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February 2018 | beautystorebusiness.com

\$7.50 Volume 24 No. 2

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THE MASTER SHOW DIRECTOR

Eric Horn Reveals PBA's 2018 Plans





Jason Bennett

SHOW BUSINESS

Eric Horn, trade show director for the Professional Beauty Association, shares his improbable but inevitable ascent in the industry—and what he has in store for 2018.

By **Tracy Morin**

Eric Horn's involvement with the Professional Beauty Association (PBA) began so long ago that the organization wasn't even formed yet. Now, nearly 23 years later, he serves a dual role: associate executive director of business development and North American trade show director for North American beauty events, including Cosmoprof North America (CPNA). Coming from the hospitality industry, where he coordinated conventions, the transition to trade show guru was perhaps natural—but in the beauty business, and the PBA in particular, he found a lifelong home.

It helps that PBA, as a powerful industry advocate with 50,000-plus members, never fails to keep Horn on his toes. Always on the lookout for improvement and innovation in the events arena, Horn ensures that each year the PBA's mega-shows, International Salon & Spa Expo (ISSE) and CPNA, wow attendees and exhibitors alike. *Beauty Store Business* recently caught up with Horn to learn about his fated journey to joining the PBA—and what's in store for the organization and its iconic trade shows this year.



The PBA Executive Summit provides top beauty executives in the industry an opportunity to network and learn from experts in various fields.

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A TURN OF EVENTS

Before the PBA, earlier organizations acted as industry advocates, including the Beauty & Barber Supply Institute (BBSI) for distributors, which held its Winter Buyers' Conference (WBC) every January. In 1993, it landed at the Grand Hyatt Washington in D.C., and Horn, then employed at the property, became the convention services manager assigned to the account. “I took care of the entire show, from the day it was contracted to the final farewell,” he recalls. “Back then, BBSI had nine employees working in Fairfield, New Jersey: executive vice president Fred Polk, one general manager and several employees who ran the association and its events.”

The following year, fate would continue to work in strange ways. The WBC moved across the country, to the Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego, California, where Horn had been transferred; naturally, the BBSI group was again assigned to him. After another successful event, Polk took Horn to dinner and offered him a job for \$1,000 more than his salary at the time; but, at 29 years old, a former lifeguard living four blocks from the beach and finally earning a livable wage, Horn was hesitant.

A year later, he'd be promoted to associate director of catering and convention services of the Hyatt Burlingame in the San Francisco area. In town for a board meeting, Polk invited Horn to lunch. “I pulled up in my new car, a gently used, spotless, white 1989 BMW convertible, roof down, radio blaring, and saw his face; it was priceless,” Horn laughs. “I had an idea he was going to ask again, so pulling up in a seemingly expensive car gave him pause; he thought he knew my salary.”

Still, Polk remained persistent—and came armed with a better offer. Though he now admits his “amazing” raise would be a pittance by today's standards, he was excited for the new adventure. Fittingly, there would be one more twist in the tale as Polk threw in a minor detail: The entire association was moving to Scottsdale, Arizona. Horn told himself he'd take the position for two years, max, and move on.

FAMILY TIES

In August 1995, seven of the original nine BBSI employees moved to Arizona; the team added an assistant for Polk, and an accountant named Steve Sleeper (now executive director of the PBA). In 1999, still operating as BBSI, the organization built its 20,000-square-foot member headquarters. With 15 employees, it occupied half of the building; today, it's 75 percent, with more than 35 employees, a state-of-the-art conference center and the PBA Foundation's heritage museum.

PBA was eventually formed by the merger of BBSI and the American Beauty Association, and incorporated The Salon

Association in 2002 and the National Cosmetology Association in 2010. “It's unified; we represent the entire beauty industry,” Horn explains. “I think my favorite part of the journey has been the relationships I have with our members. I pretty much grew up in this industry, and they've seen me through family crises, my personal bests and disappointments, and our collective successes. It's a family atmosphere.”

