

WHO WILL YOU MEET?

Make New Connections at the NRHA All-Industry Conference

Attendees at the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) All-Industry Conference cover a broad spectrum. From young retailers and industry veterans to association staff and vendors galore, there is an opportunity at every turn to meet someone with a new perspective. Whether you attend for new products, new friends or new ideas, the NRHA All-Industry Conference can address all your needs.

In this article, *Hardware Retailing* explores a few types of people you'll have the opportunity to meet at the conference, which takes place in conjunction with the National Hardware Show®, May 8-10 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. For more information about what you can expect to find at the conference this year, visit nrhaconference.com.

For insights on the value of the show from a potential customer, read the Q&A with association volunteer and consumer attendee Deanna Tratensek at TheRedT.com/deanna.

All About the National Hardware Show®

The National Hardware Show is ready to meet your needs. You can find hundreds of vendors from every major category and other unique products that could be your next top seller.

Also stay tuned for programming from the National Hardware Show on the NRHA Village stage. A returning highlight will be this year's Reimagine Retail program. Find out which independent retailer will walk away with \$100,000 to fund their retail dream. Learn more at nationalhardwareshow.com.

I'm Here for the People

David Dishke

Grand River Home Hardware,
Grimsby Home Hardware

The Networker

These conference attendees make it a point to meet someone new for valuable insights to propel their businesses forward.



David Dishke may be one of the newer members of the NHRA board of directors, but he's not a newcomer to the industry. Dishke owns two Home Hardware store locations in Ontario, and he is in the process of acquiring a third.

Dishke has been involved in the business since he was a teenager, and he and his wife took over ownership of the Caledonia store from his family in the late 1990s.

In 2004, Dishke received NRHA's Young Retailer of the Year award, and he has been attending conferences and staying engaged with the association ever since. He says the greatest value of attending the NRHA All-Industry Conference is the opportunity to meet people you wouldn't otherwise encounter.

"Sometimes people get tied up in their own wholesaler," he says. "While attending wholesaler events is wonderful, and I highly recommend it, you want to go outside the box sometimes."

Dishke admits the National Hardware Show can be overwhelming, but he says it's OK to be intimidated by such a large event.

"The scale of the show brings it into perspective that the hardware industry is not a little fish in the sea," he says. "It's important to see it."

Engaging Connections

Whenever he attends an event, Dishke sets a short list of goals for himself: Get one good idea and engage with someone or ask a question. Setting these goals helps him look outside his immediate community for valuable insights.

"When you surround yourself with like-minded people from the industry, you can learn from them and grow."

Dishke says meeting people who are from the same industry but who work with another wholesaler or serve a different market is an invaluable part of attending the conference.

"The amount of people you can meet and the connections you can make by attending the NRHA conference at the National Hardware Show is phenomenal," he says. "When you surround yourself with like-minded people from the industry, you can learn from them and grow."

Crossing the Border

The NRHA All-Industry Conference takes place in conjunction with the National Hardware Show. NRHA encourages independent retailers to take advantage of the access to products and vendors on the show floor while also engaging with the association in the NRHA Village.

Dishke appreciates both sides of the annual event, but on the products side, attending international trade shows can sometimes be challenging for Canadian retailers, he says.

Often, products that are immediately available to American retailers aren't available on the same timetable for Canadians. But Dishke says there is an advantage to seeing those products ahead of time.

"The National Hardware Show seems to be a little bit ahead of the Canadian market by about six months," he says. "There was a vendor at the show last year that had its products available in the U.S. last summer, and they're just now launching this summer in Canada. But I got to see them a whole year in advance because I was at the show. You get to see things sooner than you might otherwise."

Attending trade shows, even for just a short amount of time, can offer insights that you don't get just exploring new products from your office at the store, Dishke says.

"I can look stuff up on the internet, but I won't interact with any humans and talk to them and ask them to show me how something works," he says. "I can buy product every day, but interacting with people and learning how their brain ticks and how they make their businesses successful is what I look forward to."

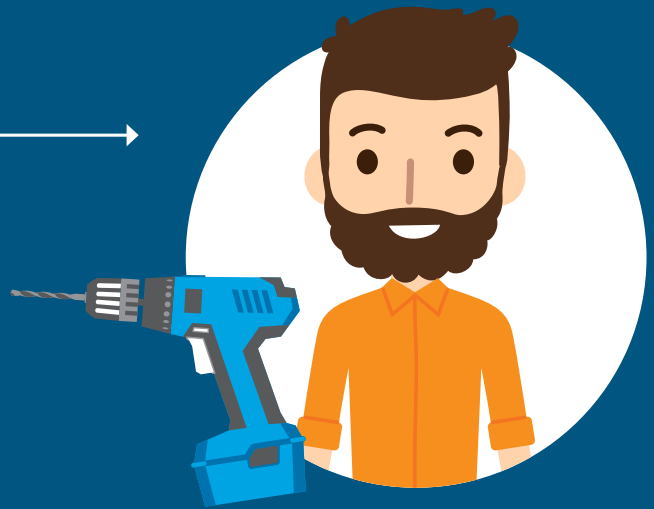
I'm Here for the Products

RJ McDaniel

B&B Hardware & Rental

The Explorer

For a first-time attendee, the show floor of the National Hardware Show seems neverending. Explorers hit the floor to find cool new products and walk away with key items to take home to their businesses.



