

RAPID 2008 Editorial

With the SME RAPID 2008 conference just completed, I thought it would be a good idea to discuss the changes made at RAPID this year, the benefits it offers to exhibitors and attendees and the environment of collaboration, sharing and learning that takes place each year at the show.

As you may know, RAPID has been bringing together and educating exhibitors and attendees alike for 19 years. Hosted by The Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME), RAPID has typically been held in Detroit, MI. This year, under new event management within SME, the show was held in sunny Orlando, Florida. While most of us were excited about the move simply because it's a more desirable location, the move was a calculated departure from tradition designed to draw on the medical industry that has exploded in the Southeast region of the US. The Medical Applications Technical Group of SME is sponsored this newest track to the conference and featured a full day of sessions devoted entirely to the medical and dental industry. Exhibitors undoubtedly discovered new customers from this industry and those attendees interested in the informative medical and dental sessions were able to meet key players in this specialized area of manufacturing. Lisa Dodge, event manager, stated, "I am very pleased by the enthusiastic response to RAPID 2008. This gives me a lot of confidence to continue with our plans to do bigger and better things in the years to come."



SME, the world's leading professional society that supports manufacturing education, actively focuses on creative ways to educate members and nonmembers. This focus on education translates to various programs and training events designed to assist students and professionals with furthering their knowledge of the manufacturing industry. SME put together some exciting programs for RAPID including The Bright Minds Mentoring Program, the Design for Direct Digital Manufacturing Competition, the RAPID Challenge, SME Certification programs and the new RAPID Workforce Development Center.

Since 2004, the Education and Information Exchange Tech Group of SME has been holding the Bright Minds Mentoring Program alongside RAPID. This program is a brilliant way to unite industry experts with local high school students in an attempt to foster interest in cutting-edge product development methods, rapid technologies and applications. Students are given industry-related materials and parts and are guided through the RAPID exhibit hall with their mentors. Students are also given scholarship information and encouraged to share their experiences upon return to their respective schools with other students and teachers.

The Design for Direct Digital Manufacturing Competition, sponsored by the Direct Digital Manufacturing Tech Group of RTAM of SME, allows high school and college students to submit designs based on certain criteria that could be successfully produced via DDM. Awards are given to the winner of each group and the winning design will be produced via the proposed DDM technology and presented to the student at RAPID.



2003 was the first year for the RAPID Challenge. This design challenge is open to all exhibitors to showcase their accuracy, material quality and finishes by producing a piece of the puzzle for attendees to put together. Design submission is open to all and is a way to showcase your design talent. This challenge is fun way to introduce attendees with a possible need for services to exhibiting technology providers.

Professional Development is central to the SME mission and core purpose. Offering various types of training courses customized to meet the users needs, webinars, and certification programs, SME has something for anyone interested in enhancing their job skills, education portfolio or looking for a career change. At RAPID, the SME Certification program is a popular pre-event activity for industry leaders interested in becoming certified at the Master Level.

New this year, was the RAPID Workforce Development Center. For the first time in RAPID history, universities and technical colleges had the opportunity to promote their educational institutions and the RAPID related programs they offer. This addition benefits every person attending that is either interested in pursuing a career in various fields of engineering and science, an industry professional looking for training to enhance their job skills, students interested in product design and development and manufacturing professionals interested in a career change.

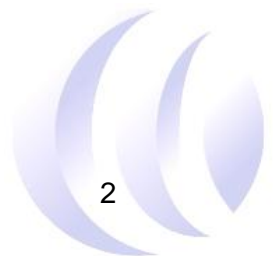
Other notable changes this year included increased marketing and media coverage and the participation and sponsorship of additional technology groups within the manufacturing and educational communities. Increased marketing this year not only to the general manufacturing public but also to the medical industry in the Southeast region and to the local media and educational



institutions in and around Orlando served to expand the attendee base from previous years. This gave exhibitors a fresh audience and assisted in facilitating new relationships between attendees and key members of the medical industry. This increase in marketing and media coverage obviously provided the interest among the targeted audiences as RAPID has already announced the 2nd highest pre-recorded numbers in the history of the conference. This new vision of expansion at RAPID brings the term networking to an entirely new level.

To produce a must-attend event, the conference team cannot rest, stated Dodge. We are already planning the RAPID 2009 conference and it will be even bigger and better. RAPID showcases rapidly changing, cutting-edge technology that you cannot afford to miss and by expanding the event and introducing new elements, we justify attending the event year after year to stay abreast of the developments. +

Media sponsors have a very important role in the success of RAPID. Each year they are responsible for pre-show promoting via print and web ads, promotion during the event in the form of articles and interviews from the exhibit floor and post show reporting on the success stories from exhibitors and RAPID event staff. This year was the first year RAPID opened



up the media sponsorship to accommodate multiple sponsors. Those included Desktop Engineering, The TCT Magazine, Today's Medical and SME's own Manufacturing Engineering. This increased media coverage, like the increased marketing and direct marketing, served to broaden the audience of RAPID bringing increased opportunities for exhibitors and attendees alike.

RAPID is one of my favorite expositions to attend because of the unique way SME brings together exhibitors, potential customers, leading industry experts, and academic scholars in the spirit of fostering new ideas, relationships and collaboration. It is a conference driven by the suggestions, advice and guidance of SME members that are at the forefront of their industry with a desire to share new ideas and technologies and to bring about new advancements in their fields. I think the true testament of RAPID's success is the 75-80% return rate of the exhibitors, the continued attendance of well known companies across the company and the attention to growing the show and expanding the attendee base.

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About The Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME)

The Society of Manufacturing Engineers was founded in 1932 by tooling engineers and master mechanics as a way to collaborate on methods to manufacture the automobile. Today, SME boasts members in more than 70 countries and is supported by hundreds of technical communities worldwide. SME still operates on the founding idea of fostering technology collaboration and sharing between individuals across various industries. This idea has kept engineers and professionals up to date on the leading trends and technologies in their fields and has provided us exhibitors and attendees with a fulfilling conference that boosts our business, educates and introduces new technologies to those of us in the industry, those new to the industry and those students looking for a future in the industry.

SME's Core Purpose: To advance manufacturing knowledge.

SME's Mission Statement: The mission of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers is to be internationally recognized by manufacturing practitioners, companies and other organizations as their source for information, education and networking.

More information on the organization is available at www.sme.org.

About American Precision Prototyping, LLC – Booth 421

American Precision Prototyping, LLC, (APP), a privately held services company, is the premier rapid prototyping and manufacturing facility in the Midwest. APP sets itself apart from other rapid prototyping and manufacturing facilities by offering free, instant online quoting 24/7, complete project solutions from design to production utilizing the latest equipment and materials in house, providing unsurpassed customer service, and offering their customers a 100% quality guarantee. *Instant Quotes, Quality Parts.*

More information on the company is available at www.approto.com.

