

ESTA Directions August 1999

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Every summer the ESTA Executive Committee holds a long, two-day, meeting. This meeting is intended to deal with topics and concepts which need more time and discussion than the other quarterly meetings. Long range planning is a regular topic for these meetings and this year the goal was to produce the beginnings of a five-year plan taking ESTA into the next century.

Finances are, of course, the key. We are, fortunately, never short of ambitious ideas to improve the services and functions of ESTA to better serve its members - the initiatives of the Technical Standards Program and the recently formed Certification Program Committee are proof of that. Everything has a price of course and we needed to get a feel for how our plans and our finances would mesh.

All committees and working groups were asked to provide a 5 year theoretical budget showing what they would do in an ideal world if funds were available. Compiling this data would give a best case (or worst case depending on your point of view!) prophecy for ESTA. Not surprisingly ambition outstripped reality by many thousands of dollars. However the exercise achieved its point by providing a road map and by showing that fund raising remains and will remain for the foreseeable future an integral part of ESTA's activities.

Don't be disheartened by this, ESTA is healthily solvent and will remain so, however there are very few Trade Associations which are completely internally self-sustaining and there are many avenues to pursue the funding we need. Although it is always going to be the fundamental responsibility of the members to help fund the association the intent is that some of this can come from outside the membership through sponsorship, certification and training, publications and so on. These are all being pursued.

One of the long-term initiatives which was discussed at the summer meetings was the introduction of an ESTA sponsored industry wide Product Stewardship program. This proposal will be launched in a preliminary presentation during the Annual Membership meeting at LDI this November. However here's a sneak preview...

Product Stewardship programs are well established in other industry sectors – particularly the chemical industries. It has become clear to the Fog and Smoke Working Group that a Product Stewardship program is going to be essential in demonstrating the responsibility and concern members have for the users of their equipment. Product Stewardship is the safe use and handling of products at all stages of their lifecycles. Health, safety and environmental protection must be an integral part of designing, manufacturing, marketing, distributing, using, recycling and disposing of products. However it's not just doing these things – it's documenting and demonstrating them so that the responsibility and understanding of health, safety and environmental concerns passes all the way along the chain – from manufacturer to end user.

The extension from fog fluid to everything we do is clear – all of us share a responsibility for the safe use of products whatever link of the chain we are. ESTA intends to promote and support this responsibility. More later – the discussion needs more space than this brief column – let me end with the Mission Statement for Product Stewardship:-

*'Our industry creates products and services that entertain and enlighten people's lives around the world. These benefits are, of necessity, accompanied by enduring responsibilities and commitments in the management of these products. We will make continuous progress toward the vision of no accidents, injuries or harm to the environment and will publicly report our global health, safety and environmental performance. We will lead our companies in ethical ways that increasingly benefit society, the economy and the environment while adhering to these principles.'*

See you in Orlando!