

ESTA Directions December 1999

*by Mike Wood*

Another year, another Thanksgiving - it must be another LDI. I don't know if it was just me but LDI in Orlando felt busier than ever. The Orange County Convention Center just keeps getting bigger and bigger – with plans to more than double it again over the next few years I understand! The resources they can offer meant that this year's LDI Awards ceremony took place on the stage of a real theatre – on the set of 'Ben Hur the Musical' no less. Unfortunately they didn't let us use the chariots pulled by animatronic horses to make a dramatic entrance – still it was fun to walk on to a dry-ice covered large stage, envelope in hand, and pretend to be Billy Crystal at the Oscars.

The award ceremony was further enhanced by the debut of the ESTA Dealers' Choice Customer Service Awards. These awards generated an unprecedented level of interest and excitement before the event. If you recall dealer members were allowed to vote for the Manufacturers they felt offered the best customer service in three categories, small, medium and large companies. The voters took it very seriously and gave great consideration to their decisions. A number of dealer members apparently held meetings with their staff to decide who to vote for. The manufacturers took it equally seriously and recognize the importance customer service needs to be given in a successful company. You can be sure that this award category will continue to be hotly contested in years to come. There is a full listing of ESTA Dealers' Choice award winners elsewhere in this issue – congratulations to them all.

As we reach the beginning of the new year we need to report the changes in Board membership brought about by retirements and the recent election results – our thanks are due to retiring Board members Jim Smerbeck and Steve Lemon and we welcome returning members Mark West and John Booth and new members Rick Rudolph and Mark Fetto.

The new year brings new initiatives and ideas – ESTA is looking for feedback into how well we communicate with you, the membership. Is everything that is going on put across in a way that is understandable and clear? Are ESTA's publications useful and relevant? How about the mailings and flyers? The Web site? Personal contact? To this end ESTA has commissioned an Internal Communications Audit from KSA Group. KSA will be contacting a representative sample of members covering every category and company size and asking them a series of questions to help with this survey. The participants will be selected randomly so not every member company will be asked to take part. If you aren't contacted and you have opinions on how ESTA communicates to you please let the office know – we want to hear the good and the bad so we can improve.

As you may already know ESTA was able to release its first ANSI Standard recently, for wire rope ladders, this is the first of many. It is the nature of consensus standards with their many public reviews to take some time to issue – however the Technical Standards Program has many, many more in the pipeline so, now they've started, you will see a much more regular stream appearing. The ESTA Technical Standards Program is the strongest program of its type in the entertainment technology world – no question. It relies on member support for everything including funding and will continue to do so. That support has been willingly given by many companies who continue to see the benefits it gives them in the global market place. Don't think that just because standards have started to appear that your support and contributions are no longer needed – they are.

I'm writing this in December so I don't know yet how the Millennium celebrations went – for me Y2K is still 3 weeks away. Hopefully you are reading this in your office and not in a secret bunker somewhere hiding away behind a mountain of canned food. Whichever it is I'd like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous 21<sup>st</sup> century.