

| CODE PINK | OCTOBER 2009

# FashionMANNUSCRIPT WEST



## The Professional Club

ROBERT MAHL OF USI GOLDMAN SACHS INSURANCE SERVICES

ALEX STURM OF COHN HANDLER & Co.

MIKE EARNHART OF WELLS FARGO TRADE CAPITAL

JEREMY WEITZ OF BUCHALTER NEMER

# TAKING YOUR CAREER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

## THE PROFESSIONAL CLUB

1958 was the year. Los Angeles the place. A group of young professionals serving the textile and apparel and industries formed a club. At the time, it was a way for industry servicers to get to know one another, help each other out professionally and grow in the industry. Fifty-one years later, The Professional Club (TPC), formerly the Textile Professional Club, is still going strong.

Today, The Professional Club still serves the textile and apparel industries, but it has expanded to include related consumer products, such as home, beauty and related accessories.

Members cut across many professions: accountants, attorneys, lenders, factors, insurance providers, consultants, and other product specialists. While still L.A.-based, professionals from across the country attend its events.

"The Professional Club offers a good setting to catch up with people within the consumer product industries that one doesn't get to see on a regular basis," says Michael Earnhart, TPC President.

Earnhart, who is a Senior Vice President in business development with Wells Fargo Trade Capital, got started in the factoring and apparel industry in 1998. He works with companies across the Western half of the United States who are looking for flexible financing and factoring services.

"Some of the networking groups with which I was involved don't exist anymore," he said, "but TPC has sustained itself all of these years because our members know the value of meaningful, long-term relationships."

TPC Treasurer Robert Mahl agrees. "The Professional Club makes doing business fun, and in addition to doing

business, I've made some lasting personal friendships out of the group.

"Part of what makes TPC successful is that everyone knows that it's a two-way street. When you are able to give referrals to people you like and trust, you receive them back in spades. Down the road, your business, and theirs, is that much more successful."

Mahl, who is a Commercial Insurance Broker for USI Insurance Services, a Goldman Sachs Capital Partners Company, has developed exclusive niche programs for the apparel industry that focus on worker's compensation, stock, and intellectual property protection. He services middle market manufacturing businesses in the United States and abroad.

"This is my fifth year of involvement with TPC," says Mahl. "Because TPC is a volunteer organization, everyone can play a role that speaks to their strengths."

Earnhart describes TPC as "primarily a dedicated group of mid-level professionals, building their careers," to which many people have brought their energy and talents to keep the club relevant in changing times.

"We needed to bring TPC into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is why we had a website developed that allows members to view updates and allows them to pay via credit card," says Earnhart.

"We also get help from other members, such as Emily Heintz, Director of Business Development for the California Fashion Association (CFA), who helps with picking out event venues and setting them up," he adds.

TPC hosts six to eight events each year at venues around the city. The or-

ganization charges a nominal membership fee to cover costs of the club's operation, with a four-member volunteer board that runs the group.

Each member makes a four-year commitment, starting out in the role of Secretary and rotating through the other executive positions, lastly serving as President in his or her final year. Each board includes an attorney, a CPA, a lender and another professional. They organize events, manage the club's bank account, prepare its tax returns and maintain the website, which includes membership information, an events calendar, and photos from past events.

Events range from the chic to casual. Blue Velvet, the Luxe Hotel and Il Moro Ristorante were some of the more stylish scenes in 2008 and 2009, along with unique venues such as Tam O'Shanter's, Santa Anita Race Track and Dodger Stadium, to name a few. The board makes an effort, using member feedback, to mix it up and keep interest high, while keeping the favorite spots in place. TPC events take place year-round and are open to everyone.

"The Professional Club is inclusive," says Alex Sturm, the Board's current Vice President. "Anyone who touches the industry in some way is welcome."

Sturm is a certified public accountant with Cohn Handler & Co., whose clients come from a wide range of industries including a large concentration in apparel and textiles. They range from small, closely held family businesses to nationally recognized companies.

There are many benefits of membership, such as a personalized listing in the TPC directory, event discounts, and



ALEX STURM, JEREMY WEITZ, MIKE EARNHART, & ROBERT MAHL

“...a uniquely valuable organization for any professional involved in the apparel, textile and related industries...”

TPC's exclusive year-end raffle. Jeremy Weitz, the Board's newest member and officer as its Secretary, says that, “A key aspect of being involved with The Professional Club is that its members can trust that the referrals going back and forth are to people who have the appropriate industry knowledge and expertise. That translates into better service, and that's vital in any business.”

Weitz, an attorney with Buchalter Nemer and co-chair of Buchalter's Apparel Industry Practice Group, represents some of the nation's largest and most well-known brands, retailers and manufacturers. He handles a host of corporate and business matters for clients ranging from mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, financing and business planning, to licensing, contractual, and copyright and trademark matters.

“Much of my business has come from

my relationships with other members of TPC. This is a uniquely valuable organization for any professional involved in the apparel, textile and related industries,” Weitz adds.

The Professional Club has grown from its roots as a niche networking organization within the textile and apparel industries, but it has stayed true to its original mission—to create a setting for industry power brokers to meet, greet and form lasting bonds that encompass both their professional and personal lives.

Founder and first TPC President in 1958, David Kapor, is pleased that the club is still thriving. “We called it The One Twenty One Club at first. The name has changed, but the essence of the club—professionals in the apparel and related industries helping one another—remains its driving force.”

TPC encourages service professionals to take their professions to the next level by getting involved. “It's no accident that TPC is thriving five decades after its inception,” says Sturm. “Involvement in TPC can be very rewarding. It's all about what you're willing to give.”

Between 60 and 100 people show up for each of their events, and plans for The Professionals Club next big event are already underway. Make your reservation to attend the next event and bring your career to the next level, while enjoying doing it. 🍷

*Robert Mahl*  
Treasurer, The Professional Club  
Vice President, Apparel Practice Leader  
USI Goldman Sachs Insurance Services, Inc.  
Tel: 818-251-3054  
[robert.mahl@usi.biz](mailto:robert.mahl@usi.biz)  
[www.theprofessionalclub.com](http://www.theprofessionalclub.com)