



The way I see it...

BY PAUL KINDINGER

Thank you, thank you, thank you

BESIDES being a great way to begin each and every day, I offer a huge THANK YOU to all the dealers who give so freely of their precious time to assist us with our quest to “*Help Dealers Succeed.*”

NAEDA and its affiliates recently have asked for your participation on two very important surveys. One was the *2008 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey* and the other was our Americans with Disabilities (ADA) assessment survey. The former was quite a bit shorter and required less time than the latter. Both, however, are important in our quest to represent you and your business interests. Perhaps I have never really shared with you how we use some of the results from surveys like these and maybe now is a good time to do so.

Information from the *2008 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey* will help us understand and benchmark how you, as a dealer, feel about your relationships with your manufacturers. Those of you who responded also had the opportunity to provide additional comments about why you rated your manufacturer(s) the way you did. In other words, we received valuable feedback about the issues you are most pleased with or frustrated about. In turn, this allows us to focus on those issues or concerns and seek further resolution or improvements on your behalf. To that end, you would be amazed at the importance some manufacturers place on the survey results compared to their competitors. Several manufacturers inquired prior to this year’s survey when it would be conducted. One manufacturer told its dealers and employees the results from the 2006 survey were unacceptable and improvements would be made.

The ADA assessment survey was designed to help NAEDA respond to a regulatory rulemaking process. Several months ago, NAEDA joined a coalition formed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce when word of a possible rewrite of ADA rules was first kicked around in Washington, D.C. We were the only group at the table representing the interests of equipment dealers.

Our initial comments about the proposed rule involved a survey of only a few dealers. We used their feedback as the basis to form our position. However, as discussions continued between regulators and the regulated community, it became obvious to us we would require a great deal more substance to help defend our position once the proposed final rule is promulgated, which may be sometime this spring.

As a result, we contacted Barnes & Thornburg LLP, a law firm in Washington, D.C., to assist us in measuring the current compliance rate and begin measuring the consequences of the possible new regulations. We contracted with the firm to conduct dealership evaluations. Although the dealers who cooperated were understandably as nervous as long-tailed cats in a room full of rocking chairs, they came through with flying colors. In fact, they did surprisingly well. However, the information gathered from those visits was, in turn, used to prepare the survey we distributed by e-mail to dealers in February. Combined with the actual on-site evaluations and previous work and testimony, we now feel confident we can fairly represent your interests.

Combined with the actual on-site evaluations and previous work and testimony, we now feel confident we can fairly represent your interests.

I hope this gives you some confidence that NAEDA and its 18 affiliated associations take our responsibilities seriously but we will always need your help along the way. It’s an oddity, perhaps, to think you join an association to represent you and then get called upon for help before we can do our job. At the same time, we represent the interests of all dealers, meaning all dealers don’t have to take their time to represent themselves on these matters.

Occasionally, we get a dealer who doesn’t appreciate the intrusion and suggests we do something else with the survey – something other than our stated purpose. Absent that rare circumstance, I hope you can see how valuable your comments are to help us do the best possible job of representing all dealers.

We respect your time, appreciate your comments and are enormously grateful for your support. I hope you will understand just how sincere I am when I say thank you, thank you, thank you... and that’s the way I see it. ■

PAUL KINDINGER is president/CEO of the North American Equipment Dealers Association. The association provides educational, legal, legislative and financial services to approximately 5,000 retail agricultural, industrial and outdoor power equipment dealers in the United States and Canada.