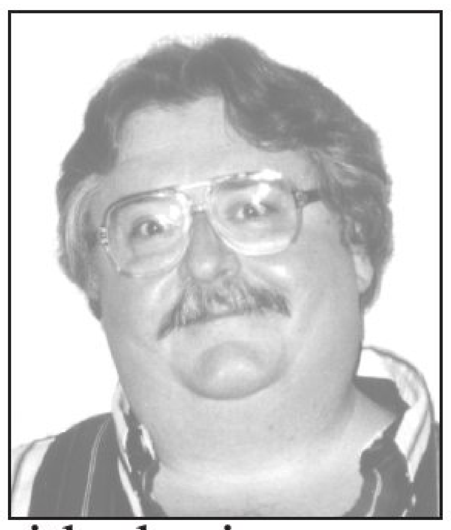
Plain Talk

Don't Hesitate to Participate

COLUMN BY ROB BUKSAR



In the April and May issues of the ERE, there is a survey which is worthy of your participation.

Now there are a bunch of you out there who don't take kindly with sharing your personal information. In today's world that's understandable. Of course there's some who just won't take the time and others who can't see the advantage in doing something like this.

Like myself most of you are small businesses. Since you are the primary player and don't have experts or the structure to delegate areas of responsibility, you've been saddled with the distinction of doing it all! Kind of a jack-of-all-trades but master of none. Furthermore, if you don't have good, unbiased criteria to compare all your business activities against (and you probably don't), how can you tell whether or not you're being beat up?

I'm a little embarrassed but I'm going to share a snafu on my part that might have been avoided if I had this survey info earlier in the game.

After trial and error I finally settled on an insurance agent who I thought was doing right by me. Like all good insurance guys he knew the buttons to push in order to get renewals.

When rates went up, and they always do, he had a plausible explanation. Besides, he really appeared to be a great guy, been with me for years, and had my best interest at heart. At least that's what he said.

Renewal time came around the first of April. My business package included workers' compensation, general liability, and building insurance. Premiums previously seemed to be awfully high. The renewal went up so high it gags me even to think about.

Nevertheless, I immediately started calling friends in and out of the industry for referrals. Everyone was willing to share a name and number of their agent and what they were paying for similar insurance. To make a long story short, I found an agent who not only represented better companies than I formally had, this guy also understood the rebuilding business and that's rare! I now have twice (and in some cases three times) the coverage for about 60 percent less premium.

My former agent represented companies that really didn't care to insure blue collar-type business. He didn't bother to tell me this little tidbit of info. They would take the business as they did mine but only at a super inflated price compared to what else was available. So they got the business and so did I, sideways.

If I had industry information to mirror some of my own business activities I wouldn't have gone with my "X" insurance guy to begin with, and would have consequently saved myself a financial butt-kicking.

Most of us have to rely heavily on outside services because we're too small to do otherwise. We can only assume we're being treated fairly by our insurance agents, CPAs, garbage disposal guys, uniform rental company, etc. The ERE survey will provide all of us with data needed to compare our own activities. How else can you tell? Just because you haven't run out of blood doesn't mean you aren't getting beat up.

The survey is a good tool and your only cost is the time it will take to accurately fill it out and forward it to the *Exchange*. Do yourself and the rest of us in the industry a good turn. Don't hesitate to participate in this survey and help the *Exchange* help us all.

God help the small American businessman and heal us from our indifference. God bless America.

Rob Buksar is owner of Hoosier Electric Co., Gary, Ind.