



Member's

Corner

Back from China . . . important Qs & As

by Steve Grossman, CPMR
Former IHRA President and Chairman



Steve Grossman, CPMR

My last month's column was based on a previous trip I made to China. Since I got back from my latest trip at the end of April, I thought I would give

you views and experiences from my 3rd trip, based on the questions most frequently asked of me. I hope you find this Q & A format helpful.

Q. Why do you go to China?

A. *Since so little is being manufactured in the U.S., and many U.S. companies are just marketing companies, I decided to try to work with trading companies or Chinese suppliers that have offices in the U.S., to offer products at lower costs with better commissions.*

Q. Was your recent trip successful?

A. *I will let you know in 6 months or so. I find the biggest challenge in working with China is getting the product and packaging right for the U.S. market. You can not take it for granted. It takes time to get it right.*

Q. What shows do you go to?

A. *I go in April when there is a Housewares Show in Hong Kong, a multi-show (Canton Fair) 90 minutes by train from Hong Kong, and then a giftware show back in Hong Kong. I am able to see these 3 shows in about 9 or 10 days. A duplicate set of shows is also in October. At this point, I do not see the value for me to go twice a year. The Canton Fair's main building is about 2.4 million sq. ft. and they are building another hall the same size to be*

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Your Association

Highlights of IHRA's Annual Board of Director's Meeting

Increase in dues for 2006 approved. First change since 1998 (see page 5).

Before starting the meeting, the Board was treated to an overview of the "state of the rep business" by **Ray Hall**, retiring Executive Vice President of the Electronics Representatives Association. Hall was bullish on the rep function and outlined the opportunities and problems faced by multiple-line, field sales professionals. The Board has requested that Hall be invited to be the featured speaker at IHRA's Annual Breakfast & Program, Monday, March 13, 2006.

Chairman Jim Adams, serving his last term on the IHRA Board, gave a brief review of his time served on the Board. He had special thanks to **Steve Grossman** for his continued volunteer leadership and support of IHRA's goals, the rep function and the 10-year run of Grossman's popular column in the *REP*orter® Newsletter. Adams also observed that although IHRA had made great strides since its founding in 1994, it needed much more support from its members to recruit additional members. Unfortunately, many members consider non-members as their competition and are reluctant to have them receive the benefits enjoyed by IHRA members.

President James Ayotte echoed Adams' comments and expressed to staff his delight with the new 2005 IHRA Locator. Brought in under budget, it could allow for a reprint (and opportunity for new member promo) in mid-summer. Ayotte also thanked ExCom for their monthly teleconference meetings. "Valuable communications at minimal cost."

President-Elect David Silberstein expressed his vision and goals for 2006. Silberstein observed that opportunities for IHRA growth existed because many larger manufacturers, especially those with direct-factory sales forces, are splitting up. The new, separate companies are looking to reps to fill the sales function. Many of the sales agencies are new . . . former direct-factory salespeople that

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Board Meeting (from page 1)

have opened their own businesses. Silberstein suggests that emphasis be placed on educating these new reps on how to best run their agencies, and, the manufacturers they represent on how best to utilize the multiple-line field sales professional function.

Senior Vice President / Industry & Membership, David Friedman, reported IHRA membership at 220 rep firms and 3 manufacturer members. Friedman also advised that, usually each year, approximately 20% of the membership does not renew. For 2005, the non-renewals were 15%. By 2005 year end, membership should be 250-260 firms. In addition, Friedman said that staff membership promo efforts — email blasts to 2,000+ rep prospects — are on an almost monthly basis. Each promo nets at least one new member.

A discussion followed (led by Steve Grossman) concerning: *“What would make the Housewares Show more exciting?”* Suggestions included: 1) Have internet access throughout McCormick Place; 2) Because of the distances some attendees have to travel in McCormick Place, some form of “people movers” or carts should be available. For IHRA Booth: more signage throughout the Show directing manufacturers and member prospects to the IHRA room.

