



Newsletter

Fall 2009 Issue

Message from the WHMA Chairman

Is that a light at the end of the tunnel or a train headed directly for us? In a little over a year the economy, company issues, and employee issues have changed dramatically. In early 2008 most companies were concerned about growing their businesses and employees were concerned about keeping up with the inflated costs of housing, food and energy. Much has happened since then and most if it negative. Things seem to be looking brighter and the perspectives have changed dramatically. Companies are more concerned about staying in business and employees interests have been more recently focused on having a job with health benefits. It is amazing how rapidly things can change. Consider the old adage – “the only certain things in life are death, taxes and change”.

Some things however seem to stay the same. Recently I've talked with several companies who have attended their customer's "Supplier Conferences". This is where the general direction of these customer's companies is communicated as well as their needs from the suppliers. The message remains the same as in previous years. That message is we need "speed" and "productivity" improvements from our suppliers. Translated that means we want things even faster than in the past and at lower costs. This applies not only to the products they procure but the other services such as design support, tooling development and supply chain management.

In addition to the increasing requirements from our customers, there is the uncertainty and implications of President Obama's health plan. What are the implications for companies, and in particular, what does it mean for companies in our industry where labor and overhead costs are a key cost component? As these demands increase how do we address them appropriately in times of uncertainty?

One of the things that you can count on in challenging times is the support that you will receive from WHMA. Our promise statement is – "WHMA connects you to resources that make you an industry leader". The value of WHMA in good and bad times is reflected in what some of our members say:

"After attending a Best Practice Session at the WHMA Annual Conference we reduced our employee turnover and absenteeism through members' shared profit performance improvement program. That one idea is worth the price of membership for a lifetime."

The WHMA Hotwire has given our company countless ideas that we've turned into bottom line profit. Businesses can be lonely – this gives us the knowledge base of a major corporation"

"Attending the WHMA events with the Supplier members has allowed us to pick the best equipment at a lower cost with better results – the relationships gained through membership in WHMA are priceless!"

WHMA also provides industry leading standards, such as our workmanship standard (IPC/WHMA A-620), along with training and development opportunities for both technical and industry business interests.

WHMA benefits are gained through opportunities for dialogue with other manufacturers in our industry during the annual conference scheduled in Orlando February 24 -26th, 2010, along with our Internet Listserv, where people can seek knowledge of the industry, ask for critical resources such as connectors or tools, as well as just having the ability to talk to their peers about challenges they are having in their businesses and ask for solutions to these problems. It's all invaluable. WHMA members are all very willing to share their expertise because they know they have gained far more in WHMA just by being associated with it.

I hope that your future is "brighter" and I look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming meetings or at the annual conference February 24 - 26th in Orlando.

Lyle C. Fahning

WHMA Conference Goes GOOFY!!

The 2010 WHMA Conference is all set for February 24-26 in Orlando – the land of Mickey, Mini and of course, Goofy. The headquarters will be the luxurious Hyatt Grand Cypress Resort. WHMA has secured an unbelievably low room rate of just \$149 a night. That rate will be honored three days prior and after the conference.

This year's Conference theme is: Wire Harness Industry: Past, Present and Future. Here are some of the topics that will be covered.

- The economy and specifically how it is impacting the wire harness business is first and foremost on WHMA members minds. Brian Hirt of Industrial Electric Wire and Cable makes a return visit to the conference to provide his unique insights. A reminder that you can read Brian's monthly Hotwire publication on the WHMA website at www.WHMA.org and click on Info Exchange and Newsletters on the drop down.
- The Bishop Report is one of the connector industry's most anticipated analysis of current conditions. Dave Pheteplace, head of Bishop's cable Assembly Division, will offer his thoughts on the current situation and future trends in the connector and cable assembly industry.
- Many WHMA members are involved in the auto industry – talk about a market segment going through a seismic change!! J. Scot Sharland, Executive Director of the Automotive Industry Action Group (AIAG), will address that industry's challenges and what it means for suppliers like wire harness manufacturers.
- The Solar Electric Power Association (SEPA) is the go-to resource for unbiased and actionable solar intelligence. SEPA helps turn new technologies into new business opportunities. Their Eastern US Regional Director, Christy Herig, will discuss the future of solar power and the opportunities for wire harness makers.
- The program also features a couple hours of Best Practices Roundtables – a great way to learn pragmatic everyday business solutions from your peers.
- And what WHMA Conference would be all work and no play. We will have a golf outing on the first day right at the Grand Cypress Resort – home of 27 holes of Jack Nicklaus designed golf holes. And, there will be plenty of social networking time, including a couple receptions included in the registration fee.

