

ROOTS:

For almost two decades, the calendar for the Carolina Hosiery Association included a May weekend for strategic planning.

The new officers were elected in April. The next month was reserved for the task of putting together a program of work. In 1985, over 100 people gathered in Charleston for the workshops... and social networking. The weekend attracted hosiery executives, their spouses, and suppliers to Wrightsville Beach, Opryland, Pinehurst, Wilmington and the ever-popular Charleston.

Each session was carefully planned with an agenda. Time was spent discussing trends sweeping the industry and its customer base. The strengths of the industry--based on relationships--and how those strengths could address opportunities were evaluated. Before the weekend was over, the CHA board of directors had goals to pursue.

The strategic planning exercise at Opryland in 1988 brought about the creation of the Hosiery Technology Center. The testing center at the HTC was a goal adopted in 1997. Other programs which emerged from the sessions included marketing workshops (including Focus), public school partnerships, legislative action, the Hosiery Health Association self-funded insurance, and public relations for the industry.

The weaknesses repeatedly included relations with the National Association of Hosiery Manufacturers (NAHM). Eventually, this led to the 2000 merger with The Hosiery Association and the role as a chapter of the national organization.

Outside speakers at the planning retreats included John Wilcox, then a retailer specialist with Kurt Salmon and Associates. Participants remember that in the early 1990s he predicted the consolidations



CRUISING--A popular diversion for participants in Charleston was the dinner cruise on the Cooper River and around the Harbor.

and pressures that would change forever hosiery manufacturing. Other speakers included representatives of the International Mass Retailers Association (IMRA), and Phil Kirk, president of the North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry.

Memories of CHA strategic planning weekends also include dinner cruises on the Charleston Harbor, a paddle-wheel board trip down the Tennessee River, cocktails in a Charleston garden, dinner in a quaint Wilmington restaurant, and golf in Pinehurst.

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Strategic Planning Put CHA On Path To Industry Service



MAKING LISTS---With executive director Paul Fogleman as the facilitator, industry executives pooled their observations involving trends and issues. This session was at the MidPines Resort in Pinehurst.



NETWORKING--Cocktails in a Charleston garden included exchange of ideas introduced during the formal planning sessions.



HOME WORK--Earlier planning sessions were held in Hickory, headquarters for the Carolina Hosiery Assn. This involved board members and committee chairs in conference at the Elks Club.



OPRYLAND--Participants gather at the entrance of the Opryland Hotel, ready for a tour of Nashville residential areas where country music legends have homes.



PARTY TIME---The court yard of the Mills House Hotel attracted early visitors, ready to develop the 1997 plan for the CHA. Among the participants was Phil Kirk, president of NCCBI.



FORMAT CHANGE--To accommodate large groups, the Strategic Planning sessions sometimes featured panelists to provide details of trends that would affect industry relations.

Strategic Planning Put CHA On Path To Industry Service

The weekend at Jeckyl Island, Georgia, helped cement hosiery focus on regional issues and the Williamsburg, Virginia gathering featured the head of the National Institute of Standards and Technology which funds the Manufacturing Extension Partnerships, a key HTC partner.

The executive director of the Carolina Hosiery Association kept the agenda on track. Friday afternoon and Saturday morning were packed with data collection. Friday morning was the golf tournament. Saturday afternoon and evening was touring and social events.

The climate for the hosiery industry has changed dramatically since 2000. The HTC has used the process to continuously evaluate its role in service to hosiery manufacturing--beyond the borders of

North Carolina. The last industry-driven planning session was in Boone to warn members " the cheese has moved." The agenda was driven by the HTC.

As a result of the industry involvement with strategic planning, the hosiery manufacturers of North Carolina have attracted national attention from the Federal Reserve publications, Washington think-tanks, and state agencies. The 1995 document " Preserving Hosiery Manufacturing in North Carolina" is still used by the N.C. Department of Commerce.

Today strategies are needed to address globalization--and the future of the 26,000 people who are receiving paychecks from an industry pondering survival.