



A Peek Behind the Scenes at PMPA

Renee Merker, Event Guru

By Carli Kistler-Miller, Director of Technical Programs and Member Engagement, PMPA

My very first impression of Renee Merker, director of communications and events at PMPA and a 30-year veteran of the organization, was that she had an unprecedented addiction to coffee. Coffee was her main topic of conversation. As it turned out, on the day I arrived at the office, the coffee maker went the way of the dodo and couldn't be fixed, but Renee was determined to make sure that everyone had their coffee. I wasn't actually witnessing an addiction; I was witnessing Renee's innate ability to make sure everyone had what they needed. It was just a glimpse into her ability and drive to provide concierge service to our members.

I arrived in January, so the entire office was "all hands on deck" for the Update Conference in February. Renee had everyone working toward the same goal: delivering value for our members. The annual Update Conference is attended by owners and managers, and the speaker lineup she had was impressive. The theme was "Sharing Knowledge" and the speaker topics included culture, rebranding and leveraging change, as well as an economic forecast. There were roundtable discussions and a "speed networking" session. Each evening ended with a reception where members were talking about what they had learned and how it applied to their shop and otherwise enjoying themselves while networking. Renee set the whole thing up in a beautiful hotel that was close to the airport. In short, she thought of everything and made sure our members received value for their time and enjoyed themselves along the way.

When she returned, she was right back at it as she worked with our interim director to put together the final arrangements for a meeting of industry delegates from around the world that was to be hosted by PMPA and held in Washington, D.C. Just how thoughtful was Renee in making sure that our international guests had what they needed? The first

item purchased for their welcome bags was a universal electricity power converter. The second item, a small umbrella, proved to be a genius addition as well, as the skies released torrents of rain on our attendees on the way to their next event.

Now I'm witnessing Renee plan the Annual Meeting in October, where she will ensure that the speakers provide valuable information, the venue is beautiful (did I mention it will be at the Bellagio in Las Vegas?) and the members will be able to network and walk away with great insights and wonderful memories.

As I'm in my office writing this, Renee is off to another city on another site visit for another meeting. She's finding just the right venue with quality service, great food and the space needed for networking and learning. Basically, Renee is doing what she does best—making sure our members get everything they need, ensuring the details right down to the coffee.



From left to right: Harry Eighmy, Chief Operating Officer, American Turned Products, Renee Merker and Brian Adams, President, R.F. Mau Company