

Loose Screws

September 16, 2009

Upcoming Ohio Valley NARI Events

Save the Date: October 8, 2009 will be the date for Ohio Valley NARI's **Feature Vendor Night!** Meet suppliers of building supplies and services. Enjoy a Deli Buffet Dinner, Free Beer and Sodas, Cookies and Door Prizes. The cost is just \$25.00 for NARI members and you can bring your whole crew! That's right, one cost of \$25.00 and your entire crew can attend! The event will begin at 6:30pm. and should "wrap-up" around 9:00pm. The location is the Holiday Inn on Hauck Road. RSVP today by calling 1-800-498-6274. Please click [here](#) for registration form.

Vendors Tables are still available! Click [here](#) for Vendor Table Application or call 1-800-498-6274 for details.

Notice:

Building Value is currently in search of scaffolding material that can be utilized as lumber racks. Building Value LLC is a nonprofit building materials re-use enterprise that salvages quality building materials otherwise destined for the landfill and resells them in a public retail center. The enterprise provides on-the-job training opportunities in construction and retail, two of Ohio's highest growth sectors. Please contact Scott Beard at (513) 475-6783, or sbeard@buildingvalue-cincy.org.

Show Off with a Digital Slideshow

by Morgan Zenner

Every remodeler is trying to do the same thing when it comes to marketing: Get his or her company in front of remodel-ready homeowners.

Dennis Gehman, CR, CKBR, CLC, president of Gehman Custom Remodeling, has devised a new way to approach customers interested in home improvement.

"A salesman of mine had the idea when he came across it himself," Gehman says. "He saw a digital photo frame advertisement in a waiting room, and thought, 'Why not create a photo frame with our remodeling projects to put on display?'"

That is precisely what they did.

Similar to how billboards are used to grab a driver's attention while sitting in traffic, Gehman uses a digital photo frame—which allows for many more visuals to be used—to display a slide show of his latest projects in areas where unsuspecting buyers are sitting or waiting idly, in hopes that one of his photos may catch their eye.

Digital photo frames are similar to a television or a computer, in that you can load pictures onto a memory card, and the frame is a miniature screen that plays a slideshow of photos.

“We thought it was a good idea because customers love looking at pretty pictures of homes,” Gehman says.

After every five photos Gehman's logo is displayed. He is now considering adding events or announcements on the frames as well.

The photos are a mix of professional photography and pictures taken with the company's digital camera. “We invested in a good quality digital camera, and some of the photos are just as nice as professional photos,” he says.

The photos can be changed or updated at any time. In fact, Gehman plans to update the frames with this year's CotY Award pictures once they are finished.

The cost of each digital frame was about \$100, though there are some cheaper, and can be found at any electronic supply store.

“We don't consider it a huge investment, other than the photo frames and the time it takes to put the photo stream together on the memory card,” Gehman says. He recommends buying the same brand of digital frames to make saving photos to the memory card easier.

Accompanying each frame is a handful of brochures with the company information, Web site and phone number.

Currently, the frames are running in four places: a paint store, two interior designer showrooms and a physical therapist office. Gehman reached out to local vendors that he had a strong working relationship with.

“Many vendors were happy to display the frame because it is their way of saying thank you for the business we've been giving them for years,” Gehman says.

In return for the display, Gehman provides a 3% referral fee to his partners. If a customer mentions the photo display, the vendor receives 3% of the project fee from Gehman.

Some vendors were hesitant for not wanting to show favoritism toward one remodeler over another.

“I understand that some vendors are uncomfortable advertising for some clients and not others, so they reject advertising altogether,” Gehman says.

In addition, Gehman is selective about where the frames go. “I don’t want to give our competitors ideas or extra knowledge about our work,” he says.

The marketing experiment is about 3 months old. Gehman has not received any direct business from the digital frames, but he has gotten positive feedback from his partners.

“I’ve contacted those businesses where the frames are displayed, and the owners say that customers look at the photo stream, sometimes a couple times through, and some customers have picked up brochures—to me that is a success.”

