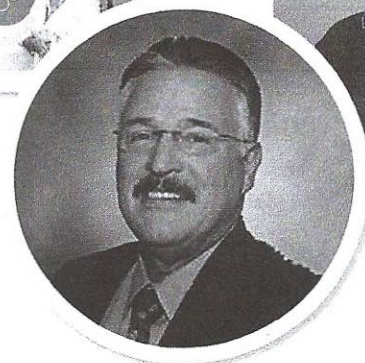


Ken Viscovich: The Most Interested Man in the Tradeshow Industry

BY JIM WURM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EACA



⇒ **He could pass for the actor** who portrays the “most interesting man in the world.” But Ken Viscovich has far more important things on his mind than shilling for an imported Mexican beer. To the contrary, Ken has built a career of success, and significant impact on our industry, by focusing on the interests of others rather than by making an effort to be “interesting.”

So it is left to those of us who have had the pleasure to work with Ken, and who know him well, to inform everyone else that makes their living in our great industry why we owe him our sincere debt of thanks.

A Career Carpenter and Carpenter Representative

Ken Viscovich has been a member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters since 1969. He spent the first 20-plus years of his career honing his skills and plying his craft. Since then he has represented the interests of the UBC as the trade show industry’s international representative. As

international representative, his primary responsibility is to represent the interests of the carpenters in collective bargaining negotiations with trade show industry contractors. While his job description is not remarkably different than those of international representatives for other trades that service our industry, his performance is.

“Ken has been a great leader for the tradeshow industry union workforce and has made many important contributions on behalf of labor, and the industry at-large. He will be sorely missed.”

– **Bob Lessin, International Representative (Ret.), International Union of Painters & Allied Trades**

“Among his many duties and accomplishments, Ken served a critical role at the UBC national conventions. He oversaw all aspects of the event registration area, was a tireless worker and helped ensure things ran as smoothly as possible.” – **Justin Weidner, Chief of Staff for General President McCarron, United Brotherhood of Carpenters**

A Different Mindset

In an industry that is often beset by challenges borne from those whose business philosophy is exclusive, Ken is only interested in those ideas and initiatives that are inclusive and egalitarian. While his prime directive is to negotiate for the best possible contract for his carpenter members, he also recognizes that our industry only works when all industry stakeholders have a fair chance to succeed. His outlook is decidedly ‘win-win,’ which is not only evidenced by the awards and recognitions he has received, but also by the industry careers he has influenced.

“What I most appreciate about Ken is his love to stay connected with people. As a member of the Exhibitor Advisory Committee, he makes sure to stay on top of our issues and concerns even when he is covered up by other responsibilities. And even when I haven’t heard from him in a while, he makes a point of contacting me when he comes into town to see if we can get together. While we do talk a little

shop, his greatest contributions come in the form of advice or recommendations on what to do better, which, for me, is huge. I congratulate him on his retirement, which I know he’s looking forward to, and thank him tremendously for all of his contributions to our industry. I’ll miss him but I know where to find him when needed!” – **Dominique Cook, CTSM, Exhibits Manager, Marvin Windows & Doors**

Industry Initiatives

Ken was the first Union director on the EACA Board of Directors when the association was established in 1998. He fully embraced the EACA philosophy of inclusiveness and served admirably on a Board that included representation from every segment of our industry. Ken consistently impressed other directors with the depth and breadth of his knowledge of their businesses and industry challenges.

Whenever an industry challenge was raised at a Board meeting, Ken was always one of the first to speak up for any and

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all stakeholders that might be disadvantaged by the challenge being discussed. Most importantly, Ken blazed a trail for future Union representatives to the EACA Board with his example. Because it was Ken who recognized that the workings of the EACA Board could be improved upon by the formation of an Exhibit Industry Task Force that included representation from all industry segments, and all industry trades.

