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New Elevate Summit Opens Friday In Orlando

WANDA KENTON SMITH · NOV 21, 2019

Following last year's split between Marine Dealer Conference & Exhibition (MDCE) co-producers Boating Industry Magazine and the Marine Retailers Association of America and the closure of its joint conference comes the first of two solo industry initiatives by the respective organizations. The new Elevate Summit and Boating Industry Top 100 launches Friday at the Orlando International Convention Center, bringing together more than 175 registered current and emerging young industry leaders for a weekend of business education, networking and celebration.

According to event Managing Director Jonathan Sweet of EPG Media & Specialty Information, the Elevate Summit delivers a "totally new format" with its primary goal to enhance and improve business leadership and performance.

"The Elevate Summit is for every company, but not for everybody," said Sweet. "Any company in the boating industry can benefit (from attendance), but it's not for everyone. It's for the owner, the GM and other top executives, but probably not for the salesperson, service tech, etc. unless that person is headed toward ownership or management."

In developing the format, Sweet said his team borrowed proven successes from hosting similar events in the beverage industry, plus invested time collaborating with key industry leaders to shape the overall concept and to identify top priorities for content development.

"What we heard was that they wanted content to help them run their businesses, with a focus on the long-term concerns versus day-to-day issues," he said.

Chris Pollum, manager of marketing and communications for Ilmor Marine, participated in a preliminary focus group.

"Ilmor is excited to be a part of the new Elevate Summit as we recognized a gap in the marine industry for a conference focused specifically on the needs of leaders," he said. "We feel that the Elevate Conference has taken a fresh approach by designing and programming a conference that we expect will deliver high-level content while still providing unique opportunities for networking and collaboration."

Presentations include both external and internal industry experts.

Noted economist and Fortune 500 consultant Dr. Elliot Eisenberg keynotes a 2020 economic forecast and its projected impact on the boating industry at Saturday's opening session, followed by Karla Brandau of the Brandau Power Institute who addresses strategies to engage and empower employees to create competitive advantage. John-Michael Donahue of the NMMA's government relations office and Scott Crabtree of YES/Yacht Executive Solutions tackle growing concerns regarding economic and political uncertainty. A panel of OEMs and top retailers wrap Saturday's line-up with a moderated session addressing supplier-dealer relationships.

On Sunday, generational expert Dr. James Pogue takes the helm to address how to manage generational change in the workplace, noting today's scenario which may involve up to five generations working under one roof. Boating Industry staff will present the latest industry market and sales data, followed by a Top 100 dealer panel pow-wow. The Top 100 gala caps the Elevate Summit, revealing the much-anticipated ranking of North America's top retailers. Sweet says this year's Top 100 has several surprises in store including new event experiences and a refreshed theme.

Other event highlights include the opening day “Women in Marine Leadership” featuring a panel discussion among six veteran female industry leaders; a presentation focusing on ways to energize future leaders, presented by Sean Bliznik of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management; plus a fireside chat with Boating Industry “Mover & Shaker” Ron Huibers, president and CEO of Volvo Penta of the Americas.

The opening night welcome reception will highlight winners of the inaugural Sea Tow Foundation and North American Sober Skipper Advisory Council’s “National Boating Industry Safety Awards,” along with spotlighting industry achievers recently named to the 2019 “40 Under 40” and “Women Making Waves” roster.

An “Interactive Exhibit Experience” opens at designated hours, sporting booths, a series of live floor presentations, plus sponsor/attendee networking activities.

“We’re pleased to attend the inaugural Elevate Summit and to engage as a Top 100 Leadership Alliance partner for the first time,” said Jeremy Bale, national brand manager for Kicker Marine Audio. “I’m really looking forward to attending the educational sessions and having an opportunity to network with an intimate group of marine industry leaders and top-performing retailers.”

The 2019 Elevate Summit and Top 100 sponsors include BRP Marine; Volvo Penta; Dealer Profit Services; Kicker Marine Audio; SeaDek Marine; Bank OZK; Northpoint Commercial Finance; Suzuki Motor of America, Inc; Wet Sounds Inc; Manheim; Priority One Financial Services; Gatorstep LLC; Eagle Extended Service Protection Corporation; Dealer Spike; ARI Network Services; Honda; Ilmor Marine; Vantage Resource Group; and TCF Inventory.

More information: <https://boatingindustryelevate.com>