

BETTER TOGETHER Even When We're Apart

The first four months Cate Smith spent as PMPA's Executive Director.



I'm writing this just one day shy of serving four months as the PMPA Executive Director. It is always difficult to start a new job when in a position of leadership, but I was welcomed with open arms and not treated with kid gloves; I was asked to jump right in and help with strategic planning and other immediate needs.

The first thing that struck me was the desire to break at the same time and eat lunch together. I was very used to eating at my desk, except on rare occasions, and then shaking the crumbs out of my keyboard every week.

Eating together wasn't about continuing the work but

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about building the camaraderie needed to create a real and cohesive team.

This feeling of being welcomed continued when I attended

my first national event, the Update Conference held in Atlanta in March. I have many years of experience in association management but little manufacturing and no machining experience, yet everyone was very friendly and appreciative of my taking an Introduction to Machining class at my local tech center and willingness to learn. Throughout the conference I was struck by the open conversations among members about how to build a better, safer, leaner, and more successful business. The willingness to help each other was at a deeper level than I would have anticipated, considering that they are competitors in many ways.

One of the strange things that bothered me, at least for a short while, was the perceived misspelling of 'listserv,' which was explained as a branding decision. When I realized how great the listservs really were, in particular the collaboration on the Corporate Listserve and the HR Listserve, I was able to accept the spelling because they really do "serve" our members!

As soon as we realized Covid-19 was going to affect

our members' businesses, every person on the PMPA staff jumped into action to help our members adapt and thrive. I to became apparent that we needed to work from home for our safety as well as the continuity of service to our members. After the first ten days of working at a distance from one another, with Miles Free and Joe Jackson at the office and the rest of us at home, we expressed the desire for more and regular video conferences rather than phone and email. This was not because it was easier to meet this way but because we truly missed seeing each other all the time!

At PMPA, we believe we are Better Together — not just as a staff but with our members. Many of the lyrics of the song *Better Together*, by Jack Johnson, are applicable to the connections made and the knowledge to be gained through membership in PMPA:

Like why are we here?

To lead progressive members to sustainable success with reliable and relevant information, resources, advocacy, and networking opportunities.

And where do we go?

To whatever lengths are necessary to enable our members to adapt and thrive while effectively advocating for the success of our industry.

And how come it's so hard?

It's a lot less hard because we all work better together.

***It's not always easy and
Sometimes life can be deceiving***

I'll tell you one thing, it's always better when we're together

It certainly is! The information I've seen in just the last four months has been timely, accurate, and critically curated for your benefit. We are going to get through this crucial time together and be stronger for it in the long run.

We will continue to be reflective and inclusive of your needs because it is how we all become better, together. If you are a subscriber to this magazine and not a member of PMPA, there is no better time to join us.

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