

THE
MUNICIPAL
LIQUOR STORE

Volume 72, Number 2, 2013

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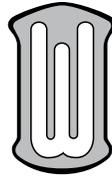


2013 Brings New MMBA Leadership

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ON THE COVER

2013 brings new leadership to MMBA. Brenda Visnovec from Lakeville is the new President and Nancy Drumsta from Delano is the new Secretary / Treasurer. Michael Friesen remains Vice President. Candice Woods from Hutchinson and Lisa Kamrowski from Nevis are new board members.

MMBA thanks retiring board members Tom Agnes and Brian Hachey.

On the cover is new president Brenda Visnovec (left) and outgoing president Lara Smetana from Pine City.



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MMBA President's Message



Brenda Visnovec
President

As the newly elected president, I was directed to write my first article for the magazine. Ironically, for one of the first times in my entire life, I found myself without having something to say. How do I begin?

So I reread Lara's article regarding her tenure and departure as president and I questioned myself even more. How does a person follow an individual who has demonstrated such growth in both abilities and leadership?

I particularly enjoyed her comment how a former president stated to her at a board meeting that if she wasn't going to speak up and participate, she might as well just leave! I was at that meeting and while it sounds kind of harsh, it was probably one of the best statements any of us as MMBA Managers could ever be told by a superior. His statement in its simplest version meant; If you are simply going to be a lump on a log and just rest on your laurels, what value are you providing?

Are we as MMBA Managers resting on our laurels? The majority of us are making money, great GP's but are we maximizing our potential? Isn't that what we are paid to do?

I believe as MMBA managers, if we truly reflect, remain proactive and open to change, there is much more success and potential out there. But as managers, we need to be hungry and we have to be willing to chase that potential. Opportunities rarely just drop out of the sky and fall into our laps. So as a

manager what can you do to improve your operation?

Here are six steps to maximize your potential and ensure you aren't resting on your laurels!

1. **Network with others!** First and foremost, it's amazing what you can learn from others. Whether it's with other business partners in the community, leaders within your city, or other MMBA managers. If you didn't attend the Annual MMBA conference, you missed a great opportunity to interact and learn. In the fall there are the MMBA Regional Meetings and in February, Boot Camp. I guarantee I learn something new from every event I attend!
2. **Do you have a plan in place for the future?** As an example; several years ago in Lakeville we heard some significant changes to the county's transportation plan were going to make the entry way into our busiest store a "right in, right out only" access. It was years down the road, but we knew how much that would impact and impair our business. We were proactive in our approach and built a new location prior to the changes being made by the county. A good business plan and communication with administration and council will ensure that opportunities and needs remain proactive and achievable! Have a plan in place!
3. **Be philanthropic!** Work within your community and with other civic organizations on events. Not only does it provide you strong networking opportunities, but it is great advertising for your business. Yes it might require some volunteer time, but last time

I looked in the dictionary, "volunteer" was not a four letter word.

4. **Listen!** Listen to vendors, to your customers, to your community. You don't need to react to every new product that is offered, or accept every deal, but you need to remain aware of what is going on outside of your office walls. Be wise and be willing to accept change and trends within the industry. Listen to your customers, they are the reason you remain open and business in the first place!
5. **Don't be afraid of change!** Some individuals are scared to death of change. I cringe when someone says "Well that's the way we've done it for years." Change is inevitable and best done on one's own initiative and forethought than to be directed to do it.
6. **If none of this makes sense.....** Start at #1 again. Just reach out to any other municipal manager and see if your discussion doesn't at least make you think about ways you can improve.

Given that we are in the State of Hockey, I thought it appropriate to finish this article with a quote from Wayne Gretzky. "A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be."

I think we all need to move to where the business is going to be in five years, not where it is today!

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Planning Tips for Combination Facilities

Karissa Kurth, Buffalo Lake Liquor Manager

A big part of our job as managers is thinking and planning ahead. I am always looking ahead at the calendar making notes of upcoming holidays and events being held in town.

There are ways to get prepared so when big holidays and events are here you don't feel overwhelmed and everything runs smoothly.

It is a good idea to keep detailed records of your events and holidays to better help you plan from year to year. Keeping track of total sales, how many employees you had working and which shifts were the busiest, checking inventory levels, and make notes of things that need to be changed for the next year.

