The MHEDA Board of Directors participated in a Long Range Planning Feedback Session on Tuesday, February 8. Subsequent to this session, MHEDA's Executive Committee, Board Advisors, (3) three Past Presidents and (3) three MHEDA staff members participated in a Long Range Planning Retreat. The retreat was held on February 9-10 and was professionally facilitated by Brent Grover, Principal with Evergreen Consulting. Minutes from the retreat were distributed under separate cover.

**Attending the February 8 feedback session were:**
President Dave Griffith; President-elect John Maybury; Vice President Jack Phelan; Treasurer John Cosgrove; Immediate Past President Loren Swakow; Advisors Jim Bowes & Mike Romano; Directors Larry Abernathy; Richard Donnelly; Chuck Frank; Rex Mecham; Greg Morrison; Duncan Murphy; Fred Oram; Ron Rechenbach; Stan Sewell; Bob Weeks.

*Handouts that were circulated to attendees including Key Influencer & AEA Survey Results and Questions for Board Members are attached to and made a part of these minutes.*

**FEEDBACK SESSION MINUTES**

President Dave Griffith opened the meeting by outlining the objectives of both the feedback session and board retreat. He pointed out that the feedback generated from this session would be used during the Long Range Planning Retreat. The primary objective of the retreat will be to take a forward look at the association in order to position the organization for future growth and stability. He noted the importance of being aware of trends to make sure that the organization is in a position to react to them.

Griffith asked the board to refer to the survey results from Key Influencers and AEA - Association Education Alliance Members. These surveys were conducted to provide the board with a snapshot of how members view the association and to learn what other associations are facing in terms of opportunities and challenges. Our goal is to become a "Best of Breed" association.

An open discussion ensued and the following points were raised.

All agreed that MHEDA must drill deeper into member organizations and develop an integrated marketing approach by industry segment and annual sales volume. Although participation in programs is being captured and disseminated, marketing efforts need to be better integrated to ensure that all programs are not being marketed in a blanketed approach to all members. It is concerning that members are still unaware of certain MHEDA offerings; it was suggested that this might be the result of too much promotion.
to a general audience versus a more targeted approach. Members may be turned off by the abundance of mailings and therefore, not focused on programs relevant to their individual business.

Marketing is currently decentralized; committees are charged with targeting their programs to a specific audience. Without a clear "ownership" of the marketing function, MHEDA has not been integrated in its marketing efforts and therefore, not clearly communicating programs to targeted audiences. It was suggested that the establishment of a Marketing Committee be considered. Although member participation data is being captured, someone has to regularly analyze this information and create a marketing plan that reaches out to every constituent.

As part of this marketing effort, the association must address the following questions:
- Who is spending money? On what?
- What does each segment want from MHEDA?
- Who is participating within the member companies?
- Are they aware of the programs available?
- Do members know what the "Best" are doing from a "Best Practices" perspective?

Kathy Cotter was hired to manage the marketing function but has been primarily charged with membership recruitment and retention. Her role should be reviewed and possibly modified.

Is MHEDA's goal to gain more members or drill deeper? All agreed that focus should be on both objectives.

Results of the survey show that MHEDA is clearly a "CEO" organization and to stay vital for future generations, this needs to change. Convention is rated as one of the best programs but only draws company principals. Is it time to change the format? Does the Transformation Retreat and Managers Conference serve the needs of the middle managers by being positioned as a "mini convention"? We may not need to change convention per se, but develop programs that reach a younger audience i.e., not as costly, regionally focused, programs suited for middle managers.

It may be time to bring back some form of the Young Executives Forum.

There was some discussion about MHEDA’s core relevance to each industry segment. How does this differ? Although there is commonality among all groups, each segment has its own needs in terms of training and information. Although we cannot satisfy the entire membership with one type of program, common needs include acting as an information resource and providing opportunities for networking.

Everyone agreed that MHEDA must continually educate members on how to sell and provide value to the customer and supplier, to prevent being perceived as a commodity product provider. This is best way to eliminate the threat of disintermediation.
Three questions were posed to the board:

1) **What is the one thing you would like to change about MHEDA?**
   - Market and sell deeper into the member companies; we need to understand the number and scope of email addresses within the MHEDA database
   - Create more awareness of services and the "uniqueness" of programs
   - Integrate the marketing efforts
   - Make MHEDA the premier place for distributors to learn how to sell and provide value to customers and suppliers
   - Publish the Disc Report in advance of convention and use this information to plan educational sessions and ultimately promote additional convention attendance
   - Continue to brand MHEDA as the only place to obtain industry specific information, training and networking - provide services that cannot be duplicated elsewhere
   - The MHEDA “Brand” should equal value to a customer who is buying from a member

2) **What trends are happening that MHEDA must be prepared to address?**
   - Emerging importance of solutions/services versus product emphasis - MHEDA should educate members on this
   - Globalization & role/fit of material handling in the supply chain - educate our members on the players involved and where this industry fits in the mix and how to collaborate
   - The next generation and their different motivations - MHEDA needs to better understand this and reach this next generation audience
   - Threat of disintermediation and the market forces behind this, especially as they relate to the customer
   - Changing demographics - age/gender/language/cultures - there will be a shrinking workforce pool especially as boomers retire
   - Succession planning and talent management
   - MHEDA may have a limited potential membership market in the future if the mission is to serve the “independent” distributor. We will have to accept this or evolve into a different organization
   - The trend toward more electronic communication may threaten the face to face component of MHEDA and possibly diminish the networking value of membership

3) **What is the single biggest business concern?**
   - Human Resources - health care costs/turnover/training
   - Margin pressure and rising costs of doing business
   - Talent/Succession
   - China and off shore manufacturing
   - Oversupply of MH manufacturing capability
   - Disintermediation
   - Connecting with C-Level customers and anticipating customer motives and needs
   - Need for service technicians and shrinking workforce pool

President Griffith adjourned the Feedback Session on Tuesday, February 8 at 12 Noon.