

FDRA Prez Unveils Strategy

By LIZA CASABONA

WASHINGTON — Matt Priest, the new president of the Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America is using a fresh set of eyes to evaluate and revamp the organization.

FDRA is gearing up to tweak its communications strategy, services and physical office space, said Priest, who started work at the organization in February, following former president Peter Mangione's retirement.

Communicating more effectively with FDRA's constituency is a key priority, according to Priest.

"There are things that members expect in the age of Twitter and instant news," Priest said. "They expect the free flow of information on what decisions are being made, whether it's here or at the port of Long Beach, Calif., or in Beijing. ... Because at the end of the day, we're here to provide predictability and certainty in an uncertain global environment."

To achieve those goals, Priest said the organization will look for cost-effective uses of technology. A new Website was unveiled in the first few weeks of

Priest's tenure. New e-mail newsletters with breaking news and information from Washington, D.C., have started going out to the association's members. FDRA also is exploring how Twitter and RSS feeds could be used to provide even

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more timely updates to members. Additionally, the association's offices on F Street in Washington, between the White House and Capitol Hill, will be updated to include a work center for visiting members who are in town for business.

Priest said he would also like to expand the locations where FDRA meetings are held to include Washington. Histori-

cally, meetings have been held in New York and Las Vegas, but getting execs to Washington, where they can be directly engaged, is important, he explained.

"[Our members] are our best advocates here in Washington," Priest said. "I'm here to mind the store and make sure our voice is heard at Consumer Product Safety Commission staff meetings and on the Hill, but when a member can come in and speak to their member of Congress about the effects of certain legislation, that is an amazing tool for us as an industry."

FDRA's core issues will stay the same, Priest said. They include duty reduction as exemplified in the Affordable Footwear Act; social compliance issues; navigating the implementation of the Consumer Product Safety Information Act; and the pending Employee Free Choice Act — a proposed bill that would make it easier for workers to form unions.

"What keeps us sharp — what keeps any organization sharp — are the times we're in right now," Priest said. "We're in an environment where reevaluating our services and making sure we're providing the best bang for the buck is the assumption."