By keeping these records you will know if you need more employees working than the year before or if you

need to order in more of a particular spirit or beer. You will also be able to compare your sales totals from the previous year. Keeping good records of these events and holidays helps make things run smoothly from year to year.

If you have entertainment in your facility, it is a good idea to look ahead and get those dates booked on your calendar at least 4-5 months before the event - if not sooner. If you are thinking ahead for when you will need entertainment, it is easier to find something that will meet your event needs and chances are the date will be open. Waiting until the last minute to book entertainment will result in not having as many options to choose from and possibly booking something that does not fit your event well.

Make sure you have a good way of advertising for upcoming events or holidays. You can't expect to have a successful event if no one knows about it. Newspaper advertising can get

expensive, so try to look for other ways to get your message out.

Have your vendors print signs to hang in your facility for upcoming events. My beer vendors print signs for the outside of the building each month to advertise my events and the On/Off Sale specials as well.

Each month I create table tents and hang posters in the bathrooms and throughout the building that advertise our events and feature our new items in the store.

Social Media is another good way to advertise. If you do not have a Facebook page or a Twitter account, it may be something you should consider. 80% of my advertising is through social media. I have found this is the best way to reach different audiences that may not read our local newspaper or come in on a regular basis to read the posters hanging around our facility.

Make sure your employees know what is expected of them when these events and holidays come around. Communication is important. Hold an employee meeting before the event so everyone knows their responsibilities and what is needed from them. In addition, leave a note by the time clock for your employees to read that briefs them in as to what is going on in your facility for that particular event or holiday.

By planning and thinking ahead for holidays and events, you and your employees can also let plan and look forward to attending. Without them, none of our events and holidays would be successful.

I hope using these few suggestions for planning your events and holidays, will make them more successful than the last!!

Cheers!

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Who Needs John Taffer?

By Paul Kaspszak, MMBA Executive Director

Everyone seems to be talking about the Bar Rescue television show on the Spike network.

If you are unfamiliar with the show, Bar Rescue is reality series starring Jon Taffer, a long-time food & beverage industry consultant specializing in nightclubs and bars who offers his professional expertise-at no charge-to

desperately failing bars in order to save them from closing.

If you watch the series enough, you will see the same issues arising in one way or another in each episode:

- Stubborn Management Who Offer Many Excuses and Will Not Change - Even While They Continue to Lose Money
- Poor Facility Public Image

- Lack of an Operating Concept / Theme
- Employee Theft of Money / Product and an Unwillingness to Terminate the Individual
- Bartender Overpouring
- Facility Cleanliness
- Poor Attention to Detail
- Poor Knowledge of Current and Potential Customer Base
- Poor Product Offerings
- Lack of Employee Knowledge about Items that Generate Additional Revenue
- Confusion in the Organizational Structure and Lack of Confidence about Who is in Charge, Who Makes Decisions, What Happens when Suggestions are Made Etc.
- Lack of Knowledge about Facility Financial Information Including Cost of Goods and Pricing

Do you see any of these in your bar? If yes, what are you doing to address the situation?

Finally, in each episode the show pays for a drastic facility remodel.

Granted, your establishment probably does not have the funds for that type of construction. But you would be surprised about the positive impact of a paint job, floor polishing, deep cleaning of entire facility including restrooms, new signage, removal of old posters etc.

Bottom Line: Who needs Jon Taffer! Address these issues and watch your profits increase!

Seen at the 2013 MMBA Annual Conference



Gina Holman, Wayzata and Skip Troyak, Stan Morgan & Associates



Conference Presenter Darryl Rosen, Darcy Nilson and Stephanie Clauson, Boyd

The Importance of Documentation

By Shelly Dillon, City of Callaway

Sometimes I don't "SEE IT", which is why the City stresses documentation.

What I am talking about is an incident log.

All department heads are to keep an incident log; each is unique to the department. Such as, the public works department keeps a list of when residents call in with a complaint, concern or comment, when city property is damaged, a street light out, or anything else relating to public works.

As City clerk I keep an incident log of calls etc regarding other city issues. But the most important incident log is kept by our liquor store employees.

All employees are required to write in the book daily.

