PACKing a Punch

CHARLES YUSKA, President, Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (PMMI)

PACK EXPO Las Vegas 2011 will be held September 26 through 28 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. *Food Manufacturing* spoke with Charles Yuska of the Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (PMMI) about the event and about food processors' top-of-mind concerns regarding food-packaging applications.

Q: What are some key issues that you expect industry leaders to be focused on this year, and how do you hope to address those issues at this year's PACK EXPO?

A: Do more with less — Consumer packaged goods companies are still battling the effects of a recession and working under the directive "do more with less." That directive is illustrated by limited access to capital and a very disciplined approach to spending, both of which make strategies such as lean manufacturing, automation, sustainability efforts and process improvements critical.

Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) — It may not sound connected, but rules introduced under FSMA are, in some ways, quite similar to those the pharmaceutical community already functions within. For food manufacturers, then, The Pharmaceutical Pavilion's PACK EXPO debut will provide opportunities to find tutorials of sorts — where experienced suppliers can deliver information, services and products that help food manufacturers adjust to FSMA requirements.

Sustainability — PACK EXPO addresses all facets of sustainability, most visibly, the environmental aspect. The PACK EXPO Green program gives attendees several ways to easily find exhibitors who will help support their sustainability initiatives: booth

signage and icons in exhibitor listings online and in print will serve as identifiers.

Packaging and brand success — Packages play heavily into branding efforts, and purchase decisions stem largely from the package. The Brand Zone is a place where brand owners and managers will find the latest innovations in containers and materials, and how to get the most from them.

Q: PACK EXPO 2011 will focus on several segments of the processing industry, allowing attendees to tailor the show to their specific industry niche. Can you explain how this focus will take shape and what readers can expect to see at the show?

A: When PACK EXPO attendees describe their careers, they rarely say, “I work in processing and packaging.” They might, however, say, “I’m in the food industry,” or “I’m in the beverage industry.” That’s how they identify themselves.
Our customer-centric approach to PACK EXPO looks to the attendees and provides what they need to make it as easy as possible for them to find the solutions they need quickly
and efficiently. Readers will see a combination of pavilions, special interest areas and educational opportunities led by experts in their fields. They’ll also enjoy lounges on the show floor for some of their vertical markets: The Baking/Snack Break, The Rx Lounge and the Candy Bar. These lounges will provide special networking and educational opportunities, including receptions, Innovation Stages and Ask-the-Expert areas, just for them.

Q: PMMI has often co-located its PACK EXPO show with other trade events in the past. Last year, and again this year, PACK EXPO will take place as a stand-alone show. What are the benefits of such a show, and what significant changes can attendees expect this year?

A: With or without collocated partners, I do not think it’s accurate to call PACK EXPO a stand-alone show. The many partnerships we’ve created in support of PACK EXPO Las Vegas 2011 are evidence of that.
Some are sponsoring pavilions, some are providing conference programming, some are holding their meetings in conjunction with the show and still more are exhibiting. Without this type of industry support and collaboration, PACK EXPO would be a very different event!

PACK EXPO has evolved into the most comprehensive resource for packaging and processing innovation in North America — a one-stop shop for innovation across the line. We took that direction because PMMI is committed to ensuring PACK EXPO stays current with the industries we serve.

Our commitment has led to the customer-centric approach discussed earlier, and the launch of special features like Project 2020: The Consumer Experience and industry partnerships to deliver the greatest value to attendees.

Q: Gen. Colin Powell is scheduled as the keynote speaker at PACK EXPO 2011. What specific insight will he bring to this industry?

A: Gen. Colin Powell was our first choice for the debut of the PACK EXPO Leadership Lecture because he's one of the greatest military and civilian leaders our country (or the world, for that matter) has ever known, and he's speaking on "Diplomacy: Persuasion, Trust & Values." Whether you're leading a platoon or a corporation, these skills are critical to success.

Q: What other educational sessions or topics are PMMI particularly excited to see addressed at PACK EXPO 2011?

A: Thanks to the contributions of our conference partners, there's a lot to be excited about in this year's conference at PACK EXPO. These groups are bringing leading subject matter experts (SMEs) from companies such as Coca-Cola, Bush Beans, General Mills and Kellogg's to cover a range of critical topics that includes the Global Food Safety Initiative, food safety and the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011, sustainability and workforce development.

I need to thank our conference partners before I go any further: The Alliance for Innovation & Operational Excellence (AIOE), CPP EXPO, the Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP), the International Society of Beverage Technologists (ISBT) and the Reusable Packaging Association (RPA).

Q: How has the trend toward sustainable and reduced packaging affected the buying decisions of packaging and processing equipment buyers?

A: Machinery requirements change as conditions change — and of course, those conditions include packaging materials. Buyers need to know if equipment they're considering will be able to effectively handle the materials they plan to use, whether the difference is in the weight or the gauge, or if they're recycled or new. Principles of the lean manufacturing trend again come into play. Lean is all about efficiency, and buyers are searching out equipment that uses energy and other resources efficiently and with minimal waste.

Q: With the economy still unstable, how have decision-makers in the processing industry shifted their buying behaviors?

A: This is where the total systems solutions approach comes into play. Buyers are considering the complete line — from processing down to palletizing — rather than a single piece of the puzzle. The line needs to work as an efficient unit; it needs to adapt as requirements change; and it needs to generate the best possible results for sustainability, efficiency and total cost of ownership.

Interview by Krystal Gabert, Editor, Food Manufacturing

For more information, please visit www.pmmi.org *[1].*

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