

MARKETING BY MARK EVANS



TALES FROM THE SHOW FLOOR

On any trade show floor you will find some variation of the “What do you think of this show?” conversation taking place among attendees and exhibitors. I had this conversation myself recently with many exhibitors at the Radiant Panel Association’s

(RPA) Radiant Expo (REX) in Hartford, CT, as well as with Larry Drake, RPA’s executive director. Not surprisingly, the answer depended on whom you asked.

Drake and I discussed quantity versus quality as it relates to the number of attendees at REX. As REX is focused on a specific industry segment, it means attendees are pre-qualified, therefore exhibitors have more pro-

ductive time with each guest. REX proved to be a great venue for technology products, such as controls and components. Canada was well represented by such industry leaders as tekmar (Vernon, BC), HBX Controls (Calgary, AB), WILO Canada (Calgary, AB) and others.

As an attendee, what you get from the show also depends on how involved you are. Do you attend the

seminars? Manufacturers often host special events that work in tandem with their booth display to get more time with customers. It pays to ask your major suppliers what they have planned for the show. Further, as a contractor or a wholesaler, consider which shows offer you the best return for the investment of your time.

Kevin Prouse is a branch manager for Emco Supply in Kamloops, BC. According to Prouse, “Regional trade shows that are more targeted to local markets have been popular in my area. When they’re busy, contractors don’t seem to be as interested in spending time away from their busi-

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nesses to travel out-of-town to the big shows.”

That said, many wholesalers coordinate bus tours to major trade shows. These trips support their commitment to introduce new products and technologies to busy contractors looking for ways to save time and increase profitability in markets where labour is in short supply.

Peter Graf is the owner of CL Plumbing in Lethbridge, AB. For many years his local home show has been the focus of his marketing efforts. “We have our own booth, which is supplemented with displays of the products we recommend to our customers. The support we get from our main suppliers (manufacturer’s products, displays and so on) ensures our success.

“Exhibiting is a way of keeping in contact with existing customers as well as meeting new ones and building relationships, some of which form over many years,” continued Graf. “One particular customer visited us every year for 10 years and then one day called us in to complete a project for him.”

According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research, exhibitor spending on trade shows can be the third largest portion of most companies’ marketing budgets, after print media and promotional items.

From the delegate’s perspective, when trade shows offer seminars, displays and special events they can pack a lot of opportunities into a few short days. While travel costs may be a consideration, combining business and pleasure will maximize your investment.

Look for tips to enhance the trade show experience in e-HPAC October 2007 in the Perspective column. **HPAC**

■ *During the course of his 27-year career in the mechanical industry Mark Evans has held sales and marketing positions in the wholesale and manufacturer sectors. He can be reached at writemarkevans@hotmail.com.*

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