

# CraftSmartsNews

Volume No. 2 Issue No. 1 February, 2000

## In This Issue

- ▶ *Special winter trade shows issue*
- ▶ *Booth design and layout considerations*
- ▶ *The importance of having good literature*
- ▶ *Booth conduct -- do's and don't's*
- ▶ *Pre-show marketing tricks*
- ▶ *Marketing at the show*
- ▶ *Post-show marketing hints*
- ▶ *A word about exclusivity issues*

**Special winter trade shows issue.** A few thoughts to get you through the ordeal, maximize the effectiveness of your participation, and get a leg up on those pesky summer shows.

There is a lot of stress attached to doing trade shows. As an exhibitor you put a lot of time and effort into booth design, fixtures, literature and the actual product samples you take. Then there are the vagaries of winter weather, the dance of the show dates among the various promoters vying for the elusive buyer's attendance, and -- in the case of ACE particularly -- whether you get juried into the show, or not. The headaches probably started around September 1st. Again, why is it you decided to make crafts your life's work? You'll probably be recuperated enough by April to remember.

Your only consolation is that the buyers are worse off than you. They, too, deal with the weather and show sequencing, but at least you get to stay in your ten by ten detention area throughout the show, and have the luxury of eating, even if it does take place in your booth. A buyer, on the other hand, has to walk those miles and miles of aisles, all the time taking notes and trying to keep track of which new lines he/she saw where.

**Booth design and layout is the starting point. You have to get the buyers' attention fast.**

So you're in a show with fifteen hundred other exhibitors, and since you are a fashion jeweler, half of them are making a similar product. This just may be the time to ask yourself what you are doing here. They, whoever they are, tell us that we have no more than a second or two to grab the buyers' attention as they race down the aisle.

Your only hope is to field an attractive, well laid out booth with good lighting. Are your items small? Then get some monster graphics and hang them on the walls. Don't lay your craft widgets flat on the table; raise them up so that they can be seen from the aisle. Movement catches the eye, and hence attention -- get yourself a battery operated turntable or two to put up front. Open up your space -- you paid for a ten by ten piece of real estate, so don't use just the two by ten section on the aisle. Make it inviting to buyers just to walk in.



## In a nutshell:

How you present yourself and your line to prospective buyers has far reaching ramifications; your success depends on this presentation



Don't underestimate the power of good literature; use it before, during and after the show



You have to promote yourself in advance of the show in order to maximize its effectiveness



You are the star of your booth during the show; rehearse your lines in advance; it's all theater and you are center stage



You have more promotional work to do after the show; how well you do this determines whether or not the show was an overall success



You are going to have to deal with exclusivity issues, so you might as well formulate a policy now



### Elements of Good Literature:

four color graphics of your work; these can be post cards, a brochure, a catalog or sales sheets

An easily understood price sheet

Detailed contact information and terms of sale

An artist statement and/or description of the work

## The importance of good literature

More than a few exhibitors seem to feel that business cards and a pile of price sheets that are washed out copies of copies is sufficient. Nothing could be further from the truth. You've just spent \$3,000 doing this show, you probably have another \$3,000 invested in booth fixtures and lighting, and it's all working. You're pulling in buyers right and left, giving them your pitch and then sending them on their way after pressing that black & white scrap of paper into their hands. How long do you think it will take for Average Buyer to lose the connection between that piece of paper in his/her hand and your tasteful booth with the marvelous craft widgets? My guess is ten seconds or ten feet down the aisle, whichever comes first.

Do not underestimate the importance of good literature. A four color brochure or catalog, or even a series of inexpensive post cards, depicting your line in depth can be an extremely effective sales tool when coupled with a price sheet/order form and an artist statement/resume tying everything together.

Good literature has staying power. That washed out scrap of copy paper gets thrown in the nearest trash can. The good stuff goes home with the buyer. I'd say that the majority of professional craftspeople generate no more than twenty-five per cent of their annual sales from orders written directly at the shows. Good literature goes a long way toward making up that shortfall through after-the-fact orders being mailed, phoned or faxed in. Invest in it, and distribute it liberally.

## Booth conduct is just using common sense

Here are a few don't's. Don't sit down in your booth -- either in a chair or on the floor. Don't read or work crossword puzzles to pass the time. Don't eat while there are customers around. Don't chat with your exhibitor friends around buyers. Don't dress outrageously. Don't leave your booth unattended.

And a few do's. Stand in the presence of buyers. Make eye contact. Always acknowledge their presence. Keep yourself fresh and groomed. Did I mention shining your shoes? Smile a lot. You are the resident expert on your line of craft widgets, so engage the buyers in conversation -- romance the heck out of your line. It's all theater anyway, so enjoy yourself and try to keep the buyers entertained while you educate them.

## Pre-show marketing

Buyers have a lot on their minds. It sounds like an awful chore at best, and at its worst can be considered overly commercializing to many craft makers, but you have to get in the habit of promoting yourself. Taking a passive approach to your marketing efforts will not work in the 21st Century. You must be proactive if you want to grow bigger and fly higher. You need to get the attention of the buyers even before they immerse themselves in the distractions of the buying process itself. To do this you must do a mailing in advance of the show to both current and prospective customers. You are keeping a list of prospects, aren't you? This would be anyone who has requested literature from you, but not yet ordered. It's also that pile of business cards wrapped in a rubber band that you picked up at the last show. It's also a number of galleries that don't even know you. Check out Rosen's Top 100

Retailer list for prospective new accounts. Send them a post card several weeks in advance of the show. If possible, make it a four color one emphasizing some of your new work (Modern Postcard will make you 500 post cards for \$95). You want to get them interested right now, so that they block out some time to seek you out at the show. A couple of weeks before the show, make some phone calls. I hate those telemarketers, too, but this is business. Don't be pushy, but have a short story to tell, preferably about all that new work you'll be exhibiting. This is a good time to tease them with your promotions and specials for the show. Something as simple as free freight on orders placed

---

**“Something as simple as free freight on orders placed right there at the show can make a significant difference in how well you do.”**

---

right there at the show can make a significant difference in how well you do.

