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## ***ASTRA DIVERSIFIES MARKETPLACE & ACADEMY EDUCATION PROGRAM***

***NEW ORLEANS TRADE SHOW AND CONFERENCE FEATURES NEW WAYS FOR RETAILERS, SALES REPRESENTATIVES, AND MANUFACTURERS TO BUILD SKILLS AND GET NEW IDEAS***

***Chicago, Illinois*** (April 9, 2018) –The American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA) today announced that retailers, sales representatives, and manufacturers will find new education opportunities at its [2018 Marketplace & Academy](#), to be held June 10-13, 2018 in New Orleans, LA, with pre-conference sessions starting June 8<sup>th</sup>. In addition to more traditional plenary and breakout education sessions, full conference attendees will have access to:

- Lightning Learning (three to five great ideas in 15 minutes)
- Consultation Stations (paid thirty-minute one-on-one consultations on succession planning, store merchandising, social media strategy, or lease negotiation)
- OpenSpace Sessions (interactive, participant-driven discussions on subjects like industry trends, the aging population, in-store events, STEM and Q4 survival)
- Certification Workshops (intensive pre-conference trainings that earn attendees the Certified Play Expert credential or a Certificate in Social Media Management)

“ASTRA’s education programs continue to evolve, thanks to thoughtful and creative input from members,” said Kimberly Mosley, President of ASTRA. “At Marketplace & Academy, there is so much expertise and so many years of hands-on experience represented among our attendees and our speakers, so we are always looking for new ways to help members share that knowledge with each other. Our 2018 education program includes some fresh, fun, and fast ways to learn.”

In addition to professional education offered at Marketplace & Academy, ASTRA offers year-round on-demand and scheduled education opportunities, including certifications, webinars and downloadable resources to help members expand their knowledge base, exceed customer expectations, and manage their businesses profitably.

For information about education activities at ASTRA’s Marketplace & Academy or to register, visit [www.marketplaceandacademy.org](http://www.marketplaceandacademy.org). For information about year-round ASTRA education, visit <https://academy.astratoy.org/>.

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**About the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA)**

Founded in 1992, the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA) is an international not-for-profit trade organization that serves more than 1,800 independent retailers, manufacturers and sales representatives in the specialty toy industry. ASTRA is a community of dedicated professionals committed to providing children with healthy, quality play materials that have high play value and are designed with a focus on what the child can do, rather than what the toy can do. ASTRA members are leaders who, through their businesses, make a positive impact on the economy and culture of the communities they serve. For more information, visit [www.astratoy.org/](http://www.astratoy.org/).

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