It was through his work at the EITF that Viscovich envisioned the greater potential of our industry through connection and collaboration. His leadership was instrumental in creating great value for our industry through these good works:

- » Universal ID protocol – He was the first to recognize that the industry would benefit from a standardized approach for a worker ID program for gaining access to venues for show move-in and move-out.
- » Drug & Alcohol Testing – Ken has always been passionate about the workforce he represents as is evidenced by his desire for every convention center to embrace random drug and alcohol testing. His constant objective is to make sure that his Union member brethren have an opportunity to pursue their life's work in a safe environment where they don't have to fear injury, or worse, at the hands of another worker that is impaired. He worked tirelessly with the Washington Convention Center, the DC area contractors and both the carpenters and teamster locals in Washington, DC, to establish our nation's first drug testing program. Since then he has been a constant advocate to develop drug and alcohol testing programs in all carpenter jurisdiction convention cities.

» Training – Industry Specific, Customer Service & Safety – Nothing makes Ken more proud than to talk about the carpenter training programs and to provide tours of the International Training Center in Las Vegas. He has long recognized that the carpenters are in the business of providing quality, skilled labor to our industry and understands that as event materials and exhibits evolve, his carpenters need to engage in continuous training so they can deliver the best service possible.

» National Labor Management Conferences – Ken envisioned, promoted and produced the first of its kind National Labor Management Conferences at the International Training Center in Las Vegas. Attendance at these events was a who's who of industry leaders including show organizers, venue management and leaders from most of the national industry contractors. These conferences provided a forum to tackle the industry's toughest issues by creating a collegial environment of collaboration and innovation.

"Thank you for your many years of service and dedication to our industry. Your leadership, vision and tireless effort to create the partnership between the UBC and our industry stakeholders has helped create a bright future for us all. Your work has engendered a spirit of cooperation that will endure for many years to come. Kevin has big shoes to fill!"

On behalf of all of my colleagues at Renaissance Management, here's wishing you all the best as you move into retirement." – **Steve Johnson, President, Renaissance Management**

Industry Awards/Recognitions
2007 EACA Intrepid Award

The EACA Intrepid Award is awarded to the individual, organization or consortium that has the ability to have a sense of what is right and proper and decent in the midst of turmoil. The EACA Intrepid also recognizes the quality of character combining courage and staying power. In business, and specifically in the trade show business, grace and fortitude under pressure is the capacity to focus attention on the needs of the customer at all times; particularly when the pressure hits.

"Ken has been a constant supporter of the EACA's efforts to innovate improvements in trade show customer service. While on the Board of the EACA, Ken suggested the development of an industry task force that could take on huge projects such as drug testing, and the development of the Universal Photo ID protocol.

For all his tireless efforts to improve exhibitor servicing and to make the trade show floor a safer place to work, Ken is a highly regarded recipient of the 2007 Intrepid." – **Steve Hagstette, Senior VP Operations, Freeman**

2010 IAEE Chairman's Award

The IAEE Chairman's Award honors an individual whose assistance to the IAEE Chairman has been meritorious. Recipients are recognized for going above and beyond in their service to the IAEE Chairman by helping grow both national and international relationships.

"Ken is a deserving recipient of the IAEE Chairman's Award. His commitment and advocacy for a drug-free workplace has served all segments of the exhibition and events industry.

The entire industry — exhibitors, contractors, labor, facilities, show attendees and show organizers — will be safer and more productive thanks to the efforts of Ken Viscovich and others who believe in the value of a drug-free workplace." – **Randy Bauler, CEM, IAEE Chairman, American Association of Critical Care Nurses**

A Fond Farewell

While it can be a daunting task to sum up the career of one of industry's most impactful leaders, it could be that the best way to sum up the career and legacy of Ken Viscovich is in his own words.

While in Washington DC recently for the 4th Annual Exhibitions Day, Ken was accompanied by the incoming International Representative for the UBC, Kevin McLaughlin. Along with making introductions to the leading industry professionals who were also in attendance, Ken took time to impart some vital words of wisdom.

He said, "If I've accomplished anything in my career as the UBC representative to this industry, it's because I've made my primary focus to get to know industry colleagues as well as I can. I like to know not just about their jobs and their business goals, but also about their career backgrounds, how they got to this industry, and their personal interests as well as their families. I made it my career mission to be interested, rather than interesting."

And in doing so, Ken Viscovich has not only become our industry's most interested man, he is also the most interesting. ©