

## **COLUMN: As The Saws Turn**

### **TITLE: Out of Sorts in St. Louis**

The last week has been an interesting exercise for me on how productivity directly relates to your environment and sense of place. I returned from a week's vacation, and immediately headed for TS2 in Chicago, missing about 10 days in the office. Normally, it would take me a day or two to re-acclimate to the office – getting through all the e-mails, voicemails and snail mails – and catching up on what I missed.

This year is different, though. Our office is being renovated and we are replacing lighting, ceiling tiles, paint and carpeting. The plan was that my office would be completed by the time I returned from the road. That was the plan. It didn't quite line up with reality (I guess these guys aren't quite as deadline-conscious as we are...). When I returned, my office furniture (and all files) had been moved into the hallway and my office had been stripped of carpeting, wallpaper (it's an old building) and ceiling tiles. I was homeless.

I stuck a folding table in a small vacant office way down the hall from my support team. It worked for a little while. Every time a call came in for me, my account manager had to come get me and I had to go back to another office. I started using my cell phone. Every time I started working on something, I needed to search for a file in a desk that was pushed against a wall at the other end of the building. It wasn't working. I was out of my space and I was out of sorts. I couldn't concentrate.

I tried again this morning. The small office my table is in was now filled with another person's stuff that had been moved out of their office. We shared the room. That lasted until noon. Right now I'm sitting in a booth in a coffee shop. Hey, at least it's my own space...for a little while.

This whole process has me thinking about how much we are affected by our surroundings; how important environment is to success. My productivity has not been at its peak the last few days. And it's driving me crazy.

So if environment can affect an individual's performance so dramatically, imagine how it might affect a trade show audience, both positively and negatively. Imagine how creating just the right environment for just your specific audience might propel your trade show results to new levels of success.

I think back to my trip through the E3 show (see last month's column). Those guys were creating very specific environments targeted directly at their audience's demographics and psychographics. And that's the key...knowing exactly who your audience is...so that you can create the environment that builds success. Not only do you want to know the demographic details such as company, title, age, and sex, you also want to know what they like/dislike, what makes them tick, how they make buying decisions (psychographics).

The more detailed information you have about who your audience is, the better prepared you are to create an environment at your next show or event that will attract and retain them. Learning about your audience requires some study. You can start with your show's management company. Ask them for an audience profile. Ask them specifically for both demographics and psychographics. But be prepared to only get the former. Most won't have a lot of information on the latter.

For that, you're going to have to do some work internally. Talk to your sales executives and your senior marketing staff. Ask them about who your company's clients are. Again, look for both demographics and psychographics. These guys should be able to give you more detail; they're selling to these people every day.

Once you have this information, you're ready to start creating an environment that is conducive to attracting this group, making them feel comfortable, and receptive to your product message. That's the objective: getting your audience to a point where they are willing to listen to your message and respond positively, building relationships and building sales. Because if you do the opposite – paying no attention to what it is that builds comfort and confidence in your audience, you'll get passed right by...or worse. They could be all out of sorts when they're around your space.

See you on the show floor.

P.S. My column on selling price against value in the June issue has generated a lot of e-mail response. Watch next month's column for a summary of the advice. It's some good stuff...

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