



Bcmc & Your Business Plan

Exhibitor Connections

by Emmy Thorson-Hanson

"When it comes to making connections nothing replaces looking someone in the eye and shaking their hand."
—Linda Resch, Viking WPS

There is no doubt about it...exhibiting at BCMC takes time and money. When companies consider exhibiting there are many questions to be answered, like...If we exhibit, what size booth should we have? How much staff time will it require? Should we bring equipment? Some may even ask, When times are tough like they are now, is it still worth coming to BCMC?

These were the same questions going through Linda Resch's mind early in 2007 when she was trying to make the decision on whether Viking WPS would exhibit at BCMC in Columbus. Viking is a 60-person company whose wall panel division accounts for just five to ten percent of their business, so the decision to exhibit is a significant one.

"If we do come and take equipment it's a substantial chunk of our marketing budget each year," shared Resch. "We have to consider what our cost is, and what the pay-back is. We went round and round last year. We missed the early-bird deadline because we were still debating."

Resch wanted to be sure the Viking trade show group was making the most informed decision possible, so she kept a close eye on industry trends. She also monitored the BCMC site to see who was exhibiting in Columbus and what the booth sizes were.

Bringing equipment gives people a reason to stop at an exhibitor's booth.

Although they were hesitant in coming to a conclusion, the group felt very strongly about how things should be done if Viking did decide to exhibit. One such issue that quickly became non-negotiable was whether or not to bring equipment.

"There are a few reasons to bring equipment," said Resch. "Perhaps someone will be interested in your solutions. But the best reason is because it gives people a reason to stop." So when it was suggested that they not bring equipment to cut costs, the Viking trade show group quickly decided that was not an option.

"Dean Bodem (president of Viking) stated in one of the trade show meetings, 'If we are going to attend at all, we are going to ATTEND. We aren't going to just do it halfway, even if the attendee numbers are down.'"

Making the Decision

In the end, one of the reasons that Viking decided to exhibit was because of the type of people that go to BCMC. "At BCMC a large percentage of attendees are WTCA members that have already made the business decision and commitment to be part of the industry by belonging to the association," explained Resch.

"Generally when they care enough to be part of an association they are more than willing to help us provide solutions for the changing marketplace." She continued, "If they are showing up to the tradeshow then they are paying attention to what is going on, which makes their input invaluable to us."

Continued on page 20



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at a glance

- At association tradeshows, attendees tend to be more attentive and dedicated.
- BCMC is a channel to providing better customer service through connections made at the show.
- Regardless of the state of the housing market, exhibitors will find value in coming to BCMC.

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400 - 600	\$10.10	\$13.20	\$12.20	\$16.00
700 - 1,000	\$ 9.55	\$12.50	\$11.15	\$14.60
1,100 - 2,000	\$ 9.00	\$11.80	\$10.10	\$13.20
2,100 - 4,000	\$ 8.20	\$10.80	\$ 9.30	\$12.15
Over 4,000	\$ 7.40	\$ 9.75	\$ 8.50	\$11.10

*If you are exhibiting a trailer, crane, or forklift contact Jan (jpauli@qualtim.com) or Stephanie (swatrud@qualtim.com)

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Continued from page 18

Successful vendors are always looking to gain a better understanding of their customers' needs, as well as a general knowledge of their markets. And exhibiting at BCMC sets the stage for accomplishing it, Resch said. "After the show we go over what we're hearing is working and not working, and what the customers are asking for," said Resch. "We have never gone to BCMC and not come back with a better understanding of what the industry needs and is looking for."

BCMC: The Single Best Opportunity

"No. Why should we?" This was Resch's matter-of-fact response when asked if Viking exhibits their wall panel product line at other tradeshow. "Those other shows are so broad based that we are just a little fish among thousands. At BCMC, showing up there means something," she emphasized. "There is a much higher percentage of people walking through the door that are interested in our solutions."

"I've been doing trade shows for 25 years, and from an exhibitor's perspective, BCMC is consistently the most well run show across several industries," stated Resch. "BCMC is the single best opportunity for us to have good face time with people, meet our target market, and to find out what's going on in the industry."

Key Connections

According to Resch, BCMC isn't just about getting sales leads and prospects, it's about making connections. What's the difference? "I define connections as relationships that are mutually beneficial in one way or another, and not necessarily in terms of money," explained Resch.

Since Viking makes solely wall panel manufacturing equipment, Resch feels that "connections" are of even more importance to her company. "We don't offer all of the tools needed for a business to be successful," shared Resch. "So what a great opportunity it is to meet fellow vendors/suppliers and listen to them explain their business offerings so that I am better able to help our clients find the right solution for them, whether they need a solution we have or something else."

Resch also feels that the partnerships she gains with fellow exhibitors (who aren't direct competitors) helps her serve her customer's best interests better. "BCMC is a channel for providing better customer service because it gives you a better understanding and closer relationship with people who provide solutions that are complimentary to what you offer."

"It really comes in handy when I have a customer who needs something we don't have a solution for, but I can tell them 'here is who you should call for that.' I don't know of any other place besides BCMC where you will make those kinds of connections."

Lessons Learned

After all is said and done, Resch came away from the BCMC 2007 experience with more than just connections and what she learned about the industry. She gained a different perspective and a new appreciation for the show. "I showed up to Columbus thinking 'I don't know how this is going to go. I don't know what we'll learn, who will be here or who we'll talk to.' I was one of the people who thought we should stay home. I'll admit I was wrong," she said.

"Here's what I found: When times are good, people show up to BCMC and it's very social and kind of like a little party break. It's a trip that is used as a reward system," observed Resch. "But when times are tougher, the people attending are more of the decision-makers. In Columbus they had very specific strategic business needs that they were trying to find solutions for. There was more focus this year."

No one knows what 2008 will bring for the industry. Regardless of the economy and housing market, one thing is for sure—anyone who makes the decision to exhibit at BCMC in Denver will not walk away empty-handed. **SBC**

BCMC 2008 is October 1-3 in Denver, CO. For more information, visit www.bcmshow.com.

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