

# Meet Nick Farmer



Nick Farmer is beginning his term as the first international president for the TEA. InPark talked to Nick about his past and plans for the future.

## 1) How did you get involved in the theming and experience industry?

I started my career qualifying as an accountant. It was a bad choice and a good choice. I quickly realised I didn't want to be an accountant, but the business experience I received during my training has been invaluable ever since. I then joined the toy industry, believing it would appeal to my sense of fun and lack of maturity, and initially so it proved to be. I spent several happy years marketing and exporting many leading toy brands, but then the toy industry decided it should become a clone of the grocery industry and there's no fun in that. So I started my own company designing and building presentation displays for toy product launches, trade fairs, department stores and so on. Then one day I read in the financial press about the 'amusement industry', and I thought to myself 'I could do that'. So I set off to become a supplier to the amusement industry and Geoffrey Thompson at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, bless him, gave me my first job theming a planetarium. I never looked back from that project, but I still feel sorry for those selling toys to supermarkets.

## 2) What do you hope to accomplish as president of TEA?

I'm truly humbled to be elected President of the TEA and I'll do all I can to repay our members' faith in me. The TEA is in the best shape ever, and the future holds great promise. My aim over the coming year is to continue to develop our existing projects while adding an increased international perspective. Over the last year we have successfully established our Experience Producers Initiative, aimed at greatly increasing our membership to provide a substantially enhanced skill resource for our clients. Experience producers increasingly are out-sourcing the skills needed for their new attraction projects and the TEA is well placed to provide a quick and effective route to identifying the creative people needed to do the job. Our new SATE conference – Storytelling, Architecture, Technology and Experience – has just successfully concluded in Orlando and will become a firm fixture on the industry calendar. Our top-notch Summit event and the coveted THEA

awards continue to grow in strength and prestige. It's not surprising our membership is growing strongly, and I'm looking forward to getting behind all these projects and helping them move forward. As TEA's first non-US President, I have a special responsibility to both ensure the health of our association in its American heartland, but also to develop our international membership. Our European Division is showing encouraging growth, new members are signing up in the Middle East and an Asian presence is taking shape. There's increasing activity in South America, and in Australasia too, so there are exciting times ahead.

## 3) What are some of the challenges facing the industry?

We continue to be plagued by feast and famine. Right now things are looking good and there's a real shortage of talent. Inevitably however, there will come a time when the work dries up for a period. In both cases the TEA is there to help. We can find the talent needed for new projects when business is strong, and support our members in locating hard to find work when times are not so good.

## 4) Who or what has inspired you?

I take inspiration from so many people and so many things it's very hard to pick one. As one example of amongst hundreds, I love Tim Hunkin's work. He's a crazy mixture of artist, engineer and inventor and you should check him out on [www.timhunkin.com](http://www.timhunkin.com)

## 5) Other than at home, where is your favorite place to be?

My favourite place is the Helford River, on the far South Western coast of England - there I can indulge my passion for traditional wooden boats. I'm a member of a rowing club there, where we row pilot gigs – six oared boats that used to row out to sea to put pilots on board sailing ships bound for Falmouth. It's the real thing! ■ ■ ■