

Houston Trade Business News

Demystifying the Award Competition Process

November ASBPE Event

The Houston chapter of ASBPE is hosting a panel Thursday, Nov. 13 to help attendees learn to organize entries for the 2003 ASBPE competition, which honors the editorial and design efforts of trade and business-to-business press.

Monique A. Barbee, chapter secretary, and Greg Salerno, marketing manager for BJ Services, will lead a discussion about the awards process.

Barbee will share tips for selecting and preparing material for the ASBPE competition.

Salerno, who has chaired the Business Marketing Awards judging committee for several years, will bring his insights to the judging process. *

National News

ASBPE National Board discusses association goals in Puerto Rico last month.

By Trudy Schreiner, President, Houston Chapter

The American Society of Business Publication Editors (ASBPE) national board met in Puerto Rico from Oct. 21-22. This meeting, held in the fall each year, brings together the chapter presidents from across the country and the national board members to discuss the short- and long-term goals of the association.

This year, the board discussions focused on membership strategies and ways to implement some changes to the awards competition. Also discussed were the latest developments on the ASBPE book project.

Membership committee formed

As with any association, membership is a core element to its existence and building the membership roles is a constant activity. The board addressed this on-going need by appointing a membership marketing committee that includes: Warren Hersch, chairman, New York chapter president; Tina Grady, Chicago chapter president; Portia Stewart, Kansas City chapter president; Paul Heney, National Immediate Past President; and Trudy Schreiner, Houston chapter president.

The committee will research strate-



Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

gies for developing and acquiring new members and report their recommendations to the national board in December. Some suggestions include offering a free 1-year membership for awards competi-

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The Other Side of Contests

There are a plethora of contests that recognize quality publishing and media – everything from the likes of the Pulitzer Prize to the discipline-specific awards in Communications Arts.

By Mark Hiebert, Board Member, Houston Chapter, and
Web Services Manager and Assistant Editor, the Houston Apartment Association

A win can sometimes subsidize a new wing on the recipient's home or solidify a publication's position in the American conscious. Other contests can just be for the benefit of recognition among peers and justification for a raise. While a win in the annual American Society of Business Publications Editors (ASBPE) Awards for Excellence may not make you rich, it does put the spotlight on publications in the business-to-business marketplace.

To shed some light on how judges look at contest entries and to see how to better prepare an award-winning pack-

age, Kimberly Scheberle of Sail House Publishing in Austin took a moment to respond to some questions about her experience as a judge during the 2003 ASBPE Awards for Excellence.

Scheberle has significant experience. In early 2003, after several years working for other trade publications, she opened Sail House Publishing and develops trade publications for associations and other organizations.

The following Q&A provides some insight into the contest process and what caught the eye of one judge.

Mark Hiebert: *What would you say*

to someone who isn't sure about entering a contest? After all, who wants to read about multifamily housing or the wild world of widgets?

Scheberle: Just because you work for a magazine that sounds un-inspirational at first glance, don't let that deter you from entering contests and from trying hard to sprinkle real journalism into their world. I read some great pieces that were about nominally boring topics: pest control, insurance, printing plants and hardware stores, to name a few.

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A Modern-Day "Pilgrim's Progress"

When English preacher John Bunyan wrote his masterpiece "Pilgrim's Progress" in the late 1600s, the world was a different place.

By Matthew V. Veazey, Board Member, Houston Chapter

The future United States was a collection of British colonies, and modern advances such as the telephone, space travel and the Internet were centuries away.

In many ways, however, the world depicted in Bunyan's work – one that presents man with good and bad choices – bears many likenesses to the modern world. In their recently released book, "24 Days", *Wall Street Journal*



Smith

reporters Rebecca Smith and John R. Emshwiller describe how bad decisions made by top Enron officials caused the once-admired company to come crashing down in a matter of weeks.

Calling the chain of events surrounding Enron a "modern-day *Pilgrim's Progress*," Smith began her Aug. 7 discussion with members of the American Society of Business Publication Editors' Houston Chapter by recalling how she and Emshwiller happened upon the story to which they would

devote two years of their professional lives.

Smith, who resides in San Francisco, was living in Los Angeles when she learned former Enron Chief Executive Officer Jeff Skilling had quit his position for "personal reasons" after only six months on the job. Smith and Emshwiller were hesitant to believe Skilling's explanation, as he had been a guiding force in transforming a simple natural gas pipeline company into a huge, complex trading company. This event and a number of peculiarities in Enron's filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) led Smith and Emshwiller to begin an investigation.

"John saw strange items in the SEC filings about Enron's partnerships," said Smith of the partnerships Enron used to hide losses and inflate its value.

The journalists soon cultivated numerous anonymous sources that confirmed their suspicions. "This was like manna from heaven," said Smith, pointing out that the book is in many ways the sources' collective story. The authors use these first-hand accounts to show the company for what it had become. On Oct. 16, 2001, Enron was

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Supplements Create Additional Revenue

The challenge for many association, business and trade publication editors has evolved to include not only the creation of compelling editorial for readers, but also to create advertiser-supported products that supply additional revenue.

