



Scanner



Our Purpose

Promoting the Industry – Focused on Member Success!

Our Vision

Advocate
Educate
Inform
Lead

Our Mission

To promote the common interest of the printing industry; and to help our members prosper, both individually and collectively, through fellowship, education and cooperative action.

Laura Lawton-Forsyth Continues PIA Family Tradition



Laura Lawton-Forsyth, President of Lawton Printing, Inc. and File-Ez Folder, Inc., both located in Spokane, WA. She is the fourth generation to join the family business, working full-time beginning in January 1991 and becoming President in October 2001.

Laura was recently appointed as the Chair for Printing Industries of America. Her father, Ray Lawton, held the same position in 1994. In this interview, we asked Laura about her role as Chair of PIA and her thoughts on the printing industry as a whole.

PICA: How does it feel to be the 1st second generation Chair for Printing Industries of America?

LL: It is surprising to me that we are the first two generation Chairs. It is an honor to have this opportunity to give back to the industry that has been so important to my family. I am also happy to be a part of an association that cares about its members.

PICA: How do you feel the goals you have set as Chair differ from those of your father when he was Chair of Printing Industries of America?

LL: When I was deciding what to say in my induction speech, I read my father's inaugural speech to see what the key issues were in 1994. Ironically, there are many issues that are similar. However what has happened to the economy in the past three years and how that has affected our members businesses makes what the association can provide to its members more critical. My initiatives are:

1. To re-energize the Young Print Professionals group;
2. Encourage more peer group involvement among members;
3. Increase collaboration with NAPL to better serve our members; and
4. Continue efforts on PIA's key initiative to be a leader in bringing together organizations serving the industry to combat the "war on print".

PICA: What is the biggest challenge you face as a woman in the printing industry?

LL: Being a woman in this male dominated industry was challenging at first just to be taken seriously. The first Graph Expo I attended alone I had difficulty getting vendors to talk to me. When my husband came with me the vendors would talk to him and he had to explain that he isn't in the business and they needed to talk to me. When I returned home from the show, I spoke with all of my local vendors and told them this story and asked that they pass it along to the corporate office hoping that sharing my experience would help change some of the attitudes.

I feel lucky to live on the West Coast because I haven't found my gender to be as challenging in my business as my peers in other areas.

PICA: You participate locally with PPI (Pacific Printing Imaging Association) and nationally with PIA. What are the biggest differences between your local and national memberships?

LL: Again being out here on the West Coast it is a great advantage to have a local association who knows what is going on with our regional economy, with the state legislative agenda and what our members' needs are- different from those in other areas of the country.

That being said, I also utilize the national association frequently on federal legislative issues and union issues as they have great knowledge and resources to help solve problems.

PICA: Why serve on the national Board?

LL: There are so many reasons - first to give back to the industry as it has provided so much to me and my family. I am also

involved to gain knowledge - to learn from others. I have met so many great people across the country and have learned about their businesses. It has been great to understand what is happening in the industry and business in general outside of Spokane, WA. I also serve on the national board to improve my business. Being exposed to many different people and their operations has given me ideas that I can implement in my business. It also has provided a different perspective on how other businesses are run. Lastly it has taken me out of the day to day functions of my business which then gives me time work on improving our operation.

PICA: Tell us about Laura the businesswoman.

LL: Well, I am not quite sure how to answer this. I am financially focused and decisive. As I grew up in a family business, I work hard at running a profitable business while maintaining the family values our employees have become accustomed to. I am a positive person and with all the struggle in the past three years, I believe that has been helpful. I am also willing to jump in and run equipment when necessary and I spent the last year running production along with my other tasks. I think it is important that the "boss" is willing to do anything to help out- nothing should be off limits just because it's your business.

PICA: What one thing would surprise your peers?

LL: I have an employee who was our production manager back in the early days of our company (we were founded in 1940). He turned 97 at the end of December and he is still employed. He comes in every few weeks to run the letterpress for one of our internal customers' business cards. He is a great asset to our company, every time he is here he is so positive and happy to be here, it rubs off on our employees.

PICA: The industry has changed over the last few years, what would you like to see happen to our industry over the next few years?

LL: I wish we could have some years of stability however I think that is unlikely with all the technological changes that continue to come our way. I would love to see the industry decide that we do not want to be a commodity business and choose to value the work we do accordingly, but that is also unlikely.

So with my wishes out of the way, I hope that the industry will embrace the technological changes that keep coming and incorporate them into their businesses.

PICA: Are you a member of a peer group?

LL: I am a member of a peer group. It was formed out of the Young Print Professional group within PIA and it has been fantastic. We are rather unique- there are three men and three women in our group. We are all in family businesses and somewhere in the process of taking over from our parents. We have been meeting for three or four years and it has been a great sounding board when we have issues. We think of our group as each of our businesses board of directors. I cannot speak highly enough of the experience and I definitely would encourage everyone to join a peer group.

PICA: Do you believe the industry is on the way out?

LL: No, I don't. I do believe it will change significantly. As an industry we need to embrace the different forms of media and incorporate them into our businesses to better serve our clients. There is no doubt the industry is changing from being craft oriented to much more technological and marketing focused. For my business we will transform into a communications and marketing company rather than a printing company. I am excited to see where this transformation will lead us!

To read the full interview, go to www.picanet.org/news/articles.asp