

ESTA Directions December 1998

*by Mike Wood*

In the last Protocol Paul Vincent bid farewell to the ESTA Presidency and thanked the many people who had worked with him over the last eight years. Well, I hope he hasn't gone far! Stepping into the void he leaves isn't going to be easy and I, for one, need all the help I can get. I just want to applaud Paul for the dedication and commitment he's shown to ESTA. Looking from the outside over the last decade I'd become more and more impressed at the rapid growth of the TDA and ESTA. From a relatively late start on the global scene ESTA has stormed through to become a world class association. In fact, in areas such as Technical Standards, ESTA very much leads the way. It's thanks to the many people like Paul that this is the case and I take my hat off to him. Thanks, Paul.

Paul leaves a very healthy association with a full portfolio of projects underway or planned for 1999. On the 1st January the Code of Conduct came into force. To my knowledge this is the first initiative of its kind in any entertainment technology association anywhere in the world. It's a bold step and shows the commitment of the membership to demonstrating its increasing business maturity in a very public way. You can be sure that the world is watching ESTA's lead on this one and I'm confident we will succeed. Paul, as Past President, will chair the first Ethics Committee and I'm sure he'll be very happy if he has nothing to do!

Certification is going to be a leading issue this year. The groundwork is proceeding well and the Association is in a good position to push forward. The first target is the electrical and lighting side of the industry with the intent of formulating a program for Stage Lighting Technician Certification. If this nut can be cracked then there will be natural progression to other sectors. This isn't an easy goal to achieve but has the potential to be as worthwhile as anything ESTA has done, helping improve safety and training the technicians for the future. As with everything ESTA does this initiative won't succeed without the support of the membership and the burning enthusiasm of a few dedicated people.

OK, time to get on my soapbox. Wouldn't you like to know the size of the industry you are in? Wouldn't you like to know how fast it is growing? Wouldn't you like to know which sectors are growing and which are shrinking? Wouldn't that kind of information help you in your business - whatever it is?

Other industries have this information - we don't. Why not? Well, in order to produce this information you have to have raw data and the only place to get this data is - you. The members of this association possess this data jointly between them. All you need to do is collate this data to get everyone the answers they (and their banks) want.

If it's that easy why hasn't ESTA done it? Well, they've tried, but every time a trade association in our industry has attempted to administer this kind of bread-and-butter survey they've come up against brick walls. Suddenly the membership becomes shy and won't reveal their individual 'secrets' to add to the pool. Other industries do reveal this data and succeed in these surveys for the greater good of all - so can we. I believe it's a sign of maturity of an industry to understand that participating in this kind of statistical survey produces positive results. I'd like to know your opinion on this, let ESTA know if you support producing market analysis data and would participate. We've shown a huge stride in maturity with the code of conduct - let's continue.