



Bridge over RTO

APRO's Vendor Advisory Committee connects vendors and the board

BY CINDY FERGUSON

In our industry, the link between the vendor and the rent-to-own dealer is crucial. APRO's Vendor Advisory Committee serves to bridge these two important communities and also address APRO suppliers' needs and issues. The committee also sets the direction and helps with many of the specifics of APRO's annual Convention and Buying Show, rent-to-own's premier industry event.

In 1986, the Vendor Advisory Committee was formed to serve as a bridge between industry vendors and the APRO board of directors. It is made up of 12 vendor-elected members who serve staggered two-year terms. The committee consists of vendors representing various categories of industry suppliers, such as appliances, jewelry, furniture, software and special services.

In October 1999, the APRO board of directors, which is comprised of rent-to-own dealers, changed its bylaws to allow the vice-chairman of the Vendor Advisory Committee to serve as a full, voting member of the APRO board. Currently, RSSS's Ellison Crider is the committee vice-chairman and APRO board member. "It is important that we receive input from all types of industry suppliers as we plan for future APRO conventions and events," says Crider. "There is no other industry association that listens to its vendors like APRO does."

Membership on the vendor advisory committee is open to any APRO associate member. "It's an honor to serve on the Vendor Advisory Committee," says John Blair, executive marketing and sales representative for M&B Jewelry and a longtime member of the committee. "It is committed to the APRO vendors to search for additional ways to make sure their investment and participation as an APRO vendor is profitable. The goal of the Vendor Advisory Committee is to assure that the vendors will add new rent-to-own dealers to their account base and provide better service for all dealers."

This year, at the APRO exhibitor

breakfast/business meeting held during APRO's Convention and Buying Show in Orlando, APRO associate members will hold an election to fill seven positions on the vendor advisory committee. Half of the positions on the Vendor Advisory Committee become available each year at the convention. All associate members are eligible to vote for candidates. There will be one ballot per member company and proxy ballots from those unable to attend the Convention and Buying Show will be accepted.

The Vendor Advisory Committee meets three times a year: once at the conclusion of the convention, once in the fall and again in the spring. All committee members participate of their own free will and assume responsibility for their expenses for travel and accommodations.

"It is a pleasure to have such an outstanding group of men and women serving and volunteering their time," says APRO's 2005-06 President Shannon Strunk. "Each meeting provides valuable ideas and results that are carried into the APRO board meeting, many of which are implemented."

If you're a vendor interested in serving on the Vendor Advisory Committee, contact Cindy Ferguson at 800/204-2776, ext. 107, or e-mail cferguson@aprovision.org.

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APRO's 2005-06 Vendor Advisory Committee at this year's Mid-Year Conference in Tucson: APRO President Shannon Strunk, Ellison Crider, RSSS; John Rogers, High Touch; John Blair, M&B Jewelry; Susan Matthews, Benefit Marketing Solutions; Jay Nardone, BDI Laguna; Mike Gerwe Jr., RES Accessories; Al Benson, Central File; Richard Rose, APRO board member and vendor liaison; Craig Moon, Sears Contract Sales; Don Julson, LG/Zenith Electronics; and Marty Smith, Imagery Marketing Consultants. Not pictured: Mike Bertolani, SED International; and Norm Smith, honorary lifetime committee member.