

CALENDAR

2008: The Dealer's Perspective



Vincent Kent

In the spirit of industry forecasts and predictions for the new year, Water Quality Products asked Vincent Kent, president of Abendroth Water Conditioning, Inc., Fort Atkinson, Wis., to give a water treatment dealer's perspective of what is to come in 2008.

January

23-25

50th Annual Convention of the Colorado Water Congress
Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center
Denver, CO
tel: 303.779.1234
www.cowatercongress.org

24-25

79th Annual Iowa Water Well Association Convention & Trade Show
Sheraton West Des Moines
West Des Moines, IA
tel: 515.243.1558
www.iwwa.org

February

1-2

2008 Pacific Northwest Ground Water Expo
Red Lion Hotel on the River –
Jantzen Beach, Portland, OR
tel: 800.551.7393
www.ngwa.org

10-13

AWWA Sustainable Water Sources Conference & Expo
Grand Sierra Resort & Casino
Reno, NV
tel: 800.926.7337
www.awwa.org

March

2-7

Pittcon Conference & Expo 2008
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans, LA
tel: 800.825.3221
www.pittcon.org

25-28

WQA Aquatech USA 2008
Mandalay Bay Convention Center
Las Vegas, NV
tel: 630.505.0160
www.wqa.org

For a complete list of industry events, go to www.wqpmag.com.

WQP: *What is the greatest challenge that you think your business will face in the next year?*

Vincent Kent: I feel the greatest challenge for most water treatment dealers will be the return of the housing market. If you're a dealer that is presently not involved in other avenues of water treatment, such as the commercial, industrial or the bid and spec market, it's going to be very challenging for a dealer to survive with the housing market alone.

I think the biggest challenge for dealerships today will be to increase market share in the commercial and industrial line as the housing market continues its downward slide.

WQP: *How has the declining housing market affected water treatment dealers?*

Kent: I think for many dealers it has had a negative effect, especially if you're a water treatment dealer trying to compete in the sales end of the industry and you do not offer rentals or leasing programs. Most consumers do not have the extra money, nor do they want to roll it into their mortgage because they've already stretched their mortgage as far as they can. So if you're a water dealer that specializes in sales only, you're going to have a hard time.

For me, as a water treatment dealer, I specialize in rentals and sales, so it becomes easier to weather the storm during the down times when you have the rental-based business as well as the salt business, the bottled water business and the reoccurring filter changes.

WQP: *In your opinion, what are the most important industry topics that will affect your business in the coming year?*

Kent: I think that the assurance that the positioning between the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) and the Water Quality Association (WQA) will finally have science determine what the truth is between water softeners, and its effect on septic systems has a definite impact on the water treatment industry. I think the WQA and NOWRA have taken the correct and responsible position to let the science be the determining factor in this case study. No longer will it be any finger pointing, it will be the science that will tell us the true effects that water softeners have on septic systems.

The bottled water industry also certainly plays a role. The industry is presently going through tremendous amounts of scrutiny over the bottles, whether the bottles are detrimental to people's health and whether they are causing problems with landfills. I think that the International Bottled Water Association has done a very good job of allowing the facts and the sciences of bottles to speak the truth.

The bottled water portion of my business is of tremendous growth, and I think that as a water treatment dealer, I believe that bottled water has to be a part of your industry. I think that you are in the water treatment business and bottled water is one aspect of water treatment. I looked a number of years ago at selling off all of my accounts in my bottled water business; however,

it's not what my customers wanted. Therefore, we stayed in it, and we have seen our bottled water continue to grow at 10 to 12% per year. I do not think the bottled water industry will hurt us as dealers, and I think that it should be a part of most dealers' product lines.

WQP: *As a water treatment dealer, what are your predictions for the industry in 2008?*

Kent: I think dealers are going to have some exciting opportunities presented before them with the launch of the new Commercial Certified Water Specialist program that is now being handled by the dealer section of the WQA. I think it is going to give dealers a new opportunity to enter into the bid and spec market and go directly after the big jobs and not allow the OEMs or manufacturers to bypass them.

I also think there are some future opportunities for dealers in the industrial market, and I think that the continued growth of the WQA Find a Professional program will be of tremendous growth for any member dealer. *wqp*

For more information, contact Vincent Kent, president of Abendroth Water Conditioning, Inc., at 920.563.2507, or by e-mail at vince@abendrothwater.com.

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