

Miniatures Marketplace - October 2000

INNOVATIVE PROMOTIONAL SALES

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Miniatures BY BARB

My article published in the August/September, 2000 issue of Miniatures Marketplace mentioned that I would be leading a discussion group at the upcoming MIAA Trade Show. The topic was, "How Sales Impact Your Bottom Line". The information exchanged was both stimulating and enlightening. The knowledge, strategies and insights learned at seminars, workshops and discussion groups are a significant benefit gained from attending Trade Shows. I am going to share some of the wonderful innovative ideas that were shared as part of our discussion.

As a kick off point for our seminar I read part of the article I had written for the last issue of Miniatures Marketplace. To initiate discussion I read "My feeling is that once you have put an item on sale you have de-valued that item. You have placed doubt about the pricing of other items in your shop. Will they go on sale? Should the consumer wait and see?" I then posed the question, "How can we have a promotional sale without de-valuing items?"

One shop owner said that they try to add extra value as a promotion rather than lower the price. Another noted that her promotional items are not regular merchandise. She lowers the price on discontinued and damaged items. She even asked some of her vendors for discontinued merchandise. We were reminded that we must not mislead the customer. Inform them that this is not first class merchandise. This shop owner always has a "last chance" basket in her shop. It contains merchandise which is faded, has missing parts or is otherwise unable to be sold as perfect. She claims that it encourages creativity in her customers and leads them to buy associated items or products needed to put the merchandise in usable condition. Some customers buy this merchandise for a startup dollhouse or collection and then work up to more expensive pieces.

Another innovative idea came from a shop owner who has a once a year "Garage Sale". Customers bring a table into the parking lot of the shop. They set up any miniatures they would like to sell. She explains, "Many customers would like to upgrade their collection. They do not know what to do with the items they no longer need. They bring them to our garage sale, where they find beginning collectors looking for miniatures to start their collection. Of course," she says, "they all end up in our shop to purchase other items."

Many shop owners have their promotions in the month of October, which is International Dollhouse and Miniatures Month. One clever dealer has an open house, by invitation only, as a thank you for her regular customers. She serves refreshments and they have a party in her shop. Where, of course, they make purchases.

One dealer made the point that she has been successfully in business for eight years without having a sale. Another dealer, who also does not have promotional sales, told us that she does send a hand written personal thank you note to her customers. Customers who make a major

purchase find a gift certificate enclosed with their note of appreciation.

Another creative shop owner has a sale, during IDMM. One week he may have 2% off anything for the kitchen, the next may be a percentage off purchases for the bedroom.

The idea of giving their customers who buy a dollhouse a plaque that says "Home Sweet Home" was the inventive concept of another dealer. While yet another gives each mini home buyer a Home Owners Book. This book contains coupons for discounts on landscaping, electrical equipment, wallpaper, paint, several coupons for furniture and more.

These are just a few of the ideas that were exchanged during our seminar. Of course our discussion contained much more information and details. I was extremely impressed by the ingenuity, creativity, originality and inventiveness of the shop owners in our industry.

Remember.....if you don't try something new. Nothing new is going to happen.