By Trudy Schreiner, President, Houston Chapter

In response to this trend, the American Society of Business Publication Editors Houston chapter recently hosted a discussion titled "Finding New Income for Trade and Business Publications."

The program was presented by two editors who have been successful in bringing additional revenue to their publication. Janet Wilmoth is editorial director of *Fire Chief* magazine, a division of Primedia Business magazines and based in Kansas City, Mo.; and William Pike, Ph.D. is editor-in-chief and editorial director of *Hart's E&P* magazine in Houston.

At *Fire Chief* magazine, a monthly publication with a circulation of 53,000, Wilmoth said she actively seeks moneymaking ideas to bring in revenue. Her success in building new income streams comes from creating ancillary products that add revenue opportunities and value for the readership.

One of the publication's most successful supplements is annual wall poster *Fire Chief/IAFC Guide to Federal*

WMD Response Assets. It details the forces the federal government could bring to bear on an incident involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

"The poster has become a popular reference tool for firefighters as well as their counterparts in law enforcement, the FBI and other agencies involved in disaster management," Wilmoth said.

To cover the expense of printing the poster and bring in additional revenue, sponsorships are sold for \$5,000 each. Wilmoth prints 68,000 of the posters to insert in the June issue as well as to sell separately.

Sometimes, topics covered in the magazine offer



Janet Wilmoth shares *Fire Chief's* annual weapons of mass destruction poster with ASBPE members.

opportunities for creating new supplements. One such story about the rising number of fire engine rollover fatalities because of the lack of seatbelt use prompted Wilmoth to create a seatbelt poster, which she says has been credited with saving the lives of some firefighters. This poster, distributed at trade shows, has proved popular not only with emergency personnel, but also with high schools.

Another profitable vehicle for creating income is including advertising space on the back of trade show floorplan posters. These are distributed in the magazine as inserts and at the trade shows.

Not all of Wilmoth's posters have caught on quickly with advertisers. April is typically the publication's health and fitness issue, so Wilmoth created a Kinesiology poster depicting specific exercises for firefighters, but has found it to be slower in appealing to advertisers.

A different income source for *Fire Chief* has been the Station Design contest for fire station architects and builders. The contest attracts entries by offering a full-page advertisement in the magazine as part of the benefits. *Fire Chief* charges a \$1,200 entry fee for the contest.

A 26-page pull out supplement titled *Station Style* was created from the contest with a focus on

fire station design and style. Wilmoth wants to expand this product to include vendors as advertising revenue.

In the works is an American-vendor poster for an annual international trade show, and a vendor directory – both products Wilmoth anticipates will open more advertising revenue possibilities.

When Pike joined *Hart's E&P* as editor-in-chief, he found an editorial department in transition. The company was setting up a group to create stand-alone advertorial supplements.

Pike said they now produce 42 to 48 supplements annually that contribute about 40 percent of the magazine's revenue. The supplements average 60-pages and have a single sponsor, such as an oil company, or may have multiple sponsors, such as



Bill Pike describes the importance of stand-alone supplements to *Hart's E&P*.

equipment vendors.

The Hart's special projects division editor is responsible for hiring freelance writers, editing, acquiring photos/art and overseeing the product through the production and printing processes.

"Special supplements are a different beast from magazines," Pike said. "The editorial is completely refocused on the products, and editors need to be aware that this is not pure journalism."

In response to a question about supplements taking advertising dollars from the magazine, Pike said that for *Hart's E&P*, which has a circulation of about 45,000, increased revenue from the supplements makes up for ads displaced from the monthly publication.

Hart's also publishes two oil and gas directories annually. Pike said the 400- to 500-page directories are labor-intensive and high-cost products, but they bring in an estimated \$400,000 a year through advertising and directory sales.

Search your archives or current editorial calendar to see whether there is a recurring topic that will lend itself to a poster or maybe there is a pool of advertisers who would be appropriate for a stand-alone publication. It is important to know the audience of your publication. *

DeskTop

(Other Side from page 1)

Hiebert: *What are three things you never want to see again after having judged the last ASBPE conference?*

Scheberle: This is a hard one for me. I actually threw away all the bad examples (for space in my closet) so I'll have to go on memory:

1: Typos! Don't send in anything with glaring deficiencies.

2: Trade journalists who forget the "journalist/writer" part of their job description.

3: Q&As. While I read some wonderful service pieces, I just didn't feel I could give the "authors" the same kind of credit I was giving to the folks who had crafted their pieces into a storyline.

Hiebert: *What is important about presentation when it comes to contest entries?*

Scheberle: It is important that it's clean, modern and that the graphic elements also serve as a part of the story. This was especially true for the Individual Profile, [the category Scheberle judged during the 2002 ASBPE awards] I felt, because I could read about a person and then see that individual: The

design also tells the story.

