



HEARD THIS ONE?

"There's too many home shows in the home show industry"

Here are the excerpts from a conversation with an exhibitor:

"There's too many home shows.

Too many shows in an area waters down leads.

You gotta quit fighting with the Other Guys ...

... stop what you say on your 'cutsie-pie' faxes.

I don't wanna hear it - exhibitors don't care.

If I'm happy with the other producers, that's all that matters to me.

Gotta go. Thanks for getting me into the shows, partner."

His thoughts +/- My response:

"There's too many home shows (in the home show industry)."

I agreed, "too many shows," but I pointed out, "Quite a few dropped off the grid." He seemed generally unconcerned. ("Hummm," I thought. Could it be he's calling upon us to...to, dare I say, to drop our shows?)

For those who didn't notice, show drops included: Hoffman Estates (2); Schaumburg Tennis Club; Lisle; College of Lake County; Arlington Park; Lincolnshire (1 fall & 2 spring); DuPage Expo (across fr Pheasant Run); 3 at Renaissance Schaumburg; many at Rosemont; more at the Odeum (4 or 5 producers); Naperville - Skokie - Elgin - Frankfort ... all one-shots.

Promoter drops/moves include: Homestar; Show Technology; dmg media; numerous chamber shows; flower show (moved); and, the Home Builders Assn. of Greater Chicago.

Another guy said, "It's down to 'the five families' . . . like the mob." (Interesting analogy.)

So, the battlefield has changed. Why? Because, it's a "battlefield" !

That's the nature of competition. That's the way it's always been and always will be. That's the way I see it.

We have to dominate our markets (*the battlefield*) so thoroughly that all other shows in the area drop out. If there's no competitive shows to divert traffic, every consumer interested in attending a home show will attend The Home ShowS and do business with OUR exhibitors.

When The Home ShowS dominates media by advertising, it casts a wide net, drawing attendees beyond the immediate area - even from distant home expos.

It is a zero sum equation. There's no win-win negotiation. It's 'all or nothing. If there's a potential customer anywhere in any market, we want them at for our exhibitors.

In support of the 'zero sum equation' rule, show closures is evidence of success as much as evidence of failure - our success and the Other Guys' failures. We've grown. Every other promoter retreated. Although the number of shows is irrelevant (a "so what" issue as I've said elsewhere), we're the only producer who's expanded by adding St Charles for 2009.

Some hold us accountable as though our growth caused show saturation and traffic dilution at the *Other Guys'* shows. That's false.

Our growth has been gradual and deliberate. Over the past three (3) years, we added one (1) show (e.g., St Charles). We know the value of each market and we're willing to wait to secure the right facilities with the greatest potential for our exhibitors.

For contrast, in Fall `06 / Spring `07, one of the *Other Guys* had 14 shows scheduled. Now, they have 7 shows. In just 2 years, they've lost half. There's a lot of exhibitors' blood on the trail of retreat. My opinion: the decline will continue for that producer ... and his exhibitors.

Another producer (another of the *Other Guys*) has sallied forth and dropped back expressing great animosity towards us for having stunted his growth. Our fault? Okay. Sure. Thanks for the compliment. It's evidence of a job well done. That means we fought back further dilution of our exhibitors leads in those markets.

A third dropped virtually all shows of consequence. They continue to promote Renaissance which I think will be troublesome for years to come (see below).

We succeed; they failed = evidence of the 'zero sum' rule, don'cha think?!

"Too many shows in an area waters down leads."

In Spring `07, one of the *Other Guys* promoted two shows at Lincolnshire, held 6 weeks apart. Is that "too many shows in the same area - a single hall - diluting leads" ? Today, there is no Lincolnshire. They burned their own show.

It happened at Harper College in Palatine. We eventually beat 'em back.

It also happened at Schaumburg Renaissance. The Renaissance will continue to suffer from "too many shows." It will take years for that hall to recover. See other Lil' J Pares titled *Renaissance - Post-Game Analysis* and *Renaissance - You Boob to YouTube*.

If you joined this oxymoronic community of duplicitous exhibitors, don't complain that too many shows are diluting your business. You're diluting your own leads. No one can stop that but you.

"You gotta quit fighting with the Other Guys..."

