

YOUR Face-to-Face Trade Event

With preset appointments and stress-free scheduling, next month's National Lawn & Garden Show is not your typical industry event.

By Bob Mikulas

The National Lawn & Garden Show (NLGS) is not a show but *is* marketed as a trade event. The word "show" connotes booths, drayage costs, carpet costs, hoopla, entertainment, hotdogs and pretzels, the uncertainties of who will attend and endless waiting for (unqualified) buyers to show up.

The uncertainties with booth style shows are that the exhibitor really has no clue who will show up at the show in general, who will stop at their booth or if they are even qualified to buy their products. Exhibitors often get looky-loos and people looking for those freebie handouts, all of whom are unqualified buyers and time wasters for the exhibitor.

NLGS, on the other hand, is a controlled marketing conference where buyers and sellers meet in preset appointments that are scheduled by mutual product categories of interest between the two parties. All of the appointments are scheduled by

NLGS management and done in advance of the event. Sellers can then prepare in advance sales materials to properly present to the buyer in the 10-minute appointments.

Although NLGS has been around since 1995, some people and companies still do not understand how it works and are still stuck on

going to booth-style shows. Make this the year you try a new event, break out of old habits, and decide how well this style of getting in front of buyers works for you.

Format Advantages

The NLGS format is simple: Pre-qualified buyers are seated at private conference tables and vendors go to them based on their schedule.

For example, vendor A has an appointment with buyer B at table X at 10 a.m., he goes to the appointment for 10 minutes then exits, his next appointment with a different buyer at a different time and location may take place at 10:40, and so it goes throughout the event. Most companies end up with over 35 appointments with pre-qualified buyers from around the United States, Canada and the U.K. This scheduling is a task in itself and luckily



What do we get out of it? A "Captivated audience" is the best way to answer that. There aren't drifters but appointments which makes this event very no nonsense and easy to work. Not to mention, it brings in a wide variety of retailers.

-Larry DeWitt, DeWitt Co.

I just don't have the time to schedule appointments with every vendor that wants to see me. This show allows me to see a lot of companies in just a few days. Ten-minute meetings give me plenty of time to determine if the product line is worth following up on.

-Darrell Ross, Earl May Seed & Nursery



we developed a proprietary software program to execute the scheduling.

Vendors are not standing around for buyers all day and all appointments are with pre-qualified buyers that NLGS qualifies in advance. That is to say, NLGS screens non-qualified participants in and out of the event. Another important advantage is the networking that goes on at NLGS. Buyers and vendors sit together at all meal functions (breakfasts, lunches and vendor-sponsored social events), and network when vendors are waiting for their next appointment.

Stress-Free Shopping

This event is the easiest way for vendors to get in front of buyers as all the scheduling is executed by NLGS. All the scheduling is done by our proprietary scheduling software so the only thing the vendors has to do is properly prepare for each appointment. We give complete instructions on how to prepare for the event and give the vendor

complete information on each buyer they will meet with, so there is no reason a vendor cannot prepare in advance for their appointments and put their best foot forward at each appointment.

The buyer on the other hand does not have to walk endless aisles searching for the next newest item, as at NLGS, the buyers are seated at private conference tables and the vendor comes to them based on the schedule. In this manner, the buyer is assured of seeing all companies with product categories he/she has interest in and eliminates the uncertainty of the buyer skipping a booth because of time constraints or the assumption that there is nothing in that booth worth seeing.

Oftentimes at a booth-style show, buyers might skip stopping at booths and many times there will be products in skipped booths that are very appropriate for them but they will never know because they did not stop — this is eliminated at NLGS.

EVENT INFO

What: National Lawn & Garden Show
Where: Dallas-Frisco, Texas
When: June 11-13, 2012
Register: www.nlgshow.com



Prototypes & POP

The POP area is an abbreviated version of a booth. At a typical booth-style show, how much of the booth is actually displaying products? Nine times out of 10, most of the booth is vacant or has no related items displayed all to attract buyers to stop, whether with pretty girls, food or meeting tables and banners.

The POP area at NLGS is solely to display products and nothing else, and is only open to buyers once set up. This allows buyers to touch and feel products to check quality and present a more relaxing way to view products without the nagging of a sales person and other interruptions.

Likewise, with the New Product/Prototype area, only buyers are allowed once set up. Also, the buyers are required to provide written feedback to vendors who have products in this area. They provide feedback on things like uniqueness, packaging and pricing. Unlike at booth shows where new product areas are essentially public, NLGS feels new products are often proprietary to the company and should not be open to anyone who walks by — including the vendors' competitors. **LGR**

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