

ARRGH . . .
DECISIONS,
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- Price
 - Advertising
 - Service
- Choose One*

With the economy in a recession, most home show promoters only offer one choice. The Home ShowS offers all three. That's what differentiates a 'promoter' from a 'producer.'

We get calls about shows and the discussion enters these three categories: Price, Advertising, Service. For the edification of potential exhibitors, allow me to elucidate – inverse order . . .

Service

How do you place a value on "Service"? *Service* is an illusive subject. Individual preference and opinion defines it. It's generally unquantifiable and often indiscernible.

So, let's eliminate *Service* as a choice. Here's what you won't receive: a show layout to pick from the last remaining booths – "Prime Booth Spaces Almost SOLD OUT!"¹; a person to answer questions like, when to setup, where the booth is located, if you can rent a table / chair / electric, floor protection; show hours; an Exhibitor Agreement for record keeping and responsibility; answers to problems; someone to handle setup and control takedown and eliminate chaos; and on and on.

Something else you won't get is selection and retention of the best halls in the best markets by experienced staff held in the highest esteem by facility management where our shows take place. Think *Service* isn't a *relationship management* issue with halls? Then, call Renaissance Schaumburg, Benedictine in Lisle, Prairie Stone in Hoffman, Lincolnshire Marriott, Villa Park Odeum, or Lewis U. in Romeoville and ask how their relationship has been with their last home show promoter? [Read "*Rage Against the Man - Tower's Lewis Show Fiasco.*" Imagine how Lewis University feels about Tower's saying they threw a "monkey wrench" into their show – or, how Romeoville feels after being labeled "robber barons."]

And, without *Service*, you'll lose the *gatekeepers* (our staff) who say "no" to the hundreds of demands for discounts – *deal-makers* making their play to get in 'on the cheap' and ride your coattails. They want to pay half as much as you, and benefit from your contribution to show advertising.

Without our staff, there's no one to say "no" to the Referral Networks that buy a single booth and then compete with every exhibitor on the floor by selling every lead to their members. That competition never ends.

And, there's no staff to say "no" to people who abuse others on the floor, leaflet the parking lot, or block everyone at takedown because their truck is at the door while they're taking a coffee break or dismantling their display.

Without *Service* from our staff, there's no control. The show is disorderly, chaotic and riotous.

More often than not, what you get from the *Other Guys* is 'head games' instead of *Service*. If you need them, they don't respond. When you're busy, you can't get rid of them. If you hear they discounted your competitor's booth, while charging you full price, they don't answer the phone because they can't

¹ A favorite cliché of one of the *Other Guys*. Perhaps that's why all their other booths are 'StandBy.'

respond to your complaint without admitting you were screwed. Calls go unanswered because you're not paying them enough to hear your complaints. That's how they see it. If you expect *Service*, don't.

Advertising

It's a simple equation: *Every dollar discounted is a dollar taken from the show advertising budget. Advertising = Attendance = Leads & Sales.*

Since you've got a hell-of-a-lot of time, effort, expense, labor, literature-display-signage-etc., invested in exhibiting . . . you'd expect a Return-On-Investment, right? Okay! Now, eliminate *Advertising* from the budget. [*Crazy, ain't it?! – like holding a party and forgetting to send the invitations.*]

What's the difference between a lot of advertising and the bare minimum? That would be the difference between "no" discounts (our policy) and discounts to virtually every deal-maker (the *Other Guys'* policy). Of course there's degrees of *Advertising*, like "some *Advertising*." How much is "some"? Is there a middle ground? Sure. That's where some of the *Other Guys* can be found. The Home ShowS does all the Advertising all the time for every one of our 11 shows. The difference between The Home ShowS *Advertising* and the *Other Guys' Advertising* is vast and substantial. We tell you what we'll do – we do it – and then, we show you what we did.

A recent comment by one of the *Other Guys*: "*Yeah, if they actually do all the advertising they say they do ...*" "*Yeah*" what? Yeah . . . that'll produce a good show? Yeah, that will produce traffic on the floor?? Yeah, that will produce leads and sales for exhibitors???. Yeah, WHAT!?

We consistently spend a greater share of show revenue on *Advertising* than any promoter. That's worth restating – **The Home ShowS Advertising surpasses every home show promoter in Chicagoland.** That's called 'stewardship' over YOUR advertising and marketing budget. Who should you trust to handle that? The Home ShowS? Or, Tower / Showcase / Ryan? (((Brilliant?)))

Price

One exhibitor suggested we drop our prices to half to keep pace with competition, postulating that would "triple the number of exhibitors at our shows." That's a unique way of failing – *I'll save that for latter...*

Others have told us, "You produce the most expensive home shows in Chicagoland."

