

# STAFDA EVENT PLANNER

NOVEMBER 6-8 | ATLANTA, GEORGIA

PLAN AHEAD AND GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS YEAR'S MOST ESSENTIAL TRADE SHOW

With apologies to P.T. Barnum, we would like to nominate a new candidate for "The Greatest Show on Earth." As STAFDA's milestone 40th annual Convention and Trade Show approaches, we thought it a good idea to remind you how great it really is, how vital it is to the independent distribution channel and offer some tips to help you plan ahead and make the most of this year's event.

We also want to encourage you to send more of your people this year. Invariably, distributors who don't attend the convention feel they haven't missed much, while those who do wonder why everyone isn't there. Care to wager which of these groups is wrong?

For construction tool and fastener distributors who are dedicated to fielding the best-trained, most knowledgeable sales forces, to gaining the most market share in their regions and to making their businesses run more efficiently and profitably than ever, the STAFDA convention is the year's single most valuable, educational and profitable event, period. In this industry, where a little knowledge can be a priceless thing, why would you turn away from the opportunity of a show where new product geniuses reside



For its educational sessions, General Session, Trade Show and Closing Party, STAFDA returns this year to Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center, Nov. 6-8.



every 10 feet and where the aisles are almost literally paved with gold? Well, why indeed?

So with that in mind, here are a few tips to help you determine who should represent your company at the show.

#### WHO GOES THERE? MAKE A LIST

First, consider your staff. Who has done an outstanding job for your company over the last year or two and deserves a working reward of a couple of days learning new things, getting inspired and seeing the industry's best new products? Start a list.

Next, who among your managers would benefit from some of this year's educational sessions, peer networking

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*This year's Opening Party takes place at the College Football Hall of Fame. Since its opening in August 2014, the Hall has added another major attraction to Atlanta's bustling, energetic and historic cityscape.*



daunting prospect for individuals who wanted to see the whole thing in just two days, which is why it makes sense to split your team for this task, too. Innovative new products and valuable new contacts are in literally every booth, and every supplier there is eager to meet you and help you grow your business and profits.

Whether you split out assignments by aisles, product categories or some other system, try to ensure that your combined team sees everything the show has to offer. Distributors who take this approach are glad they did.

#### THE HOME TEAM ADVANTAGE

Truly, for the independent tool, fastener and supply distributor in today's intensely competitive construction industry, there is no better time and place than the annual STAFDA Convention & Trade Show for sourcing new products, building profitable new relationships and gaining skills to help you grow your business and keep your company a leader in your local and regional market.

Against the trend of shrinking trade shows, STAFDA is a thriving, "must-see" event because it delivers genuine value year after year, and has done so for nearly 40 years. Learn more at [www.STAFDA.org](http://www.STAFDA.org). **CS**

#### SEMINARS AND RECEPTIONS: DIVIDE AND CONQUER

STAFDA usually offers more educational sessions than one person can logistically attend, so divide your team by their interests or job types so your company can walk away from the day's sessions having had at least one person at each session. Those people can then report their learnings to the rest of your team back at their branch or your main office.

This year's sessions cover leadership skills, sales compensation plans, customer service, negotiating, current human resources issues and a peak ahead at the manufacturing and distribution outlook for 2017. We will have a complete listing of all the sessions and presenters in our next issue, our huge annual STAFDA Convention Special Issue.

Divide and conquer the numerous manufacturer receptions, too, either by key accounts or by assigning people to attend a reception given by a potential vendor. Distributors are naturally gregarious people and vendors love to talk to current and potential customers. Encourage your employees to visit as many events as you deem fit for your people and your line card.

Also, since some of vendor parties are invariably held "off campus" and may require time-consuming walks or cab rides to reach, it pays to designate a few people to cover them so your entire group doesn't have to sprint from one event to the next without having any meaningful dialogues anywhere.

#### SPOUSE/COMPANION ACTIVITIES

STAFDA also remembers our better halves so they can have a good time while members hit the show floor. On Sunday, Nov. 6, Atlanta-based celebrity chef Kevin Rathbun will host a cooking demonstration where attendees can taste and learn to prepare his famous appetizers.