Senior Vice President / Fiscal, Mark Glotter, reported that everything “balanced out” and 2004 ended “on budget.” Glotter and the Board reviewed the Proposed 2005 budget (actually being used since the first of the year). Glotter also pointed out that 2005 has seen more money than usual being received early in the year. New rep

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The **REPorter**® is sent to more than 2,000 manufacturers each month. In addition, the **REPorter**® is posted on IHRA’s website and receives hundreds of “hits” each week. What better place to get the exposure you need with the audience you want to reach?

Here are the details and costs:

Each IHRA member firm may place one ad, like the ones on page 5, in a monthly edition of the IHRA **REPorter**®. All ads are the same size: 2 1/8” wide x 3” deep. Please send original artwork or use the space below to plan your ad (ads with color are acceptable): If you want us to produce your ad, please indicate copy:

Size of ad	Ad copy

Costs for Member advertising in The **REPorter®:**

\$25 per ad (same size as smallest ad in Locator). Contracts for a 6-issue run (\$150) receive a free ad in a 7th issue; contracts for 10 issues (\$250) receive free ads in the 11th and 12th issues.

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The first ad should run in the _____ issue.

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Grossman (from page 1)

and local transportation \$500 (I take the subway and trains instead of cabs). If you go, I suggest you make sure your hotel has “American” type beds or you will be sleeping on a board with a sheet on top. The visa into mainland China is \$40 if ordered early plus the cost of your passport.

Q. Can I go on my own?

A. I do not recommend it, at least the first time. To get your visa you need an invite letter from a factory and you need an invitation to get your badge for the Canton Fair. Also, unless you speak Mandarin or Cantonese, you will have a problem in communicating.

Q. Is there a language barrier in the hotels and restaurants?

A. The major hotels have people who can speak enough English so things get done. Restaurants, on the other hand, can be quite interesting. If you have one of your Chinese support people with you then it is easy. If not, some restaurants have picture and/or English menus available. If you get off the beaten track you can always walk around and point to what you want. In the major cities you have McDonalds, KFC, and Pizza Hut. (One must remember you are in their country and English understanding is a gift.)

Q. What is the food like?

A. I happen to like it very much. Chinese food in southern China is much lighter, no thick sauces. Mostly pork, fish and duck with a lot of vegetables. In better restaurants, fruit is usually served at the end of the meal. Make sure you order mild or spicy. If you are taken out, be prepared for a lot of drinking. The beer is good but on the light side, but be careful of the rice wine.

Q. Dress code?

A. I found business casual to be fine for shows and restaurants; even more casual for “bumming around.”

Q. What are the biggest cultural differences?

A. I think there are 3. One, there is very little personal space due to all the people. The Canton Fair is located in a city of 16 million people. (At times it feels like one is being in an elevator that full all the time.) Two, don't expect to be in a hurry, figure to accomplish half of what you would in the states. There is always a discussion on any question, it is the Chinese culture. And three, the culture never wants to say no and disappoint you. So if you push for an answer you will probably hear “no problem.”

Q. What about the time difference?

A. When it is day here it is night in China. Depending on your time zone you basically have a 12-hour difference. Going there is an easier adjustment than coming home. It usually takes 4 to 7 days to readjust when you get home, so put it into your plans. The nonstop flight from Chicago to Hong Kong is about 14 hours. Try to upgrade if possible.

Q. How are the Chinese people towards Americans?

A. I usually found them helpful and courteous as long as I took it slow and was respectful. My only frustration at times was the challenge to be understood.

Q. Why does getting samples always seem to take time or are difficult to get.

A. Many Chinese manufacturers do not keep a supply of samples, and therefore they are pretty much made to order. If the factory is in high production, samples wait until production slows. If one has asked for multiple samples without an order, they loose interest. If your sample request is loosely worded you might get the item you really want because they guess at what you want.

Q. How much do samples cost?

A. Usually the sample cost is minimal from the supplier, but you are looking at over \$100 for airfreight per shipment.

Q. Do you visit factories?

A. Sometimes. Keep in mind that China is larger than the U.S. A lot of industries are grouped together and some are in the middle of nowhere. If the show was in Chicago would you drive to Kansas City? One really needs a reason to spend the time to visit, such as: you are doing business with them, you plan to do a big program with them, you're bringing an order with you, etc.

