

In the show industry . . .

The most offensive deceptions come from promoters who load the scales of *puffery* until they bottom-out your bottom line.

What's almost as disheartening are exhibitors that assume these fabrications are insignificant, or worse, believe their prevarications.



Living With Sin

Here's five of the most frequent sins:

- Promoters' Sins:** **Selling booth space to referral: networks / services / associations / competitive publishers.**
- Exhibitors' Sins:** **Exhibiting in these shows.**

When you're in a show, your competition is on the floor. You look around and you see them and know who they are. Right? Wrong.

When there's a referral service/network/association in the show, it guarantees a minimum of 3 competitors (sometimes as many as 6) will be calling your show leads before you unload your display and sort out your stuff. Multiply that times the number of referral networks and you can have over a dozen 'hidden competitors.' What's worse is they never appeared at the show, paid for show advertising, or stood all day talking to people you hoped would become your clients.

If you're anywhere in a hall where there's a referral organization exhibiting, you're facing *hidden* competition no matter what your trade. Referral organizations riffle show leads, selling attendees on the "pre-qualifications" of their 'club' – that requires little more than paying their fees.

Referral organizations collect leads at shows, re-selling those leads to their clients at minimum expense. They maximize profitability by selling show leads to more and more members. Their members often call upon attendees while you're still standing in your booth – the same leads you've collected for follow-up after the show. A number of exhibitors reported they couldn't even set appointments because the jobs were already sold by the referral organizations' members.

Our Answer: The Home ShowS barred referral organizations from our shows.

You no longer need to struggle with hidden competition.

We're the only producer that's written this into every contract – the Exhibitor Agreement.

- Promoters' Sins:** **Negotiated discounts.**
- Exhibitors' Sins:** **Negotiating discounts – then, complaining about traffic.**

By its very nature, "negotiated" discounts are unfair to the majority exhibitors in a show since not every exhibitor receives the same discount. If one exhibitor got a lower price than another, the *discounter* is riding on the coattails of other exhibitors who paid the higher price – benefitting from their advertising budget. It's unfair. It's inequitable. And if you don't know these secret agreements exist and are being promoted by the producer, it's deceptive.

If you received a discount, and didn't get the traffic you expected, you're missing the point. There's a delicate balance between advertising and show income. The impact that "deals" have on a shows' ad budget is direct. More discounts = less advertising. So, don't complain about traffic.

Our Answer: The Home ShowS doesn't negotiate. If another producer does, ask yourself why? Ask yourself, "How much do I expect the promoter's deal-making to hurt the show? – to hurt me?"

Promoters' Sins: Discounts to 'select' exhibitors.
Exhibitors' Sins: Failing to become a 'select' exhibitor and obtain YOUR discount.

As stated, "negotiated" discounts are unfair to all exhibitors – but they're unfair-er to exhibitors who don't ask. If you're going to exhibit with the *Other Guys*, and they're known for 'dealing,' demand a discount too! Start with *half-off*. Work your way from there.

When the majority of promoters are offering discounts, you're leaving money on the table if you haven't received a substantial discount. (NOTE: Some producers give away space, so don't be shy ... drive a HARD bargain.) If you're going to join these financially bifurcated exhibitors, be on the side isn't paying so dearly for booth space.

If you do the *Other Guys* shows, but don't get a discount, well . . . you're a "patron" due for sainthood, because you show no greater love than love of your fellow exhibitor. I hope that carries the day for you. No? Well, you'll be rewarded in heaven. Just don't expect to be rewarded by your employees, suppliers, or family, who could use the income your business is supposed to provide.

Enough tongue-in-cheek.

When you negotiate, you're still chasing *the dream* – a dream that your going to make a *better* deal by reducing your cost of exhibiting – especially if you expect the same results – or, any results. Every dollar in deals reduces show advertising equally. Plan accordingly.

Our Answer: As stated, The Home ShowS does not negotiate deals.

We offer Early-Bird Discounts, Fall/Spring Discounts, Multi-Show and Multi-Booth Discounts.

It's built into our budget. It saves us time. That saves you money.

Everyone gets all applicable discounts (even if you don't ask).

As for the *Other Guys*, you know the adage: *You get what you pay for.*

Promoters' Sins: Outrageous advertising claims.
Exhibitors' Sins: Accepting such claims without substance.

Yes, we've heard the *Other Guys* claim to spend \$60,000, \$100,000, even \$170,000 on show advertising. But, we haven't seen it. Without doubt, I can tell you if someone spends more to advertise a show than they take in, they'll have impact – *being chased by unpaid halls and vendors.*

More troublesome is the exhibitor that believes these claims without question. For example, an *experienced* exhibitor offered this comment: "*Maybe the Other Guy made a decision to over-spend on advertising and loose money on the show because, in the long run, it was a good business move. What do I care!*" I see they've dropped half their shows. So, how's that working?

Deception is in it's acme when it's "self-deception."

Any producer might take a hit on a show because anything can happen. To believe that producer intentionally spent the entire shows' revenue on advertising to be "*the best promoter in Chicagoland*" is just plain bull-(FILL IN BLANK). Their claims bear no semblance to reality.

Our Answer: The Home ShowS sends out an advertising placement report after every show.

It's what we did – not what we claimed we would do. Our ad plan has yet to be beaten. If the other producer makes claims you think are beyond ours, have them prove their claims. They can't? Well, then it's misrepresentation / deceptive practices / fraud. Call the Attorney General or your lawyer, but call them on it.

Promoters' Sins: Inflating traffic counts.
Exhibitors' Sins: Asking for traffic counts.

There's a big emphasis on traffic. It's the result of declining attendance due to: credit crises; gas prices; recession; and whatever other dark clouds are looming about.

Frankly, traffic is just numbers. I believe every nose that enters your booth is a potential customer. Are you treating them that way? Or, as just another number in the count?

The way I see it is those who attend are interested in the "3 R's" – Repairs, Remodeling, Renovating. If that's because the economy is slow, then that's all just right for you – The Home Show's exhibitors. To me, the 3 R's are always going to drive business, good economy or bad.

One effect I see is the economic "qualifier" of attendees. If people attend a show, they're there for a reason – you're the reason! They're certainly not filling up the gas tank to trip across town and stare amusingly at displays and exhibits. Don't look over the heads of potential customers in front of you for the 'big rush' your hoping will come. It's NOT gonna happen. Talk to the people and make every contact significant. You'll be more successful for the effort.

The *Other Guys* project traffic at 10,000 to 15,000 to 50,000 and, some, even MORE.

Our Answer: We project traffic at greater than 1 and slightly less than a zillion
(quietly laughing ... and hoping for the latter).

So far (over twenty years and counting), our exhibitors have been satisfied with the results. You choose what YOU want to believe.

Conclusion:

There's a theory that one should "love the sinner, but hate the sin." It's a reflection of the need to embrace your fellow man, support forgiveness, and oppose retribution. That's twaddle.

I believe the sinner should be challenged. Failing to do so perpetuates the sins and the idiom becomes a cliché. Unless you intervene and act, you can no longer expect a sinner to change their path than a river to change its course. My purpose is to cause you to abandon your apathy, demand accountability, and take action accordingly. If you don't do that, you're half the problem.

I write to help exhibitors understand home shows. I pretty much write as I speak – certainly, as I think. If my opinion, my views, my thoughts are educational then, purpose served. But, if you're angry because you realized exhibiting in the home show industry was undermined by deception, I can only offer sympathy for the *pain and suffering* you've experienced.

Yet . . . how would you know otherwise?



Since 1986 . . .

*At Your Service,
Lil' Johnny*

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... keeping the facts straight.