

# The Evans Group LLC



## Nurturing, Mentoring, and Networking: Creating an Infrastructure of Friends

Many of the professionals in our industry just returned from NAFEM, an exciting show with many new products displayed, focused seminars, and lots of “networking”. Such a big word, and many of us were out “glad handing”, renewing old relationships, and finding out where someone worked “now”, as the industry is almost incestuous in how few people move to many places.

As a business consultant my largest concern in attending NAFEM was simply how old so many of you looked! It unnerves me as I watch my friends and business acquaintances show such sign of aging.

It’s the problem of our industry; we simply do not attract new and young people to the industry as it exists, and creates my conclusion that unless “we change” the equipment and supply industry will become a fully Internet driven, social networking industry. The youth taking over.

But that’s not it. We’ve all heard, and probably said, “Internet marketing does not design a kitchen” and internet sales do not do the “hand holding” and installation, the change orders, or take the franchisee’s call at 10 p.m. that they need more “rocks” glasses the next morning.

Perhaps this is not true now, but it will be. How much the traditional dealership, and the consolidation of manufacturers into conglomerates, all points to the traditions we “old folks” at NAFEM see changing with lightening speed.

How we address this, The Evans Group LLC considers, is the prime question and issue facing our industry, both in “how to attract young people” and how to adjust to the “new economy of buying”.

One evening at NAFEM I was fortunate to dine with an old friend in the industry, a 30-year veteran that lives overseas and handles much international business. This gent has already integrated the worldview of Internet buying with the U.S. factories he represents while at the same time making use of the key to true selling- **networking**.

Here's the definition of networking:

NETWORKING: the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions: specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.<sup>1</sup>

Networking is not drunken parties, glad handing, and the telling of “tales”, although it's certainly a part of how our industry sees the art, but is a critical part of developing relationships.

As my business associate and I dined at NAFEM we went through the “tall tales”, the many stories, and the successes and failures. Part of it surrounded a bit of how I consult, in which I believe that, properly nurtured, synchronicity often played an important part in how we gained business together. Many view synchronicity as one of those “new agey” and “touchy feely,” non empirically based words that really explains anything.

This is far from the truth.

“The concept of synchronicity was first described by [Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung](#) in the 1920s. Synchronicity is the [experience](#) of two or more [events](#), that are apparently [causally unrelated](#) or unlikely to occur together by chance, that are observed to occur together in a [meaningful](#) manner.<sup>2</sup>

The concept does not question, or compete with, the notion of [causality](#). Instead, it maintains that just as events may be grouped by cause, they may also be grouped by their meaning. Since meaning is a complex mental construction, subject to conscious and unconscious influence, not every correlation in the grouping of events by meaning needs to have an explanation in terms of cause and effect.”

Synchronicity can be a nurtured event, and is not “magic”, nor an explanation of “wow, look what just happened” but a trained way for our industry to network, and to work and group events by cause.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia

# The Evans Group LLC



Many compare synchronicity to another “new agey” word: serendipity. This word is defined by the dictionary as “an aptitude for making desirable discoveries by accident, and having good luck and fortune.”

The “old way of doing business”, still the mainstay of our industry, consists of “dealing with the RFP” (from customer, manufacturer or dealer) perspective and trying to build a relationship. This framework still exists, but it is evolving and will inevitably change.

The dinners between two older executives will lead to new ways of business. Buying groups have negotiated price programs, and manufacturers have led or followed along, to allow the lowest possible margins, even lower than what FEDA analysts tell us is “not worth investing in.”

There is a Jeff Bezos (Amazon), or Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), somewhere, with some idea that will move this industry to younger people. Our traditional ways are being broken. We can argue the need for the manufacturers rep, for the buying groups, for bids. In the end we have created an industry in which only the customer really benefits, unless we are shrewd and find relationships and loyalty to service, or find ways to do only work that is truly profitable.

The normal dinner of two cronies bragging was instead somber without knowledge, as it was only “rehash” of disciplines, former contacts, and hope of certain things opening up.

Nothing was different. There is a flag here. If anything is different it is that prices are lower, margins slimmer, and business limited so all of us act as striking birds. But the vulture may be us.

The industry will not end. It will change, as all business must constantly change or die.

It is how we as the “elders” learn from our young, become influenced by them, and learn how to attract them (by letting them lead in the new ways) that will define the success of

our industry over the next 20 years, or whether our industry shifts in which business as we  
“want it and knew it to be” even is.