

Interview with Cate Smith about PMPA's Annual Meeting 2020

PMPA's executive director, Cate Smith, shares her first experience at PMPA's Annual Meeting which took place in-person on October 22-25 at Big Cedar Lodge in Ridgeville, Missouri.



Carli Kistler-Miller: How long have you been with PMPA?

Cate Smith: I was hired as the executive director in 2019, and, although my final interview was at the Annual Meeting in Las Vegas last year, I wasn't able to participate fully. So this was my first PMPA Annual Meeting and I was grateful that we were able to have it in-person.

CKM: In-person meetings are few and far between these days with COVID-19. How did that happen?

CS: The venue was Big Cedar Lodge in Ridgedale, Missouri which is a remote resort in the Ozark mountains. There were many, many discussions and, in the end, we felt that by holding the meeting in-person we were upholding our mission to provide education and networking opportunities. Additionally, hotels are handling contracts in different ways due to COVID-19 and, in order to be good stewards of PMPA funds, it was best to have an in-person event.

CKM: Were masks provided?

CS: Oh yes. Veronica Hopson, PMPA's confidential assistant, found really comfortable masks and had our logo put on them and we handed those to all the attendees. She also found small hand sanitizers and we gave those out too, in addition to promoting other CDC recommended safety precautions.

CKM: What were you expecting for this Annual Meeting?

CS: Given what an odd year this has been, I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew there would be helpful networking and comraderie, which is exactly what I ended up seeing. I think this year's atmosphere was more casual between the beautiful, remote wooded area and the isolation we have all been experiencing. I think people were even happier and more relaxed to be around their friends and other members. Yes, there was stress with travelling and things were different because of masks and social distancing, but those circumstances resulted in a greater appreciation to be able to be with each other.



Aneesa Muthana, Tom Halladay, Victor DaCruz and Cate Smith at the Board of Director's meeting.



Pontoon boat ride to the Welcome Reception.



Women of PMPA lunch.

CKM: What did you think of the speakers?

CS: We had two speakers on-site and, typical to a COVID-19 world, we had some speakers present remotely. Our keynote speaker, Brian Moran, was incredibly dynamic. He did a great job delivering his message about a 12-week year. John Guzik and Omar Nashashibi from The Franklin Partnership captivated the audience when they spoke about how government has changed since COVID-19, and a separate presentation on the 2020 Election — which was only two weeks away at the time.



Members participating in a session.

Melanie Webber from FisherPhillips, LLP presented the top ten issues employers are facing with today's new working environment. I thought she did an incredible job putting together all the bits of information out there and presenting it in an understandable way. Eugene Barinholtz from Kutchins, Robbins & Diamond Ltd walked everyone through surviving in a COVID-19 world with regards to corporate finances. Between the PPP and other opportunities out there, it was refreshing to get some new direction. And Steve Kline, Jr from Gardner Business Media and Michael Guckes from Gardner Intelligence presented industry trends and markets going forward. So it was an all-around great lineup.

CKM: It sounds like the speaker topics were relevant.

CS: Renee Merker, PMPA's director of communications and events, works with the Executive Committee to find speakers who will be valuable to the membership. This year, when they realized the struggles our members were having with COVID-19, they actually scratched their first speaker line-up and created a program around COVID-19 and the issues our members are currently facing. It was more work for them, but it was worth it.

CKM: For the first time, the sessions were recorded. How did that come about?

CS: We knew that there were members who wanted to attend the Annual Meeting but couldn't due to COVID-19. We also knew that the speakers and topics presented would be beneficial to those members. So Joe Jackson, PMPA's marketing and event assistant, worked with our A/V company and



Cate with Board members. First row: Anessa Muthana, Victor DaCruz, Cate, Steve Sorenson, Scott Eighmy. Second row: Tom Phillips, Nate Bernstein, Kevin Coffman and Tom Halladay.

recorded the sessions. Then you edited them and we sold them online. It was a successful endeavor and I'm so glad we took the time to do it.

CKM: There was one session that wasn't recorded — the roundtable with Miles Free III. How did that go?

CS: As you know, Miles Free III, PMPA's director of industry affairs, loves to talk with and help the members so the roundtable was incredible. Miles walked around with a microphone asking questions and starting conversations which resulted with members sharing their experiences and solutions. Our members continue to amaze me with their willingness to help each other. It only makes everyone stronger.

CKM: What did you think of the Annual Awards Banquet?

CS: I really appreciated the formality and prestige of the awards ceremony. There was an authentic appreciation for the award winners not only from PMPA, but from the other members. They celebrate each other's accomplishments. The banquet was sprinkled with fun and good-natured ribbing that results when people genuinely like and respect each other. It was also at that banquet where Victor DaCruz from DaCruz Manufacturing handed over the president's gavel to this year's board president, Tom Halladay from H&R Screw Machine Products, Inc. The ceremony was followed by music and dancing. It was a lot of fun.

CKM: What is your overall takeaway from the Annual Meeting?

CS: That our members genuinely like and respect each other and that our members genuinely appreciate how PMPA helps them and their business. It just reinforces what we always say...we are Better Together! **PMPA**

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