

Afera's 2nd Tape College: Q&A with the Secretary-General

Afera hosted the 2nd Tape College on 7-8th April 2005 at the Marriott Hotel in Brussels. Composed of three working sessions over 1¾ days, this industry-wide educational seminar is aimed at educating industry professionals of all areas and levels on the technical fundamentals and issues driving the tape industry.

The event was scrupulously organised by the Tape College organisation subgroup consisting of Technical Committee Chairman Lutz Jacob and TC member Chrétien Donker, along with Afera's Secretariat (including Secretary-General Astrid Lejeune and assistant Stephanie Feith). *Afera News* caught up with the S-G to interview her on Afera's latest event:

You've just returned from Afera's 2nd Tape College. Do you feel the event was another success?

Astrid: Yes, it was an unprecedented success. We had more attendees than ever expected this year—118. Our goal was to build upon the immense success of Afera's 1st Tape College held in March 2004. Again we targeted an audience of first-time participants including both member- and non-member companies—tape manufacturers, suppliers, national industry associations, converters, distributors and end-users. We achieved this and more. Employees who attended the 1st TC recommended attending the 2nd TC to many of their colleagues from a variety of professional levels and areas of interest within their companies. Thus we had many more participants than our original target of 90.

What kind of feedback did you get from the participants?

Astrid: It was overwhelmingly positive. As I mentioned already, over 50% of attendees attended the Tape College on the recommendation of a colleague, so we were working with a participant base with high expectations after the success of last year's event. And Afera delivered. The participant survey conducted immediately following each of the three sessions revealed that the areas which received 'very good' to 'excellent' scores were the overall TC schedule of events, the TC proceedings book, the hotel facilities and service, and the quality and selection of food. This makes for a very well-rounded positive assessment of an industry event. I read a number of individual comments on the high quality of the general organisation of the TC, as well as the presentations, slides, sound system and diversity of participants.

What gave Afera the idea to launch the Tape College in the first place?

Astrid: Afera saw a gap in the European tape industry which needed to be filled. This was a demand for a platform on which to exchange standard, up-to-date information on the basics of functioning within the tape production environment. In its continuing effort to add value to its membership, Afera pinpointed the need to provide a scholastic event for its diverse membership base—not just for top-level managers and technical and engineering experts, but for sales and marketing professionals. The style and format of the Tape College was then modelled after that of Tape University 101, organised by Afera's American counterpart association, the Pressure Sensitive Tape Council (PSTC), which has offered educational seminars for 26 years.

How does the event provide added value to the tape industry?

Astrid: This event is the only one of its kind within the European tape industry. What makes it unique is that the curriculum and setting are styled after a university seminar. The participants come from every branch and level of the tape industry, creating an interesting mix of 'students' and 'professors'. This type of interaction, combined with the setting and subject matter, has earned rave

reviews from participants. Our attendees' feedback on both events has confirmed that both newcomers to the industry, as well as those who want to expand their knowledge and increase their effectiveness, benefit from this educational course.

How does the Tape College differ from the Technical Seminar?

Astrid: The Tape College is designed for those who want to develop or polish their *fundamental* industry knowledge by 'going to school' with the experts, exploring the basics of design, manufacture, application and testing with tape industry authorities. The TC is attended by many industry newcomers and/or those involved primarily in R&D, sales, technical service, marketing, quality control, engineering and production. The Technical Seminar is geared toward creating a collaborative platform for *cutting-edge technical issues* and developments relevant to the world-wide self adhesive tape market among its most important industry players. Thus the Technical Seminar is routinely attended by top-level managers who are experts in their respective areas. Both events are open to all industry professionals, Afera members and non-members alike.

Where does the Tape College fit into Afera's strategy going forward?

Astrid: Whereas at last year's Tape College the participant base mainly consisted of management-level employees of Afera member companies, this year we saw many employees of other levels within their companies participating—mainly younger employees who are newer to the industry. 37% of attendees were from R&D departments, 18% from sales, 14% from technical service and 12% from marketing.

Afera has designed this event to reach member company employees as part of its top-down approach to raising member awareness and the overall profile of the Association throughout the tape industry. Our Strategy Plan as of 2005 lays out Afera's top two priorities as raising Afera's profile among all levels of employees in member companies and within the broader industry, as well as further expanding our membership base to incorporate all entities in the tape industry value chain. I think the great success of the 1st and 2nd Tape Colleges has contributed to the realisation of both of these goals.

What does the future hold for the Tape College?

Astrid: Afera plans to alternate holding the Tape College and Technical Seminar on a yearly basis. So the 3rd Tape College will be held in Spring 2007.