

Professional Development Meetings, What's in it for me?

One of the bigger mistakes I've made in my professional career was not attending the Professional Development Meeting (PDM's) offered by the Michiana APICS chapter earlier in my working career.

When I got my first "real" job back in 1998 at a company in Nappanee, my boss signed me up to become a member of APICS. I didn't know what APICS was about, probably didn't even know what APICS stood for, all I knew was I got magazines clogging up my mail box once a month. I read about the monthly meetings offered by the local chapter, but I had just completed four years of college, what else was out there for me to learn? I knew it all, or so I thought.

I didn't attend my first PDM until 1998, being forced to because I had received my CPIM. Now, I had to maintain my certification, and by going to the PDM's I can easily accumulate points. Well, after working in Production Control for 10 years, I figured out that I did not know it all, although if you'd ask my wife she'd tell you I still think I know it all. I didn't know what to expect from the PDM's, but I knew that if I wanted to maintain my CPIM I had to go.

Let me try to tell you what the PDM's have meant to me. First, the people are the nicest group of people I'll ever meet. They are peers of mine that have gone through, or are currently going through the same kinds of problems I am encountering at my job. I've finally figured out that few companies are set up the way I've read about in books. If I'm having a problem at work, I can probably find someone else from APICS who's had a similar problem and ask how they resolved it.

I am starting a new job soon. One of my first tasks will be to straighten out the inventory inaccuracy problems. At the February meeting, I met someone who has given lectures on how to improve inventory accuracy. He has sent me information on just that topic. I will use some of that information to help me.

Many other people use the PDM's to network for new jobs. I know many resumes are swapped back and forth through the Michiana APICS chapter. Some of our members work as consultants, they contact companies who are looking for Production and Inventory Control Professionals. Perhaps if they had your resume they could pass it along, which could lead to an interview.

I haven't even talked about the fine speakers we have every month that helps with our continuing education. Some speakers are more about my situation than others, but I can pull something from each speaker and apply what they've discussed to something I do at work. Our speakers are well-respected professionals who have been down the same path that many of us have in our careers.

Beyond what I've written above, we also are served a meal during the PDM. I like to think that the meal and the room cost \$15, and all of the other stuff is free. It probably doesn't cost most of us anything out of pocket since our companies pick up the tab.

I'd like to say that the PDM's are a great place to network and make friends, while being served a nice dinner, and being able to listen to a speaker that will discuss something of interest to me that will help me advance in my professional career.