Perfect Storm for Legislative Changes RE:Alcohol & Marijuana

Many states are exploring ways to increase revenues by either saving or making money related to the use of alcohol and marijuana. Approaches have the potential to reduce the “using” market with some states’ efforts while others create what could become a “slippery slope” in making alcohol and marijuana more accessible, more acceptable and more prevalent in our communities and ... **workplaces**. International economic downturn; costs of social service & entitlement programs, law enforcement, court & prison resources; a change in the country’s political leadership; and a need to grapple with the drug-related violence perpetrated by Mexico's drug cartels are just some of the dynamics creating the current climate. This confluence of social and economic factors may be prompting an unprecedented political change in attitudes.

States are projecting potential financial windfalls as they craft exploratory legislation including:

- Requiring recipients of social service and entitlement programs to be tested.
- Increasing taxes on alcohol.
- Increasing access (and thereby taxable consumption) of alcohol e.g. the days of the week that alcohol can be purchased and consumed; the repeal of state laws that control sales in grocery stores and restaurants as well as a “private club law.”

- Decriminalizing possession and use of drugs and alcohol to reduce violence, costs and application of law enforcement resources (such efforts are afoot nationally and internationally).
- Reducing the severity of sentences for certain drug and alcohol offenses hereby lowering the court and prison costs.
- Legalizing, regulating and taxing marijuana (some with and some without medical-use restrictions).
- Sanctioning, cultivation and distribution of marijuana for medicinal use by the State

Pieces of legislature are under way in West Virginia, Florida, Missouri, Texas, and Hawaii that would require drug testing for recipients of entitlements including food stamps, unemployment benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). In Kansas, its House of Representatives has already passed a bill that would require testing to receive TANF benefits.

There is proposed legislation from Mexico to Connecticut with an objective to limit the application of resources (law enforcement, court, prison space) to the worst-of-the-worst. e.g. a bill endorsed by Mexican President Felipe Calderon would allow individuals to possess certain amounts of marijuana, cocaine and heroin allowing Mexico to focus its resources on the deadly drug cartels. Several of our own U.S. border towns have proposed decriminalization legislation with the same objective.

Projecting that the state would save up to \$11 million a year in police, court, and jail expenses, while on the other hand generate \$320,000 annually in fines which could replace the costly practice of prosecution; Connecticut has decriminalization proposed and sees it as a win-win.

Other states are seeing legalization of marijuana as a potential panacea for state revenues. California, Oregon and several others - some with medical marijuana laws on the books and some without - are proposing activities including annual license fees for growers and distributors and taxing the retail sales.

Eyeing the potential for expanded tax coffers, nine states have proposed measures to expand access of alcohol. And then, there are several states with pending legislation targeted at specifically raising taxes on alcohol declaring that the time to raise taxes is way past due. Advocates of these bills cite that 25 states haven't had a raise in alcohol-related taxes in 20 years or longer. At least

ten states have committed a portion of dollars raised through taxation of alcohol to fund treatment programs which are duly threatened by the state of the economy.

If at first activities such as state sanctioned marijuana or taxing alcohol seem like a perfect solution, realize there *is* pushback, “counter balance” and a potential downside to each of these efforts. Besides obvious arguments such as “sending the wrong message” and “giving more access to ‘gateway’ drugs,” there are resistances in the form of politics and economics.

For example, a bill was proposed in New Hampshire that would have raised the beer tax by 10 cents per gallon and send the revenues to the state's Alcohol Fund -- which helps pay for addiction treatment and prevention services. The bill was defeated when a coalition of producers, wholesalers, retailers, and the Teamsters union raised the specter of InBev closing down the state's Anheuser-Busch brewery if the beer tax was increased stating that among other effects this would cause a loss of jobs and a huge drain on the state's subsidy resources.

There are multiple sides to each of these creative legislative ideas. The important issue of note is the *huge* volume of current activity along these lines of thinking. Consider where you stand on these issues. Your position may become critical sooner than later.

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