

# **How to do an INDUSTRY Hi-Fi Show\***

**PROBLEM:** How can you get more excitement, more buyer exposure, more free publicity, and even more outright *sales* from your Hi-Fi Show participation?

**SOLUTION:** Just follow these four simple rules:

1. Know what you want your Show participation to achieve, and target everything you do toward achieving it.
2. Make a real Presentation, and make sure your audience experiences ALL of it!
3. Make sure that everyone on your Show staff knows his part and can do it perfectly!
4. Plan *EVERYTHING*. Leave nothing at all to chance!

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\* This Show Special was written to help Audio manufacturers and, their international distributors exhibit at consumer electronics and audio trade Shows in the United States and around the world. The “showgoers” or “customers” it refers to are people in the industry – dealers and distributors. With just a little thought, though, virtually everything presented here can be made usable by retail dealers for local Shows to a consumer audience or even in selling to retail customers in the course of their day-to-day-business. This entire document is copyright 2018 by Roger Skoff and all rights are reserved.

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 2

### **Part 1.      Knowing what you want to achieve**

We've all "done" Hi-Fi Shows before, and we've all seen what usually happens: The average Showgoer entering a display room sticks his head into the doorway just far enough to see what's happening, stays like that for a few seconds to "check-out" the system or what's playing, and then grabs a handful of sales literature and moves on to the next room.

In terms of the Exhibitor's real goals of promoting his products, and MAKING SALES, the Showgoer's ten-second presence does no good at all, and, in fact, may actually be counter-productive: Besides reducing the exhibitor's limited supply of literature, the Showgoer – who didn't really *hear* the demonstration – may think that he DID hear it; may think that what he heard *WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH* to warrant further listening; and may think (when a friend or colleague later asks him about what he heard at the Show), that he's perfectly justified in dismissing what he "heard" as unworthy of serious consideration!

The way to avoid this kind of situation is to CONTROL your display and to CONTROL, at least while they are in your room, the actions of those who attend it! And, to control things – to make them happen as you want them to – you have to know just what it is that you're trying to accomplish.

EXHIBITING AT A SHOW REALLY HAS THREE PURPOSES. FOR YOUR DISPLAY TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU MUST RECOGNIZE AND TRY TO ACHIEVE ALL OF THEM.

The first is simply **TO SHOW THAT YOU'RE THERE**, and to establish, by your presence and the quality of your presentation, that you're a real company, worth dealing with when it comes time for your prospects to add a new product or a new line to those they already carry.

The second is **TO SHOW WHAT YOU HAVE**, not only in terms of the products you make or carry, but also the professional skills and knowledge you have in selecting other products to complement yours; assembling them into high-quality systems; and setting those systems up to sound their very best – even in the often dismal acoustical environments of a Hi-Fi Show! A great presentation can cause people to think highly of you and your company; one less great can cause them to think poorly of the products you're offering for sale.

The third and final purpose of exhibiting at a Show is **TO MAKE PEOPLE WANT TO BUY WHAT YOU ARE THERE TO OFFER!**

## **Roger Skoff *SHOW SPECIAL***

Page 3

For some Manufacturers or Distributors, just "showing the flag", and handing out brochures may accomplish two of the three purposes just listed, and may be reason enough to justify their presence at the Show. For **YOUR exhibit to be successful, though, it must accomplish all three – and even more!**. Not only must it show people that you're there, show them what you have, and make them want to buy it, **it must also make them want to buy it from you NOW, before they go off to see the rest of the Show.**<sup>2</sup>

### **Part 2. Making Your Presentation**

- A. What *IS* a presentation? What does it consist of? And what is it supposed to *DO*?

To put it most simply, **your presentation at a hi-fi show is EVERYTHING you do or DONT do that can affect people's understanding and opinion of you, your company, and the products you make or sell.** Everything is important – from which products you choose to display; to how you choose to display them; to which of your people you choose to work your room; to how those people act and dress; to how the room is set up on the inside; to what you do for signage out in the hall.

- B. Types of Presentation: Which is best for YOU?

There are four types of presentation that can be made at a Show. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, so selecting the one that's right for you is an important decision that deserves some serious consideration.

