



2008 Partner of the Year Award

LaQuita, CA -- WMIA distributor members announced that SawStop LCC is the winner of the association's 2008 Partner-of-the-Year Award. The announcement was made during the April 23-26 Woodworking Industry Conference (WIC).

Scott Mueller, a distributor member of WMIA's marketing committee and an executive with Edward B. Mueller Company Inc., explained the guidelines used to pick the 2008 winner when presenting the award.

"A good partner is a company that makes a good product, that is committed to working through distribution, that is honest and fair in its business dealings, and last but certainly not least, provides a good income opportunity to the distributor -- without which, nothing else really matters," Mueller said. "In short, from a distributor's point of view, a good partner is someone who is willing to help you build your business while you help them build theirs."

Mueller emphasized the potential business boost that partnerships between manufacturers and importers and distributors can have for all parties involved.

"When manufacturers and importers take the step of partnering with distributors, beautiful things start to happen," Mueller said. "Sales, of course, increase. Customer service improves. Manufacturers and importers get valuable feedback from the market that can only come from a large established sales force that knows the customer base. This essential two-way flow of information helps customers to see and adopt the latest and most appropriate technology for their business, while at the same time allowing manufacturers to use the information gained from the marketplace to generate the next innovation."

Stephen F. Gass, PhD., the founder and president of the Tualatin, OR-based SawStop LLC, accepted the award at the ceremony.

Dr. Gass is a lifelong woodworking hobbyist who earned his doctorate in physics and has worked as a patent attorney. This combination of personal and professional interests enabled him to develop an important safety technology for woodworking equipment in 2000. SawStop cabinet saws are equipped with a safety system that detects when someone accidentally touches the spinning saw blade, and stops the blade with a fast-acting brake.

After attempting to license the technology to saw manufacturers, Dr. Gass eventually developed a prototype and began manufacturing SawStop cabinet saws with two partners. It is now the top-selling saw in the country, with an estimated 25-30 percent of the cabinet saw market.

Dr. Gass attributed much of SawStop's success to word of mouth and acceptance by distributors, as well as appearances on media outlets such as CNN and NPR. The company is planning on expanding its product line into other table saws, including a lighter "consumer" model, and joiners and band saws, all with the same safety technology.