Just outside the NRHA Village in the Las Vegas Convention Center, the expansive landscape of the National Hardware Show begins. Walk the show floor with a retailer like RJ McDaniel, and you will find everything you are looking for.

As co-owner and vice president of B&B Hardware & Rental, McDaniel attends the show to be the first to spot products that will help grow his business.

He attended the 2017 NRHA All-Industry Conference at the National Hardware Show with a Young Retailer of the Year award in tow. He received the honor in part because of his focus on expanding B&B Hardware's rental business, starting a new disc golf niche and growing the company's firearms department.

"I'm always looking for new products in stores and online," McDaniel says. "The show presents another unique opportunity to do that."

Across the Categories

McDaniel served as a judge on the Retailers' Choice panel, which is a group of independent retailers who walk the show floor and choose their favorite items. The selected manufacturers receive the Retailers' Choice Award from *Hardware Retailing* during the conference.

"Serving on the Retailers' Choice panel was a lot of fun," he says. "I was able to connect with other retailers and talk about the products that work for them, and I got to explore new items."

McDaniel approached the show floor with a strategy. Back home at the store in Milan, Illinois, he was planning to expand his outdoor living category with a focus on grilling. B&B Hardware & Rental features a popular line of grills and accessories, and McDaniel was looking for items to complement his selection.

Another member of the panel discovered a gadget that slices hot dogs to help them cook more evenly, and McDaniel found smoke tubes to put on charcoal grills to turn them into smokers. He also identified

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products that would serve his rental business, including an innovative extension ladder.

"I was looking for outdoor living and grilling items, but I found a few other items that were good additions to the store, too," he says.

Inspiration on the Show Floor

The sheer size and selection that's available on the show floor is striking. McDaniel says he values his wholesaler events and attends those as often as possible, but the National Hardware Show is something different entirely.

"When you go to the show, you have opportunities to see what other items and vendors are available outside your wholesaler," he says. "It's good to experience that because if you only attend wholesaler events, you can get tunnel vision."

McDaniel says it's also helpful to see how vendors set up their displays on the show floor. After attending last year's event, he took some of their ideas home to Illinois.

"I'm inspired by four-foot planograms at shows," he says. "I remerchandised in the store based on how vendors set up in the booth at the National Hardware Show. Everything has improved in volume since we reset those areas."

McDaniel has spoken to other retailers about the NRHA All-Industry Conference at the National Hardware Show, and he talks about more than just products.

"You can get new ideas, make new connections and see what products are out there," he says. "It helps broaden my perspective on my business to see so many different options."

I'm Here to Help Your Business



Tom Marcum

North American Retail Hardware Association

The Teacher

NRHA staff members look forward to the opportunity to learn more about retailers' businesses and share how NRHA can help them grow and succeed.

The NRHA All-Industry Conference is the pinnacle event for independent home improvement retailers every year. At the conference, retailers have the opportunity to connect with and learn from each other, regardless of wholesale affiliation or business size.

The NRHA Village is the hub for education, advocacy and association at the conference. Industry experts, panels of innovative retailers and other compelling presenters take the stage in the NRHA Village to deliver insights and actionable lessons. Along with attending sessions, retailers are also welcome to use the space as their haven away from the show floor.

Whether you're meeting a fellow retailer for lunch, taking a break to check emails or you have an appointment with an NRHA staff member, the NRHA Village is your space to relax and connect.

Gaining a New Perspective

Tom Marcum, director of recruitment for NRHA's Retail Leadership Institute, says having the NRHA All-Industry Conference at the National Hardware Show creates opportunities for independents that they may not have elsewhere.

"NRHA serves the independent channel in many ways throughout the year, but the conference provides a different kind of opportunity. Retailers can see how NRHA helps them connect to other channel members and supporters," Marcum says. "They can see how NRHA serves the industry and at the same time they learn specifically what we have to offer."

Collaborative panels on the stage include successful retailers from across the industry, and NRHA recognizes the value of providing opportunities for each wholesaler to be represented in its presentations.

"I think the major difference for retailers is seeing many perspectives," Marcum says. "Everyone has a different way of doing things, and retailers can benefit from hearing something new at the conference."

"Retailers can learn about the big-picture issues—more about what's going on in the industry that is impacting them now."

Learning About NRHA

NRHA staff members are in the NRHA Village during the conference to answer questions about services and to talk about how the association can best serve your needs.

In his role for the association, Marcum helps retailers determine what educational and training opportunities would be best suited for their operation.

"We get to sit down and explore what is going on in their business and how we can help address their challenges and continue building on their successes," he says.

NRHA provides basic training courses and programs to help retailers develop their own internal programs. The association also offers more advanced leadership and management training opportunities. Marcum will be in the NRHA Village to talk to retailers who are interested in the Retail Management Certification Program, Foundations of Leadership or annual roundtable groups.

"At the conference, there's also a very good chance retailers will meet past participants from our higher level leadership and management programs to hear directly how they benefited from their experiences," Marcum says.

Other NRHA staff will be there to discuss business services, which help retailers access health insurance, credit card processing, employee recruiting and more.

One of the most significant opportunities for conference attendees is connecting with members of the entire channel.

"Retailers can learn about the big-picture issues—more about what's going on in the industry that is impacting them now, and they might not even know it, and what will be impacting them in the future," Marcum says. ■