What the City likes to see is the weather (snow, ice, rain) if an employee had to clear the sidewalks for any reason, how busy their shift was, if they refused service to someone (who and what reason), if they had to ban anyone (Who, for what and how long) and any other unusual happenings.

We don't require an essay to be written, just the facts in a clear and concise manner.

The purpose is to Cover Your A%\$.

When employees are dealing with a lot of the same customers day after day it is hard to remember specific days and times. This way if we have an incident we need to look back on, there are written reminders of the day.

The manager reviews the book every morning and if she has any questions is able to contact the correct person or if there are any issues that need to

be addressed she can deal with the incident.

We use a composition book. The kind that has bound pages and no pages are allowed to be ripped out.

Yes, the book does get kind of messy, but it has come in handy when trying to remember who was involved in a fight and if there were consequences, if a bartender called for a ride for someone and they left on foot or worse drove

away.

When the incident book was put in place, everyone complained. They "Didn't have time to write it down", "Nothing ever happens", "We didn't have to do this before."

But once the employee realized it was for their and the City's protection (and they got in the habit of it) it is now just routine.

Cheers!

Seen at the 2013 MMBA Conference



Corey Herzog, Bacardi and John Schmidt, St. Francis



Gary Buysse, Rogers and Sarah Lien, Barnesville

Things for Managers & Staff to Do When Not Busy

Based on Information from Bob Phibbs, the Retail Doctor

1. Clean the glass on the entry doors and windows.
2. Sweep the front sidewalk & clean parking lot.
3. Knock down cobwebs in the corners of the ceilings and floors.
4. Check the bathroom for cleanliness and clean if necessary.
5. Check for moldy stuff in the staff refrigerator and toss it. Clean if necessary.
6. Wipe the counters and all machines clean.
7. Pick a shelf, remove all the product, clean and merchandise.
8. Check the vacuum bag in the vacuum cleaner and replace if dirty.
9. Change any burnt out interior and exterior light bulbs
10. Check that all remnants of dated decorations and promotions including tape, wires and strings are removed.
11. Pick a shelf / endcap / display and make sure items are priced and tagged accordingly
12. Check your special orders or requests to see if items have arrived or need follow-up.
13. Make sure digital displays are working correctly.
14. Organize the under-the-counter areas.
15. Call or write a customer thanking them for a purchase
16. If you have computer access, go to a vendor's website and learn five new things about an expensive item you carry.
17. Research a new line to carry and write an explanation for why it is a good fit for your facility.
18. Role-play a sale.
19. Role-play a return without receipt.
20. Give another employee a list of ten items to find in your store; time them while they look.
21. Create a scenario where employees find the biggest add-on to a sale in just five minutes.
22. Organize the stockroom and make sure areas are labeled correctly.
23. Take a portion of an online retail sales training course.
24. Offer to help a customer to their car.
25. Spot check if inventory spot matches POS
26. Find the slowest moving item in the facility and come up with how you could sell it.
27. Break down empty boxes in the back.
28. Fill up the register supplies.
29. Fill up the bathroom supplies.
30. Analyze your sales figures and markdown those items rarely sold, overbought or dated.
31. Analyze your store's online reviews on sites like Yelp, then find a solution to stop the bad comments from recurring.
32. Teach an employee how to order supplies, check in shipments, make a call tag, etc. so those employees can take on more responsibilities and see a path to the next level of employment.
33. Make up a quiz of the top 25 questions customers ask you with a correct response for each.
34. Have an employee write out a review of a product.
35. Check out five large retailers' Facebook pages and list 3 things that seem to get a lot of "likes" or comments.
36. Write several emails to send out during the coming month.
37. Perform an employee review.
38. Shop a competitor and write up recommendations about what they are doing right.
39. Watch TV, Text Friends, Call on Cellphone --- NOT!!!!!!

Of course, once a customer comes in, all of this stops and the customer is given full attention.

Focus on long term success, but be willing to make short term adjustments to get there

A man walked into a bar and sat down next to a man with a dog at his feet. "Does your dog bite?" he asked? "No," was the reply. So he reaches down to pet the dog and the dog bites him. "I thought you said your dog doesn't bite!" he said. "That is not my dog!!!"

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- Cooler positioning that takes advantage of the demand?

Discuss all of these options and many more with your local Coors Wholesaler.

