

## **How AHTD Changed My Life and Added Value to Our Business**

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While this you may find it bold to state AHTD changed my life, it is not an exaggeration. Membership has had quite an impact on both me personally and Powermatic Associates. Powermatic became fully employee owned in January 2018. Each person owns a piece of the business. Essentially, the impact of AHTD has affected everyone from those in the warehouse all the way up to the President.

Powermatic Associates started as a manufacturer's rep by Larry Fitzgerald back in 1972. It didn't take long for us to morph into a distributor. In fact, we were the first Turck distributor on the west coast. Other lines soon followed making us one of the major suppliers to the Semi-Conductor industry in the Bay Area. Our founder, Larry Fitzgerald, attended his first AHTD meeting in the early 1990s. While he never formally served on any committees, he actively participated in meetings and networked at events throughout his time with Powermatic.

Over the years, many of our team members followed suit by attending meetings. Attendance was often sporadic and rarely made a priority. Participation was also done at a bare bones level; attend the basic meeting, then leave. Extra meetings, break-out sessions and pre-planned networking opportunities were not even on their radar. Admittedly, until two years ago, I was one of those members.

What changed? Our management team thought it best to select a representative to attend AHTD on a regular basis. I volunteered and set out to get maximum benefit from the group. Talking to a few more experienced members, I received three solid pieces of advice. First, never miss a networking event. Meet people, exchange cards and ask questions about their business. Second, visit the product showcase with an open mind, looking for opportunities to add value to your company. Third, get involved. Join a committee or task force within the group. This was contrary to how I had previously attended, but I was willing to make the effort. I was amazed at how this advice could make such a positive impact.

Our company currently works without a full time HR person. The work of handling a geographically and culturally diverse group of people falls mainly on our management team. During the last three or so meetings, I have been able to gather benchmarking data and a list of best practices as shared by presenters and other members alike. Due to our 100 percent employee ownership, this is critically important to furthering our culture and improving our employee involvement.

This past meeting, Spring 2019 as I toured the product showcase, I came across a company providing label printing machines that seemed to be exactly what our company needed. That evening I sent some product data back to our team. They were so excited they had a demo set up with the company before I even returned home. A few minutes with new technology at the product showcase saved us months of searching for a viable option.

The single biggest impact to our company came during the Fall 2018 meeting. I had an opportunity to meet with KYKLO, a company who provides webstores specifically designed for companies just like Powermatic Associates. At the time of our meeting, Powermatic was already two years into building a webstore internally. We had a full time person dedicated to the project for over a full year and the end was still not in sight. During my brief, yet powerful meeting with KYKLO's team at AHTD, we scheduled a

follow-up meeting to bring other members of our team up to speed on their offering. The timeline looked like this, introduction to KYKLO in October, finalized the contract in November, live in March and orders flowing today.

In summary, my previous attendance at AHTD Meetings was merely pleasant at best. Since dedicating myself to being immersed in the association, the meetings have become increasingly valuable to the company and so much more rewarding. Also, without belittling my male colleagues, I believe women in membership bring a different outlook and new perspective to a largely male group. The ranks of women in this industry are expanding every year. Women are moving into leadership roles and AHTD has proven to be a welcoming recipient of their contributions.

AHTD has changed my life and I plan to be a part of changing others' lives.

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June 2019