

Giving Credit Where It's Due

Back in 1985, as America West airlines celebrated its second birthday, a magazine then called *Arizona Living* ran a cover story I wrote on the airline and its founding chairman, Ed Beauvais. A few months later, an Arizona congressman entered the story into the U.S. Congressional Record as official recognition of the huge economic contribution America West and Beauvais were making to the state.

Such things are done fairly often, it turns out, but the idea of a public thank you stuck with me.

And it surfaced again last week in San Diego as I sat in the shuttle bus going from the car rental place back to the airport. I'd just come from R.W. Smith, one of the balloting winners of this year's *FER* Customer Choice Awards. As the shuttle bounced along, I remembered first meeting the RWS team back in '89 and the great educational conversations I'd had over the years with Allan Keck and Ron Woodhill.

They, and many others around the industry, have shown me a lot over the last 20 years, especially during the early times, when

A lot of people gave selflessly when I was new to the industry and needed the crash course.

every interview and conversation I had required a lot of background orientation. A lot of people took the time to show me the ropes.

Bill Kinney, now a very close friend, was probably the first manufacturer to get me oriented not only to the factory's daily grind, but also the challenges of product development and international markets as well as the importance of ethics and values in business.

Henry Singer is another who gave of himself. In '87 he taught me a lot about the dealer world, the complications, the challenges. He shared personal observations as if I already understood the dealer business, and when he was finished with me, I did.

In the late '80s, it was Wes Tyler who first showed me the inner workings of the service industry. I still remember a car ride in Tucson, at some association meeting or another, during which Wes calmly observed that much of the equipment industry's profit problems came from a woeful lack of differentiation, or a lack of *communicating* the differentiation. He was the first one to explain candidly how parts revenues figure into the scheme of things not just for the servicer but also for the factory, how warranty reimbursements work, or don't work, how authorized service affiliations can complicate customer service and more.

Right around that time, I also met the late Bruce Hicks, who readily shared his unique vantage point as a combination rep,

manufacturer and importer. His multi-perspective gave him a truly one-of-a-kind wisdom about the entire channel. And he was the first industry figure I'd met who incorporated a real concern for the environment in what he did.

Harrison Holman was another one who shared his insights selflessly. The first time I met him, he was verbally thrashing me for parroting manufacturers' optimistic computations of slices per hour. He was right. You can't just time one piece and then project out. Our very next meeting, he treated me like a family friend. I always appreciated that.

The list goes on, and I can't possibly include everyone here who deserves it, but another one in particular stands out on my short list: Bob Pacifico, FCSI. He, too, took me into his inner sanctum when I was still a novice covering foodservice. He was candid about industry politics, the role of the independent consultant, principles of facilities flow, trying to write a tight spec, and on and on. He lives nearby. I should see him more often.

Do you know people you've been meaning to thank? If so, thank them.



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