



2025

SPRING OUTLOOK & STRATEGIES CONFERENCE KEY TAKEAWAYS

April 23-25, 2025 | Indianapolis, IN



PAPERBOARD®
PACKAGING
COUNCIL

MOMENTUM, RESILIENCE, AND THE BEST SPRING MEETING YET:

A Look Back at PPC's 2025 Spring Outlook & Strategies Conference

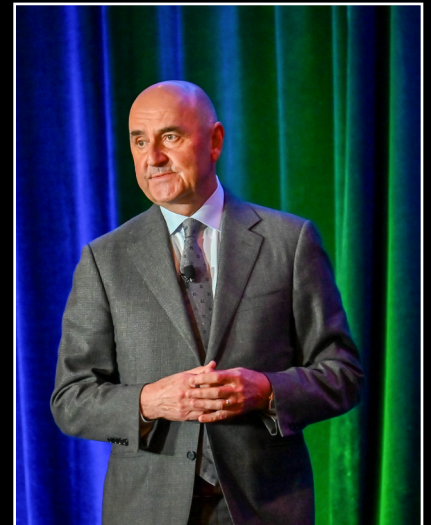
At **PPC's 2025 Spring Meeting in Indianapolis**, the energy was unmistakable: momentum was not just a theme—it was a spirit that carried through every conversation, presentation, and connection. From the moment we gathered for our unforgettable Welcome Reception at the **Indianapolis Zoo's Dolphin Exhibit**, it was clear we were experiencing something special. New ideas sparked, old friends reunited, and a shared optimism for the future of paperboard packaging set the tone for what many called our **"best ever" Spring Meeting**.

Our conference opened with powerful remarks from **Eric Frank, SVP, Marketing and Product Management at Koenig & Bauer, our Diamond Sponsor**, and longtime champion of the print and packaging industries. Eric reminded us that while technology—especially AI—continues to accelerate, it is human creativity, inspiration, and storytelling that drive true innovation. He challenged us to embrace emerging tools without losing sight of the human spirit that no algorithm could replicate, urging us to balance heart, purpose, and ingenuity as we move forward.

PPC Board Chair Steve Scherger, EVP & CFO of Graphic Packaging International, built on this message of resilience and leadership. In a time of economic uncertainty and shifting market dynamics, Steve encouraged members to recognize that while some forces are beyond our control, our response—and our commitment to progress—remains firmly in our hands. He called on all of us to view this moment as an opportunity: to adapt, to lead with confidence, and to distinguish ourselves through positivity, perseverance, and a steadfast belief in the future of paperboard packaging.

Together, we reflected on our industry's momentum as something we actively build, protect, and propel forward. From the main stage to breakout rooms, the spirit of collaboration and innovation was evident. As you explore the key takeaways from this year's conference, we hope you find inspiration, practical insights, and a renewed sense of purpose to carry the momentum home to your businesses and teams.

This is what leadership looks like. This is what momentum feels like. And thanks to you, this truly was our best Spring Meeting yet.



SPRING MEETING | KEY TAKEAWAYS

STABILIZE, THEN STRENGTHEN: HOW RRD BUILT A CULTURE-DRIVEN PATH TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

LISA PRUETT, *PRESIDENT, PACKAGING AND LABEL SEGMENT, RRD*

Lisa led attendees through RRD's journey in transforming its packaging business, which began with stabilizing operations, streamlining offerings, consolidating systems, and realigning KPIs. While these efforts strengthened the business's foundation, they also revealed the opportunity to rebuild trust, energize morale, and foster a stronger shared purpose.

Lisa showed how RRD shifted its focus to intentionally building a resilient culture. Through initiatives like Culture Scorecards, safety committees, leadership visibility, and recognition programs, they reignited engagement, boosting revenue by 25% and reducing turnover by 28%.

Bottom line: Stabilizing operations sets the foundation, but a thriving business demands continuous, intentional culture-building, powered by relentless communication and leadership commitment.



BREAKOUT SESSION RECAP



LEADERSHIP & WORKFORCE BREAKOUT

LISA PRUETT, *PRESIDENT, PACKAGING AND LABEL SEGMENT, RRD*

Session highlights included:

- Prioritizing attitude and shared values in hiring.
- Using peer-to-peer recognition and mentorship programs to boost engagement.
- Measuring culture through internal surveys—and acting on the results.
- Celebrating wins and holding consistent accountability.

Bottom line: Workforce culture thrives on daily, visible, authentic leadership.

THE COURAGE TO COLLABORATE: NAVIGATING THE NEW PACKAGING LANDSCAPE TOGETHER

PAUL NOWAK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREENBLUE

Paul challenged members to lean into collaboration to future-proof the paperboard industry. EPR fees will reward sustainable design—organizations must align now.

- Shared data is critical to defend recyclability claims.
- Eco-modulation will reshape costs—those investing in recyclability will win.
- Fear and ego stall progress—courage and collaboration drive innovation.

Bottom line: Sustainability isn't a competition—it's a shared responsibility that requires action, openness, and leadership.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: BUILDING LEGACY AT 3A PRESS

MARIE ROSADO, PRESIDENT, 3A PRESS, CORPORATION



Marie shared a moving story of resilience, entrepreneurship, and multigenerational pride. From a small Puerto Rican print shop to an award-winning folding carton powerhouse, 3A Press grew through consistency, innovation, and strategic environmental investments.

