

THE SALES DESK AND THE APPLE COMMISSION: WORKING TOGETHER ON RETAIL PROMOTIONS

Norm Carpenter
VP Domestic Marketing
Washington Apple Commission
norm@bestapples.com

The retail supermarket industry is continuing to undergo change through consolidation and is increasing the sophistication it utilizes in marketing produce. The Washington apple shipping industry is being asked to partner with these retailers in new ways—one of which is to be more involved in the marketing plans and measurement of success of apples in the retailer's environment.

The Washington Apple Commission (WAC) has been involved with retailers in creating, facilitating and paying for marketing plans for apples quite independently of the shipper sales desks. The shipper/packer community has also been involved with retailers doing many of these same things. It seems prudent and reasonable that there should be a combination of expertise and force by the WAC and the shipper sales desks to maximize our mission of selling more apples more profitably.

There have been some historical barriers to this sort of industry wide cooperation that the WAC believes are no longer valid. The time has come for the Washington Apple Commission to partner more closely with retailers and sales desks in promotional planning, in sharing marketing information and in category management roles. Doing so can help us all improve our marketing efficiency. We recognize that there have been and are still some concerns about competitive behavior and favoritism. We intend to judge our involvement in these relationships by the guiding principle of "What is best for the collective growers of the apple industry?" For example:

- Helping grow the apple business with existing accounts, regardless of who the suppliers may be is good for the growers. WAC should do that.
- When one shipper wins an account from another shipper, it may be beneficial to the winning shipper, but it also increases competitive behavior and does not add to the industry's overall grower returns. WAC should NOT be involved in that.
- Encouraging a stable market environment is good for growers. A WAC-retailer-sales desk partnership may be beneficial in that regard.

The Washington Apple Commission is already working with some shippers in this fashion and we are entering discussions with many other shippers regarding this process.