

## President's Message

"How's business?" This is a question that opens many conversations between business peers. Many times it is just a way to start conversation and is answered with the standard response, "business is great." Recently I have noticed that this standard greeting procedure has changed, or at least the reply has. Now the replies range from: "things are picking up," to "well, we are still in business." Times are tough for everyone in this economy. We are all out there trying to figure out how to increase our share of the decreased number of opportunities and find new niche products and services to supplement our core business, while trying to decrease overhead.

Although if you think about it, these are the same challenges we always have. Who isn't trying to increase their market share, find niche products and services to increase revenue - all while trying to keep costs down? The poor economy just works like a magnifying glass; it makes our constant challenges larger. As an industry, we also have some other challenges that are getting larger. The increasing number of competitors we have differ from MNESTA's members in one very important way: they are not licensed. The number of unlicensed, displaced workers, trunk slammers and door-to-door peddlers in our state is on the rise.

How's that working for your market share? They are having an easier time with their overhead in good times or in bad because they are not playing by the same rules our companies are. Plus, our industry gets the added benefit of increased consumer dissatisfaction with alarm systems and the increased false alarm factor that endears our industry with law enforcement.

Which leads me to the next challenge on our list - false alarms. We are seeing an increased number of alarm ordinances that are unfriendly to our industry. Some municipalities have become so frustrated that they have implemented "no response" ordinances. With city and county tax revenues decreasing and budgets of law enforcement agencies being cut, the false alarm burden to law enforcement will only create a negative effect on our businesses.

Now, I could list many other challenges of this type that MNESTA members are going to encounter in the near future, but my point is not the number of issues. It's the nature of them; they are political. Many members may find business practices, products and great ideas at MNESTA meetings that help them win some of their everyday challenges. But the list of challenges I am talking about are difficult to overcome by individual companies because of their nature.

The biggest asset MNESTA can offer its members comes when our challenges become political. As MNESTA members, we become a collective that has much more power than our individual companies alone. As a group, we have a better chance of getting a positive outcome to the ordinances and regulations that dictate how we do business.

Becoming a member of MNESTA is the first step in trying to help with our industry's problems. But presenting MNESTA's member list to the perpetrators of those problems does not make them go away. Work done by volunteers within our membership is how we effect change to problems facing our industry.

Currently, we have 14 volunteers who participate at a level over and above just attending general membership meetings. Of that group, we have five that donate countless hours to make sure that MNESTA's goals are accomplished. MNESTA's current effectiveness and eventual survival will be determined by its members' commitment to volunteering to help fight for its causes. Ownership and management of our member companies need to get involved. Just paying dues is not enough. You can either donate a little time as members of this association or find out what it takes to tackle these challenges facing us as individuals. Last year I traveled 4,960 miles and spent 48 hours in meetings after driving about 80 hours to get there. How about you?

Tim Davis  
President