Auction Workforce Challenge

Throughout Minnesota, North America, and the World, the auction business is facing unique challenges. Some of the challenges relate to education, technology, marketing, public awareness, governmental policy, and workforce challenges among other issues. Having the good fortune of working throughout Minnesota for several MSAA companies and being in communication with auction professionals from around the globe, I see the workforce challenges that we face as one in need of attention. Frankly, most auctioneers know, understand, and see the difference in what our industry looks like compared to 10, 20, or 30 years ago with the downward trend of the number of auctioneers and auction companies as our industry continues to consolidate. Yet, my experience working in numerous different roles for auction companies leads me to believe we have holes to be filled in this business rather than what some may see as a lack of demand for auctioneers.

With every advance of technology and new way of doing business, the auction workforce must diversify to meet the changing world. This means that not only do the companies need to embrace new technology and techniques, but horizons of employees and your auction team must expand. If we refuse to grow and expand to meet the needs of today’s customers, then we threaten the long term future of auctioneers locally, nationally, and across the world. The needs and demands of customers must drive us to change or the auction business will be left in the tracks of companies like Amazon.

The greatest challenge I see in regards to the diversification of skills of our auction teams stem from the way we have managed our human resources. Most auction companies in Minnesota operate with part-time or as-needed staff which inherently creates challenges, especially over training and education. With each new advancement in technology at least one person - and hopefully several within your team - must learn the new way of doing business even if they are part-time or as-needed staff. As a business owner and auctioneer, take the time to invest in your staff and get them the training or education they need to help you meet the needs of your customers for today and tomorrow. Dedicate a day for them to become at least lightly-versed in the clerking software, online bidding applications, and any key function of your auction business. This will serve you well. The human capitol of your company is quite possibly the most valuable asset of your company – and we all want to enhance our assets to benefit our customers. If, for whatever reason, the members of your team are unable to do this, I encourage you to find others from outside of the auction business to help take your business to the next level. The future of the changing auction industry demands it.

Isaac Schultz, Director