**"Open Door, Silent"** – This type of presentation is best for "one-on-one" conversation with serious prospects. When Showgoers wander into your room you'll be able, just as you would at their store or in your own office, to tell them each, individually, about the wonders and glories of the toys and goodies you have on display, and, if you're lucky, to get down to some serious selling, without loud music to interfere with your pitch. The problem with this approach is that, without music playing to lure them in, your room might get fewer lookers than otherwise, and, in order to make your presentation truly one-on-one, you may need to have more people to staff

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<sup>2</sup> Once a prospect is out of your room – even if you've made a firm appointment for your own people or your reps to call on him later – odds are you've lost him completely. There's no way of knowing what other products similar to yours he might see and like better after he leaves your exhibit; there's no way of knowing who might do a better job of selling to him; and there's no way, once he's gone, of knowing whether some entirely different product might get the budget he might otherwise have spent with you if you hadn't let him go.

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 4

your room. The "Open Door, Silent" presentation approach is often preferred by manufacturers or distributors of source products, electronics, and cables, who run the risk (See "Open Door with Music", below) of having their products mistakenly judged on the basis of other products they may be used with. If that's the case, far better to simply have no music at all!

**"Open Door with Music"** – This is the most commonly used type of presentation at any Hi-Fi Show. It's also the one most commonly screwed up! Why? Because all you have to do is to put some music on and let people filter into and out of your room whenever they please, it's easy to fool yourself into thinking that you're accomplishing something when, in fact, you're really not! If your room is getting lots of ten-second "Heads-in-the-Door" and you're giving out lots of literature but NOT talking with people and NOT either taking their orders or making specific real appointments for your rep to visit them and close the sale, you're one of the many exhibitors who are doing it all wrong! The biggest advantages of the "Open Door with Music" presentation are that music WILL attract Showgoers to your room, and an open door WILL let them enter at will. The disadvantages are that an open door will just as easily let your visitors walk out again, and, with people wandering in and out all the time, you may never really get the opportunity to give a complete demonstration. *Another HUGE potential disadvantage is that if whatever you are selling ISN'T speakers, people can misjudge your display entirely! If, for example, you are selling cables, or electronics, or anything else at all, and they walk into your room and like the sound the odds are good that they'll think "What great speakers" and disregard your own product entirely, but if they DON'T like the sound, it's almost certain that it's YOUR product that will take the blame! IF YOU ARE SELLING ANYTHING OTHER THAN SPEAKERS, YOU MIGHT VERY WELL WANT TO CONSIDER A SILENT OR "CLOSED DOOR" DISPLAY!*

Particularly with "personal audio" products, where Showgoers can come to your exhibit and individually audition the products you have on display, it's important to have one of your staff people at each of your "listening posts" to tell people what they're hearing; what its advantages or alternatives are, and to guide them to a purchase. To let someone listen to your product and then walk away without having one of your people speak to him is to forget the purpose of your exhibit and waste all the money it cost you. DON'T LET IT HAPPEN!

**"Closed Door, Silent"** – This one's a little bit tricky, in that "silent" doesn't really mean *silent*; it just means there's no *music*. Instead, you offer a "SEMINAR" on some specific dealer-interest subject that will attract people to your room.

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 5

Your seminar should run for either 20 or 50 minutes, including a "Question and Answer period", and you should schedule it to repeat every half-hour or hour, as appropriate, with a 10 minute break between programs.

The seminar, itself, can be conducted as a lecture, as a "test" (with audience participation), or in whatever other format you think will fill the room. Good lecture topics include **"How to make bigger sales to happier customers"**, and [When you can, always use "How..." or "How to..." in the name of your topic] **"How offering your customers a free System Tune-Up can build sales and put money in your pocket"** One "test" topic that's guaranteed to have 'em lined up in the hallways is **"Power Amplifiers (or Cables) – Can you or your customers REALLY hear a difference?"** And there's LOTS more that are nearly as good! Whether you select the lecture or the test format, if you do a good job of it, the "Closed Door, Silent" type of presentation can be a fine source of interested and active buyers who will already "know" that you and your staff are experts in your field.

