



March, 2003



It's Official !!

the CRA is the new regional

All the papers have been filed and final actions have been completed. It's official the Mid-South and the North Central are now the **Central Reprographic Association**. With this larger geographic area comes a great opportunity to increase our membership and to refocus our efforts to serve our members.

The Board of the CRA is committed to improving our regional association. This is your organization. We want to hear from you - your suggestions, your criticisms, and your concerns.

During our convention at Lake Geneva we took surveys to find out how you liked the educational sessions and any suggestions for future programs. We received several great ideas.

- How about the members who weren't able to attend the convention?
- What are you looking for in your regional?
- What can we do to make this organization more responsive to your needs?

From my organization's point of view, each time I attend a convention I come away with ideas that help my business be more profitable. I get ideas from other Reprographers and from vendors. But as with most things in life, the more you put into the organization, the more you get out of it. So mark your calendars to come join us in St. Louis and e-mail ideas for the association to ralphw@rapidsrepro.com.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the newly remodeled Millennium Hotel in St. Louis, September 18 – 20th. We are planning a convention and trade show that will be informative and entertaining.

Ralph Wasik

President

Our web site is **cra1.org**

Stay current visit the web site for:

- recap of the NCRA 2002 convention and pictures
- list of vendors who support the membership
- information on the 2003 convention
- past newsletters



Membership has benefits!

We all are very excited about the consolidation of the NCRA and the MSRA forming the **CRA**. We have gained much talent and synergy through this joining and hope to achieve a much larger membership through the consolidation. There are many benefits to renewing or becoming a member of the CRA.

1. Largest and most successful of the regional trade shows attracting new suppliers to our industry
2. Networking with business contacts from 17 states giving us the widest coverage of any other region
3. Excellent educational sessions to help keep you more abreast of current technology and trends in our industry
4. Spousal involvement through historical tours and luncheons, social gatherings and our magnificent charity auction while at the convention- a mini-retreat for your spouse or significant other
5. Newsletters with information articles for members

This year's convention will be held September 18th-20th in St. Louis, Missouri at the newly renovated Millennium Hotel and Resort. We are close to selling out vendor spaces and promise an excellent convention in the "Gateway City." This should make easy and affordable travel arrangements for all those attending. The weather is gorgeous in September, which should make for an excellent golf outing at one of the areas professionally designed courses.

We need you to be a part of this dynamic organization by joining now. Membership is only \$125.00 per company; a small price to pay for the many benefits you will receive by being a part of the CRA. For your convenience, we have included a membership form to fill out and return with your check. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call me at my toll free number (888) 523-4448 or via e-mail at jeff.barthol@westblue.com. I look forward to talking with and seeing each and every one of you at the 2003 Convention!

*Jeff Barthol,
Membership*

Company _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____
 Primary contact person: _____ Title _____
 FAX _____ E-Mail _____
 Spouse's name _____

*We need this
important
information*

Additional Company contacts:

Name	E-Mail	Spouse's name

\$125.00 per corporate membership.

2/5/03

Return this form with your company check payable to: **CRA** and send to **Mr. Chuck Wingard**
C/O Tree Town Repro Service, Inc.
542 Spring Road
Elmhurst, IL 60126

Help the CRA go completely digital for the newsletter. Include e-mail addresses of associates to receive the CRA e news. The newsletter is published 4 to 5 times a year with informative information to the members.

As a service to our members the following article by Bob Knappage of Thomas Reprographics is a follow up from his presentation at the 2002 Convention.

Checking out your Company

Over the past few years we have acquired several companies. With each new acquisition we look into every aspect of the new company. I suggest that every so often we should treat our own company as a new purchase. Too many times we tend not to pay attention to the things closest to us. Over time it seems like many of the procedures we put in place, just quit happening.

Look at your company as if you just bought it.

- Start with Accounts Payable and review all the bills that have been paid for the last two months. Some things to look for are: Make sure to take all the discounts being offered, (too many times I have found the accounts payable person is not aware of all the discounts offered). Are we getting the pricing we agreed on, or has pricing changed and we were not aware? What are we spending for Shop Supplies? Have we worked out a vendor with a discount, or are we just sending some one out to get supplies with a list? Are we using our preferred Vendor, or have some of our people changed Vendors without our knowledge? Do we need all the things we are buying? Do we have a red flag system set up to let us know when contracts are ending, so we can avoid automatic renewal (most of the time with automatic price increases)? What are we buying we don't need?
- Look at inventory. Having too much inventory cost money in many ways. Inventory is cash you don't have. Check your inventory for old items you are no longer using. See if you can sell or use it in a different area; or sell at a discounted rate. It is doing you no good sitting on the shelf. I suggest a 2 1/2 to 3 weeks inventory is all you need to carry. Employees many times order without regard to how long the order will last. Set up inventory guidelines. Some inventory can become outdated in a short period of time. Have a system to keep your losses to a minimum.
- Accounting procedures. How do you handle cash? Are your financials records secured? How often do you audit? Does more than one person check the balance sheet? Over time many of us have grown from small companies to medium or even large companies, without ever changing our one-man operations. Too many times we fix the problem, after the loss.
- Security. This is a new problem for many of us. The new technology has put many new responsibilities on us. Have someone check out security on all your computer systems. In today's world this is a must. Not only do we need to protect our records; we must protect our customers. Are any employees working on the Internet at home with company records? Do they have a firewall?
- Labor. This is the most expensive cost we have. In my opinion more money is lost in this area than any other area. Set up a wage scale for each job. Stick with it. Too many times we give costs of living raises when the actual job has no increased value. I have seen too many departments with all employees getting operator's pay, yet half the employees are doing helper's work. Do not increase a helper's wages to operator's pay until you need an operator. Know how many dollars each employee should produce. Watch out for the bad apple. It only takes one sour attitude to ruin a good crew. Even if they are your best worker, they may be killing the attitude of the rest of your crew. Get rid of them. Each year, our volume drops 10-20% during the last two months of the year. I use this time to clear out problem employees. I request a layoff to cut costs during this period and try to make sure we lose the problem employees.
- Equipment. Don't buy equipment unless you need it. Many managers feel the need to have enough equipment (and employees) to cover the maximum amount of production work they will receive. Ours is a business of ups and downs. We have to work with averages, and good managers know how to do this. Evaluate before you buy.
- Network. Make sure you are buying the right piece of equipment for your needs. Check with your friends and associates, the IRgA, and any groups that you are a member of before buying. Many times the most expensive equipment isn't the best. Understand your vendor. Will they help, or will they sell and run? If digital, check on what other costs you will incur to satisfy your production needs.

