



Business Partnerships: Relationships That Can Impact ESAs and Education, too

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Meet the AESA Staff Who Make It Happen AESAs Directors of Business Services, Pete Titone and Mathew Dutkiewicz

*“Mat and I bring full-time focus to the procedure,”
Titone said. “It’s not only whether it makes monetary
sense but also whether the business can make an impact on the world of education.”*



By John Fitzgerald

The relationship between businesses and AESA members has always been simple: Businesses provide a product and members use the product. But as more demands are placed on educators, business needs become more specialized. How can AESA best help members navigate through the list of possible business providers?

About two years ago, the Association engaged the services of Pete Titone (photo left) and Mat Dutkiewicz (photo right) as Directors for Business Services. Their role was not only to serve as a conduit between businesses and ESAs so educators can find the best fit for their business needs, but also to help businesses find their best match among educators.

Executive Director, Joan Wade stated, “John Bass and I came from the world of ESAs, John serving as Executive Director in Texas and I served in that same role in Wisconsin. We understand the ESA side of AESAs business model but we needed help in working with our business partners, sponsors and exhibitors. In our first year as leaders of AESA, we brought on the support services of Mat and Pete. They have done extraordinary work for us and it shows in our bottom line.”

In fact, there are many businesses that want to enter into the education market that don’t even know ESAs exist, Titone said.

“Part of the problem is that there are 17 different names for ESAs – BOCES and so on,” Dutkiewicz said.

Once they identify a company that is the best in the class for the product they provide, Dutkiewicz and Titone look to see if the business has the selling power to be successful with ESAs. Then they reverse their view and see if ESAs will be successful in the business’s network.

AESA offers businesses three levels of services: Business partnership level, Sponsor level and Vendor level.

Vendors are the most familiar to ESA members. These businesses participate at the annual conference as exhibitors in the vendor hall to introduce their services to AESA members.

Sponsors work with ESAs on a state or national level. They sponsor dinners or events and get 15 to 20 minutes of talking time to introduce their product or service to ESAs.

It's at the Business Partnership level that Titone and Dutkiewicz have seen the most growth – 50 percent over the past three years. These are businesses that have been vetted and are best in their class.

“These are the businesses we believe are the best in the market to provide their services, no matter what the services – food service, financial service. They've got to be national in scope and be able to provide for the entire network,” Dutkiewicz said. “We want to help members find the best in the areas they need. For example, if someone needs janitorial services, they can go to Marsden and know they've been vetted by AESA and they're the best in their class.”

“Mat and Pete have been very effective at retaining our current business partners and bringing new business partners on board. It is through their hard work that the Association is able to grow our services to our members while maintaining our membership fee at a very reasonable level” Wade said.

But that doesn't mean Dutkiewicz and Titone only work at the national level. They also work with ESAs at a regional, state and local level not only to match businesses and ESAs, but also to help businesses sponsor ESA events. Businesses that usually only participate at the vendor level are often willing to sponsor meetings and events in exchange for the ability to talk about their organization, Dutkiewicz said.

The pair has years of experience as vendors. Both are managing partners with EnPact Associates, a business consulting firm. Dutkiewicz spent more than 30 years with Great American Insurance Group and Titone spent decades both with Great American and Horace Mann Insurance.

While businesses will often reach out to Titone and Dutkiewicz, they want to hear from ESAs as well. Not only is it important to know which services ESAs need, but if there's a company that is serving one ESA's needs, perhaps they can offer their services to the association members as a whole.

“We represent AESA,” Titone said. “We bring vendor support to AESA. When members or vendors call us, they get a call back.”

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