

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY WILL HELP KEEP AMERICA ON THE ROAD

Perspectives column from the March 26, 2010 The Greensheet by Gary Molinaro

One of the blessings of this industry is the active involvement of those who make a living from it. We have strong, well-managed trade associations that do good work with the active participation of volunteer leaders and members who get things done. Much of the progress of the last decade or so can be easily traced to the work of various association committees and the volunteer members who made it happen, from idea to implementation.

There are, of course, some programs and some association efforts open to criticism — and we are not hesitant to call them like we see them — but those are the exception rather than the rule. And, it is those types of exchanges of various ideas and perspectives by the active industry members that makes these associations effective in the long term.

One example of these effective efforts, in my opinion, is the “**Know Your Parts**” program rolled out last fall by **AASA**, the supplier branch of **MEMA**, which serves manufacturers of aftermarket components, tools and equipment, and related products. The “Know Your Parts” campaign seeks to stem the proliferation of low-quality parts throughout the aftermarket supply chain. These components not only threaten the good reputations of aftermarket businesses in the supply chain — from the supplier to the distributor to the independent repair facility — but also pose a potential danger to consumers and the professional repair technicians who install the parts. The campaign was the product of an association marketing executives council study of low-price parts and the impact that lower-cost, lower-quality parts can have on an industry built on better-than-original quality products.

The program has developed a cute and creative animated video ad with agency partner MontAd, and that video was introduced at the Vision Conference held in Chicago in mid-March. And, at the same time, a viral marketing program has been in process.

At that recent conference, **Steve Handschuh**, president and chief operating officer of AASA, announced the next steps in the “Know Your Parts” campaign. Those efforts, specific to the volunteer engagement of its full-service members, involve:

- Including the “Know Your Parts” logo and/or message in member-company communications;
- Using the campaign logo on member-company websites, with a link to the campaign site at <http://kyp.aftermarketsuppliers.org>;
- Broadcasting the “Know Your Parts” campaign videos at trade show exhibits, other industry events or on related websites;
- Distributing campaign material, including flyers, talking point cards, and more at events or through corporate mailings;
- Partnering with AASA to promote their companies’ product quality training material;
- Promoting member-company online product quality training programs through a link at the “Know Your Parts” campaign website;
- Including material in customer contacts and during client meetings;
- Encouraging other full-service suppliers to promote the “Know Your Parts” campaign during peer networking at industry events;
- Educating member-company employees about the “Know Your Parts” campaign.

“We have a vital message to spread throughout the aftermarket industry that quality matters when it comes to aftermarket parts,” Handschuh told conference attendees. “As full-service aftermarket suppliers, you add value to the aftermarket supplier chain and, most importantly, you stand behind the parts you sell.” And, most importantly, AASA got a signed commitment from member companies defining their level of commitment and the specifics of their efforts in support of the “Know Your Parts” campaign.

As noted here previously, this is a concrete program that will benefit what is the foundation of what has made the independent automotive aftermarket a vital industry in our economy. Consumers have depended upon quality from aftermarket suppliers for many years now, and this commitment to quality is what will keep us going.

That commitment to quality will help keep America on the road.

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