

Association Sales & Marketing

IDEAS FOR ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES

Is It Time to Start Thinking More Like a Retail Store and Less Like an Association?

Many associations today are struggling with what to do about decreasing revenues from the sale of advertising, exhibits and sponsorships. Many continue to see a flattening or decline in the sale of these important sources of income and have tried ways to turn this trend around with limited success. But, as hard as the association marketplace has been hit with the effects of declining sales, no industry has been more impacted than the retail industry. We have witnessed the challenges faced by many of the largest store brands including such companies as FAO Schwartz and Circuit City which at one time were leaders of their market sectors and are no longer to be found. Other retailers have closed stores or shifted to online only sales. But, there are some retailers who have strongly survived and, in fact, have found new strengths in the changing economy.

Michael's is a national chain that sells a large variety of arts and crafts supplies as well as seasonal decorative goods to be used in consumer's homes. These are large stores selling thousands of products most of which sell for under \$10 each. So what is the key to their success? They have established themselves as the expert on custom framing and offer this service in each of their stores. I am an amateur

photographer and when I have a picture enlarged that I want to frame, I head to Michael's. The staff in the framing department is very knowledgeable about their lines of frames and are extremely helpful to me in

choosing the right frame and color of matting to bring out the best of my photos. They have a video system that can display an image of my photo in the exact frame and matting as the finished product will be, and the quality of the workmanship of the finished product is excellent. They are my go-

to retailer when I need custom framing.

Another store that I love is The Container Store. Here, they sell hundreds of containers designed to hold all of my household goods for every room in my house by offering a wide range of product sizes and features each designed to help me keep my home better organized. Most of the products in the store are priced under \$20, but they offer something that no other retailer offers. They sell two lines of custom closet organizing systems that maximize the space and functionality of each of the closets in my home. I can organize clothes and other items in an efficient, attractive, and accessible way while maximizing the storage capacity of each of my closets. I go to the store with the dimensions of each of my storage spaces and a highly trained and knowledgeable person

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custom designs my space and then shows me a color rendering of how each wall will look. Over the years, I have done all of the closets in my home (as well as my garage) and have always found the experience to be positive. The products are very well made, durable, and effective in solving my home organization challenges and the personal touch of working with a designer adds value to the overall experience.

What do these two stores have in common that makes them successful? It's really simple. They require the customer to come into the store to purchase their most expensive specialty products. I can't have my picture framed online. I need to bring it to the store in order for their framing expert to look at the photo and help me choose the best combination of frame and matting to enhance my picture. Although I can purchase frames from a number of online sources, I can't receive the level of service that I get when I am in the store at the framing department and can see the many options that are available and how each will work best with my picture. I can also buy closet organizing products from other sources (both retail and online), but none offers the level of expertise and value that comes from going into the store, seeing the products on full display and receiving the personal service that assures that I get the right solution that will work for me, my family, and my home. Both of these successful retailers have found that by offering a higher priced custom service which requires the customer to physically come into the store, they increase their revenue, provide a unique service that is of great value to their customers, and take advantage

of the customers' presence in the store to sell them complimentary products. It's a win-win relationship that is working for these retailers every day.

I am not suggesting that associations open retail stores to stay competitive, but I am suggesting that associations look at this and determine the things they do best and which are also unique and valuable to their customers and prospects. These are some ideas on possible solutions:

Identify what makes your association and its products unique and sets them apart from all of the other offerings available in your market. What value does your brand offer the industry or profession it serves and then look for the best ways to enhance that value in the eyes of your customers. Industry suppliers are looking for ways to tell their story to their customers and prospects and your association may offer the best way for them to do just that. Enhance the relationships between your members and industry suppliers. Just like a customer has to walk into a Michael's or Container Store to receive the best service, you should establish your association and its products as the best place for buyers and sellers to meet and where business is successfully conducted. Create an environment in all of your products where both members and vendors are welcomed and can interact with each other. Your convention and tradeshow are already doing this, but see how you can extend this model to your electronic, print and sponsorships sales, as well. Each of them should be an inviting place for industry suppliers to inform your members about the products and services they offer.

Advertising Sales Experts Introduces New Content Marketing Program for Associations

In today's sophisticated marketing environment, industry suppliers are looking for new and innovative ways to deliver information about their products and services to their audience. Purchasing advertising space, either in a print or on-line product, used to be sufficient, but the trend is now for advertisers to want more for their investment than just the space they are buying. This has resulted in many publishers offering content solutions to their supplier communities.

Advertising Sales Experts has developed an exciting new program for the development of a content marketing or native advertising program that reflects this growing need of advertisers while respecting the unique issues faced by associations and professional societies. Launched in the fall of 2016, our Content Marketing program develops highly relevant articles built on input from industry suppliers but focused on the information needs of an organization's members. Our unique approach is designed to add value to an organization's magazine or website while creating opportunities for increased advertising sales.

To learn more about our service and to see an example of the approach we take, please visit us at www.adsalesexperts.net/contentmarketing.html.