**"Closed Door with Music"** – Just as the "Closed Door, Silent" type of presentation can give you your best opportunity to show off your company, your staff and your special skills and knowledge, the "Closed Door with Music" type can – **IF YOU CAN GET YOUR ROOM TO SOUND REALLY GOOD** – give you your best possible opportunity to show off the actual performance of the products you make or carry and to make a convincing "pitch" for them based on that performance. Just remember, though, that if you're going to expect people to come into your room and **STAY THERE** throughout an entire "Closed-Door" demonstration, what you *show* them, what you *play* for them, and what you *say* to them **MUST** be sufficient to catch and **HOLD** their interest. No Show-time sight could be more heart-rending (or more counter-productive) than that of the mangled bodies of potential customers lying trampled by bored-to-tears other prospects fighting to claw their way out of your room! **REMEMBER, ALSO, THAT IF YOUR PRODUCT IS ANYTHING OTHER THAN SPEAKERS, IN ORDER FOR IT TO GET ALL THE CREDIT IT DESERVES** (and that you are working so hard and paying so much to display) **YOU HAVE TO TELL** (and, hopefully, *DEMONSTRATE to*) **YOUR AUDIENCE WHAT YOU ARE SELLING AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO WHAT THEY ARE HEARING!**

**C. Let 'em know WHO you are; let 'em know WHERE you are; let 'em know WHAT YOU'VE GOT; let 'em know *IN ADVANCE***

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 6

Whichever type of presentation you choose, the results you get will be *greatly* better if you **advertise**. This doesn't just mean running ads in your normal advertising media to let people know that you'll be at the Show (although you definitely SHOULD run them). IT MEANS DOING *EVERYTHING YOU CAN DO TO SPREAD THE WORD AND TO GET PEOPLE TO COME TO YOUR ROOM!*

DO run ads. DO call or send emails to all of your dealers to invite them to the Show, and DO ask them to tell and invite their industry friends. DO do the same with every other dealer you can find, whether they sell your products or not, and DO assign and REQUIRE each of your reps to bring at LEAST (pick a number of) new dealer prospects to your exhibit to meet you in person, learn about your products and have private discussions. Do contact, in any way you can, every editor and every reviewer for every audio publication and every appropriate blog that you can think of and personally invite them to come and visit your room<sup>3</sup> Once you're AT the Show, DON'T just rely on the door-card provided by the promoters, but DO pay a few bucks to a sign painter<sup>4</sup> for a bigger, better sign to hang on the wall in the hallway, or (if it's allowed) to mount on an easel outside your room. IF OTHER EXHIBITORS ARE USING YOUR PRODUCTS (*HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, GET AS MANY TO DO IT AS YOU CAN*), PUT SIGNS AT OR IN *THEIR ROOMS*, TOO. Also, if the venue for the Show is large or confusing, and there's ANY possibility that people could miss your room, hang "THIS WAY TO..." signs at all of the doorways, elevators, and hallway intersections. Even if it's NOT confusing, if you can get away with it, HANG THE SIGNS ANYWAY!

DO have all of your staff people at the Show dress the same, and DO have them become "walking billboards" for your company by wearing BRIGHT (but business-like), DISTINCTIVE CLOTHING WITH YOUR NAME ON IT. That way, wherever they might be seen at the Show – in your room, or even at lunch, or visiting another display – they'll always be spreading the word!.

DO turn the Show's visitors into "walking billboards", too. It's simple. When they stick their heads into your room to grab literature, just hand them a LARGE, BRIGHT, DISTINCTIVE "Trash Bag" WITH YOUR NAME ON IT to put it in!<sup>5</sup> With masses of

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<sup>3</sup> THIS IS IMPORTANT and can be of tremendous value to your business in terms of Show reports, reviews, and other free promotion. DO IT!

<sup>4</sup> PEOPLE *WILL* JUDGE THE QUALITY OF YOUR MESSAGE BY THE QUALITY OF YOUR SIGNS AND OTHER DISPLAY MATERIALS, so whether you're going to use them in your own room, in the rooms of other cooperating exhibitors, or anywhere else at the Show, **ALWAYS HAVE ALL OF YOUR SIGNS PROFESSIONALLY PAINTED!**

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 7

dealers and other Showgoers wandering around flashing your colors, EVERYONE will know you're there, and your exhibit (if you do everything else right) is sure to be the hit of the Show!