It's baffling. On one hand, we know what a successful production costs, or what it should cost. On the other hand, we've heard promoters – the *Other Guys* – give incredible deals, from: a "*few hundred off* (discount²) – to '*half price*' (big discount) – to '*4 booths for the price of 1*' (bigger discount)– to '*75 bucks*' (\$75) for a booth (biggest discount) – to **free** (the ultimate discount). Why free? *Because they need, to fill in the show.* (I wonder if, after the *Other Guys* say "free," they follow by slamming their fist saying, "*And that's my final offer!!!*" *If it gets any worse, the Other Guys will have to pay exhibitors to exhibit at their shows.*)

Baffling? You want the best *deal* you can get – the *lowest price* you can pay – we understand that. If, in addition, you want a well advertised show that produces lots of attendees so you can set appointments and sell them your products/services – that, we can't understand.

You get what you pay for is more than a saying. It's a reality.

Our prices are real. And, so are our discounts. We offer: Early Bird; Fall/Spring Combo; Multi-Booth; and Multi-Show Discounts. This year, we added an Expansion Discount to *Previous Exhibitors*. All this is to help exhibitors to act instead of negotiate deals "to fill in the show."

When a show isn't planned out, whether the exhibitor or the promoter fails to plan, there can be no stability – no chance of a successful production.

² \$300 discounts are literally *there for the asking*. They're so common, it's hardly worth note.

Back to the suggestion: *'half-price booths = triple the number of exhibitors.'* Well, it sounds good, if the formula actually worked. But, it don't.

Exhibitors paying cheap booth prices at the *Other Guys* shows – prices *less than half* – would have to pay more at The Home ShowS than they're used to paying, or continue exhibiting with the *Other Guys*. What do you think they'll do? Therefore, there's no broadening of the exhibitor base.

The cheap-*sters* (~70%) are predominantly the booths seen at Flea Markets and Chamber events. To get them to exhibit at a home show, we'd have to drop our prices so low, the variable expense and administrative headaches would be greater than any revenue they produce, and they still wouldn't provide support to show advertising. Their financial impact is negative, adding expense without benefit to you or the promoter. Their presence at a home show is non-productive.

They're also divisive and disruptive – a distraction to serious exhibitors with much more at stake. When the *Tupperware* lady is aggressively vying for the same customer as the kitchen remodeler, or landscaper, or window guy, you don't want to get caught in the crossfire. Imagine an attendee being distracted by an aggressive Cash & Carry exhibitor when you're losing ten\$ of thou\$and\$ in a \$ingle \$ale.

Finally, if the exhibitor base tripled, who amongst you wants to face 3 times as many competitors? What about twice as many exhibitors? (= twice as many competitors.) The formula doesn't work even with a 50% increase in competitors because, as some exhibitors have said, one too many windows / kitchens / siding / HVAC contractors / gutter guys is just "too damn much."

We let the market decide, while producing the best shows we can and charging *Prices* that are necessary to accomplish just that. (And, I have to ask, "How's are shows with Referral Networks working?- selling your leads.")

Final Thought . . .

We prefer serious exhibitors over *deal-makers*. It's the only way to produce a professional show.

If we stick to our *Price* (which is called 'charging more'), then logically, the cheap-*sters* will exhibit at the *Other Guys* shows. The competition their show advertising creates is insignificant. Here's why:

Exhibitors willing to pay a legitimate *Price* to exhibit in The Home ShowS will have the advantage of extensive show *Advertising*, resulting in better market penetration, producing consistently greater attendance than the *Other Guys* shows in, or anywhere near, our shows. By extension, their exhibitors can't compete with our exhibitors because their show's *Advertising* can't compete with our show's *Advertising*. (The veracity of this truth is a matter of historical fact. Think about the how many shows that cancelled / failed over the past few years (18 - 24), or are in the process of failing. A cancelled / failed show is evidence exhibitors rejected the promoter's shows and their plan failed.)

Though you might not immediately recognize the *Service* we provide our exhibitors. It's undeniably a function of stewardship and the responsible administration and management of your advertising and marketing budgets. *Price* allows us meet the *Advertising* budget necessary to produce successful shows, while offering better *Service* and maintaining good relations with exhibitors, halls/facilities, vendors, municipalities and attendees.

Hopefully, this cleared up questions about the true value of professional show productions.

To that end, we don't "compete." We "succeed."

From the desk of

Lil' Johnny

Send comments to

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Since 1986 . . .



. . . the price of value.

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