Q. Do you find a lot of new products when you are there?

A. Yes, if you mean less expensive. But, rarely a new fashion statement. China is good at copying but is a long way from being a U.S. fashion leader.

Q. Can I join you on next year's trip?

A. I am working with IHRA to see if we can put a trip together. A lot will depend on how many members are interested. A notice will be sent to you soon. If you have further questions, email me at

steman4@aol.com

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This is an IHRA service to keep members advised of lines available. The listing of a manufacturer should in no way be construed as an endorsement of that line by IHRA, it being the obligation of each member to make their own evaluation of the line.

IHRA Representative Member Ads

and HOT Lines usage are the big factors.

Senior Vice President, Kent Kulovitz, reported the revised bylaws were approved in June 2004. This “housekeeping” was to bring the bylaws into agreement with current IHRA policies and practices.

Executive Director, Bill Weiner reported on Headquarters Operations: Lines Available and HOT Lines activity has picked up. The method of delivering HOT Lines has changed from an email PDF attachment to making it part of the email body. Saves time for the IHRA member (can see at a glance if it is of interest) and eliminates complaint of AOL users (about 6 members) that they can't open the attachments. The Board suggested that future HOT Lines contain information regarding the manufacturer's website (if applicable), their type of customer base, customer base (type of account) to whom they want to sell and more specific territory designation needs.

Member Services were reviewed. The Board felt that members probably did not know most of the programs available. The list will be sent again, as it is about every 6 months. Sales of the Locator – both printed and electronic – have increased. It will be updated and reprinted in July. The **RE**porter® is sent approximately the first of each month. Member response is very positive to the information it contains. The same is true for the monthly **RE**ptops – articles from IHRA's Article Library. These are past articles by IHRA's consultants that are still relevant.

New Business included:

Jim Ayotte proposed and Kent Kolovitz seconded a Nominating Committee consisting of (per bylaws) Chairman Jim Adams, President James Ayotte and President-Elect David Silberstein; plus Directors **Jeanmarie Bettencourt** and **Mark Levy**. The Board approved. The Nominating Committee will develop a slate of Officers for the year 2006. The Committee will also develop a slate of proposed candidates to fill necessary Directors' seats.

IHRA dues have remained the same since 1998 (\$195 for rep firms; \$295 for manufacturers). In that time, IHRA has increased many of its member benefits and services: increased Lines Available and HOT Lines programs, Annual Breakfast and Program, The **RE**porter® Newsletter to a monthly publication, **RE**ptops monthly advisories, printed and electronic versions of the IHRA Locator, broadening of the Expert Access service to include additional consultants and many more communications with manufacturers advising them on how to better utilize their multiple-line field sales professional network. If dues had increased at the rate of inflation since 1998, 2005 rep dues would have been \$247 and 2006 would be \$254+. On a motion from Jeanmarie Bettencourt and a second by James Ayotte, **the Board approved dues for 2006 at \$245 per rep firm and \$345 per manufacturer.** 2006 dues invoices will be sent in October.

The Board voted to approve the Proposed 2005 Budget as presented.

Date & Time of next IHRA Board Meeting: Thursday, March 9, 2006, 4:00 – 7:00 PM.

MAVERICK

International Trading & Consulting, Inc.

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2005 INDUSTRY CALENDAR OF EVENTS**June**

June 4 - 7

PORTLAND GIFT & ACCESSORIES SHOW
Portland, OR

June 12 - 14

MINNEAPOLIS GIFT MART GIFT SHOW
Minneapolis, MN

June 22 - 27

DALLAS INT'L GIFT & HOME ACCESSORIES
Dallas, Texas

June 23 - 27

DALLAS HOLIDAY & HOME EXPO (FORMERLY SILK)
Dallas, Texas

June 24 - 27

GLM TEMPORARIES \$ NATIONAL GOURMET SHOW
Dallas, TX**July**

July 9 - 12

PHILADELPHIA GIFT SHOW
Washington, PA

July 10 - 12

SUMMER NASFT FANCY FOOD SHOW
New York, NY

July 12 - 19

THE LOS ANGELES GIFT & HOME MARKET
Los Angeles, CA

July 15 - 18

THE GIFT FAIR IN ATLANTA
Atlanta, Georgia

July 19 - 21

IFAM: INT'L FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES
Las Vegas, NV