First of all, I use the term "the *Other Guys*" to refer to other producers ... sometimes one, sometimes all. Any reference to them is in a competitive sense as B2B.

Secondly, who else is saying anything about the state of the industry? Who's offering any opinion of consequence? Who knows the home show industry from the inside out? Who knows it better than me? No one that actually publishes an opinion on Chicagoland home shows or its players.

Finally, as to "quit fighting with the *Other Guys*," consider this: Our job is the complete and total dominance of home show markets for the benefit of our exhibitors. When there's other shows in the same area (i.e., "Too many shows in an area waters down leads."), which show would you prefer to be in? The Home Shows? Or, the *Other Guys*? We're here for the long run. We're here to fight for our exhibitors and their survival, and that assures our own survival.

Is there another more sensitive and polite way to win the market wars? I don't think so.

"... stop what you say on your 'cutsie-pie' faxes."

He seemed personally offended at my faxes describing them as 'cutsie-pie'. Really?

So that I understood the import of his words, he emphasized, "... all the staff and all the other exhibitors feel the same."

I thought, "Good. My papers are being read by everyone - mission accomplished."

Marketing is nailing the issue by getting the point across. Telling me to stop saying what I say, well, that's anti-competitive business censorship. It's Un-American.

Referring to my marketing faxes as 'cutsie-pie' is like telling a Scottish warrior, "Cute skirt." The pen. The sword ... get it?!

[You should also know his company is listed as a reference on the *Other Guys'* web site.

Cynically, I remember hearing producers trade discounts for 'good references' — *could it be?*]



"I don't wanna hear it - exhibitors don't care."

If exhibitors are reading the faxes, how can they not care? I asked and either he didn't get the point, or . . . "didn't want to hear it."

I 'hear' exhibitors when I walk the floor, or as a result of conversations the THS staff has with exhibitors: "You know what such-and-such said? Well, blah-blah-blah." And there's something repeated from the heart of a fax/email sent long ago that gave a heads up to the unwary.

There's thoughts about how discounts, deals and freebies destroy advertising and traffic; good facilities and bad producers; about banning Referral Networks; and so on. There they are exhibiting in our show and talking about a fax I sent. For that, I'm grateful that those I reached did care enough to read them.

If you're reading this, you certainly think more about shows than anyone who "doesn't wanna hear about it." That makes you an informed exhibitor and an asset to us. Keep spreading the word.

"If I'm happy with the other producers, that's all that matters to me."

This offered a series of revelations.

Start with the idea of "too many shows." Then, skip right to his happiness with the *Other Guys* and that is "all that matters to (him)."

If market saturation is the complaint, then exhibitor participation in every show certainly isn't the solution. The thoughts are contradictory. The more shows he and other exhibitors participate in, the more shows there will be.

**Thus, there can never be too many shows
as long as exhibitors keep exhibiting in them.**

Complaints of show saturation with ongoing participation is an oxymoron. If exhibitors are happy with all the shows, then they're supporting market saturation.

Don't think for a moment that we're backing off the *Other Guys*. The reason there's "too many home shows" (for now) is because exhibitors are still doing their shows. We'll continue to work on that, year after year, market by market, show after show, exhibitor after exhibitor.

If you don't quit the *Other Guys*, we'll have to continue to out-produce them until they abandon our markets and drop more shows, or you drop them. *So far, so good.*

"Gotta go. Thanks for getting me into the shows, partner!"

I liked the result, even though troubled by the prelude. My answer, "Not a problem. Next year, you'll add more of our shows when fewer of their shows are around." That's my prediction.

Our responsibility is to our exhibitors. To prove that, we must continue to promote the best shows possible. We have in the past and we will continue to do so in the future.

More than two decades of productions has taught us the value of our relationship with each and every exhibitor we've had the pleasure of serving. They must succeed before we can succeed.

"Successful exhibitors." What a plan!

Lil' Johnny

That's my thinking. What's yours?

Comments: John@ChicagoHomeShow.Net

By the way, Bill, if ya told the *Other Guy* ya gave me an ear-full, ya did . . . *partner.*

SOURCE: www.ChicagoHomeShow.Net/LilJ



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. . . winning 'partners.'

