



BRILLIANT MARTY! TURNING 'GOLDEN' LEADS INTO 'NO' LEADS

Phases of 'The 3 GOTCHAS!'

(First review: Part 1 - Martin Andras on Martin Andras)

It feels like you've contracted a virus — the inverse of Midas Touch. Every lead you call says, "No."

You work a show — long weekend — setup / takedown — post-show mental decompression — catch some sleep — hit the desk raring to call for appointments / find work / get jobs and . . . **POOF!** Ya got nuthin'! The leads you collected were set upon by a hungry pack of competitors. The attendees ('potential customers) talked to half-a-dozen guys that were "at the show" and have their bids.

Wouldn't you like to know how the hell you lost out *so quickly*? — To know why those leads went from a 'go' to a 'blow' in mere days? — To know why that home show (*ya got such a great price on*) turned into wasted time / money / resources?

"Who," you ask.

The now *former* 'potential' customers answer, "Acme Contractors, Ajax Construction and *anudder* . . . I can't remember the name — triple 'A' somethin'."

You think, "Huh? Those guys weren't at the show." You walked the hall and from memory could recite every competitor on the floor. None of those guys exhibited.

"GOTCHA !"

That, my dear exhibitors, is the first of *The Three Gotchas* — unknown bidders who choked your leads. (Never heard of 'The 3 Gotchas'? It's a golfer joke . Ask around.) All you know is GOLDEN leads are "no leads."

Who got 'em? The Referral Networks that exhibit in every show: home shows, chambers, fairs, etc; grabbing every attendee and dishing every lead out to *their* non-exhibiting client contractors.

Phase 1 — *Getting in on-da-cheap*

Businesses lacking funds for advertising opt for leads *on-da-cheap*. Where do they turn? Referral Networks. Guess where the Referral Networks get the vast majority of their leads their clients prize as the best available — the 'GOLDEN' leads. Answer: home shows. Home improvement expos produce (~75%) of their customers ... and show leads are very, very good.

Some exhibitors say, "*Why should I care about Referral Networks? They pay for a booth same as me, right?! It's just competition like any other.*"

We think you're wrong. The value Referral Networks receive is disproportionately unequal. They're like competition on STEROIDS! [Add an asterisk: ~]

~ A Referral Network can sell a single lead a dozen times, good or bad. That's how they earn. When they land a show lead on Sunday afternoon — say, 4PM — do you really think they wait 'til after YOU had a chance to set YOUR appointment? Really? **HA!** That lead was referred out, called by their non-exhibiting client contractors, and set for appointment before you unpacked your truck. Often, the bids are in. Sometimes, they've already inked the contract, and the deal is gone.

Look around, Bub. If there was a Referral Network (2, 3, or more) at your show, that's where the sales are going. [NOTE: A couple years ago, a Pheasant Run show had 4 or more Referral Networks.]

Phase 2 — *The Facebook Phase of Who's Who and What's What.*

Now, focus on Brilliant Marty and his perspective (Facebook posts) wherein you'll note the tight,

personal relationship between a Referral Network and Brilliant Marty, the show promoter.

RF: Hey Martin... Is the Home Improvement Network part of your show base?

Martin: Yes it is... Why do you ask?

RF: I am part of Petes' group for 10 years now

Martin: Good. He's a very valuable asset to the home show event scene.

He sends out mass emails to home owners & contractors, he advises where to host new events, & contributes to the marketing campaign early.

Hope he's producing some good home show leads that you are closing.

It's always good to get a booth at an event because you can meet your own clients.

Gets you more leads in the long run cause you get all of Petes & your own!!!

RF: Yeah I am very knowledgeable of the Home show leads.... I have been getting them
10 years now . . . *(emphasis added)*

Need I point out, this is direct competition between non-exhibiting Referral Network clients and Brilliant Marty's show exhibitors? Fine, I'll point that out.

It's right there !!!



I tracked "**RF**" down to see what home shows he exhibited in. Over the past decade, two shows we know of. TWO SHOWS! None-the-less, for "**10 years now**", RF's getting show leads from Referral Networks (they belong to *Angie's List* as well).

What's RF's business? Their web site lists: "Kitchen and Bathroom Remodeling, Basement Remodeling, Cabinetry Work (Entertainment centers, Bars, Built-in bookcases), Trim Work (Crown moulding, Baseboard, Casings, Chair railing and Wainscoting), Flooring (Wood, Laminate and Tile), Interior and Exterior Doors, Windows and Patio Doors." Another web site listing RF's biz says: "General Remodeling, Carpentry, Cabinet Refinishing, Handyman Service, Ceramic Tile."