Outside your room<sup>6</sup>, if you're showing or demonstrating equipment, PUT A SIGN ON THE WALL LISTING ALL OF THE BRAND NAMES<sup>7</sup>. If you're doing a seminar or a test, PUT UP A SIGN TELLING WHAT THE SUBJECT IS. If your presentation is "Closed-Door", make sure your sign gives the program interval (every half-hour, every hour, etc.), or the next time people will be admitted. You should also put one of your people (a pretty girl is good) just outside the door, to answer questions, hand out tickets (if you use them), and keep the crowds waiting for the next "show" in an orderly line.

Inside your room, if you're a manufacturer, a sign should (even though you make sure that they all set out PLENTY of business cards for people to take) give the name of your distributors or the rep firms that you deal with. If you're a distributor, it should list the names and cities (but NOT specific addresses or other contact data) of all of your dealers. If you are playing music, another sign should LIST YOUR ENTIRE DEMONSTRATION SYSTEM, including every component and every cable, by brand and model-name or number<sup>7</sup>. *(Unless your product or your system's really a "Giant Killer", though, for a VERY modest price, or unless you're offering a "Show Special", it's probably best to NOT post specific prices. Instead, MAKE PEOPLE ASK YOU FOR THEM – That will give you a qualifying conversation opener that you can turn into SALES, either on the spot, or at a meeting that you set up for later.)*

### **D. Setting-up your display room: What to do; Why to do it**

The ideal set-up for your display room will depend on a number of factors: How big your room is; its shape; what type of presentation you intend to make; how many

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<sup>5</sup> Make sure your "Trash Bag" is big enough that, if the visitor already has a bag of his own, you can just take his bag, drop it into yours, and hand it back to him. Having a pretty girl to hand out your bags or do the dropping is always a good idea!

<sup>6</sup> The assumption throughout this paper is that the Show you are attending will be held in a hotel or other venue with separate private display rooms. If, instead, it's an open area like a Convention Center or CES, some things will obviously be different, but the great majority of what is said here will still apply or be applicable with suitable adjustment

<sup>7</sup> If you're a distributor and all or most of the products in use are those you carry, the benefit is obvious. Even if you are a manufacturer, you should still do this. Crediting the other products used in your display, will cement your relations with their manufacturers or distributors and may help to create long-term alliances that can benefit you in many ways, not the least of which may be their use and promotion of your own products at this or future shows and the recommendation of them to their own dealers.

## **Roger Skoff *SHOW SPECIAL***

Page 8

people (both staff and Showgoers) you expect to be in it at any given moment; what you expect to do in it<sup>8</sup>, and so on. What this all means is that **the specifics of *your* particular setup for *your* particular room can only be determined by *you*, AFTER you've seen the room.** Even so, some basics *do* apply, and are worthy of your consideration:

**Sound** – If you're going to be playing music, ALLOW YOURSELF PLENTY OF TIME TO GET YOUR SYSTEM SET UP PROPERLY, AND SOUNDING GOOD! *DO* use acoustical treatments (Sonex, Tube Traps, Room Tunes, etc.<sup>9</sup>) *DO* experiment with speaker placement, and even alternate total System placement. *DO* do whatever you can to get your System and your display room working well together. If necessary, take a full extra day for set-up. It's worth it. **PEOPLE WILL JUDGE NOT ONLY THE PRODUCTS ON DISPLAY BUT ALSO THE QUALITY OF YOUR ENTIRE COMPANY BY THE QUALITY OF THE SOUND THEY HEAR!**

