In 1994, Allan Romander became one of the first CCAs in California, and he has diligently maintained his certification ever since. But for many years, he admits, that’s about as far as things went.

“I never really promoted the program. I did not tell all my growers I was a certified crop adviser or what a certified crop adviser meant to them,” Romander says. “That was my own fault,” he adds with a laugh.

It’s an ironic confession considering what Romander has been up to lately. After joining the California CCA Board in 2004, Romander developed a marketing program that nearly doubled the state’s number of CCAs in just five or six years. The accomplishment led to an invitation to chair the International CCA (ICCA) Board’s Promotions and Communications Committee, which Romander accepted in 2009. And now as vice chair of the ICCA Board, he is again making marketing a priority in the form of a new “ambassador” initiative (see sidebar opposite page). Set to launch sometime this year, the program aims to help local CCA boards improve their own promotional efforts.

In short, Romander has become something of a marketing guru, although he thinks the formula for success is pretty simple: Find a way to connect with the right people and then do what he didn’t do in the past—speak up.

“One of the best things I did [in California] was to retain a marketing consultant because with this consultant’s help we started to go around and talk about the CCA program and make people aware of its existence and the value of it,” Romander relates. “And the rest, as they say, is history.”

Learning from the ground up

Romander began his career with a bachelor’s degree in animal sciences from California State Polytechnic University in 1968, after which he landed a job as a field buyer for H.J. Heinz Co. in Stockton, CA. But in those days, he says, “a field buyer was as much a field agronomist as he was a guy who signed a contract,” which meant Romander was soon on a steep learning curve. One of his first assignments was to develop an agronomy program for growing new cucumber varieties that could survive mechanized harvesting—a new process at the time.

“For a kid who had no formal training in agronomy, I had to learn from the ground up,” he recalls. “And I learned a lot—from talking to colleagues, talking to growers, talking to anybody who would listen.”

Later, Romander became a district manager for Heinz in Michigan, but by 1979 he was back in California. After stints at an agrichemical retailer and a consulting business that he helped launch, Romander worked for Western Farm Services (now Crop Production Services) until he retired in 2007. Along the way, he handled an amazing assortment of crops, including canning tomatoes, apricots, almonds, walnuts, dry and freezer lima beans, cherries, apples, and even a little corn. “[Diversity is] the hallmark of California agriculture,” he says. “It’s an interesting region.”

California is interesting for another reason, he adds: It’s one of just a few states that require people