

AHTD Fall Meeting 2018: A Week to Remember

Washington, DC. proudly welcomed the Association of High Technology Distribution (AHTD) for their Fall 2018 meeting held from September 19– 22. The US capital was up to the task of providing first class hospitality, exquisite accommodations, and endless sight-seeing opportunities.

Three hundred fifteen members, along with 68 spouses and guests, descended on the Renaissance Washington DC Downtown Hotel for several days of business meetings, networking opportunities, and training sessions designed to motivate, educate, and improve the operating skills of the distributor and manufacturer members alike.

Each member had a schedule that was managed with a mobile app and kept them moving through a very busy day while not feeling rushed. AHTD provided members with a great balance of meetings and networking while still maintaining time to check in on emails and return calls.

The executive board started the event with their meetings on Tuesday. The four operating committees, which include: Program, the Manufacturer Advisory Council, Promotion/Communication, and Membership held their planning meetings on Wednesday afternoon.

The conference started promptly at 5 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon with the First Timer's Reception. New members and first time conference attendees were introduced to the AHTD executives and had a brief orientation. The Welcome Reception immediately followed in the beautiful hotel lobby with an amazing array of hors d'oeuvres. This was the chance for old friends, colleagues, and business partners to renew relationships and start new ones. The rest of the evening was available for individual engagements or exploring the wonderful city.

The conference content was delivered in general session format. One speaker after another provided thought provoking ideas for attendees to take back to their companies.

Polly LaBarre kicked off the first morning by challenging AHTD to disrupt like an insurgent. Polly called for leading without authority, building an organization of contribution, being open to ideas, and learning as fast as the world is changing.

Erik Qualman ran with the leadership theme as he delivered a keynote rich with video clips and vivid imagery that focused on the five habits to success and happiness in a Wi-Fi world. The crowd enjoyed his insights, humor, and green glasses.

“Succession Planning: Prepare to Unlearn Everything You Thought You Knew” was the topic tackled by Dr. Thomas Deans. Dr. Deans took to the stage without notes or PowerPoint and yet held the attention of the audience as he shared his family’s personal experience in succession planning. He further explained that most business owners and senior management underestimate how long and how emotionally difficult it is to exit a business. Many begin the “succession process” too late and for all the wrong reasons.

John O’Leary’s session was a conference favorite. He spoke about “living inspired” and not with a victim’s mentality. He encouraged the members to ask themselves these questions in a positive way:

Why me?

Who Cares?

What more can I do?

Alex Chausovsky shared the ITR view on economics specific to how to survive the predicted depression in 2030. He explored the underlying causes of the calamity in greater detail.

Larry Johnson had attendees on their feet and interacting with those around them during his session. Larry emphasized the six most important actions a manager can take to keep associates motivated. For those attempting any culture change back in the office, this session provided a few golden nuggets.

AHTD served up a 45-minute “comedy hour” on Saturday morning with Robert Mac. Robert’s dead-pan delivery had the attendees cracking up before caffeine kicked in.

The final networking opportunity was the big Final Night Party was an experience of a lifetime to celebrate at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. Guests were welcomed into the museum with a glass of wine and a smile. Members had the opportunity to mingle and explore the lives of aquatic creatures as they made their way through the exhibits in the Ocean Hall. When it was time for dinner, guests were directed to the Rotunda to dine with an African Elephant; what a sight to see! Dessert was enjoyed in Gem Hall while looking at incredible gems and minerals, not to mention the Hope Diamond. However, the night did not stop there! Guests boarded coach busses and toured the monuments in the moonlight; what an experience they all had. To top off the evening, upon their return to the hotel, they were greeted with a delicious cookie shaped like the Capitol building. It was a sweet way to cap off a monumental evening.