Obviously, the publications with large art staffs and budgets start with a greater advantage, but many small budget trade magazines did great work with minimal resources. It just took more legwork to find appropriate photos and create educational sidebars. To earn high marks in the Individual Profile segment, an article didn't have to have the most amazing design I'd seen (that's a different contest); it just had to be clean and with purpose.

For one fun example, one of the articles that made me chuckle (and one which I consequently marked down) had a glowing introduction about how this man didn't fit the industry's mold. He didn't wear suits; he didn't look the part of an executive. It went on to say how he preferred sandals and Hawaiian T-shirts or something of the sort. Then you saw the picture of him wearing a suit. It was completely not the story they were telling. It was someone not communicating with the photographer. I got two different stories. How was I supposed to pick the true one?

Hiebert: *What importance do you see in the recognition that contest wins can provide?*

Scheberle: I think it's incredibly important.

When we switch jobs, it's sometimes difficult to convey our specialties and our talents to potential employers. For instance, association executives know very little about the details that go into a successful publication. An award is something tangible they can understand. It's even better for employers who understand the field; it's a great tool to gauge your success.

Hiebert: *What are the five key elements to a winning contest entry?*

Scheberle: First, be in the right category. Carefully read the category/contest description. I read several stories that weren't profiles, but features. Some of them were good, just misplaced.

2. Write clean, dynamic prose.

3. Have a story to tell. If it's not interesting to the writer, it certainly isn't for the reader.

4. Have graphic design that helps, not hinders. Art and editorial are a package, not two separate departments that reside in different parts of the building.

5. The lead. Just like they tell you in J-school, hook the reader early. *

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tion entrants. The organization offers a discount on contest entry fees to members encouraging entrants to join when they enter. The committee will consider this and other suggestions before a final report is submitted to the national board. If you have suggestions for the committee, please contact Trudy Schreiner at tschreiner@houston.r.com

A new ASBPE award

The family of Stephen Barr has established the Stephen Barr Award in memory of Barr, who succumbed to cancer in November 2002. Barr was a contributing editor at *CFO* magazine and the recipient of numerous ASBPE awards. The award will include a \$500 prize and trophy with the first award to be presented at the 2004 ASBPE national conference in Philadelphia. It will be presented annually as a Best of Class to further recognize a "feature writer

whose work reflects inventiveness of approach, and especially the use of narrative style; insightfulness and balance in the presentation of a complex subject; and depth of investigation and impact among the community of readers."

ASBPE book project

ASBPE has collaborated with business press editors, writers and college journalism professors to write a book on service journalism that depicts the best practices of the business press. Titled "Best Practices of the Business Press," it is expected to be available January 2004. The book is comprehensive in its scope, touching on topics from strong reporting practices to marketing to making experts into writers to maintaining a publication's integrity.

Rob Freedman, ASBPE national president, spearheaded the project and has received commitments from several university professors to adopt the book as a course textbook. ASBPE also will make the book

available through local ASBPE chapters. It is about 300 pages long and will retail for about \$30.

Archiving chapter meeting notes

The board discussed several ways to record and archive meeting notes from the chapters to keep on hand as a resource. It was decided that each chapter should forward a write-up of each meeting to a designee on the national board; the material can then be included in the national newsletter as space is available and also compiled annually for distribution to members.

While there were only two days of discussions about how to improve the association, it was a productive meeting for moving forward many projects that will ultimately benefit all of us as ASBPE members, and as editors and journalists working in the trade and business-to-business field.

To learn more about ASBPE, visit the Web site at www.asbpe.org *

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viewed as a solid, innovative company on track to garner \$200 billion in annual revenue. By Nov. 8, the company was faced with the prospect of declaring bankruptcy or being bought out.

Smith said the fallout from the Enron collapse left her with mixed feelings. On one hand, she is satisfied that major players such as Skilling and former Chief Financial Officer Andrew Fastow are being brought to justice. On the other hand, she laments the fact so

many innocent people lost jobs and had retirement savings depleted.

Smith said that covering Enron's demise has taught her the importance of business journalists' needs to pay attention to the most subtle inconsistencies of their beats.

Looking back, Smith said documentation about the partnerships was available well ahead of those 24 days. "The groundwork for this was out for four years," she said. "You wonder, 'Why didn't any of this come out?'"

On a more basic level, Smith said a recent question from her 12-year-old daughter helped her clearly see the key lesson of the Enron debacle: Actions have consequences – a point so eloquently expressed three centuries earlier by Bunyan and reflective of the timelessness of human nature.

"She asked me, 'Mommy, what did the executives at Enron do that was so bad?'" Smith recalled. "I said, 'They made a lot of really stupid investments and mistakes. They did dumb things, and they couldn't admit it.'" *