The depth and breadth of RF's service and the competition they create is eye-opening when you're an exhibitor looking for any of those jobs, and they're buying up the same leads. And, your up against dozens of non-exhibitor contractors every time you participate in a show where Referral Networks exhibit (Home Improvement Network, Angie's List, HBA Remodelers, NARI, ServiceMagic/ServiceMaster, etc).

You're paying dearly to exhibit – to staff and advertise and market through shows for jobs that go to others, while scrambling from one "No thanks" to the next. Exhibitors work all weekend to develop a few good show leads, while non-exhibitors buy the very same leads from the Referral Networks *on-da-cheap*. Promoters that sell space to Referral Networks are working against YOU by diluting YOUR marketing.

If anyone can buy leads from Referral Networks, why exhibit? The stress, effort and resources required makes everyone ask, "What do I do this for?" Ans: Nothing is more effective at lead generation than home shows – even Referral Networks' clients know show leads are the GOLDEN.

Referral Network contractors (your competition), figure, "Why buy the mine when I can get the gold for free? – or, on-da-cheap?" They pay Referral Networks to do the digging.

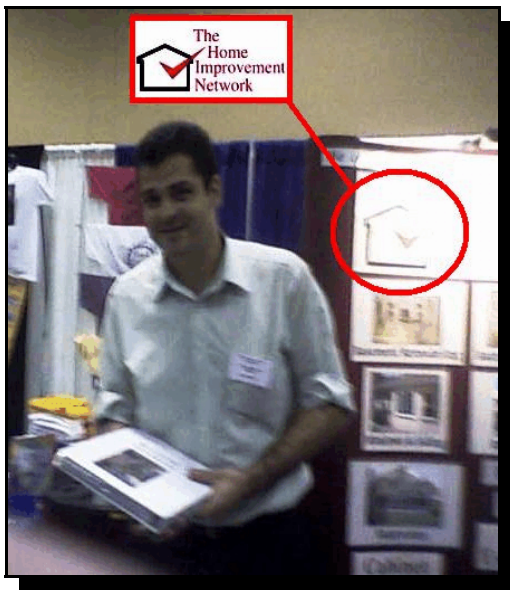
Unfazed by this Phase?

"What's all this got to do with Brilliant Marty?" you ask.

Obviously, there's more to this story than just some flattering remarks in the relationship he shares with "**Pete**" at the "**Home Improvement Network**" – "a very valuable asset".

Brilliant Marty also benefits from the "mass emails to home owners & contractors" announcing upcoming shows. And, Home Improvement Network "contributes to the marketing campaign early", meaning they pay more than money to get in his shows. And why not?! They just hustle leads. They don't actually **DO** the work.

Think I exaggerate how these businesses cooperate as they operate? Wake up! And read on...



Deja vu you, Brilliant Marty - A Flashback

Sharing this lust for leads makes some strange bedfellows.

Consider this pic taken at the Fall '08 Tower Show in the Schaumburg Renaissance. **Brilliant Marty** is working three sides of the fence. He's running one of two **Home Improvement Network** booths at **Tower's** show (under **John Maurer's** nose); collecting attendee info for **HIN** (list provider for Brilliant Marty's mailings); and, gathering Tower's exhibitors for his own shows.

Wow. A magic moment – like being in a 'Golden LEAD Triangle.'

Obviously **Tower's Maurers** didn't get the point. But, neither does **Showcase** or **Kennedy** at **Pheasant Run** or other promoters swinging the expo doors open for Referral Networks. They're tapping those *deep* pockets at YOUR expense – *easy money for promoters – tough post-show results for you* "Oh well," you say?

UPDATE – NOV. 2009: John Maurer of Tower's Maurers was fired by Joe Maurer (his father) and rumored to be working for Brilliant Marty. BRILLIANT JOHN! Well, that must say something, Joe.

Rephrase that Faze

You may say, "What can I do? I'm trapped. It's the nature of the contracting biz and growing competition. It's a jungle out there, Johnny."

We answered that. [See: "Referral Networks Barred from The Home Show" and, "Part 2 - Pulling Weeds."] We barred Referral Networks from The Home ShowS a couple years ago. Our opinion: Referral Networks conflict with our purpose and the concept of putting attendees and exhibitors face-to-face. (Note: Many Referral Network contractors receiving show leads use the ruse that they "met" the attendee at the home show, even though they've never exhibited.) We said, "no more."

