

PDA Stepping Out

By Lee Bower

Since the initial discussions by a small group of industry leaders attempting to visualize an association devoted to the advancement of polyurea technology, the Polyurea Development Association recognized that the opportunities for polyurea extended far beyond the U.S. borders. And early on, the leadership understood that PDA needed to be a global association that would face global needs and offer international solutions.

In fact, the initial PDA charter provided for four International Board of Director positions. The thought was that these people would provide not only insight but guidance to help PDA expand its ability to service the needs of all our members regardless of geography. PDA has been very fortunate to have had numerous, active and dedicated international board of directors since our first meeting in New Orleans in 2000. And, with their coaxing, PDA has taken the first steps in moving PDA to the next level by venturing out of the United States.

So, in April, PDA went to Nuremberg, Germany as an exhibitor at the European Coatings Show. This is truly an international meeting and exposition of manufacturers, raw material suppliers, and equipment manufacturers. This bi-annual show had over 30,000 attendees from all over the world. And to tackle this major show, a small group of PDA volunteers packed their bags, renewed their passports and hopped planes for an exciting and eye opening

adventure to bring the PDA message outside the US for the first time!

The PDA team included Dudley Primeaux (past president), Ray Scott (past president), Murph Mahaffey (president elect 2006), Christiane Hackl (international director), Dr. Umile Gianluca (international director), Ken Bowman (executive director), and myself. All of us, worked the PDA booth or stand as they say in Germany.

In anticipation of a multi-lingual audience, PDA translated its tri-fold brochures into German, Spanish, and Italian...and only a few minor translation errors were pointed out! But, the interesting thing was we ran out of the English brochures first.

We had what would be called a modest booth, but one that served our needs well. Traffic by the booth exceeded our expectations, and guests ran the gamut from those who didn't even know what polyurea to some of the leading suppliers of polyurea in Europe. Additionally, most of the people who stopped by were not aware of PDA and our mission. This gave us a good opportunity to not only explain the benefits of polyurea but PDA as well.

The final estimate was that we had over 120 guests visit the booth for extended conversations, took brochures, left business cards or requested further information. All in all, we were very pleased in the traffic our booth garnered.

Besides having the goal of trying to spread the word on polyurea and PDA to an international audience, we had another very important goal of meeting with BASF, Bayer, and Huntsman. We understood to be truly successful in our international endeavors we would need their support and input. The in-depth meetings that we had with all of these companies were very helpful and positive. And, I want to thank them for taking a considerable amount of their time at a very busy show to counsel us plus to offer further assistance in establishing PDA in Europe.

The next step, now that our ad hoc International Committee has collected considerable information, feedback, contacts and direction, will be to present a full report to the PDA board at the upcoming Leadership Workshop in August. From there I feel that a complete plan will be developed on how PDA will expand its scope to be truly a more international association. As we move forward, we provide additional reports from the committee in the Podium and on the PDA web site.

I can't finish this article without saying that not all of this adventure was all work! As you see by the photos in this Podium, we enjoyed the fine German hospitality, food and beer. Many thanks to Christiane Hackl who took on the dual role of International Director as well as hostess and guide for the week.