

NEPPA Spring Expo & Client Show Celebrates America's 250th Birthday!

The 2026 NEPPA Spring Expo & Client Show held on May 6-7 in Boxborough, MA, was a tremendous success as members came together to celebrate, connect, and showcase the very best of the promotional products industry — all while embracing this year's patriotic theme, Celebrating America's 250th Birthday.

Thank you to everyone who joined us! The success of our events rely solely on the energy, enthusiasm, and unwavering support of our incredible NEPPA members. Your participation helps strengthen our community and creates meaningful opportunities to connect and collaborate.

The celebration kicked off Monday evening with our Annual Awards Presentation, followed by a delicious dinner honoring those who exemplify dedication, leadership, and growth within our industry. With more than 70 attendees gathered for the festivities, the evening concluded with music, dancing, and plenty of fun thanks to DJ KJ, Kevin Johnson.

Tuesday morning began with an informative and engaging educational session featuring a panel of industry experts discussing Artificial Intelligence and its growing impact on the promotional products industry. Attendees gained valuable insight into how AI can be leveraged to enhance business operations, creativity, and customer engagement.

When the show floor opened, the energy and excitement throughout the expo hall were undeniable. Distributors and invited guests sourced the latest and greatest products throughout the day.

Adding even more fun to the patriotic theme, PromoCorner interviewed suppliers with the question: "What promotional product would have been most useful in 1776?" The creative responses brought plenty of laughs and perfectly tied into our celebration of America's upcoming 250th birthday.

From supplier set-up to the awards dinner to the client expo itself, attendees proudly embraced the red, white, and blue spirit throughout the entire event.

Thank you for being part of the NEPPA community. Whether you are a long-time member or a first-time attendee, your presence helps shape the future of our industry, and we are grateful for your continued support.

Kathy Lojaco, HALO

Lori Donovan, MAS, NC Custom

Committee Co-Chairs

Education Session

Demystifying AI: Packed NEPPA Panel Delivers Practical Insights for Promo

A full house of industry professionals gathered for our latest NEPPA event, where an expert panel successfully bridged the gap between "scary tech" and practical business growth. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees walking away with actionable strategies to modernize operations, remove bottlenecks, and elevate client experiences.

We received incredible engagement from our 30 survey respondents (26 distributors, 10 suppliers, and 4 business services). Notably, the data revealed a room packed with seasoned expertise: over half of our attendees (24 out of 40) bring more than 11 years of promotional products experience to the table, proving that veterans and newcomers alike are eager to innovate.

What's Next? Turning Insights into Action

Many of you requested an interactive follow-up webinar to see live examples of these AI tools in action. We are currently working hard behind the scenes to transform the panel recording into a high-value, easily digestible piece of informational content.

In the meantime, you can view the recording here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS0uMDBsBDs>

Your Feedback Drives Our Future

Beyond "More AI," your survey feedback gave us fantastic ideas for future NEPPA programming. You asked for deeper dives into creative marketing strategies, ideas for customer and team appreciation events, insight into different imprint methods, and tactics for competing with online companies. We are already using this feedback to build our next lineup of amazing, high-impact education.

Thank you to our hosts, Emily Codner and Abby Burke, our brilliant panelists, including Britney Godsey from Gold Bond, Jeison Ortega from Charles River Apparel, Javier Melendez from Walker-Clay and Halle Moore from Bay State and everyone who attended for making this session such an incredible success!

Lisa Fosdick, The Promo Playbook

Kathy Locajono, HALO

Professional Development Co-chairs

Beacon Awards Presentation

NEPPA's Awards Presentation took place on May 6th at the Boxboro Regency in Boxborough, MA, the night before our Spring Expo.

President Ben MacDonald of The Ad King opened the awards ceremony introducing Vice President Jessica Casaubon to present our 2025 Beacon Awards. The NEPPA Beacon Awards recognize the outstanding achievements of NEPPA members throughout the year.

NEPPA members vote to determine the "Best of the Best" suppliers, multi-line representatives and distributors.

The Rising Star award is presented to an up-and-coming promotional professional who brings new ideas, dedication and enthusiasm to both their company and the industry.

The Most Valuable Promo Person (MVPP) award, is presented to a member who has supported and participated in NEPPA events throughout the year.

Distributor of the Year

Walker-Clay, Inc.

Supplier of the Year

Charles River Apparel

Distributor Representative of the Year

Javier Melendez of Walker-Clay, Inc.

Supplier Representative of the Year

Nancy Bercovitz of BAG MAKERS, Inc.

Multi-Line Representative of the Year

Joshua Brooks of Brooks & Brooks

Rising Star

Richard Sakkal of HydraPeak

Most Valuable Promo Person

Tom Zuliani of Edwards Garment

Jessica Casaubon, Gemline

Awards Chair