*Based Nielsen MPLS Liquor Beer Brand Report 2012



2013 MMBA Annual Conference Recap

By Gary Buysse, Rogers Wines & Spirits / Bar

I'm going to take this opportunity to highlight this year's annual MMBA Conference.

Let's just say I return to my office reinvigorated, humbled and refreshed. Each year this conference provides me with the impetus and opportunity to reevaluate my operation, polish some areas that have lost their luster and sweep the dust out of the corners out of the liquor department and my mind.

The product seminars were informative. I will be expanding some areas of our inventory. Kieran Folliard, Irish Whiskey Ambassador with Beam Global, was engaging, as always, with his Irish history lesson which always seems to meander its way back to whiskey.

Randy Dobratz, North Central Division Manager, St Michelle Wine Estates,

provided a new training program for large and small municipal operations on how to train our professional staff to sell more wine and generate additional income for the communities we serve. Contact Randy to take advantage of this opportunity and view his powerpoint presentation.

Vinocopia General Sales Manager Marion Dauner, assisted by Jason Ospina, gave us of a world tour of whiskey.

On Monday morning Daryl Rosen helped me to reassess my communication skills at a personal and professional level - which most of you realize is a necessity for me. View his videos by clicking here.

For some however, the most beneficial opportunity wasn't to be found on the agenda.

At breakfast the discussion concerned personnel management, at lunch

purchasing habits and strategies, at dinner craft beers and as the evening winds to a close we were still discussing hours of operation and marketing of our on sale operations in Greater MN.

For most of our annual conference attendees, this is total immersion in municipal liquor from Sunday morning until Tuesday early afternoon. The networking opportunities at this annual conference are phenomenal!

For the interested professional manager there is no downtime here!

Managers with multiple locations and millions in sales volume can be found discussing strategy with managers from single stores with \$250,000 in annual sales. Many issues seem less significant when they are widely experienced and collectively solved.

A relative newcomer to our conference commented on the sense of camaraderie he felt as an attendee. Then he told me I had too many shirts in my suitcase!

Our managers are some of the best, if not the best, in the industry. When you perform as individuals you are exceptional, when you manage collectively you are unbeatable.

The networking and collective analysis of industry issues that takes place in our Association is a singular advantage that sets us apart from others.

It is a resource that should not be diminished or ignored!

Continually reach out to your peers in the MMBA

Call me if you prefer. I might not have the answer, but with the management talent pool in the state, I am certain I can point you in the right direction.

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Connecticut: Sunday Sales Hurts Businesses

By Brian M. Johnson, New Britain Herald

As the state approaches the one year anniversary of Sunday booze sales, liquor store owners aren't in a celebratory mood.

Legalization of Sunday Sales was signed into law May 20, 2012.

Area liquor store owners said the law has not resulted in increased profits and has actually hurt their businesses.

Mirosław Szczygła, owner of Five Star Liquor, in New Britain, said the law is terrible for families and businesses.

"This is the worst decision we've made in Connecticut," said Szczygła. "We can't compete with Massachusetts unless we cut or lower our liquor taxes. Most

of the time Sunday there is no business until after 1 p.m. when the alcoholics come in. Most regular customers have bought all their liquor by Saturday. Now I have no time for family at all. We can't even afford to take off time for holidays."

Bob Shah, owner of A&S Package Store in New Britain compared working all week to living in a golden jail.

"I haven't made any extra sales and I can't leave unless I find someone trustworthy to manage the store. The state hasn't made any extra money from this either. People still go out of Connecticut to sell liquor because of the high liquor tax. In Massachusetts they have no sales tax on liquor. What the state really needs to do is look at the numbers and review their tax rates."

Vijay Patel, owner of Discount Package Store in New Britain says he can't afford to stay open an extra day as a small liquor store.

"Our sales totals are no match for last year and there's no time for rest," said Patel. "I don't have time to see my kids. They go to school and by the time I get home at 10 p.m. they're already asleep."

In neighboring Bristol, Bruce Wolfert, owner of Wolf's Wines & Spirits in Bristol said the law hasn't done what the government promised.

"It has made no difference at the end of the week," said Wolfert. "Our sales are about the same, except now we're working seven days instead of six. That means we're spending more on electricity and heating and giving up family time."

Raj Chaddah, owner of Town & Country Discount Liquors in Bristol. sees the law as a huge burden.

