

ASAE & The Center Communication News, February 2010

How Three Newsletters Morphed Into One Magazine

By: *Al Rickard, CAE*

Have you ever considered a joint publishing effort with a related group? Learn how an umbrella organization created a new magazine to meet the combined needs of three associations' leaders, readers, and advertisers.

When three associations have powerful synergy, it's only natural to look for ways to leverage it for greater influence and mutual benefit.

That's what the International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses (IARW), the International Refrigerated Transportation Association (IRTA), and the International Association for Cold Storage Construction (IACSC) did a few years ago. They formed the [Global Cold Chain Alliance](#) (GCCA), an umbrella group that encompasses each of these associations plus two other "core partner" organizations.

Each of the three associations published its own newsletter serving specific member interests. How, GCCA asked, could these publications be integrated into a broader communication vehicle that would help brand GCCA as a centralized source of information in the cold chain industry? (See sidebar for a definition of "cold chain.")

The answer: Combine the publications into a new magazine that serves its readers well despite limited staff resources.

All logistical sectors of the cold chain industry—warehouse construction, transportation, and warehouse storage—depend on each other and must share knowledge to provide the highest level of service to their customers. The challenge was to figure out how to serve the industry as a whole without neglecting any of its parts.

Here's how the process of meeting this challenge worked for the associations, their readers, and their advertisers.

Editorial

GCCA developed the new magazine's mission, structure, and editorial template with the help of its longtime publishing consultant, Association Vision. Editorial planning and writing became a joint effort, with GCCA Director of Marketing and Communications Tori Miller serving as publisher and the president of Association Vision as editor-in-chief.



Al Rickard

"We needed to present editorial in each issue that would address major issues in the overall cold chain industry, yet at the same time provide enough specific information on each sector to keep them all engaged as readers," Miller says. "We also had many strong editorial elements in each of the newsletters that we adapted and carried forward into the magazine."

Among the elements GCCA had to make decisions about:

Name. The new *Cold Facts* magazine continues the *Cold Facts* name of the old IARW newsletter, the largest of the three association newsletters.

Feature well. Each edition consists of a cover story tackling a major industry issue, plus three or four features that also address topics relating to all aspects of the cold chain.

Columns. A "Leadoff" column in each issue rotates among elected leaders of the three organizations and the staff CEO (who is president and CEO of all three organizations), with occasional columns from other GCCA core partners.

News from each organization is consolidated into an association news department, and industry news is combined into its own department. One of the newsletters used to include a popular Q&A with industry and government leaders; that has now been transformed into a "Cool People" column in the magazine.

Comparable coverage. "We are very careful to make sure that each sector is well represented in each issue," Miller says. "When we plan each issue, we use a letter code for each sector of the industry and mark the applicable codes next to each story idea so we can see at a glance how the content addresses each sector."

Cold Facts at a Glance

Editorial focus: Cold chain trends and advancements, market intelligence studies, and programs and activities for the three allied associations.

Circulation: 4,000

Frequency: Bimonthly

Average size: 28 pages

Full-page, 4/c ad: \$1,675



What's a "Cold Chain?"

In the refrigerated and frozen food industry, the "cold chain" is defined as "the management of the temperature of perishable products in order to maintain quality and safety from the point of slaughter or harvest through the distribution chain to the final consumer."

This includes careful temperature control through processing, transportation (usually by truck or rail), temporary storage in refrigerated

To provide all three associations with their own communication vehicle, GCCA also publishes individual e-newsletters (*Cold Connection*, *Cool Moves*, and *Cool Designs*). This provides a good mix of print and electronic communications for members.

Advertising

Because circulation has increased and ancillary audiences were added, the magazine's advertising value proposition is stronger than the newsletters' was. To ease the transition for advertisers, ad rates initially remained the same as in the old *Cold Facts* newsletter. Incremental annual ad-rate increases help keep the publication on solid financial footing.

Production

GCCA saved money by combining the three newsletters into a magazine while upgrading the design quality. Westbound Publications designed the new magazine, and Documation handles printing and mailing.

Rollout

Developing the new magazine took nearly a year. As part of this, GCCA gained approval from the boards of each association and contacted all major trade press to inform them about it. Since the primary audience is members of the three associations (not the larger food company audience that the trade publications reach), the trade publications realized that it was not competing with them. This ensured that the positive public relations relationships GCCA enjoyed with these publications continued. The magazine premiered with the March-April 2009 issue.

Keys to Success

The magazine staff focuses intently on balancing the needs of each audience sector by developing articles that transcend each of their interests and demonstrate how companies across the integrated cold chain work together to help each other.

In addition, volunteer leaders of each association write periodic columns, giving them appropriate exposure and a platform to address strategic issues for their respective groups.

Advice for Making a Merger Work

Think big. Move beyond the parochial interests of individual associations and show how a magazine that mirrors integrated business relationships is good for everyone.

warehouses, transportation to retail stores or restaurants, and in these stores and restaurants until consumers purchase the products.

Each sector of the chain, from the point at which product is harvested to the point at which it is sold, shares responsibility. Breaks in the chain may occur just as easily on a warehouse dock as they do on a supermarket floor. If one link breaks, all suffer the consequences of a dissatisfied customer.

And finally, make sure the result is a high-quality publication—editorially and graphically—of which all stakeholders can be proud.

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