July 20 - 27

CHICAGO GIFT & HOME MARKET
Chicago, IL

July 22 - 25

CALIFORNIA GIFT SHOW
Los Angeles, California

Jul 24 - 27

WASHINGTON GIFT SHOW
Washington, DC

Jul 30 - Aug 2

ORLANDO GIFT SHOW
Orlando, FL**August**

Aug 6 - 10

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L GIFT FAIR
San Francisco, California

Aug 7 - 11

CANADIAN GIFT AND TABLEWARE ASSOCIATION
Toronto, ON, Canada

Aug 13 - 18

NEW YORK INT'L GIFT FAIR
New York, New York

Aug 15 - 19

ASD/AMD TRADE SHOW
Las Vegas, Nevada

Aug 27 - 31

THE SEATTLE GIFT SHOW
Seattle, Washington**September**

Sep 10 - 13

BOSTON GIFT SHOW
Boston, MA

Sep 10 - 13

ATLANTA FALL GIFT & HOME FURNISHINGS MARKET
& ATLANTA GOURMET MARKET
Atlanta, GA

Sep 15 - 18

NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO EAST
Washington, DC

Sep 17 - 19

NATIONAL GOURMET FOOD SHOW
Dallas, TX

Sep 17 - 19

DALLAS INT'L GIFT & HOME ACCESSORIES MARKET
Dallas, Texas

Sep 24 - 26

LOS ANGELES GIFT & HOME MARKET
Los Angeles, California**October**

Oct 15 - 17

ART & FRAMING SHOWCASE
New York, NY

Oct 15 - 17

COFFEE FEST SEATTLE
Seattle, WA

Oct 16 - 19

NEW YORK HOME TEXTILES SHOW
New York, NY

Oct 16 - 19

NEW YORK GOURMET HOUSEWARES SHOW
New York, NY

Oct 29 - Nov 3

NEW YORK TABLETOP SHOWS
New York, NYFor a complete list of ECRM-EPPS Conferences, see their website at: <http://www.ecrm-epps.com>*Field Sales Professionals Serving the Home • Housewares • Hardware Industries*

Just a reminder: Here are some of the benefits of IHRA membership

The LOCATOR

IHRA's directory of member firms, is a most effective means of bringing together manufacturer and representative. Distributed to industry executives who have the responsibility for securing their company's sales representatives, each member firm listing has detailed information concerning ownership, facilities and services offered, territory covered, product specialty, customer base and number of employees.

Hot Lines

Designed for manufacturers seeking immediate representation, line available announcement is eMailed or faxed to member firms within 48 hours of manufacturer's request.

Lines Available

Monthly listings in IHRA's newsletter, The **REPorter**®, of manufacturers seeking representatives. Also - special Lines Available listings in connection with the yearly International Home & Housewares, Gourmet and Hardwares Shows. Members receive lists prior to the Shows so appointments can be scheduled at the Shows.

Use of IHRA's Hospitality Room...

during the International Home & Housewares Shows. A place to "hang your hat" (and coat) during the hectic hours of the Show. Use the Room as an escape from the crowds and a meeting room for you, your staff, your customers and manufacturers. Free refreshments always available.

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For complete details: MRERF,
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East of the Mississippi, not including Illinois, Call John Doyle

1-888-243-0174

Expert Access

IHRAMembers may contact consultants by telephone for advice in each practitioner's specialty:

Accounting & Taxes

Stan Herzog, Applebaum, Herzog & Associates

847-405-0400 x111

Marketing/PR

Larry Kaufman

312-467-9494

Human Resource Hot Line

Dr. Michael Santo

800-292-7182

Legal Services Program . . .

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Your initial telephone consultation is free; fees are quoted in advance for standard services.

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312-648-2300 Ext. 309

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Lapel Pin - Member identity pin with IHRA logo etched in red on gold. \$5.00 each.

Logo Etchproof Sheets - For use on company letterheads, business cards and in advertising.

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The REReporter®

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**INTERNATIONAL HOUSEWARES
REPRESENTATIVES ASSOCIATION**

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