## Marketing at the show

It's show time! Your booth looks like it was designed by Martha Stewart herself. Your craft widgets positively gleam under your subtle lighting. You haven't dressed up like this since your cousin's wedding, and even your fingernails are clean.

Don't be shy. Engage the buyers in conversation. You know more about your craft widgets than anyone else, and knowledge is power -- so use it. Have a

short speech rehearsed that details what they need to know about your work, and why they should buy it. Take this as a verbal artist statement. Be specific. Work in testimonials from galleries currently showing your line. If you can look them in the eye and tell them that the XYZ Gallery, which is coincidentally one of the Top 10 Retailers of American Crafts, swears that the profits from the sale of your work covers their rent, you are virtually assured of getting an opening order. Craft buyers are a lot like lemmings in the sense that they want to share in the success of a line that is successfully distributed by other galleries that they respect.

It's polite to ask about the kind of venue these particular folks have. Are they in a mall or downtown? Do they cater to local or tourist traffic? Does it look as if your line would fit in with their other offerings? Interact with them and see what happens.

If you've gotten a warm, fuzzy feeling about these buyers, do not let them leave your booth without your literature package in their hands AND their business card in yours. I think it's an even trade: your one dollar brochure in return for their two cent card. These folks are now highly qualified prospects, whether or not they buy from you at the show.

## Post-show marketing

Whew! You're back home and it's only now that you realize how grueling these things are. Your friends think you have a wonderful lifestyle, and are fortunate to be going to all these neat places. What they don't understand, and you probably forgot since the last time, is that it's hard work standing on concrete nine or ten hours a day trying to talk strangers out of their money. But your work isn't over yet.

Now's the time to make those post-show

phone calls. You have two separate lists here. The first is a list of all your customers who you thought you were going to see at the show but didn't. This happens all the time. They flat out didn't see your fifteen foot corner booth, or they didn't come or...whatever. You're calling these folks to remind them that it was your line that sat in that now empty shelf space in their gallery, and that they need to reorder. And to pitch them your new craft widgets that you are dying to have them try. Offer to send them your new literature, or maybe even an "on approval" sampling of your new stuff.

The other list is your "be backs". You know them. You thought you had the order. You had your pen and clipboard in hand when all of a sudden they ran out of your booth mumbling something about (a) needing a lunch break, (b) being late for an appointment, (c) conferring with another buyer, (d) reviewing your literature that evening or (e) none of the above. I'd include in this list those business card prospects who appeared genuinely interested, but somewhat noncommittal. Your orientation here is to assure them that you are interested in doing business with them, and to resolve any lingering doubts they might have.

## CraftSmartsNews

Published bi-monthly or quarterly or whenever we get around to it by CraftSmarts/John Iverson & Associates. All rights reserved. To ensure continued receipt, please let us know that you want to be kept on the mailing list. Subscription to the newsletter is free for now. To contact us for any reason, we can be reached the following ways:

Mail ..... 2229 Paseo de los Chamisos  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Voice ..... 505/424-1261  
Cell ..... 505/670-1162  
Fax ..... 505/424-1262  
E-mail ..... john@jiverson.com  
WWW ..... www.jiverson.com

Call for your free initial phone consultation. All business issues welcome. This is your resource -- use it!

## Take our survey. . . .

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey questionnaire at the website. The information asked for is generic, and will be held in strict confidence. Knowledge is power, and knowing as much as possible about you, the crafts makers, will help me tailor content as we continue this journey. Results will be shared with all of you. If you do not have Internet access, please request a fax or postal survey form.

## A word about exclusivity

We have all had to face this many, many times. It seems as if buyers want an exclusive relationship with you for everything east of the Mississippi River in return for taking on your minimum opening order. You, on the other hand, would be just as happy selling both sides of the same street. If nothing else, competition in your line has a tendency to stabilize the retail price somewhat close to keystone, thereby assuring a faster turnover and, hence, more profits to you. Too much competition in the same trading area, however, and your craft widgets start taking on the look of a commodity item.

There is a somewhat happy medium, but its parameters are *ad hoc* and must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. It is legitimate for an account that does very well with your line to ask for protection within its small trading area. A suburban location catering to well-heeled locals would be a good example. A gallery in a city of six million people should expect no more than, say, exclusivity within its own Zip code. A small trading area that caters to four million tourists a year might not even warrant Zip code exclusivity -- just not next door.

So what's the test of whether this type of protection is warranted in the first place? Try to define the retailer's trading area. Then within that geography ask yourself if your line is being reasonably represented. Obviously someone buying two or three hundred dollars a year shouldn't be protected -- I'd be looking across the street to find someone who'd take a serious interest in the line. But if you're getting a couple of thousand a year, well....?

## A final word about the website

Go to the website at [www.jiverson.com](http://www.jiverson.com). It is here that you can start your journey toward becoming a Master of the Business of Art. Take the survey, sign up for the E-zine. Review Frequently Asked Craft Questions and check out craft-oriented trade show dates. Remember to leave me suggestions on how to improve it. CraftSmarts is your resource -- just use it!



2229 PASEO DE LOS CHAMISOS  
SANTA FE, NM 87505

PRSR T STD US POSTAGE PAID SANTA FE, NM PERMIT # 970
--