

Building an image

Top Featherlite distributor is a local heavy hitter

After 27 years in sales and marketing, Susan Ratliff knows how important an image can be to a company. Her company, Exhibit Experts, provides an effective means for businesses to

market and sell their products and services. Exhibit Experts sells portable trade show displays to customers large and small. "We attempt to create an image for a customer with displays, accessories and staff training that will help them to stand out from the crowd at trade shows," Ratliff says.

With Phoenix becoming a mecca for trade shows, this alternative to advertising may be a smart choice for many businesses. A \$90 billion-a-year market in the United States, trade shows are becoming increasingly more popular in Phoenix, which



Susan Ratliff and her team at Exhibit Experts bring clients up to speed on trade show strategies for success.

now ranks fifth in the number of trade shows hosted each year.

While pricey custom trade show exhibits are available at other companies, more affordable displays are thriving in the current economy. Ratliff adds that by targeting and meeting your audience face to face, trade shows give you a much bigger bang for your buck. "Exhibit marketing is a great way to promote a company when the business owner wants to get ahead of the competition in a down market," Ratliff concludes.

Ratliff not only opened Exhibit Experts, but also enjoys sharing her knowledge. She is an accomplished author, with three books about tradeshow marketing under her belt. "When I wrote the first book, I was a member of the Entrepreneurial Mother's Association. Organizations would ask me to come in and tell my story. People wanted to know what I knew about working the trade

shows," says Ratliff, who has made a name for herself with her speaking engagements. "I actually get quoted all over the country as an expert."

Training clients who will be participating in a trade show is critical for Ratliff. She adds that the rules of engagement and selling in a trade show environment are much different from the rules in the field. Ratliff trains her clients on

the psychology of trade show marketing, and works with new and seasoned salespeople to make their experiences more effective and profitable.

Ratliff attributes much of the success of her business to effective networking. "Networking opportunities in this town are an untapped resource for business," she says. "Becoming involved in the community is really what it's all about." Ratliff has demonstrated her networking spirit by belonging to the Restaurant and Lodging Show committee and serving as a member of the Phoenix and Scottsdale chambers of commerce as well as the National Association of Women Business Owners. Ratliff shares her knowledge and experience with these groups, "You have to give back in order to get something out of networking."

— Stephanie Lynchski

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW TOPICS

- How to Get Your Name in the News
- Networking Your Way to the Bank
- 45 Fantastic Tools for Trade Show Success
- How to be a Weekend Entrepreneur

HOW TO CONTACT

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