

NSGA NOW

Making the Right Connections at NSGA's Speed Networking

Michigan State
Basketball Coach
Tom Izzo

A Deeper Look at
Manufacturer and
Retailer/Team Dealer
Relationships



Speed Networking Hits it Big Again at NSGA Management Conference

By Larry Weindruch, NSGA Director of Public Affairs

A packed room took part in the second NSGA Speed Networking session on Monday afternoon at the 2018 NSGA Management Conference & Team Dealer Summit. Speed Networking gave retailers and dealers a series of ten 12-minute appointments to create new relationships and strengthen established ones. Forty manufacturers participated in the event, with more on a wait list, to meet with retailer and team dealer attendees.

"The response to the first speed networking last year was positive, and this year, it was overwhelming," NSGA President & CEO Matt Carlson said. "To accommodate everyone who wanted to participate, we completely filled the ballroom and added several tables in the foyer outside the room."

Carlson opened the session by reporting on the results of a survey conducted to identify and quantify manufacturer opinions of their retailer and dealer customers. This is the companion piece to last year's survey of retailers and dealers to identify their opinions of their product suppliers.

The two surveys produced insights that showed retailers, dealers and manufacturers how they can improve their relationships, communicate better and merchandise products in a more effective manner.

» Because there was such a large demand to participate in the second year of NSGA Speed Networking the main ballroom was filled to capacity and more tables were needed outside.



"The NSGA Speed Networking is a unique opportunity for hard-to-get and invaluable access to key decision-makers," said Dave Smallwood, National Sales Manager of Bronze Sponsor company Scenturion. "It gives us the chance to make a presentation and have one-on-one discussions in a relaxed atmosphere."

"It is one of the most productive activities we have at any event and it has led to great results," Smallwood said.

NSGA Speed Networking is an opportunity for Johnny Mac's Sporting Goods to find potential products for its nine retail stores in Missouri, Michigan and Illinois.

"The speed networking event provides an excellent space to learn about new products and trends in the industry," said Candace Bingham, Director of Purchasing at Johnny Mac's. "The short opportunity to sit with a manufacturer representative opens a more poignant dialogue than the traditional walking booth-to-booth experience, providing ample time to ask questions and share ideas."

The NSGA Speed Networking also gives retailers, dealers and manufacturers the chance to have some frank discussions about the industry.

"The NSGA 'Speed (Networking)' roundtable discussions are a great idea," said Chad Clark, Senior Vice President of Bronze Sponsor company Cliff Keen Athletic. "It gives dealers and retailers a chance to ask manufacturers questions they may not normally ask."

"The casual setting lends itself well to some great discussion," Clark said.

"I think both dealer and manufacturer feel at ease in this setting, and level with each other on perhaps a deeper level, than they may in a more formal presentation setting."

"Also, I think the NSGA did a great job this year matching up dealers

with appropriate vendors; lines they actually sell or lines they can potentially generate more income from," Clark added.

Another positive aspect of Speed Networking is additional exposure for innovators who have a new product they are trying to get into the retail or team dealer channels. Having the opportunity to visit with 10 retailers and dealers in one place in one afternoon saves a lot of time and money instead of trying to travel across the country to make similar connections.

It was a "very productive afternoon," said Ken Meehan, President at Dunham's Sports. "We saw some interesting new product like Zorbitz Stadium Bags, The Short Shot and Wicked Rags Sock Jock, which will make hockey moms' life better."

"We also saw some early prototypes of some electronic training aids and apps," Meehan said. "We met with some current suppliers and saw some new innovative products."

After just two years, Speed Networking has become a key component to the Management Conference & Team Dealer Summit.

"As a team dealer, it proved to be a very beneficial event for myself and the various vendors that I met with," said Jeff Miller, President of Scholastic Sports Sales, Ltd. "It was a great opportunity to see and learn about new products in our ever-changing industry."

"(I'm) already looking forward to next year's Speed Networking event at the 2019 Management Conference."



» Top: Caterpy Laces Operations Director Anthony Pong, left, and Marketing Director Mike Collins, center, meet with Dunham's CEO Jeff Lynn and Senior Vice President of Finance David Lynn.

» Middle: From left, co-owners David Lentz and Tom Van Dixhorn talk about ShortShot with Bruce Bohan of Fish Hawk Sporting Goods.

» Above: Anna Malkan, center, the Vice President of Sales for Swedish-based Volumental, talks with Johnny Mac's President & CEO Bob McArthur and Director of Purchasing Candace Bingham.



If you have any questions, please contact Julie Pitts, NSGA Director of Business Development and Research at jpitts@nsga.org