. It's rare to find a company like Epicurean Group that can provide professional service in both areas of the hospitality business.



What are your goals as the current Vice President for NAMA?

For the past 12 years, I've been the Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of NAMA, the national association representing 1800 member companies, including some of the world's most recognized brands. My personal goals coincide with those of NAMA: to foster the profitable growth of the vending and refreshment services industry. This includes a focus on the rapidly growing micro markets being introduced by vending operators all across the country. (Micro markets are an innovative retailing channel that includes automated self-service, in an unattended payment environment, allowing for greater variety and consumer convenience in a controlled setting.)

Are there any new benefits or features NAMA has introduced lately?

Technology and innovation come immediately to mind. We are assisting our members with tools and education to fundamentally drive change in the industry, including cashless payment systems, menu engineering, remote monitoring, warehouse productivity solutions and micro markets. Since 2005, we are the leading provider of nutritional information since through our "Fit Pick" and "Balanced For Life" programs. NAMA is committed to our members (customers) and we have greatly expanded our educational program offerings, consumer research and networking (trade show, forums and seminar) opportunities. Two areas of particular note include greater emphasis on Government Affairs and Coffee, Tea, Water (CTW) services. We have also revitalized the NAMA Foundation, enabling us to provide enhanced industry-specific research, industry and student scholarships, white papers and much more. Check out our website at www.vending.org for more complete information.

What is a common challenge within the vending and refreshment services industry?

Unfair Federal, State and Local legislation, taxation and regulation. This is why we have broadly expanded our Government Affairs function. Small businesses are under intense pressure and it is essential for us to help drive favorable policy outcomes and advance our advocacy initiatives through effective and timely lobbying on behalf of the industry we serve.

What is one key take-away you hope to have from your position with NAMA?

My entire 45 year career has been devoted to the hospitality SERVICE industry. Knowing that I have played a direct role in helping companies and individuals reach more of their business and personal goals more often is what means the most to me. I love this industry — one that has been very good to me — and I love my job. There is so much more I want to accomplish before I "hang up my spurs."

What is the best meal you've ever eaten?

That's easy; it was a romantic picnic luncheon (purchased from a market in Napa Valley) with my wife and I sitting on a large rock surrounded by sheep on the edge of a high cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean 125 miles north of San Francisco. The meal was terrific but the ambience was priceless — beauty we will never forget.

Dan Mathews | EVP & COO | National Automatic Merchandising Association



What do you see as the biggest challenge facing corporate foodservice and workplace hospitality in today's business climate?

One of our biggest challenges as an industry is consistently providing hospitality excellence and culinary innovation while raising the bar each and every day. That's what we expect of ourselves and that's what our clients and customers expect of us.

In what ways has the association grown/stayed consistent since your Presidency?

The association has remained the "go to" professional association for corporate foodservices and hospitality since its inception and has been effective in delivering relevant information to its members, as well as sharing best practices.

Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

When I look back, I'm not one to second guess decisions I've made. I would encourage anyone seeking a leadership position in any organization to be bold and think big!

How has your professional role changed since your 1989–1990 year of Presidency?

My professional role has changed considerably since 1989–90. I have spent the last 23 years at Restaurant Associates. During that time, our organization has grown from managing 15 premier clients and 800 employees to 150 premier clients and 8,000 employees. It has been extremely exciting and fulfilling.

What is your most fond memory from that year?

One of my fondest memories of that year was the President's Gala in San Francisco, where for the first time in the association's history, one of our member organizations, *Bon Appétit*, catered the Gala and did a fabulous job. It reinforced just how far we've come as an association and as an industry.

Ed Sirhal | President | Restaurant Associates

UPCOMING EVENTS

CRITICAL ISSUES CONFERENCE

Tuesday, April 8
New York, NY

NRA BREAKFAST

Monday, May 19
Chicago, IL

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

November 4 – 6
Mohegan Sun, CT

