

More Bang for Your Buck

How to Get the Most Out of Trade Shows Part II

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THIS IS THE SECOND IN A TWO-PART SERIES FOCUSING ON HOW SHOPPING CENTERS CAN CAPITALIZE ON TRADE SHOWS. It includes interviews with delegates from La Cumbre, the recent Latin America Trade Show in Orlando. Part I covered issues such as selecting the most appropriate trade show, effective prep work, collateral material and message points. This article focuses on added-value programs, opportunities surrounding trade shows and the necessary follow-up.

Added-value Events

Pre- and post-trade show events and sponsorships can be useful secondary selling opportunities, especially for centers in the host city.

“Because we are selling the experience, our most important tool is our post-La Cumbre event following the close of the show on Friday,” explained Sally March, tourism manager for Mall at Millenia in Orlando. Her three-hour evening event drew 100 tour operators and included bus transportation to the mall, appetizers, a welcome cocktail and drawings for a \$500 shopping spree at the mall and another \$250 shopping spree at Burdines-Macys. “To promote the event, we tried something new in addition to the invitation. We left a phone message in the hotel room of every buyer delegate attending La Cumbre. This definitely helped get the word out,” March said. “The mall sells itself, and this function helps us to obtain our desired outcome, which is inclusion in the tour operator’s programs and itineraries.”

Kathy Anderson, president of AZ Travel Marketing and tourism consultant to The

Rouse Company and Fashion Show in Las Vegas, emphasizes capitalizing on the limited time you are with tour operators. “After all, trade shows are long-term investments because they are based on relationships,” she said. To build relationships The Rouse Company often hosts a dinner for key tour operators. This gives them more one-on-one time with the operators.

Karen Fluharty, senior director of international marketing for Chelsea Premium Outlets, sponsored the media room at La Cumbre. “This was thought out well in advance, because once we identify our specific international inbound markets, we put together an overall destination marketing program that details how we are going to most effectively and efficiently reach that market,” Fluharty explained. “Our decision to take a larger role in this year’s La Cumbre was based on the increase in Mexican business and our belief that the Latin American travel market is on the rebound.”

The sponsorship was based upon Chelsea’s desire to significantly raise the level of visibility not only for Orlando Premium Outlets, but for their

entire portfolio, especially Premium Outlets Punta Norte, their property opening in Mexico this fall. Fluharty took the sponsorship to the next level by adding an exclusive media event at the Orlando property. She hosted about 60 Latin American media representatives with cocktails and entertained them with a fashion extravaganza similar to a Cirque du Soleil performance.

Another benefit was the opportunity to use the sponsorship as a platform to promote their new on-line in-language group reservations program.

Having used the media room at La Cumbre to conduct this interview, it was easy to see its value. At any given time, 30 to 40 media representatives were enjoying the time to sit, talk, interview, eat and participate in frequent drawings. Fluharty measures the success of this type of sponsorship, by tracking the amount of PR placement in the Latin markets over a 12-month period. “Plus, we factor in things such as the Colombia TV station that filmed our fashion show for their travel channel, which will air on a regular basis,” she said.

Shopping centers shouldn’t forget to place press releases in the media room. Some shows offer this service for no additional fee.

Maximize the Opportunity

What makes trade shows so valuable is the opportunity for face-to-face contact. With so

much competition, without the one-on-one, you might get lost in the clutter and lose top-of-mind awareness. Moreover, this face-to-face meeting is important to maintaining and nurturing the relationship. Therefore, don’t rely just on trade shows, include sales calls with your important tour operators. If you are attending a trade show in another country, take advantage of the fact that you have already spent the money and time to travel there and take a couple of extra days to make sales calls. Partner with your hotels or nearby attractions.

When you meet with tour operators, remember it is not all about you. This is your opportunity to find out what they are looking for, what is selling and how you can provide what they need. Find out what it takes to get your shopping center’s program into their itinerary book, perhaps even with a photo and a description of your programs.