On Tuesday, Nov. 8, two great events are offered, an Atlanta Market shopping tour for those who want to get a jump start on their holiday shopping; and an Antebellum Sojourn to Madison, a classic southern town that so charmed General Sherman that he reputedly refused to burn it during his infamous "March to the Sea." This quaint town's historic architecture transports all who see it. Oh, and Madison has unique shopping, too!

#### THE TRADE SHOW: DIG DEEP

Hit it with everything you've got. With 560 vendors in nearly 800 booths, last year's trade show was a

a month or so for your number to arrive but it is well worth it. Start the process for yourself and your key road warriors at [www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck/apply](http://www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck/apply).

Bear in mind, however, that **not all airlines participate** in the TSA Pre-Check program, so you will want to ensure your preferred airline works with

the program. Or, you might end up at the airport, ticket in hand and still have to wait through a long security line because your airline isn't TSA-friendly. Avoid airlines that aren't "with the program."

#### HOTELS: BOOK SMART

Once you know how many of your people will be attending the show, determine how many hotel rooms they will need and book your hotels. STAFDA's hotel room blocks are available now, but these tend to fill up fast, so call today if you haven't already. This year's convention hotels are:

- Westin Peachtree Plaza, (404) 659-1400
- Omni Atlanta at CNN Center, (404) 659-0000
- DoubleTree Atlanta Downtown, (404) 688-8600

**BE SURE** to book your hotel rooms directly with STAFDA's official hotels and **BE SURE** to request rooms in the STAFDA room blocks at STAFDA's discounted rates. Scammers pop up every year and you have likely already received e-mails from one or two of them. These firms offer rooms but they **do not** have access to STAFDA's room block or STAFDA's negotiated convention rates. Booking with these scammers actually penalizes STAFDA. Just call the hotel directly and ask for the STAFDA room rate.

Most employees don't need a private room. Many people find sharing a room with a fellow employee helps build rapport. Sharing also saves money for the company, and your people aren't there for the hotel rooms anyway.

#### STAFDA EVENTS: GO ALL IN

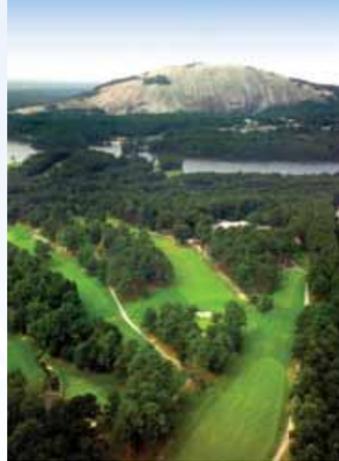
A few events, such as STAFDA opening and closing parties and the General Session, are "all hands on deck." Make sure your entire teams attend them to get the maximum value from their educational and networking opportunities. This year's Opening Party will take place at Atlanta's spanking new college Football Hall of Fame and, in keeping with this year's winning theme, the General Session will feature sports legends Jimmy Johnson and Herm Edwards.



JOHNSON



EDWARDS



and the reinvigoration of a world-class convention? When was the last time your purchasing managers attended a pure professional tool show like STAFDA? When was the last time your inventory control manager had a chance to speak with Jon Schreiberfeder, the expert who literally wrote the book on it?

Or perhaps you are looking into a new CRM or ERP system, legal, sales or human resources advice, a new shipping solution, online marketing expertise, payment processing service or other program for your business such as website design or training initiatives. All of these fields and more are represented on STAFDA's Tech & Consultant's Row during the show.

Naturally, you can't take every member of your team every year — who would mind the store? — but deserving employees who can't go this year could be put on a short list for next year's event (which will take place November 12-14, 2017 in awesome Austin, Texas). The prospect of attending next year's event can be a nice carrot for some employees who can't attend this year.



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#### FLIGHTS: PLAN WAY AHEAD

If you haven't done so already (and if you fly perhaps four or more times a year for work or pleasure), get a TSA PreCheck number now. For \$85, you can "skip" many airport security lines for the next five years. The process requires a short visit to a TSA enrollment center and takes