



## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BIG BOX

By Rich Kizer & Georganne Bender

We were giving a presentation at a marketing conference and the topic was “Neutralizing Your Competition.” We were just getting into a discussion on Shoppertainment, sharing a story about a retailer who held a fancy catered dinner in her store, along with a trunk show, demonstrations, and pedicures, when we noticed that one man’s eyes had glazed over. Georganne said, “You’re not buying this are you?” He said, “It sounds interesting, but I can’t imagine that anyone would actually do pedicures in their store. What’s that got to do with what I sell?”

Famous last words.

One woman offered that she regularly goes to a local bar and grill now that they have “Manicures & Martinis” on Friday nights. Well, she opened the flood gates as attendee after attendee shared something unique they’d done to attract customers and increase cash flow – and yes, several of the stories involved pedicures.

The man began to listen.

We went on to explain the importance of Shoppertainment, how it does more than just sell item and a price – it drives customers to your store because it gets them involved in something unique and fun in an otherwise boring sea of similar stores.

When it’s done well, Shoppertainment generates so much

more than short-term excitement, it creates a lasting impression, and – this is important – an emotional connection with customers. That connection alone gives customers a reason to return.

But we don’t have to tell you that. You guys have this Shoppertainment thing down cold. The big guys with their coupons and lines at 3 a.m. on the



day after Thanksgiving have nothing on you – you’ve learned to think way outside the big box.

• **The Squeaky Page Scrapbook Studio** in Olympia, Washington, held its 2nd Annual Scrapbook Cruise to Alaska. Customers climbed aboard the Norwegian Star for “Seven wondrous days of Mother Nature at her finest,

Preserved by Father Time, Scrapbooked by YOU.”

• **Ben Franklin Crafts** in Redmond, Washington, made knitting exciting again with their “Yarn Yoga” classes. Classes sold out almost immediately as knitting became the “it” craft, and Ben Franklin Crafts the only place in town to learn how.

• **Scrapbook Village** in Glasgow, Kentucky, held its Annual Fall Retreat in November and sales went through the roof! One hundred customers were dazzled with classes and workshops, demos, contests, prize giveaways, and more.

• **The Stamp Act** in El Paso, Texas, started a new craze when Chloe, the official store dog, invited a Pet Psychic to the store. Customers, and their pets, began to line up outside well before the store was open, their \$15 entrance fee in hand, anxious for the chance to find out what Fluffy’s really thinking. Word of this successful event spread quickly through the creative industry, and soon pet psychics were in heavy demand all across the country. (See our column in *Craftrends* November 2003 for more information about this profitable event.)

• **Cut ‘n Paste**, in Boise, Idaho, opened in 2004, hit the ground running and never stopped. One of the many

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cool things inside this incredible store is “Kid City,” a special place designed for children to scrapbook. The Kid City specialty is “Classes for kids, taught by a kid.”

- **The American Scrapbooking Center** in the Queens, New York, neighborhood of Bayside, wasn't even open for business when owner Dina Quondamatteo attended our “Are Your Promotions Causing Commotions?” seminar at the MemoryTrends Trade Show in 2004. Realizing that she'd need to make a big splash, Dina sent out a single page press release to the media and the city showed up.

One of New York City's major newspapers ran a full-page article about the store in one issue, then followed up with two more. These articles alone attracted customers from all five New York boroughs as well as surrounding states.

The ABC affiliate sent a reporter to film the grand opening festivities and a short piece ran on the news that night. ABC returned a few days later, this time with a popular news anchor and film crew. They stayed two and a half hours and later ran a lengthy piece that was completely filmed in the store. The news ended that night with the anchor holding a two-page layout that “Dina made for us.”

Local dignitaries attended the Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting Ceremony that featured a grand opening ribbon made from \$5 bills. After the ceremony, Dina wrapped that \$200 ribbon donation around the representative from St. Mary's Children's hospital like a boa as local newspaper photographers snapped photos.

And the 150 customers who attended the ceremony were treated to a tote bag filled with lots of goodies. Not a bad run for a single-page press release!

We can't wait for this summer's “Cow Pie Bingo” when Dina hopes to turn a cow loose in her store parking lot, giving customers the opportunity to pay \$5 to guess where Bessie will drop her ... you get the picture. This isn't something the local New York residents see too often, so we're sure the press will be back in droves. We'll be there for sure.

It's estimated that there is now 18 to

19 feet of retail space for each person in the United States. The unique things you do in your store are what set you apart from your competitors and over fill your share of that space. You can open your doors each morning and hope that customers show up, or you can do things that ensure that they will. Knowing you all as well as we do, we're certain you'll go for the latter. ♦

**W**e want to hear about your events and promotions. Send a brief description to [craftrends@primedia.com](mailto:craftrends@primedia.com)



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