

PRESENTING OPPORTUNITIES

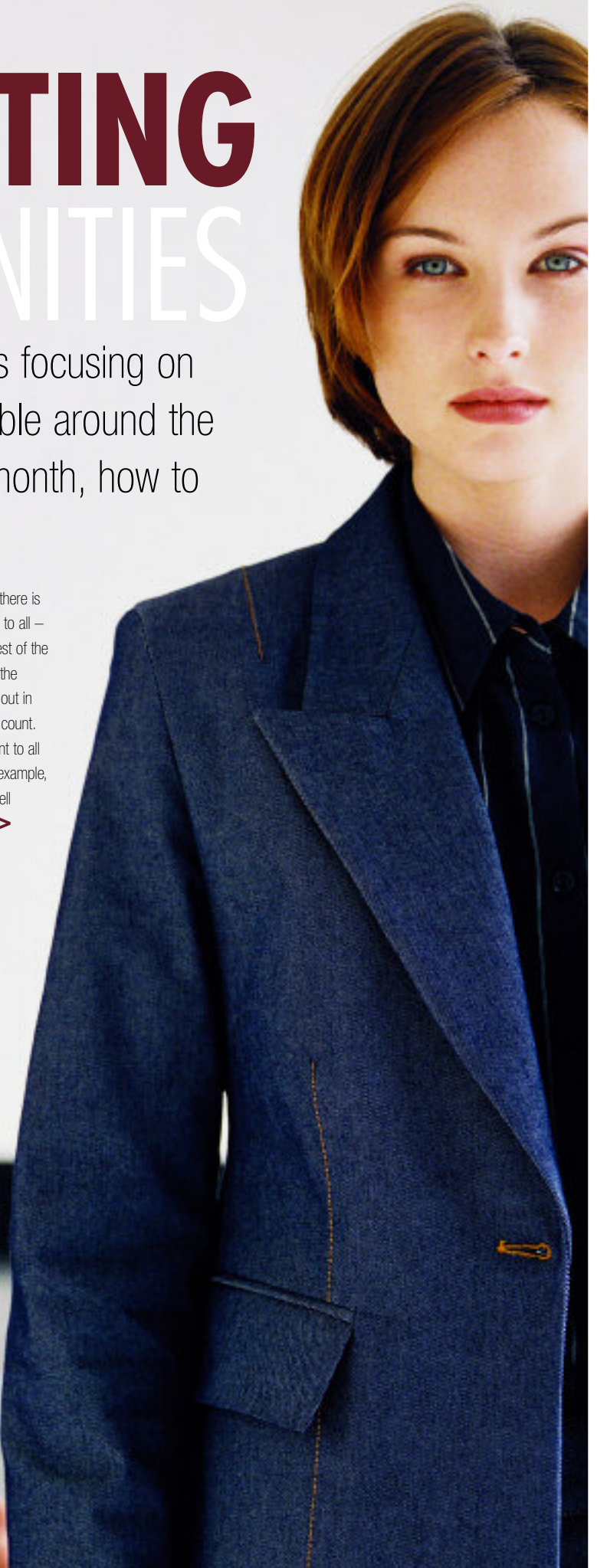
The first in a three part series focusing on the sales opportunities available around the business presentation. This month, how to sell into the boardroom.

The classic interpretation of the board room is currently best represented by Alan Sugar's in the television show, 'The Apprentice'.

Long of table and egotistical of chair, Sugar's room seems to be angled equally towards impressing and intimidating all who darken its threshold. And while not every company has this power-happy MO

when designing a board room, there is usually one consistency generic to all – it tends to look nicer than the rest of the office. The theory for this being the same as when you get decked out in the nice suit – first impressions count.

"The board room is important to all different types of company, for example, a large company for whom a well appointed boardroom is the >>



Kitting out a new board room for the end user is all about the 'wow factor'



norm or a company who receives a lot of customers on their premises and wants to impress," says Melanie Hinde, group sales manager for Wholesale and Independent Channel at 3M. "We also find that companies in the creative sector typically take great pride in the appearance and functionality of their boardroom, in a bid to be seen as 'cutting edge'."

As Posh Spice might tell you, vanity costs – which can be good news for margin. Also, due to the subjective nature of interior decoration, it appears that both the 'old school' line of products and the latest gizmos are enjoying equally buoyant sales figures.

"The traditional products such as aluminium or wooden framed whiteboards and the like, are still selling well and very much a growth area," reports Paul Hardy, sales director for display manufacturer, Bi-silque.

While a proponent of the traditional presentation product, Bi-silque is releasing a new range of products designed for use with a projector or as a whiteboard which has the overall appearance of a flat screen TV. The product fits well with the ease of use functionality of traditional presentation products while satisfying the high spec board room aesthetic.

"We're trying to innovate and add a little bit of value and higher specification to the marketplace," adds Hardy.

Innovation for an individual's tools surrounded by board room finery is also taking place within the Acco Nobo range of laser pointers.

"Normally laser pointers are red, fine for OHP presentations, but the red dot doesn't always show up very well in DLP presentations," says Acco Nobo's commercial market manager – UK, visual communication, Sue Kenyon. "A green dot is seven times brighter than red – we've developed this using military technology to give us the absolute brightest dot."

Kenyon also reports that Acco's latest range of DLP projectors have also had their intensities augmented, with a range scraping the 2,500 lumens ceiling.

Further high tech innovation is found in the form of the interactive whiteboard, an obvious example of a classic reworked for the modern market.

"All companies whether small or large have some requirement to effectively deliver information to their customers, employees, colleagues or other stakeholders," says Smart Technologies' MD, Nancy Knowlton. "Technologies such as interactive whiteboards offer a new dynamic for the delivery of these messages. You may have only one chance to get your point across to a potential client and a technology enhanced board room can help capitalize on these opportunities by improving visual communications."

Board rooms are refurbished frequently, and not just when a company moves to a new premises

Do selling opportunities into furnishing the board room only occur when a company is on the brink of furnishing new offices? Not so, says 3M's Hinde, who says that her company's experience is that board rooms are refurbished frequently, not just when a company moves to new premises.

According to Knowlton, designing a collaborative board room means choosing the best products and tools to help customers effectively meet, teach, train and present.

"While training rooms primarily need to be functional, purchases for the boardroom may require a different approach that facilitates visual communication and group collaboration," she says. "Careful attention to design will enable a range of benefits that can enhance workplace productivity and effectiveness. Today, presentation technology has become an integral part of everyday work life and boardrooms, which traditionally

have been devoid of technology, are experiencing a technology revolution – the sky's the limit."

With that in mind, Hardy suggests dealer salespeople should go in aiming for the "total solution sell".

"Providing this service gives scope to a salesperson to talk up the sell, and this is a product area which lends itself well to upselling," he adds. Kenyon agrees, and advises ordering from one source for a coordinated approach – ideal for corporates.

"Think of everything to enhance the experience of delegates to a training session or big meeting, and offer a complete solution to maximise margin," she says. "Suggest name badges, dry wipe desk plates, a Welcome message board; there are lots of opportunities to enhance the deal."

Demonstrating products is also a particularly effective selling technique in this area, as 3M's Hinde explains. "Many of the products in the 3M AV range are different from anything the end user would have seen before. I would therefore strongly recommend demonstrating the products in action," she explains.

Remember that kitting out a new board room for the end user is all about the 'wow factor'. A company ready to make changes will also be ready to get excited, so go in prepared to offer them a complete solution, carefully tailored to their aspirations. Start with Alan Sugar, go on, I dare you... ■