

America's Beauty Show assists salon professionals

Paul Dykstra, CEO of Cosmetologists Chicago (CC) and manager of the CC-owned America's Beauty Show (ABS), checks in with Beauty Industry Report (BIR) with an update on the organization and its upcoming event, March 27-29, at McCormick Place in Chicago.

BIR: What would you like to share with BIR's readers?

Paul Dykstra (PD): Two simple messages, Mike. First, CC is thriving as a salon professional association, leading America's Beauty Network for salon professionals in all segments of the industry. Second, America's Beauty Show is the one event in the United States that salon professionals and exhibitors should not miss.

BIR: How does CC's ownership of ABS benefit exhibitors and attendees?

PD: ABS is both the financial driver of our member-benefit-focused association and an industry leading event created and developed by salon professionals for their peers. For exhibitors, ABS provides direct access to and contact with their end-user customers.

BIR: Give us a brief overview of CC.

PD: CC began in the 1910s as The Chicago and Illinois Hairdressers & Wigmakers Association; partnered with Columbus Behan in 1924 for the first Midwest Trade Show and Exposition and has, for all these years, been a driving educational and legislative force, supporting the working salon professional.

We have a five-part mission. This year, because salons are struggling in this economy, our focus is helping salon/spa professionals and owners develop their careers and re-build their businesses.

BIR: 2010 is ABS' third year in downtown Chicago. What are some of the advantages?

PD: Besides increased exhibit space, which we are filling to capacity again this year, McCormick Place brings ABS back to its roots in downtown Chicago. It gives attendees the opportunity to see everything Chicago offers, along with attending their own trade show. It gives exhibitors more flexibility for product launches, education and meeting face-to-face with salon owners, managers and professionals.

BIR: What did you learn from last year's show to help improve the 2010 event?

PD: We intend to make ABS a yearlong "event" for attendees and exhibitors alike through increased emphasis on and support of lead retrieval for key exhibitors. Our attendees tell us they use the 3-day show to see what's new, learn about products, compare tools and make purchases. We intend to extend that experience beyond the show so that exhibitors will know who came to their booth and can turn potential customers into loyal customers.

BIR: One of the big concerns I have heard from exhibitors is the high cost at McCormick Place. Please clear any misconceptions.

PD: ABS brings new customers to exhibitors—big-city salon owners and pros who wouldn't go to Rosemont. We've negotiated superb hotel rates, starting at \$94/night, along with special discounts at McCormick Place restaurants. I encourage our exhibitors to talk with our sales team about how to get the best value from the services offered at McCormick Place.

BIR: What makes ABS stand out?

PD: Our location in the center of the country is certainly an advantage. So are the officers and directors of CC, who work tirelessly to plan a show in the best interest of salon professionals. Schools in our area are thriving and producing a new workforce with high career goals. We work closely with distributors on innovative programs. Plus, ABS is the only major trade show CC produces each year, so we put all our efforts into making it the very best experience.

BIR: At this point, how does 2010 ABS compare to last year in number of exhibitors?

PD: Our exhibitor numbers are up in space and individual exhibits. More importantly, several companies that didn't exhibit in 2009 are back in a big way. L'Oréal will be on the show floor in a big way with all its brands. P&G Salon Professional brings Hi Touch, a new salon relationship building concept. Plus, we have TIGI, Sexy Hair, Aquage, American Crew and other hair care leaders; Essie and CND as big nail exhibitors. Repechage, Dermalogica and Bioelements are just a few of the skin care companies exhibiting.

BIR: Tell me about this year's education.

PD: Our manufacturer classrooms are sold

out. The Salon/Spa Sustainability Summit features John Paul DeJoria as keynote speaker. We have Master Classes with icons, like Damien Carney and Sue Pemberton, Beth Minardi, James Harris, Scott Cole and Linda Yodice and Rafe Hardy. Mizani sponsors our popular African American 2010 event. Dozens more classes address every salon need.

BIR: How do you market ABS on the Internet?

PD: www.americasbeautyshow.com is the best online resource for salon professionals and exhibitors. We are active on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. But we also believe in print, so we mailed a detailed program to 120,000 pros in early January.

BIR: What is the industry's biggest challenge, and how will ABS 2010 address it?

PD: The economy and high unemployment rate remain challenging to salons and spas, as clients stretch appointments and look for discounts and value-added offers. Our Salon Business Success Forum for owners, sponsored by P&G Salon Professional, will address how salons can bounce back in 2010.

BIR: Who are your mentors?

PD: Fred Piattoni, longtime executive director of ABS and CC, hired me 20 years ago. I still respect his advice and consult with him.

BIR: What is the best business advice you ever received, and who was it from?

PD: Hire Vi Nelson, said Tom Clifford!

BIR: How do you find balance between work and your personal life?

PD: I'm a classical concert pianist, and after stressful days, I play for hours.

BIR: If you weren't in the beauty business, what would be your dream job?

PD: Conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

BIR: Any final comments?

PD: CC is an independent association dedicated solely to the working salon professional. Our independence allows us to provide the precise services and benefits our 5,000 members want, including free admission to ABS, subscriptions to leading publications and other important benefits to build careers.

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