Over nearly a quarter of a century, Horn has held several positions with PBA, all geared toward trade shows and events. He notes that events and membership are the two revenue-producers for the association—and all proceeds go straight back to the industry in the form of education, charitable outreach, government advocacy, unique events and more. “Many see us as an event producer, and that's only a portion of what we do,” Horn says. “We're the largest organization of salon professionals, with members representing salons/spas, distributors, manufacturers and beauty professionals. The event production simply aids our greatest efforts, which fall under government advocacy and protecting our members.”

On May 15, Horn will celebrate 23 years with the association; he and Sleeper are the last men standing from the small team that landed in Arizona. But the connections he's forged remain indelible—and he has no plans to leave his beloved beauty family. Horn even married into the industry. His husband, Inigo Uriarte, is a hairstylist, offering a built-in source for feedback and advice when needed. “Since Fred Polk hired



CPNA marketing director Daniela Ciocan and Eric Horn at the 2014 Trade Show Executive's Top 100 presentation.

“Our members are special people, they care and they use their passion to change the way we look, feel and act. No other industry can do this.”



me, I felt like I was adopted by the beauty industry and allowed to work with the most creative and passionate people,” Horn marvels. “Our members are special people, they care and they use their passion to change the way we look, feel and act. No other industry can do this. It has been the

most incredibly enriching experience, and I’ll continue working in this industry for as long as I have something to contribute and as long as they’ll have me!”

MAIN EVENTS

Despite its ultimate goal of industry outreach, events are a massive undertaking for the PBA—and Horn is at the epicenter, continuously working on the following year’s events in the office, visiting a show site, traveling to other industry shows or meeting with possible sponsors or partners. “We try to bring the most current programs to CPNA, because we know our audience (both professional and retail) demands it,” Horn says. “I’m traveling lately more than I’m in the office; the downtime that used to exist is long gone.”

The demands are indeed fierce, as PBA strives to work years in advance of each event; for both ISSE in Long Beach, California, and CPNA in Las Vegas, Nevada, the organization has space on hold for shows until 2028. Teams in Las Vegas, Milan and Scottsdale constantly seek to institute relevant, unique and cutting-edge projects to elevate the experience for attendees and exhibitors alike. “In the beauty industry, things can change in the blink of an eye, so to stay current, we normally work on the upcoming show logistics the day we end the previous show,” Horn says. “It’s a cycle that never changes, but thankfully, the details never remain the same. Boredom would come quickly, and I’m sure I would have never stayed this long.”

Luckily, CPNA alone has pioneered a slew of projects to wow its whopping 35,000 attendees. For example, Discover Beauty was a first-of-its-kind curated event, matching independent brands with select buyers. Meanwhile, the professional section boasts Discover Green and Green Leaf, Discover Scent, Discover Spotlight and Tones of Beauty. And CPNA’s two newest areas include Discover Pack in the packaging section and the Discover Pro Beauty in the professional section. (Discover Pro Beauty is another curated area, for manufacturers seeking distribution and guaranteed meetings with buyers—and PBA welcomes interest from larger OTCs, as well as unique brands, to participate.)

Another successful, yet still growing, program is the OTC Program, which offers two complimentary three-day show badges per store for qualified beauty store owners. Each store may have up to two people attend, and multiple stores can register with different addresses. (Contact your manufacturer rep to be placed on their list of eligible OTCs.) Each exhibitor also has five free VIP tickets to give away to eligible buyers—and Horn notes that many of these go unused, so check with your manufacturers!

For 2018, the PBA show train presents no signs of slowing down. Susan Howard, PBA’s director of events, is now spearheading ISSE, with valuable feedback from member exhibitors and attendees helping boost benefits. This year, Horn hints that the show will feature some exciting changes: the introduction of The

HELPING HANDS

Here’s how you can make a difference by donating to the PBA’s Disaster Relief Fund.