"Our sales have just been spread out over another day, with the extra cost of manpower," said Chaddah.

Marvin Friedman, owner of Maple End Package Store in Bristol, said the law eliminates profits from people stocking up for Sunday.

"When the law was first signed we didn't open on Sunday and our business began to fall off," said Friedman. "When we opened Sunday, it got back to where it was, but there's been no real difference in total volume of sales.

Before we could open on Sundays, people would come in Saturday to stock up. Now there's no incentive. People may show up on Sunday, but nobody is buying extra. Any business that's open for more days pays additional costs, so we actually lose out."

Minnesota Court Affirms City's Right to Deny Liquor License

The Minnesota Court of Appeals has affirmed the Newport City Council's decision in June to deny a liquor store permit sought by Stephen Linn, president and CEO of the Linn Cos. of Woodbury.

Backing an earlier decision in Washington County District Court, the three-judge panel found that the City Council did not abuse its discretion in denying the permit for the store in a vacant commercial space that was next to Newport Liquor Store.

"The City Council made its decision out of concern for the welfare of the city," the ruling says. "... Council members were troubled by the fact that Linn wished to open his liquor store next to an existing store. The two stores would be located along a highway [Hwy. 61] leading into the city, and council members were concerned about the image that adjacent liquor stores might create."

Council members were open to having the store in another location but also questioned whether the city of about 3,400 needed another liquor store. The city's code allows up to five liquor licenses, and two had been issued when Linn applied.

Attorneys for Linn argued that the application denial was arbitrary, based only on protecting Newport Liquor Store from competition and not for reasons related to the city's welfare.

The court disagreed, saying cities have broad authority in deciding whether to issue liquor licenses. The court also ruled that the City Council had not violated Linn's right to equal protection of the law in its liquor license denial.



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Information in Today's World

By Steve Grausam, Edina Liquor

I know I am dating myself, but when I started in the liquor business in 1983 there were a handful of wines you had to have on hand such as; Gallo jugs, Inglenook, Carlo Rossi, to name a few.

When I went to work in Edina in 1987, Sebastiani and San Martin 1.5 were the big deal, as was California Coolers and the start of Franzia box wines.

I can remember the wine buyer at the time telling the salesman that Franzia White Zin box wines will never sell.

Remember that saying "never say never" I guess it applied then and it still does to this day. We just do not know what will sell and what will not.

One thing I do know is that we have more data and information than ever before to help us make the right choices.

Take a look at the Top 20 Table Wine Brands for Off Premise:

Barefoot

Sutter Home

Franzia Box

Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi

Yellow Tail

Kendall Jackson Vintners Reserve

Chateau Ste. Michelle

Gallo Family Vineyards

Cupcake Vineyards

Carlo Rossi

Beringer

Clos Du Bois

Robert Mondavi Private Selection

Livingston Cellars

Menage A Trois

Bogle Vineyards

Rex Goliath

Peter Vella Box

Black Box Wines Box

La Crema

If you're in the Metro and do not carry these 20 brands, you're missing the boat. If you're in Greater Minnesota you should have at least 10 of these top brands, if not more.

They are proven winners and these wines pay the bills, it's that simple.

I have heard of stores that do not carry Barefoot wines. Is it because management doesn't like the salesperson or wholesaler or they don't think the wine will sell?

Brands come and go and it's anyone's guess what the next big thing will be. So never say never and check with your fellow MMBA members to see what is selling in their locations.

There is a lot of information in the market to help us learn and up to date on what is going on in the liquor world.

Here is a list of different media that is available and it doesn't cost a thing.

Beverage Dynamics: Great stories on retailers all over the US and other business relating to our industry.

Market Watch: This publication has the best info on new products coming into the market. They also feature retailers and do a great job on industry trends.

M. Shanken Daily News: This site sends a daily update of liquor news and information. Much shorter than Mark Brown's daily news. As Paul would say, "A quick read" version of Mark Brown.

Mark Brown (Buffalo Trace) Daily News: mbrown@buffalotrace.com Email Mark and he will add you to his distribution list. This has news from all over the world relating to liquor. This is the best news site that I have found relating to liquor.

As I stated before, these do not cost you a cent. So take the time and sign up.