Review what you are doing all the time. Things are changing fast and many times the old ways won't work anymore.

*Bob Knappage
Thomas Reprographics*

EXHIBITORS CORNER...

Booth sales for the 2003 CRA Trade Show are close to 50% completed. The floor layout will consist of 50 booths, 36 of which will be configured in a quad layout. This means that each of these booths will be a corner booth. Reserve your booth now to take advantage of this unique layout. Also, keep in mind that you can take advantage of your booth preference by positioning yourself in conjunction with another vendor's booth (i.e., a paper supplier next to a machine manufacturer or a laminating manufacturer across the aisle from a color output specialist). There are many possibilities and opportunities to choose from.

The CRA will also be providing advertising space in the 2003 Show Planner **Free of Charge!** The space consists of one 4"(H) x 5"(W) black and white ad per booth reserved. This year we are also offering the ad space in color for a small upcharge. Take advantage of this valuable marketing tool by offering show specials or at least by letting people know what you have to offer.

The 2003 Trade Show will also be changing the way it handles the trade show raffle. This year, when you donate a gift for the raffle, you will be entitled to take "center stage" and give a short pitch about your company and its offerings. This change was instituted due to the comments received on the 2002 Vendor Survey.

The 2003 Trade Show in St. Louis is shaping up to be an excellent return on your investment. I hope to see you in September.

Jeff Sproat
Vendor Director

Behind the Scenes at the CRA

Central Reprographic Association members see one major convention and five to six newsletters per year. The three-day convention event starts with a golf outing, four educational sessions, six meals, four social events, a charity auction and the largest regional trade show of its kind. Newsletters have evolved from a convention reminder, to an information packed communication, featuring highlights from the convention, educational presenters, and timely convention updates. Simply put, our Association has transformed itself to better serve the needs of its membership.

How does it all happen?

The CRA operates on a yearly action calendar, with important tasks headed up by the Board of Directors and Committee Members. CRA Board of Directors and Executives formally meet twice during the year to conduct business for the association. The first is the convention and the second is the winter board meeting. Informal meetings can take place during the year typically to check on progress and identify potential problem areas before they become significant.

The winter board meeting is held mid-January or early February. This meeting is in three parts and consumes a full day of collective effort. Part one, reviews the results of the last convention, evaluates and implements changes and improvements. Part two, details the agenda, educational programs, social events, and budgets for the next convention. Part three is a "site survey" for the convention location two years in advance of the event. The facility, its amenities, and staff are evaluated. Pending a favorable review, contracts are negotiated and signed.

Preparation for the convention is a yearlong activity. Immediately following the close of the convention, attendees are formally surveyed for feed back. Results and comments are organized, and shared with the Board of Directors. Bills are paid. Exhibitors are solicited early in October and November then again in February, April, and May. January kicks off our Membership Round Up. The Program Chairman is soliciting and locking in presenters. The Show Planner starts to take shape with solicitations of exhibitor's advertisements. Preparations for food service and social activities are taking shape. By June the details are finalized and we move to the "Pre Convention Hype mode". Newsletters reflect the educational programs, exhibitors, and social activities. July, the die is cast! Registration packets are mailed to members. The Golf committee is making final arrangements, the Charity Auction committee is soliciting items, and the Vendor Director is busy coordinating final booth arrangements. In August it's now up to the membership to respond. Waiting for the first registrations seems an eternity... then registrations start to roll in ... our Treasurer rolls up his sleeves and posts the incoming registrations. Preliminary meal counts, reservations for activities, name badges, registration packs, and all details with the hotel are finalized.

The CRA's Executive Officers, Directors, Committee Members, and Executive Administrator work hard all year to deliver an outstanding convention to its membership. They are a dedicated group and measure their success by the number of members that attend the convention. To the members that attend and support the association, THANK YOU, ... you inspire the Board to continue its efforts ... to those of you that have never attended our Convention, plan to attend the convention in St. Louis... You may find that the CRA is exactly what you are looking for in a reprographic association.

*Steve Zawoyski
Past President*

***Stop by the CRA display at the IRgA Convention
Vancouver, BC - May 7th - 9th, 2003***

The End...