

Award Winner

SPOTLIGHT

Dan Beaudet

“Passionate people are unstoppable,” claimed Don Schmincke at DPHA’s first conference. Dan Beaudet is a passionate person. He is passionate about the products that he represents and the showrooms that he serves. He is passionate about professionalism and pairing his lines with the needs of the marketplace. He understands that if you do not have passion for a product it is practically impossible to expect that product to do well in the showroom. He has embraced technology that has enabled his company to out-compete and out-service much larger organizations. He knows how to create value and provide extraordinary service to his manufacturers and his showroom clients throughout New England. His ability to convert passion into action and action into accomplishments are among the many reasons that DPHA honored the Dan Beaudet Company as the 2006 DPHA Representative Agency Professional of the Year.

The criteria for the award include:

- ? Degree of involvement in DPHA activities
- ? Personal achievements in the industry
- ? Pursuit of personal improvement and education
- ? Job performance and accomplishments
- ? Involvement in and support of other DPH-related organizations
- ? Public recognition for a deed or accomplishment which may or may not pertain to the DPH industry but reflects favorably on the individual as a DPHA member

In each of the criteria, Dan Beaudet Company is more than a deserving recipient of DPHA’s Representative Agency of the Year Award.

Dan Beaudet started his career in decorative plumbing while working for Universal Rundle Manufacturing. When the company that pioneered gel coating one-piece tubs was sold to Crane Plumbing, Dan saw an opportunity to create his own representative agency. It was 1990 and the New England area was in the throws of a recession. His first account was Keystone Shower



Dan Beaudet accepts the Representative Agency Professional of the Year Award from Awards Committee Chair Jim Tomafsky (Mountain Plumbing Products)

Doors and Medicine Cabinets. Where most other companies saw problems with the line, Dan recognized opportunities. He realized that his success was tied to his ability to eliminate common problems that hampered sales. In this case, many of the problems associated with selling shower doors had to do with improper measurements. Dan responded by going to different jobs sites to ensure that the specifications provided to the manufacturer from the showroom were accurate. He also spent considerable time training showroom staff how to correctly specify purchase orders to prevent problems. In doing so, he made showroom staff confident in recommending the line that resulted in a dramatic increase in sales.

Success begets success. Dan’s ability to eliminate problems and increase sales attracted other lines. In 1994, Dan parted company with his partner and changed his agency’s name to the Dan Beaudet Company. He has been on his own ever since because, “I have a work ethic that I am not willing to impose on other people,” Dan said. What he lacks in staff, he makes up for in technology. He has embraced technology to become more efficient. As early as 1995, he invested in an expensive software program that enabled Dan to mine data to recognize opportunities where showroom sales were below expectation and to pinpoint trends that enabled Dan to create value for his showroom clients and the lines that he represented. He used software to an-

alyze both showroom and line performance and target areas that need to be addressed and to help improve relationships throughout the supply chain.

Data does not lie. Dan realizes that, “once a territory is established, it is human nature to rely on routines. If it is not broke, don’t fix it. That is dangerous because sometimes you don’t know if something is broken. Using technology, I can look for ways to improve each relationship with a showroom and manufacturer based on the sales report and other data.”

Technology also has been embraced to establish and maintain effective lines of communication. Dan’s website – www.decorativebath.com – features frequent updates of new product introductions, trends, industry events, recognition of outstanding showroom performance in his service territory, product galleries, links to area showrooms and manufacturer web site, new accounts and other information that keeps content fresh and current. The web presence is complimented by direct mail pieces that promote the company’s lines and a corporate newsletter that keeps the agency and the lines that it represents in front of showrooms, designers, builders and contractors.

Dan Beaudet Company currently represents 12 different, high-end decorative lines that are sold almost exclusively through independent showrooms. Dan believes that a representative agency’s sales are contingent on passion and enthusiasm for the product lines the agency carries. “You need to be passionate to see opportunities. You have to have the ability to transfer the enthusiasm for a product before you can even approach a showroom.” Innovation and design are keys to creating passion for a decorative plumbing and hardware product. “I find it particularly annoying to see the ‘me-tooism’ that has evolved over the last several years. Unique and innovative designs are what churns the market,” Dan said. His ability to understand design differences enables Dan to select lines that are market and design leaders. The showrooms that he serves realize that Dan understands the industry and brings lines to them that are distinctive and different.

Dan also is a keen observer of showroom operations. He uses the time in a showroom before an appointment to listen to and observe showroom staff interact with customers. He eavesdrops to hear the types of



questions that customers ask of showroom sales professionals and to listen to the responses that they provide. “Overhearing these conversations can be extremely beneficial for developing the approach for a particular showroom and how I present the products that I represent,” Dan said. “I try to

continually observe what happens in a showroom.” These observations enable Dan to determine opportunities. “It tells me a direction I can take with the showroom manager to provide solutions and generate the ‘wow’ factor. If a showroom does not have ‘wow’ then it becomes extremely difficult to differentiate it from other venues that sell decorative plumbing and hardware.”

Dan capitalizes on his products’ distinctive designs to create “wow” for showrooms. “You have to excite showrooms about the possibilities,” Dan said. “The lines that I have the most fun selling are those that provide the most solutions.” Dan realizes that a line’s success is contingent on the showroom’s confidence in the line’s ability to deliver. Showroom sales staff need to understand the potential a line offers to help their customers get to yes and enable their customers’ visions to become realities. If a line offers those qualities, the salesperson’s confidence and enthusiasm grow.

Dan’s commitment to professional growth is evident by his obtaining the Certified Professional Manufacturers Representative designation. He also is a past chair of the National Decorative Representative Network. Dan became certified because, “it was a program over the course of three years that addressed specifically what I was doing and what I was all about. I have continually tried to embrace the practices and precepts taught by the certification program when I approach customers and manufacturers.”

Dan sees his role to help showrooms improve their performance. “Training is huge for a showroom,” Dan claims. “Explaining how different products can work within a showroom’s merchandising mix, how products can be solutions to customer needs and getting showroom staff comfortable so they are not left dangling can be terrifically empowering for showrooms and their staffs.”

Dan compliments his showroom training programs by encouraging showrooms to send sales staff and key employees to factory training tours. Dan often at-

tends as well to help build a comfort level and address regional specific concerns that his clients may have. “I find it extremely valuable to accompany showroom staff on factory visits because it helps to establish a comfort level that is necessary for any product line to succeed.”

Dan is positioning his representative agency to stay ahead of the customer service curve. He recognizes the need to drive more pull through business to showrooms. He has laid the foundation to reach out to more of the design community. Dan also believes that he serves as the manufacturers’ eyes and ears in the marketplace. His role is to serve as a conduit between dealer and manufacturer and to help solve problems in a timely and effective manner.

Given his approach, commitment and, yes, passion, there can be no doubt that the Dan Beaudet Company is a deserving recipient of the DPHA Representative Professional of the Year Award.

Up Close

Name: Dan Beaudet

Company: Dan Beaudet Company

Hobbies: Photography

Favorite Location for a Photo Shoot: Homer, Alaska

Last Book Read: Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen

Changes he would like to make to the industry: A better understanding among manufacturers of the roles and advantages that representative agencies can provide and to build a much better team approach to improve relationships with all three partners in the supply chain.

Person Whom He Most Would Like to Have Dinner With: His wife Bobbi because she is the “person I most respect on the planet.”