Tom Seeman

VINEYARD BOTTLED WATERS
Edgartown, Massachusetts
IBWA Member Since 1987

Tom Seeman, president of Vineyard Bottled Waters, has been a Distributor member of IBWA for more than 25 years. Being the only bottled-water distributor on Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket is a double-edged sword: It means a total lack of competition, but also a total lack of networking and resources. IBWA helps to fill that gap.

“Whenver there is a bottled water issue in the press, IBWA is the best source of good solid information to communicate to our customers,” Seeman says.

As an employer of a five-person company, Seeman values the networking opportunities that IBWA annual meetings and other gatherings provide.

“We are a very small distributor,” he says. “IBWA educational seminars and the annual convention give us a valuable opportunity to meet with suppliers and network with other distributors.”

That supplier connection is also important. Seeman reports that he relies on IBWA as a place to find sources for needed equipment that isn’t readily available in his somewhat isolated location.

“I’ve stayed a member of IBWA for 25 years because of the information the association provides and the value of the connections I make at the meetings,” Seeman says.

“All the knowledge that IBWA provided would have cost me thousands of dollars to create and learn on my own.”

For Marty Conte, the bottled-water business is inextricably linked with IBWA. After all, Marty’s father was one of the founding members of the American Bottled Water Association, IBWA’s predecessor organization. An emphasis on working with and helping others has been passed down through the generations.

“When I was a kid in the business, members of my family would often invite people from other companies to visit us and learn from the way we did things,” Conte says. “Now I have the opportunity to interact with and learn from other members through IBWA gatherings, which are always very collegial and open.”

Conte has been a member of IBWA for his entire career. He has served as chair of the State and Regional Associations and Education Committees, currently serves on the Membership Committee and the IBWA Board of Directors, and has attended the association’s annual conference for more than 20 consecutive years. Although he believes that the value of IBWA membership is evident, he especially treasures the organization for the technical education and operations knowledge it makes available.

“We built a bottling plant in 2003, and looked heavily and often to IBWA for training and knowledge about that process,” he says. “I shudder to think where else I could have gotten all of that information if not for IBWA. All of that knowledge would have cost me thousands of dollars to create and learn on my own.”

His IBWA membership and attendance at the annual meetings also help Conte keep up with legislative and regulatory changes. He values the association’s currency and forward-thinking approach when it comes to lobbying on behalf of the bottled water industry.

“The changing face of this industry—from 5-gallon bottles to single-serve and from water only to coffee service and everything else—means that we have all had to be more proactive and relevant,” Conte says. “IBWA helps us keep up, while truly serving as the voice of the industry.”

“IBWA gives us power in numbers.”

Marty Conte

DIAMOND SPRINGS WATER
Charlotte, North Carolina
IBWA Member Since 1994
(Conte family IBWA members since 1958)