Provide the highest quality of service to your customers so that they want to come back and exhibit, sponsor and advertise again. Do all you can to assure that each customer gets the highest ROI on their investment in your products by maximizing the exposure of your supplier companies to your members over the longest possible period of time. You want your products and events to be the primary lead generator for each of your supporting suppliers. Your role is to create an environment that allows buyers and sellers to be introduced to each other in a welcoming atmosphere.

Focus the efforts of your sales team to sell the higher priced products by training them on the best practices of relationship selling. The best sales people are not selling a product; they are providing solutions

that meet the marketing goals and strategies of their customers. The most effective sales people listen before they speak. What are each of your customer's unique challenges and goals and how can your products (either individually or as a package) meet those needs and exceed those goals? You want your association to be viewed as the "marketing partner" of each of your customers to assure their success in the segment of their market that your association represents.

Successful retailers have learned that by combining quality products with unique customer service and relationship development they are seeing increasing sales. Your association can "ring up" more sales by applying some of the retail industry's best practices.

Welcome 2018: A New Year with New Opportunities and Challenges

We are at the start of 2018 and each of us wants to do what we can to increase revenue this year from the sale of advertising, exhibits and sponsorships. This is a perfect time to step back and take a look at what steps each



association executive can take to meet his or her organization's goals for the coming year. Advertising Sales Experts offers a number of services to help

associations achieve their non-revenue income goals:

The Advertising Audit®--Is your association maximizing its non-dues revenue from the sale of advertising in its print and electronic products? Are your advertising rates competitive? Are your products competing successfully in the market in which they operate? Would your sales staff benefit from professional media sales training? Is your organization maximizing the benefits that come from the cross-selling of products? The Advertising Audit will answer these questions and more through a customized and personalized assessment of your organization's sales program. The Advertising Audit® is a comprehensive review and analysis of your organization's products, pricing, and competitive landscape that will give you the information you need to increase revenue while assisting your staff in getting the most value from the time they spend on the sales process. Here is what is included:

- Competitive Analysis
- Prospect and Customer Management
- Marketing Support
- Cross-Selling Opportunities
- Sales Staffing Issues
- Sales Training
- CRM Best Practices

Professional Level Advertising Sales Training--As with most professions, ongoing education is essential for continuous success. We are pleased to offer a full-day seminar on the latest trends, techniques and methods to increase your organization's advertising sales.

Each session is custom developed for your association's products and the market in which it is operating. Topics covered include:

- How to compete successfully against commercial publishers
- Integrating web and print advertising sales
- Selling the association advantage
- Establishing ad rates that work for you, not against you
- Understanding the advertising agency/client relationship
- Cross-selling opportunities
- Branding of your publications and website to maximize customer awareness
- The tools of the trade: media kits, research, circulation audits, tactical marketing tools, prospect management, and more

- Customer relationship selling and key account management

Included with each class is an evaluation of your organization's media kit and other collateral material as well as plenty of time for your staff to ask specific questions about the unique challenges they are facing.

Virtual Events: An Exciting New Online Product That Extends Your Reach and Generates New Revenue--

Virtual conferences are a new and innovative way to reach a broader audience, complement your print and face-to-face products and become a major new source of non-dues revenue. By bringing all of the advantages of a conference, convention and exhibit hall directly to the computers of your members, a virtual event enhances the value of your organization's brand and reaches a broader audience than can attend a live event. These are a few of the capabilities of a virtual event that you can offer your members:

- Attend and download multimedia presentations including keynote addresses and plenary sessions.
- Content presentations can be set up just like in a live event...with tracks, meeting rooms, and chats

between presenters and members of their audience.

- Generate revenue in a virtual trade show area in which companies can purchase exhibit space from which they can distribute documents and multimedia information about their companies and the products and services they offer.
- Set up a career fair from which employers can announce job openings and attendees can submit their resumes.
- Numerous sponsorship opportunities are available for sale to generate revenue in addition to the sale of virtual exhibit space.
- Extend the life of your face-to-face event for 90 days or more.
- An ideal venue for presenting continuing education and certification courses.
- A new and exciting interactive industry buyers' guide.

This product does not compete with your existing face-to-face events but instead complements them by extending their life while reaching an audience of those who could not attend and bring increased value to your association's exhibitors and sponsors. Click here to learn more: <http://www.adsalesexperts.net/virtualevents.html>.

Who We Are

With over 30 years of publishing and advertising sales experience, Robert Silverstein has worked in both the association and commercial publishing sectors. He has lead teams which have successfully generated multi-million dollars of annual advertising revenue in print, online, and face-to-face products. He has the unique understanding of the competitive commercial advertising environment and the unique challenges faced by associations and professional societies. Advertising Sales Experts, Inc. is pleased to offer to the association community a range of products and services that include print, online, and face-to-face solutions for generating new sources of non-dues revenue while allowing associations to extend the reach of their content delivery products.

To learn more, contact us at the address below or visit our website at www.adsalesexperts.net.

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