

1997 EWRT International conference

The theme for the 1997 National EWRT Conference, held in Columbus, OH, was “Discovering Tomorrow’s Energy World.” There were 134 attendees at the conference, which took place from September 24-26 at the Hyatt on Capitol Square. Conference speakers discussed many of the issues facing utility industries at the time, including deregulation, competition, and federal versus state legislation.

Highlights of speaker messages follow:

- Dr. Jay Barney of the Ohio State University discussed corporate strategy. According to Barney, creating a competitive business is the responsibility of every employee. Each employee should look critically at his or her own job, trying to find ways to improve it and maximize efficiency. To sustain competitive advantage, trust, friendship, and teamwork are necessary.
- Marsha Ryan, President - Ohio, American Electric Power, talked about community responsibility. It includes corporate and employee financial giving, employee volunteerism, economic development efforts, and political participation. As utility industries enter into competitive environments, they need to maintain a high level of community involvement and bring corporate responsibility into a more efficient realm.
- Dr. Arnon Reicher, professor at the Ohio State University, presented a light-hearted analysis of careers, biases and goals, and provided goal-setting tips.
- Bill Lhota, Executive Vice President at American Electric Power, said that AEP favors States’ rights in deregulation. According to Lhota, “there’s a lot of anxiety and apprehension, but we all have an opportunity to shape the future of our industry.”
- Linda Gillespie Stuntz, Partner at Stuntz & Davis, discussed federal issues. Some of the forces that are driving utilities to competition are the Energy Policy Act of 1992, rate differential between utilities, and improved information technology. According to Stuntz, Congress would like the states to deal with deregulation. But most utilities are not comfortable with that because many of their stranded costs are the result of federal regulation. Environmental issues further complicating electric restructuring.
- Cheryl Foley, Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary at Cinergy, discussed international issues. Although US electric utilities face economic opportunities abroad, there are risks and challenges with international interests. According to Foley, “you have to be of a size that you can diversify your risk in order to protect your portfolio.”

- Paula Spence, Vice Chairman of HMS Partners, talked about the advantages of brand advertising for utilities. “When the product is virtually the same” said Spence, “you have to *create* a difference for your product by establishing personality.” In addition to name recognition, branding establishes a personality.
- Dr. E. Linn Draper, President, Chairman and CEO of American Electric Power, presented the Keynote address on the future of the industry. According to Draper, “I think we are inevitably moving to a completely deregulated energy marketplace. The challenge is to figure out how to get there.”

A panel discussion, covering bundling of services, was presented by:

Cynthia Jones-Hundley	Director of Business Development, Columbia Gas
David Breitmayer	Vice President of Sales, UtiliCorp United
Charlotte Collister	Manager of Business Service Planning, AEP
Dave Duran	Vice President, Project Management, Enron Energy
Services	
Steve Rinehart	Manager of Marketing, Ohio Edison
Al Keys	Vice President of Marketing, Cinergy

The following optional events were available to all conference attendees:

- **Workshop on Internet Access** – AEP Information Systems presented this free workshop.
- **Trolley Tours City Overview** - The trolley traveled through the restored German Village historic area, the Brewery District, and downtown sites such as the capitol building, Battelle Gardens, and the Santa Maria.
- **The Wilds** – The Wilds is an endangered species wilderness preserve, converted from AEP’s reclaimed mine area. The Wilds tour included a minibus safari through grasslands, where zebras, white rhinos, Bactrian camels, Asian horses, and scimitar-horned oryx roam over nearly 10,000 open, cageless acres.

The annual awards banquet took place at the Center for Ohio Science and Industry, one of the nation’s leading hands-on science museums. The following awards were presented:

- **Member of the Year:** Virginia Lowe, Nashville
- **Overall Chapter Achievement:** Indiana Chapter
- **POWER Award:** Robin King, Indiana

- **Newsletter** First Place: Indiana Chapter; Second Place: Bluegrass Chapter
- **Objective One** - “To provide opportunities for professional growth and development”
First Place: Ohio Chapter; Second Place: Indiana Chapter
- **Objective Two** – “To increase the knowledge and understanding among members of issues affecting the electric and allied fields”
First Place: Indiana Chapter; Second Place: Ohio Chapter
- **Objective Three** - “To apply our expertise to support the communities we serve”
First Place: Indiana Chapter; Second Place: North Texas Chapter

Committee Chairs for the 1997 conference were:

Conference Chair	Donna Kowalenko
Decorations Committee	Beth Wood, Julie Volpe
Evaluation Committee	Julie Volpe
Finance Committee	Bette J. Rozsa, Lonni Dieck
Hospitality Committee	Beverly Laios, Maria Webb
Meals Committee	Diane Keegan
Packet Committee	Cathy Szasz, Paula May
Program Committee	Kim Smith
Publicity Committee	Sherri Monteith
Registration Committee	Vickie Swartz
Sponsorship Committee	Pamela Watkins, Kim Smith
Special Assignments	Terry Trimper Jones
Tours Committee	Mary K. Walsh
Ways and Means Committee	Velda Otey
Workshop Committee	Enid Barry