

# BCN

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Eager To See Technology:

## Independents Look Forward To SCE '08

by Jim Curley

**F**or independent boxmakers and their suppliers, SuperCorrExpo is a win-win situation. This quadrennial exposition provides a centrally located marketplace for AICC boxmakers at nearly 700 sites in the U.S. and Canada to see the latest technology offered by more than 275 exhibitors. In turn, providers of equipment and services to the industry get to see hundreds of converters in one location during 33 hours of show time.

### Numbers Don't Lie

AICC event attendance figures make the point that independents value SuperCorrExpo. Whereas a typical AICC Annual Meeting draws about 400 paid registrants, AICC's Annual Meeting in 2004, held in conjunction with SCE, drew 525 paid registrants, an increase of almost 30 percent from usual AICC fall meeting totals.

"Where else but SuperCorr can you go to see all this equipment in one place," said Joe Palmeri of Jamestown Container. "A lot of box companies, particularly smaller ones, don't get regular visits from suppliers. SuperCorrExpo is a great opportunity for them

to see the technology that's out there."

Brian Buckley of Brian Thomas Packaging noted the time constraints that busy executives are under. "If I



From left, then AICC Chairman Brian Buckley joined TAPPI President Larry Montague and AICC President Steve Young, far right, in meeting Sun Automation's Al Lindsey at last fall's CorrExpo. AICC and TAPPI have co-sponsored SuperCorrExpo since it began.

want to see a machine at XYZ box-plant, I have to spend a day getting to the plant and visiting it, and most of the next day coming back. Here I can get a lot more done in less time."

"The same holds true for suppliers," said John Bacot, who was with Hycorr Machine, a supplier, before he joined AICC earlier this year as its Vice President. "SuperCorrExpo's great

for them. It offers them economy of scale: They get to see a lot of customers in one place and in a week's time."

### From The Beginning

Plans for the first SuperCorrExpo were initiated by AICC and TAPPI in the mid 1990s as the corrugated show held every four years in Paris drew international attention.

"We wanted to create a venue for members to see the latest in equipment and services without the ex-

pense that an international trip would incur,” explained AICC President Steve Young. “Plus, if a large-scale domestic show could be held at a convenient site, companies could afford to bring their production people.

“Additionally, both TAPPI and AICC already held smaller-scale equipment shows. It was felt that if we combined our efforts into a larger show, the new ‘whole would be greater than the sum of the parts’ of our individual shows,” Young added.

“A third reason TAPPI and we decided to put on SuperCorrExpo was that we wanted monies invested by suppliers to stay in the corrugated industry, rather than go to a commercial show organizer,” he said.

“SuperCorrExpo has become a successful franchise. We’ve been pleased with the outcome of the show in 2000 and 2004 and expect similar results in 2008,” Young said. “I’m heartened by the number of exhibitors who have already signed up. We’re ahead of where we were at the same period in 2004.”

### The More The Merrier

As Young noted, SuperCorrExpo will attract more personnel than simply the executives who attend AICC national meetings. And while larger companies like Packaging Corporation of America and Green Bay Packaging will hold production meetings at the show, independents are also expected to come in force to the Peach State.

“We’re excited it’s in Atlanta,” said Paige Burgess, whose plant, Ferguson Supply and Box Manufacturing in Charlotte, North Carolina, is a four-hour drive away. “We’ll bring a ton of people.”

Jamestown Container’s Palmeri said his multi-plant company will bring seven people to the show, while Craig Hoyt’s Buckeye Boxes will bring “four or five.”

Even a smaller one-plant independent, America Packaging, expects to bring about four people to the show, though their visiting times will be staggered. Boxes still have to be made and delivered in Kansas, explained Tony Schleich.

“We will bring both production folks and designers,” Brian Thomas’ Buckley said.



### Checkbook In Hand?

Independents have survived for many decades in part because they have been nimble enough to create or discover niches and they have been willing to invest in new, sometimes unproven machinery that can help forge those niches.

“I may be willing to buy at SuperCorr, but I won’t say on what,” Buckley said coyly. When pressed, he said that he will be eyeing specialty folder gluers, laminators and robotic equipment on his tours of the show hall.

“I won’t have a check in hand, but I will be looking at things like specialty folder gluers and small flexos,” Palmeri said. The veteran boxmaker offered a timely hint: “I’d advise anyone to talk with suppliers at their booths. Even if you’re not in the market for new equipment, some suppliers take older machines as trades, refurbish them and put them back on the market. It doesn’t hurt to ask questions.

“I’m always looking at what’s new,” he added. “For example, I’d like to see a corrugated pallet that would work for us. That would help our sustainability efforts.”

“We’re looking for add-on equipment that will give greater efficiency to our machines,” Hoyt said.

“We’re interested in smaller equipment,” said Schleich. “We’re also interested in seeing what equipment foreign manufacturers bring to Atlanta.”

“We just finished installing a jumbo flexo, so I won’t have a checkbook with me, but will be looking a new technology, such as sensors to detect defective gluing,” said Kim Nelson from Royal Containers. “I’ll only look at North American suppliers though.”

“With energy becoming a major expense, power consumption is now a major factor in equipment choice,” Hoyt said. Nelson agreed, saying that her plant had to add a new transformer after recent installations.

### The Changing Landscape

With continued consolidation among the integrated firms and a domestic industry that is totaling four percent less shipments than it did a dozen years ago, old lines of demarcation are disappearing. “Before consolidation, you used to know what a sheet plant would run and what a full-line corrugator plant would run. It’s all blurred now,” Hoyt noted.

“We do some graphics work not only for direct customers, but also for some integrators,” Buckley noted. “Whenever I look at equipment, I think about the sales opportunities it will create.”