

Speakers Share The Inside (Sales) Scoop at The Show

By Kathy Witt

The New Consumer, fatal mistakes, tweeting (or not), leaping toward a bigger bottom line and giving her what she wants — that’s right, ladies, we rule!

Five speakers offered insights, expertise, encouragement — and the resources by which to achieve greater success — at educational sessions presented during The Travel Goods Show.

TGA’S “LUNCH & LEARN” SESSIONS were held at noon each day of The Show. Timely topics (and the savory scents wafting from the Mojave Grill Restaurant) brought attendees to hear **Dan Mann** of retail consultant firm, The Mann Group, speak on the new, post-recessionary consumer. Mann drew from his experience with the Outdoor Industry Association and the National Bicycle Dealers Association to illustrate how to raise average dollar transactions through smart marketing and sales management.

Carolyn Gilger, owner of Houston-based Luggage & Leather, attended two “Lunch & Learn” sessions, including Dan Mann’s, and commented that she took away something from Mann’s that she already knew but found helpful to

have reinforced. “The most important point is the need to connect with customers right off and to give extraordinary service,” says Gilger. “A customer can get satisfactory service anywhere, but not extraordinary service.”

Joel Warady, principal of Joel Warady Group, shared his experience on the social media front in a program entitled, “To Tweet, or Not to Tweet.” Dustin Boyd, store manager for Lieber’s Luggage, attended the session and found it both worthwhile and apropos to his business. “There are so many new avenues to establish our name brand beyond the traditional marketing methods now,” he says. “Hearing from an expert about the many types of social media available, their low cost, and how to relate that to our business

was helpful.”

Fourth-generation retail specialist **Tom Shay** talked about the “10 Fatal Mistakes of Small Businesses” – and how to correct them. “Perform a customer survey and ask, ‘What one thing could we do to make it easier for you to do business with us?’” Shay says. “Then listen.”

“Tom gave a number of strategies as well as information that was helpful for the business owner,” notes Christopher Dennis of Edwards Luggage. “As a store manager, the strategy I can implement is to send thank you cards to customers. I can also have semi-annual job reviews and create an incentive plan for my associates.”

At the Travel Apparel Plaza, during his slide presentation on the busi-



Speaker Dan Mann presenting the new, post-recessionary consumer at the “Lunch & Learn” Educational Seminar.



Joel Warady answers the question, “To Tweet, or Not to Tweet,” during his “Lunch & Learn” presentation.



During his “Lunch & Learn” presentation, Tom Shay spoke on “Ten Fatal Mistakes of Small Businesses.”

Educational Seminars@The Show



What do women want? ExOfficio's Steve Bendzak outlined it in his presentation, "Give Her What She Wants."



How do you boost sales? Chuck Weisbart reveals all during his "Full-Service Salesmanship" presentation.

ness growth topic, "Give Her What She Wants," **Steve Bendzak** of ExOfficio told attendees exactly what it is that women want: solutions and secrets.

"Be a solution provider," he advises. "Enhance her trip. Show her how to pack less so she can do more. Customers outfitted properly will be a

New Age carry-on traveler." Bendzak also suggested retailers host programs like "Travel Secrets Seminars," "Sales Rep Days" and "Travel Expert Nights" as a way to position themselves as travel solution providers.

Chuck Weisbart of It's...In the Bag! fired up the audience with his

energizing presentation, "Full-Service Salesmanship: Make the Leap from Luggage Store to Travel Outfitter."


"Chuck has a great concept and a great way of marketing his packing seminars," says Dennis. "He gave very specific and hands-on information about how he organizes and presents them."

Weisbart urged retailers to become travel counselors adept at outfitting customers from their underwear out. "Suitcases are clothing lasagna, which explains why travelers are always overweight – and their bags are, too," says Weisbart. "Nothing goes into your customer's case until the night before."

"Chuck really emphasized the need to be service-orientated and a good listener and stressed the need for associates to experience their products," Dennis adds.

Weisbart's words of wisdom?

- Start holding monthly travel enhancement seminars and put the dates for the next three months on everything printed and in every electronic ad.
- Get customers to come in after their trips and "download" information. "Ask for the most surprising thing about their trip, the best and worst thing of their trip," he says. "Force the issue with a coupon that is given to them before they leave and activates for one week only – the week they are back. Compile an information base so that your shop is 'info central for travel.'"
- Encourage customers to bring in their itinerary. "Look over the itinerary," he suggests. "Ask them how much baggage they are taking – and if they would consider going carry-on only. This breeds the opportunity to fully outfit your customer. Then, start with the underwear — and work your way out!"

Show speakers and educational sessions have added a valuable and varied learning component to The Show floor in the past couple of years, and each of the five presentations during the 2010 Show was well-attended by Show attendees. "This year's topics piqued my interest more than in years past," says Luggage & Leather's Gilger. "The set-up was great, and knowing that you are going to do this again next year will allow me to set aside more time at The 2011 Show." 

Retailer Wish List of Educational Sessions

Several retailers who attended "Lunch & Learn" sessions during The Show noted their value for continuing education and suggested topics for future programs.

"I would be interested in a session on loss prevention and in hearing a motivational speaker on sales – how to pump up your sales associates, get them motivated, specific ways to handle rejection, when the customer says no," says Christopher Dennis of Edwards Luggage.

Dustin Boyd of Lieber's Luggage expressed interest in a topic covering innovative in-store displays and window displays – in terms of overall set-up and atmosphere. "We have a big store and are always looking for ways to make it more interesting and eye-catching," he says. "We are always interested in new ways to draw attention to our products."

Carolyn Gilger, owner of Houston-based Luggage & Leather, wanted to hear Joel Warady's social media session, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet," but had to leave. "I hope this will be presented again next year," she notes.

While Randy MacKenzie of Edwards Luggage agreed that she would also like to hear more on the social media topic at future Shows, she suggested that the educational sessions be limited to the first two Show days.

In keeping with the social media theme, Kicker Kalozdi, who heads international sales/marketing for Hadaki, suggested a presentation on ways manufacturers and brands can create a following on social networking sites.

Bob Brenner of Brenner Luggage had too many NLDA commitments to attend the sessions but said he would like to see the seminars videotaped and loaded onto the TGA website for later viewing.

We'd love to hear your suggestions for future Travel Goods Show educational sessions. Email your topics to info@travel-goods.org and we will follow up.