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RC REPORT

Why events are worth baking in the sun!

As I write this, we are suffering through the usual midsummer heat. Thankfully, this summer, most things are getting back to normal. For me, summer means more than heat and picnics. The event season is back in a big way, including swap meets and fun-fly events. For other hobbies, there are events for trains, RC boats, RC cars and the NRHSA Expo, to name a few.

For those of us locked down for any length of time, we're champing at the bit to get out of the house. I have been out and working throughout, but there were no fun events for quite some time.

Now more than ever, attending events, whether selling or just providing information, is a great way to expand your customer base. It may mean driving a few hours, popping up a canopy and rubbing elbows with the attendees. Braving the elements shows your shop made an effort to be there. The average cost for spot is to \$10-\$30, and some events may let you set up for free.

Branching out beyond your regular local customer base does pay off. I attend local swap meets, which usually draw folks from outside my area. These events are well known and advertised in local papers and on the Academy of Model Aeronautics website Events page. I sell to the folks who have been waiting to stock up on items that only I have. A small entry fee can usually turn into hundreds of dollars for about half a day's work.

You can build long-term business because you become the local, on-site hobby shop. Folks to these events from many miles away to show off their latest creation and flying skills. As they say, stuff happens. If an aircraft gets damaged or the flyer forgot something that could ruin the whole day, they will be glad to see you. Being able to supply that widget or glue to mend the problem builds word-of-mouth support.

I customize the products I bring depending on the type of event. Swap meets usually draw folks looking for aircraft deals, including vintage kits, ARFs, engines and motors. Other standard items include glue, cables, control hardware, servos and gas and fuel accessories.



Contributing to giveaways helps build name recognition.

Check rules for indoor events before bringing fuel into their premises. Swap meets are good places to move some stagnant stock too.

At flying events, the most popular items are glue, servos, servo cables and switches, power connectors, my plywood laser parts, propellers and screw hardware. I show my latest laser cut kits at these events and do potential customer test flies. I also bring my deep-cycle 12-volt battery, inverter and soldering station to make custom power/charging cables and repairs. I can't count how many times I've turned tragedy into profit. Many attendees greet me and say, "I was hoping you would be here!"

Over time, these encounters turn into repeat customers and emails looking for products and services at other events. I get regular jobs to digitize plans and cut parts for a scratch build or a major repair. I also get orders for other laser-cut parts, glue, and fuel-to-electric motor conversion kits.

At these events you get to feel the pulse of the modelers. You can see what is hot in kits and trends. What hardware do they need? Do you need to buy the mega rack or stock two dozen of the most popular bits that are on the most-wanted list? I sell hardware from three small peg boards that are easy to move and satisfy 99% of the modelers' needs.

Unfortunately, you'll never have what everyone wants, but you can get close. To get started, attend as an observer and take notes. See what the popular kits, brands and sizes are. Build a stock list that you can move easily. Get to know the event directors and get on their mailing list so you can become a sponsor. I reserve my spots at the event for the following year, especially if space is limited. Make a banner, buy a few tubs from the home store and some folding tables, and set up at an event near you! **HM**



MKH ARF



Most flyers will need repair items at an event.



Above, Dennis sells his wares.



You never know what products hobbyists will be happy to find.