Bottom line: Purpose, perseverance, and passion are the cornerstones of lasting industry leadership.

BREAKOUT SESSION RECAPS



SUSTAINABILITY BREAKOUT: **PAUL NOWAK**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREENBLUE

In a lively discussion, Paul emphasized:

- Collaboration and harmonized recyclability data are urgent.
- Eco-modulation will reward fiber-based, recyclable designs.
- California standards will likely set national benchmarks.
- Building consumer education into EPR efforts is essential.
- Litigation will shape future packaging claims—data will be your defense.

Bottom line: Lead now on sustainable design, data gathering, and consumer education—or risk falling behind.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: STAYING STRONG AMID SHIFTING TIDES

DR. CHRIS KUEHL, *MANAGING DIRECTOR, ARMADA CORPORATE INTELLIGENCE*



Chris joined us virtually to offer a sharp analysis:

- Tariffs remain volatile but are settling toward more country-specific evaluations.
- Consumer spending: High-income spenders stay strong; middle-income resilience is crucial.
- Labor shortages will worsen by 2030 without major workforce investments.
- Manufacturing and capital investment are rebounding, especially in automation and reshoring.
- Inflation and recession fears are real but not immediate crises.

Bottom line: Agility, workforce development, and strategic investments—not panic—will define industry winners in the next decade.

AI AND THE NEW WORKPLACE REALITY

BETH Z, *AUTHOR, YOUR NERDY BEST FRIEND*

Beth debunked AI myths and offered actionable advice:

- AI will replace tasks, not people—embrace it to eliminate tedious work.
- Fact-check everything; generative AI does not “know” facts.
- Learn “prompt engineering” to get better results.
- Use AI tools like Perplexity and You.com for safe research.
- Protect sensitive data and guard against voice cloning and data scraping.

Bottom line: Thoughtful adoption of AI will make organizations smarter, faster, and better, not weaker.



CYBERSECURITY BREAKOUT:

DARRYL CARLSON, *PRESIDENT, ROYAL PAPER BOX*

- Cyber threats aren't just technical, they're human.
- Social engineering is the #1 attack vector.
- Regular employee training and phishing tests are vital.
- Cyber insurance requires strict adherence to incident protocols.
- Layered defenses, access restrictions, and password management protect critical systems.

Bottom line: Cybersecurity is everyone's job, and relentless vigilance is your best defense.

AVOIDING COSTLY EMPLOYMENT LAWSUITS IN TODAY'S TURBULENT TIMES

JESSICA ROSEN, *ESQ.*, PARTNER,
GREENWALD DOHERTY LLP

Jessica warned that AI adoption and DEI initiatives are creating new legal vulnerabilities.

- AI: Employers must establish policies, audit hiring tools, ensure human oversight, and avoid systemic bias—or risk lawsuits.
- DEI: Poorly structured programs could trigger reverse discrimination and retaliation claims. Audit programs, shift toward employee-led initiatives, and seek legal counsel regularly.

Bottom line: Proactive governance, not reactive corrections, will protect companies' people, reputation, and growth opportunities.



BREAKOUT SESSION RECAP



SAFETY BREAKOUT:

**GALEN KILLAM, VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER,
GREAT NORTHERN CORP.**

Galen and PPC members shared real-world lessons:

- Safety culture is built on daily mindfulness, ownership, and behavioral leadership.
- Incentives matter, but they must reinforce reporting transparency, not just incident-free days.
- Addressing cell phone use and mental presence are the top current challenges.

Bottom line: Sustainable safety is proactive, people-centered, and driven by constant communication.

HONORING EXCELLENCE: SAFETY & SERVICE

During our annual **Chair Safety Awards Ceremony + Dinner**, we celebrated the individuals and organizations that exemplify the values of our industry—safety, service, and leadership.

VOLUNTEER LEADER AWARD



At the heart of PPC is a vibrant, committed member community. This year, we proudly recognized **Andy Johnson of Graphic Packaging International** with the **Volunteer Leader Award**. Andy's contributions to PPC—from driving sustainability initiatives to mentoring future leaders—embody the spirit of service that powers our progress. His impact is a testament to what's possible when members lead with heart, integrity, and purpose.

CHAIR'S SAFETY AWARD

Presented as part of PPC's Industry Benchmarking Program, the **Chair's Safety Award** recognizes the plant with the most hours worked in a year without an OSHA recordable incident. This year's recipient, **Graphic Packaging International's Queretaro Plant in Mexico**, demonstrated their uncompromising commitment to workplace safety—turning policy into daily practice. Congratulations to **Plant Manager Roberto Anaya** and the entire Queretaro team for setting a powerful example and raising the bar for safety across the industry.



DIVE DEEPER INTO THE
INSIGHTS THAT SHAPED SPRING
MEETING—VIEW THE FULL
TAKEAWAYS HERE





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Indianapolis, IN

Spring Outlook & Strategies Conference

A special thank you to our generous sponsors — your support made this year's Spring Meeting possible and helped create an unforgettable experience for all attendees.

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PPC **NEXT**

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

July 30 – August 1, 2025

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Fall Meeting & Leadership Conference

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