From Hurricanes Harvey and Irma to California’s wildfires, the nation—and world—took some hard hits from Mother Nature this year. Thankfully, members of the beauty industry have somewhere to turn: PBA’s Disaster Relief Fund, funded by members and dedicated to helping those affected by hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, snowstorms and other misfortunes. “One hundred percent of funds donated go directly to beauty industry professionals, member or nonmember,” Horn says. “We’re in this together, united by beauty.”

In the wake of recent disasters, the industry has (as always) responded generously; the fund has distributed a whopping \$315,000 to those in need. But PBA still has 500-plus individual unfunded requests. And, as memories of recent disasters fade, there’s been a drop in donations. “Please keep the money coming in. If you have prospered in any way from this industry, please give back to help those who now need it,” Horn explains. “It’s a tough request, to ask for money when there is no actual disaster, or the disaster has passed, but that’s what must be done to continue to help and be at the ready for the next catastrophe hitting our members.” To help, donate to the Disaster Relief Fund or the other charities officially sanctioned by PBA, Cut it Out and Look Good, Feel Better.



PBA AND COSMOPROF NORTH AMERICA – FAST FACTS –

Cosmoprof North America (CPNA) is a joint venture between the Professional Beauty Association (PBA) and Italian trade show organizer, BolognaFiere Sp.A. (BF).

NABE

PBA and BF created a joint partnership in 2002 called North American Beauty Events, LLC (NABE). NABE was initiated to bring relevant events to the North American market. Currently, Cosmoprof North America is the main focus of NABE.

BF

BF has a U.S. office in Las Vegas, which currently handles strategic marketing for CPNA.

BF also has offices in Bologna and Milan that handle the CPNA sales for all international exhibitors with the exception of Canada and Mexico.

PBA

PBA holds the overall management responsibility for CPNA as well as the North American sales activity (US/Mex/Can).

CPNA 2017

1,250+ Exhibitors 30,000 Attendees

EXPECTED FOR CPNA 2018

30% International Attendance 70% Domestic Attendance



Playground, with short, single-technique, hands-on classes; a Wellness Room, with classes centered around stylists' well-being; and a new event on January 28 named The Blow Out, which will host a reception followed by a program featuring the Leading Ladies Panel and a Beauty Underground artistic presentation. "This is the one time I would tell all participants not to miss this event," Horn enthuses. "Not only do we have the outstanding and impressive lineup of Leading Ladies and a presentation to rival all others from Beauty Underground, there will be a special, not-to-be-missed announcement about the future of ISSE."

Meanwhile, at CPNA 2018, attendees can expect a streamlined floor space that Horn expects to retain for years to come. "We've changed the layout and moved our popular areas to positions on the floor that will give smaller manufacturers more traffic and visibility, and we're working very hard with manufacturers to keep them on the show floor and not to utilize the hotel rooms and suites," Horn explains. "We don't want the OTCs, buyers and reps taking a great deal of time out of their day to travel to and from the show floor, losing time for the valuable business on the show floor."

INTO THE FUTURE

So what's next for the PBA and its ever-evolving orbit of industry efforts? Horn promises some changes, both subtle and substantial, in the coming year. First, the PBA will be channeling its efforts toward

the licensed professional, putting more focus on their education and careers—hence ensuring heightened value of membership. "We're not forgetting about our B2B members, either; that's where my position as associate executive director of business development comes into play," Horn adds. "I'll be looking for new shows, new ideas and new ways for our members to do business. My position was created to bring more revenue and opportunities to members, so I welcome any suggestions for the next great idea!"

True to this ever-changing industry, the PBA is also updating its look—both in print and communications. Even its website is getting treated to a makeover; this year, PBA will debut a new site designed to improve the member experience and provide a sleek, modern feel (which is already in the works). And, of course, Horn continues to hone PBA events for unforgettable experiences. "The talented people who work in our events area, along with myself, know we are only as good as our last event, so we always look to impress and provide the best we can," Horn says. "This industry is special, and we all have a common bond: to help people be their best." ■

Tracy Morin is a freelance writer and editor based in Oxford, MS.

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@probeautyassoc @probeautyassoc
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