To register go to www.WHMA.org or call Kathi Schlieff at 952.253.6085.

How To Jump Into The Social Media Pool Without Drowning

While you're hearing all the success stories about those companies participating in social media and wondering how you can join in, there's a lot to consider and prepare for before making the leap into the pool. Here are six realistic points to understand about social media that may prevent future disappointment and wasted dollars:

- Participating in social media just for the sake of participating is a waste of your time and money.
- Although the platforms are typically free, effective social media marketing takes an enormous commitment of time - and time is money.
- The original social media is word of mouth. In order to have word of mouth online, everything needs to be in top shape off-line - at the retail level, the manufacturers' level and the distribution level. If your house isn't in order, there's a chance that word of mouth about your company will be negative.
- Jump in with a specific plan. You need to have content and have something interesting to say and share.
- You need to have an infrastructure in place to monitor various social media communications and respond to online comments.
- You need to be prepared for negative word of mouth and have a procedure in place for turning it into a positive.

Bottom line: The social media success stories you hear and read about are few and far between. Don't expect an overnight miracle. Social media is just one integral part of your firm's marketing plan.

Targeting Excellence in Cable and Wire Harness Manufacturing

IPC/WHMA-A-620, Requirements and Acceptance for Cable and Wire Harness Assemblies, now at Revision A published July 2006, is the first industry consensus standard for cable and wire harness fabrication and installation. Classes of products are defined and include criteria for Target, Acceptable, Process Indicator and Defect conditions to support the collection of visual quality acceptability requirements for each class. These criteria are supported by 599 full-color illustrations.

Revision A, developed during a four-year process by members from user and supplier companies, represents a consensus among industry leaders. The IPC Wire Harness Acceptability Task Group of the Product Assurance Committee and the Wire Harness Manufacturers' Association Industry Technical Guidelines Committee prepared this standard. IPC/WHMA-A-620A describes acceptability criteria for crimped, mechanically secured and soldered interconnection and the corresponding lacing/restraining criteria associated with cable and harness assemblies.

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An industry developed and approved program that includes training, certification and instructional materials based on the IPC/WHMA-A-620A is available to your company. A comprehensive and technically accurate program, IPC/WHMA-A-620 Training and Certification provides Certified IPC Trainers with high quality materials and detailed instructional plans that have been used for training Application Specialists at all levels, including buyers, sales teams and management.

It is interesting to note – and supports the notion that the A-620 standard continues to gain traction in the industry – that the growth of manufacturing companies that have at least one Certified IPC Trainer (CIT) on staff has grown by 20% (694 companies) over the first half of 2009. The number of total CIT's has also grown by 19% over the same time frame to 1080. Of that number, 741 are domestic and 339 are international. This graphically points out the global acceptance of the standard.

For full information on A-620 materials and training, go to www.WHMA.org and click on Training Materials.

FUR Systems and Custom Interface Sign DOD Mentor-Protégé Agreement

Bingen, Washington -- Custom Interface and FUR Systems recently entered into a Mentor Protege Agreement with the goal of expanding Custom Interface's capabilities to build more complex assemblies and wiring harnesses. As part of this agreement, FUR will provide training and certification opportunities in the areas of IPC-610 and ESD compliance. FUR will also offer technical assistance in mechanical and electronic engineering and mentoring in support of Custom Interface's goal of becoming AS-9100 certified by the end of 2009.

"We have been working with FUR since 2003, and have developed a strong working relationship," said Nancy White, president of Custom Interface. "Obviously, they have great confidence in us as a key supplier. Their mentoring will go a long way in helping us become AS-9100 certified."

The DOD Mentor-Protégé Program: The Department of Defense Mentor-Protege Program was started in 1991 to assist small businesses (proteges) in competing for prime contract awards by partnering these companies with large companies (mentors) under individual, project-based agreements. Certain criteria must be met in order to qualify as a small business under this program. Custom Interface qualifies because of its status as a women-owned enterprise. For info go to DOD Mentor Protege Program

About Custom Interface Inc.: Custom Interface incorporated in 1997 and is located in Bingen, Washington, about one hour East of Portland. The company is a strategic partner with major manufacturers in the design and assembly of wire harnesses and electromechanical assemblies. www.custominterfaceinc.com

About FLIR Systems: FLIR Systems, Inc. is a world leader in the design, manufacture and marketing of thermal imaging and stabilized camera systems. www.FLIR.com.