

The new NRHSA president outlines the vision

The new president of the National Retail Hobby Stores Association, Steven Elliott, and the board of directors are working hard to fulfill a new vision for the organization.

Elliott, owner of Fundemonium, a hobby and toy store in Rohnert Park, California, started in the hobby industry with a HobbyTown franchise and later reformatted his store. He has attended the annual Convention and Table Top Expo for about 15 years and has been a member for at least 10 years.

Going forward, the Board of Directors plans to evolve NRHSA into a business-oriented, professional entrepreneur organization.

The plan is to establish NRHSA membership as a premium badge that would indicate to consumers that they're shopping at one of the best hobby retail stores.

Building on his former career as a registered architect, Elliott said it would be similar to practitioners who became a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). While NRHSA won't have as rigorous requirements as AIA, the goal is to help NRHSA members develop in the profession.

It builds on the work of the previous chairman, Ryan Raffuse, who established the education committee that spearheaded



Steven Elliott
Owner,
Fundemonium

bringing in educational seminars for members.

"We're interested in ensuring NRHSA is providing greater value to the people running a retail business. Not all hobby shop owners are interested in growth, and that's OK," Elliott said. "But NRHSA will focus on those stores that want to improve."

The organization won't pursue growth just to expand the membership numbers. The goal is to make it attractive to high-performing businesses. The board will also work to diversify the types of vendors at the Expo to expand what stores can carry. The board plans to develop better communication with manufacturers and distributors throughout the year to address issues that come up.

Although the Expo is one of the most notable activities of NRHSA, there are many other benefits, such as credit card processing, health and workers compensation insurance, shipping discounts and promotions for member stores.

"The long-term payoff comes from participating in education that will lead to improvements in your business for years to come," Elliott said.

"If NRHSA can be part of helping rebuild a sense of trust between dealers and manufacturers and distributors, I think it'll be much better for the industry as a whole," Elliott said. **HM**



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