Our Mission Statement supports this decision:

Our responsibility is the development of businesses for our exhibitors through the logic of collective action, and the fair and equitable management of the cooperative advertising benefits available through The Home ShowS.

I know, I know ... it's that syrupy kinda blah, blahs that may make you dose off. Yet, it's a damn good sounding board to know who to let into The Home ShowS, and who to cut loose.

We dropped Referral Networks to keep our shows from being 'strip-mined'. That protects our exhibitors from non-exhibiting contractors who shouldn't *benefit* from our shows; didn't pay for *cooperative advertising*; didn't act *collectively*; and, certainly didn't help in the *development of businesses for our exhibitors*. It isn't *fair and equitable* to allow Referral Networks to collect your leads and dish them out to non-exhibitors – especially under the guise of 'having met at the expo.' That betrays our exhibitors, deceives our attendees and defiles our purpose.

Allowing hidden competition to snatch up attendees through Referral Networks is effectively crushing every bit of effort WE put forth for OUR exhibitors. And that, my friends, is absolutely **NUTZ !!!**

Phase 3 – The Two-faced Phase

Digging below the surface, another concern exhibitors *should* have is where Brilliant Marty's going with his own referral business.

Oh, what! You didn't notice?! It reminds me of a favorite line from a movie:

"What's the matter? Did I stutter? Everybody got all quiet, and sh!t?"

*About a minute ago, it was like an evening at the Apollo. Now, all of a sudden, it's quiet as a church."**

(* You tell me the movie and I'll buy you a hot dog.)

Not only are the Referral Networks welcomed into Brilliant Marty's (and other) home shows, but if an attendee wants a referral, well it's as easy as entering your info into Brilliant Marty's web page.

Looking for a contractor and don't know where to start?

Just give us a little description of what you would like to have done and we will forward it to one of the great companies from our events at no charge to you or the contractor.

If an attendee can't find a trade at one of Brilliant Marty's shows, who does he refer? – the Home Improvement Network? You betcha. They exhibit at every Brilliant Marty show. Given the chums they've become, Brilliant Marty certainly kicks them the leads.

Phased out?

Taking this concept to an extreme, you'd think any promoter that sells space to Referral Networks could reach a point where self-cannibalization occurs: a show that represents half-dozen Referral Networks – no contractors – no tradesmen – nobody else exhibiting – just Referral Networks ... and maybe the Tupperware lady, chamois guy, some flea marketeers.

What an ignoble demise. 'Selling out' takes on a much more ominous meaning, doesn't it?!

These diametrically opposed nuances may seem irrational, *until it happens*. Then, what would that expo look like? And gee, I wonder who's going to pay for the show?

Even Brilliant Marty knows the answer to this riddle when he makes his last (and lost) appeal:

Martin: It's always good to get a booth at an event because you can meet your own clients. Gets you more leads in the long run cause you get all of Petes & your own!!!

That last pitch has little impact, however. RF's response was exemplary:

Yeah I am very knowledgeable of the Home show leads.... getting them for 10 years now...

If RF's "getting them" (show leads), why the hell would he exhibit with you, Brilliant Marty?

[Strange, ain't it? Brilliant Marty promotes home shows, selling booth space to a Referral Network who's clients AVOID exhibiting. Is he an example of an anti-oxymoron? Is that an 'oxy-genius' ?]

I'm at a loss for understanding how old world expectations will balance with these new economic disparities. Will they keep scamming the system until the system fails? Where's the hope? – The change?

Are YOU Really Unfazed by the Craze?

When Brilliant Marty was asked, 'What have you been up to?' he answered,

"Just trying to make a dollar outta some oxygen!"

(Oct 14 and Nov 5).

Peoples, do your research. Yak it up with other exhibitors, your staff and business advisors. Don't fall prey to clueless moaps 'promoting' you out of business. Show marketing **IS** your livelihood and **OURS**. Get serious about whom you exhibit with. The competition is tough enough, so when there's less out there than meets the eye, ask "why." If you see the *Other Guys* don't work for YOU, get off them fast. There's no time to spare – not in this economy – not any when promoters are just hustling YOU.

Support producers . . . not promoters.

From the desk of *Lil' Johnny*

Send comments to John@ChicagoHomeShow.Net

Yup, even you can comment, Brilliant Marty.



Since 1986 . . .

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. . . not just a 'phase' – an institution.

P.S. Sorry for the length of this Paper, but exhibitors need to know what's what and that takes on some weighty proportions when your business and ours hangs in the balance.

P.P.S. And yeah, I still have other thoughts to share about Brilliant Marty – so, read on . . .