“At Chelsea we find these types of shows valuable because they give us the chance to meet suppliers face-to-face, and this creates an environment for generating new ideas and new ways to work together,” explained Jean Guinup, eastern region director of marketing for Chelsea Premium Outlets.

If you still find trade shows too much for your budget, consider sharing a booth with a partner hotel. Or share with the competition! Budget challenges led us to form the co-brand “New York City’s Historic Shopping and Dining Attractions – South Street Seaport and Grand Central Terminal.” The tour operators love the fact that they can include both

projects in one itinerary.

While you attend the show, visit the other exhibitors and network. See what kind of partnerships you can develop with other suppliers. Visit the receptive tour operators who are also exhibiting. Pay attention to what displays seem to attract the most attention. What are the tour operators seeking? What is your competition selling? Keep your display and message clear and coherent. The days of elaborate, expensive displays are, fortunately, gone.

If there is an opportunity to add additional appointments have a strategic plan. Know before going who you want to see but could not get an appointment with. Secondly, know your strong markets and go to the section with those countries (many shows set up the "hand-scheduling" session by grouping tour operators together from the same country).

Follow Up after the Trade Show

Successful trade show efforts are all about follow-up. For Anderson and The Rouse Company, that means not only sending the requested follow-up material but also keeping in touch throughout the year. It is important to maintain an updated database.

"In addition to tour operator and media follow-up, we write a recap report for our centers and management that provides a detailed summary of the meetings and opportunities as well as the specifics of business trends and information requested. Often the discussions we have with the tour operators help us clarify what is and is not

selling so we are better prepared to develop offers and services in key destinations to meet each operator's individual needs," Anderson said.

"Phone and e-mail are important follow-up but do not replace that constant face-to-face you get when you participate in the appropriate trade shows on a regular bases," said Guinup. If a shopping center

developer is really serious about developing an international clientele, you have to be active in the trade shows. Certainly, shows within the markets are best, but if the budget does not allow it, at least participate in shows like La Cumbre and Pow Wow that bring in the international buyers.

Work the shows – before, during and after. Understand

the peculiarities of overseas markets, especially if you are participating in an in-market show in another country. I remember working one with index cards in hand because the tour operators' stamped them with their information instead of handing out business cards!

Many overseas shows are not appointment-driven, and you have to rely on the tour operators coming to your booth — all the more reason to redouble your pre-show efforts so they know you are going to be there and want to see them.

Develop and maintain your contacts. Follow up on all leads. Keep a current database such as ACT! or whatever works for you. Do detailed recap reports for your management focusing on ROI. Finally, bring plenty of business cards and take the opportunity to network, not only meeting people but also learning something new from them! ■

CJF Marketing International offers a range of services for creating and implementing strategic tourism, economic development and marketing programs for shopping centers, urban entertainment projects, downtown retail districts, communities and commercial properties globally. The firm also offers educational programs and seminars for corporate meeting planners, shopping center developers, communities and re-development agencies. Feimster can be reached by phone at 732/249-6080 or by fax at 732/545-3138. Visit her website at cjfmarketinginternational.com.

Checklist for _____ Trade Show

Date:

Location:

- Display. Floor display or tabletop?
- Rack brochures/directory. Quantity based on the type of show
- Any additional collateral material appropriate to the shopping center
- Giveaways. Something small displayed on the table and sometimes something more elaborate for top producers
- Basket for the gifts
- Press releases
- Shopping packages
- Lots of business cards
- Presentation sales book with photos
- Tour operator lead sheets
- Stapler, scissors, tape
- Rubberbands for posters
- Clips, envelopes to organize business cards
- Notebook for all lead sheets, profiles, etc.
- Two plexiglass holders to hold the rack brochures and two business card holders.
- Appropriate translations, depending on the show
- Print out the profiles of the tour operators you are meeting with in advance. (I put this material and a lead sheet for every operator in a three-ring notebook.)
- Sales kits, preferably on CD

Include:

- General info, including a fact sheet
- Shopping/dining package
- Group programs
- FIT programs
- Press release
- Coupon book sample
- Rack brochure
- Copy of the home page of your web site
- Business card
- Delivery information and phone numbers