





PRESENTING OPPORTUNITIES

Presenting opportunities (Part Two):
how to maximise your client's meeting
facilities and your sales. By Martyn Billing.

Meetings, meetings, meetings. It could be said that, the better the quality of meeting facilities, the more conducive they are to productive discussions and effective decisions. Also, of course, with many outside visitors, customers, suppliers etc, also using the facilities, they can be one of the first impressions of a company or organisation.

In recent years, there has been little real innovation in presentation products. However, as the price of the main equipment such as projectors and interactive boards has reduced, their use has become more widespread.

The reduction in the price of this equipment and familiarity with the technology has certainly opened up opportunities for office product dealers to maximise sales from their client's meeting facilities. The order value can also be increased by the sale of complementary products such as projection screens, conference and audio-visual furniture, signage etc, plus appropriate accessories such as marker pens, laser pointers etc. Comments Graham Leese of Acco, "This sector is still quite dynamic and not as price sensitive as other areas."

It is not only companies and commercial businesses that have or require meeting facilities. Various public sector organisations, charities and the not-for-profit sector should also be considered. However, the larger they are the greater their requirements. Steve Dracup of Promethean agrees, "Large blue chip companies should be the first port of call, as there will be a dedicated HR and training function with allocated budget to spend."

Picking up on this point, while the natural target contact may be the facilities manager, or indeed sales and marketing personnel, as they tend to make a lot of presentations, the human resources

and training function should also be considered. They will no doubt be using the facilities a lot and so have a significant say in the equipment required.

As mentioned previously, multimedia projectors, including the latest DLP models, and interactive whiteboards are the main pieces of capital equipment within a meeting or training room. Interestingly, the latter are only now being more readily adopted for business applications following high penetration into the education market. Dracup explains that this is because parents have seen them being utilised within schools and colleges and those that are leaving education are now familiar with their use.

To make the most of the main equipment, a conducive environment needs to be created. This can be achieved by the supply of dedicated conference or meeting room tables, comfortable chairs and items such as drywipe nameplates for the delegates.

A professional quality protection screen should be included, although the standard matt-white surface is now usually appropriate, particularly as projectors now have higher light output and better definition. The projector itself should either be ceiling mounted for permanent installations or placed on a dedicated stand or trolley, where the equipment needs to be moved between rooms. Comments Tony Cochrane of TCI, "As the price of projectors has fallen, the supply of a screen and an appropriate piece of AV furniture now makes up a significant, and indeed more profitable, part of the sale."

To offer a complete service, you should also consider offering the facility to install and set-up the equipment. If you do not have the necessary technical skills and expertise yourself, consider >>



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utilising a suitable company on a sub-contract basis. The client will appreciate the turnkey solution and, again, this can add to the profitability of the sale.

A good place to start may be to undertake an audit of an existing or potential client's meeting facilities and equipment. This is an approach advocated by Graham Leese of Acco: “A dealer has to look around customer's premises and be proactive in suggesting products that will improve their professional image.” Indeed, the perfect opportunity may be when you yourself are entertained in a meeting room, to suggest that the facilities could be improved!

Before undertaking the audit, it would be wise to familiarise yourself with the equipment now available. Most of the leading suppliers of presentation products have comprehensive literature and websites available. Indeed, many also provide training and advice.

Cochrane says, “One can easily assimilate the basics. We provide advice sheets for many of our ranges, for example, simple details of how to select the right size screen for the room and audience numbers.”

If as a dealer you have meeting room facilities yourself, then you should ‘practice as you preach’. Dracup suggests, “For greater chances of success, resellers need to advocate the technology by actually getting out there and using it as part of their own business routine.”

Although new products to equip the modern meeting room have not changed significantly in recent years, the specifications have improved and the prices have reduced. This has made the latest technology much more affordable and so within the budget, to equip many more meeting and training rooms.

Dealers should capitalise on this market change and the simple way to do so is to check out the meeting facilities at your customer's premises and recommend improvements.

Good presentation is an essential part of creating the right perception. Therefore, you can considerably contribute to the success, and resulting ongoing business, of your clients by helping them to improve their meeting and training facilities. ■

CASE STUDY

Bennett-Sykes and Bi-silque

Bennett-Sykes has been working with presentation products company Bi-silque over the course of 2006. Chris Sykes, account manager for the Nottingham-based dealer, says that his company has previously struggled with achieving any meaningful return from sales in the presentation area.

“In the past, we've struggled to have an edge as everybody is selling the same product,” he explains. Traditionally, specialist educational suppliers have dominated this market. Robin Smith, Bi-silque's business development manager in the UK, believes that there is an opportunity for every dealer to be able to tap into this market by using his company.

“I deal with one local client who tends to buy in bulk,” says Sykes. “When they do new installations, we'll receive an order for 100 notice boards of this size and 50 that size etc, and with Bi-silque they know they're paying the right price and getting the right product.”

Service levels are also good, as delivery for the UK is made from the Preston headquarters on a three to four day lead-time. For those orders that present an increased level of difficulty, such as bespoke items, Sykes reports that Bi-silque can also meet those idiosyncratic requirements.

With this new level of resources to draw upon, Bennett-Sykes is now able to supply client's wishes and compete in a difficult product sector. Previous to working with Bi-silque, Sykes explains that the dealer used to work alongside a direct sale company.

“We used to work with one specialising in this area, but found out that they were selling behind our backs to the people we were selling to,” says Sykes. “Since then, we've used Bi-silque, who we can trust to deliver the right products, pricing and availability.”