Making major business transitions is always challenging; whether the transition is moving to e-commerce or specializing in a certain part of the business, it takes hard work, sweat and tears to bring it all together. Having a community of people who have shared in the experience can help.

When Affordable Treasures opened in 1986, the store owners, Sherry and Merrill Melin, stocked the shelves with closeout merchandise that wasn’t entirely organized around a theme. After it changed hands in 2000 to the founders’ son Dan Melin and his wife Katie Dhuey, the couple continued to hone the store organization taking customer feedback and current trends into consideration. Over the years, as they continued to refine the selection to suit customers’ needs, Affordable Treasures became known as a one stop shop with a little bit of everything; their core business focused around party, plus arts and crafts, toys, balloons, costumes, school and office supplies, cake decorating, gifts and novelties.

As a party retailer, Dhuey realized there were aspects of her business that set it apart from other retailers. As a result of the unique needs of Affordable Treasures, Dhuey joined Party Club of America in 2006.

“We felt very alone,” she said. “As small business owners, you don’t really have peers. None of our friends understood what we did, and we didn’t have colleagues to talk about the business with.”

The benefits Dhuey receives from PCA are more than just support from retailers like herself. She enjoys discounts and rebates from vendors that she says more than make up for the cost of dues. 

“Discounts from one vendor alone pays for dues for the entire year with PCA. Every other discount and rebate goes on top of that savings.”

She utilizes the imports PCA offers to obtain merchandise that her customers can’t find at big party chains. The peer support available through PCA also is valuable. For instance, when tricky human resources issues rear their heads, it just takes a quick post on Yammer, the peer support resource offered by PCA, to get responses ranging from whether a lawyer needs to be involved to solutions for simpler matters.

In 2016, Affordable Treasures opened their first e-commerce store. By adding virtual space to their brick-and-mortar location, Dhuey is able to sell inventory that wouldn’t move fast enough in her store location. On their Amazon store, they sell additional Halloween costumes and decorations, which has opened up the option to increase their import buys. By using the imports offered by PCA for Everyday and Seasonal products, Affordable Treasures has been able to sell merchandise at higher markups than they would have if they were only selling domestic products.

For years, Dhuey said she resisted moving to a point-of-sale system. She credits encouragement from other PCA members with giving her the courage to make the transition. And it was worth it. After the grind of making the change to a P.O.S. system, Dhuey finds that the powerful tool was well worth the difficult transition.

“We have to be constantly evolving to keep up with the challenges of the marketplace today. Being in PCA helps us gain the knowledge that allows us to evolve.”

To learn more about PCA membership or to get started, visit www.partyclubofamerica.com/join-pca/ or call Andy Richman at 800-324-7474.