If you are looking for staff training, check with Randy Dobratz (St. Michelle Wine Estates) He has created a wine staff training he will take on the road and train your staff at no cost to you. Randy did a seminar at the conference and already has three or four cities signed up.

You can also sign up for the Wine101 course on the MMBA website. There is a cost involved for this online training.

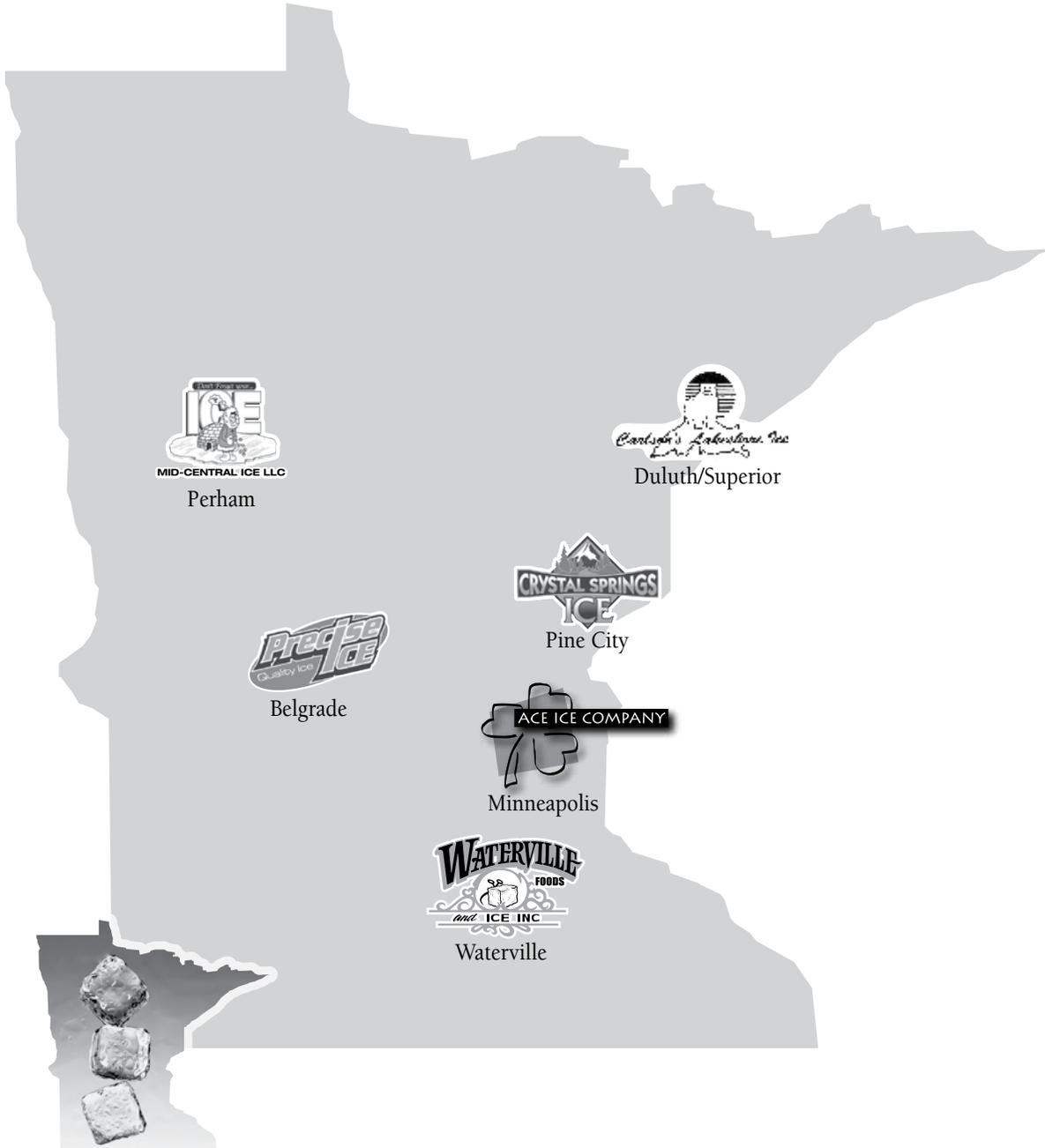
Remember: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

Leadership has nothing to do with title or rank. As soon as people volunteer to follow you, you are a leader

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