

The goal now is for these attendees to keep progressing on the connections they made with their legislators and offices.

"We stressed to our members that these meetings are only the beginning," explained Orlet. "They now have to follow up at the district level to nurture these relationships just as they would with customers."

Gray is one member who sees this as a chance to better educate his legislators about the association and the electrical distribution industry it represents.

"It was a great experience for me to

come down here and learn how things are done," said Gray. "I think that in my district and areas where my businesses are, I can maybe move things forward a little bit because I now have contacts with people. If I have issues, I can pick up the phone and I know the right people to call."

"The congressmen and senators almost invited themselves and asked us to let them know the next time we were going to have a customer event because they would love to attend," added Jack Henderson, executive vice president of Hunzicker Brothers in Oklahoma City.

"What a great opportunity that will be to show them what it is that we do and what we contribute to the economy and the job market."

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IDEA Update

IDEA holds its 2011 E-Biz Forum in St. Louis

IDEA brought its 13th annual E-Biz Forum to St. Louis Sept. 26-28, offering up dozens of seminars to more than 170 registered attendees. Among the highlights was an introduction to IDEA's Data Management Platform (DMP), a review of the Industry's Electrical Attribute Schema 2.0, and a preview of the B2B Partnership Rating Program (PRP).

- The DMP is a new product that allows distributors and manufacturers to manage their data and relationships. Designed to facilitate communication between trading partners, the DMP is complementary to the Industry Data Warehouse (IDW). "The DMP allows a manufacturer to take all of its information, put it into one place, manipulate it, and then feed it out to the distributor or back into its own business system," explained Mary Shaw, director of standards at IDEA. "On the flip side, the DMP allows the distributor to request and obtain from the supplier additional data or marketing attributes unique to that distributor, above and beyond what is standardized today in the IDW."

- Released in March, Schema 2.0 increases product coverage by 64% over the previous version. "For Schema 1.0 we went into the UNSPSC category code list and identified 1,493 product areas that were very obviously for the electrical industry," said Shaw. "But as we looked at it and as committee members started digging into it, we realized there are other product areas that were not so obviously in the electrical industry—crossover industry products like HVAC, plumbing, and tools. As a result, the number of categories has been bumped up to a little more than 2,400 in Schema 2.0."

- Still in the planning stage, the PRP is a formal collaboration tool that will be used to measure industry standards adoption and compliance, enable data receivers to communicate their exact data requirements, and evaluate IDW data content and trading partner processes. "It will be not only a



At the Forum, IDEA President and CEO Bob Gaylord announced Border States Electric (Fargo, N.D.) and Cooper Industries as the distributor and manufacturer recipients, respectively, of the fifth annual Richard Buzun Award for Leadership and Innovation in eCommerce. Above, from left, Gaylord presents the award to Border States' Greg Thrall Sr., vice president, operations; Todd Kadry, marketing solutions manager; Jason Archbold, marketing catalog supervisor; Jason Seger, vice president, operations and inventory; and Jason Schulz, data support and project specialist.

way for a company to monitor its own processes," Shaw noted, "but also an opportunity to recognize those companies that are putting in the extra effort to benefit the industry through the use of e-commerce standards and data."

Shaw added that the DMP, Schema 2.0, and PRP are among the many tools offered by IDEA designed to help make it easier for those in the industry to do business: "When we can take their minds off of having to do so many different things so many different ways, and help ensure that data is clearly identified and standardized, they can put their efforts where they really need to be: focusing on their customers."

The 2012 IDEA E-Biz Forum will be held Sept. 25-27 in the Omni Mandalay, Dallas. —IED