**Seating** – The seating you arrange must be appropriate for ALL of the things that you will be trying to accomplish in your room, including, if that's your intention, sitting with customers to discuss your products and close deals. Consider all of the things you will want to do in your room AT THE SAME TIME and prepare for them. If any one thing will interfere with any other, you must either provide seating that will allow for both, and schedule your room for the conflicting uses at different times or GET A SEPARATE ROOM (See Note #8, above). If you're doing an "Open Door, Silent" presentation you may not need *any* seating, or, at most, just one or two chairs for your own people working the room. For an "Open Door with Music" presentation, just A FEW chairs (perhaps two or three rows of two or three chairs, each), ALL ARRANGED TO BE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE SYSTEM'S "SWEET SPOT" will be more than sufficient. Another successful approach for an "Open Door with Music" type of presentation is to have NO CHAIRS AT ALL. This allows for maximum circulation of people through your room, and TAKES ADVANTAGE OF the "Head in the Door" syndrome. **(ONE VERY IMPORTANT THING: If you do decide to go with no chairs, RAISE YOUR SPEAKERS UP ON**

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<sup>8</sup> Remember that your primary purpose in being at the Show is to do business. Will having just a single room allow you to actually have discussions with your customers and to close them to get their orders? Instead of closing them on the spot, do you intend to just make appointments for later, between scheduled presentations, or another location? If a single room WON'T let you do all that you need to do, you should certainly consider adding another separate room to your Show presence. **THIS IS IMPORTANT:** If you won't be able to do effective selling and *closing*, why are you going to be at the Show at all?

<sup>9</sup> Remember that you're spending THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS to participate in the Show. Don't waste all that money and lose your opportunity to do good Show business by skimping on the things that will make your room sound GREAT, instead of just merely good!



EXTRA TALL STANDS (have them built, if you need to) SO THAT THE TWEETERS ARE AT EAR-LEVEL FOR A STANDING PERSON. Most speakers are designed for ear-level operation, and one reason why "Head in the Door" Showgoers tend to think so little of the sound they hear is that, because they are standing-up to listen to speakers designed for a sitting-down listener, they're hearing the speakers at the wrong point on their vertical axis, and the speakers won't sound "right" or "image" properly!) For "Closed Door" presentations, the trick is to get as many seats in the room as you can, WITHOUT crowding or creating a safety hazard by having insufficient aisle space. If you're doing a "Closed Door with Music" presentation, **you must also consider the sonics at each listening position.** If what you play doesn't sound good to a listener too close, too far back, or too far off to the side, you need to adjust your seating plan. Showgoers won't care WHY what they're hearing sounds bad. All they'll care about is that it DOES sound bad!

**Plants** – Large, tall plants (preferably with big leaves) will not only dress up your room, but, if properly placed, they'll also improve your acoustics. (They act as random diffusers and absorbers) ***Always* have plants in your room, REGARDLESS of your type of presentation or even if you're just setting up a separate room for discussion and closing.** If you don't own any plants or don't own enough, a local nursery or interior design firm may be willing to rent them to you.

**Equipment** – How you show your equipment is another thing that will be affected by the type of presentation you choose. For components or speakers that are actively making music, setting up your display to *look* good is important, but less critical than setting it up to *sound* good. For equipment that's for display only, LOOKS ARE *EVERYTHING*, and artful arrangement, the proper color and choice of display furniture (stands, tables, etc.), spotlighting [you can buy suitable lights for as little as about \$10 at your local hardware store], and other Interior Decorators' "tricks-of-the-trade" can make the difference between a display that is just "ho-hum" and one that will have gangs of potential customers lined-up in your room waving money. A point that Master Merchandisers always remember, and that you should never forget is: **DON'T TRY TO DISPLAY TOO MUCH!** Pick only the products that are NEW; that you have an "EXCLUSIVE" on; or that you think will be of the greatest interest to those who visit your room. Remember, too, that **A SINGLE object, well displayed will ALWAYS look more important than many objects displayed equally well;** and that **Cluttered displays look cheap.** Space *between* things makes each item a center of attention.

**Literature** – The common practice of setting out a single rack or table of literature near the door works just fine for the "peek-and-grab" type of Showgoer. Because *YOU* want people to come ALL THE WAY INTO YOUR ROOM, though, a **clearly visible** table set AS FAR FROM THE DOOR AS POSSIBLE might be a good idea to help lure them in. (It's the old grocery store trick of putting the milk on the back wall, so you have to pass through the entire store to get to it) Something else you can do, at least for an "Open Door, Silent" type of presentation, is to place the appropriate literature NEXT TO each of the components you have on display. That way, when the Showgoer sees something that interests him, the literature AND YOUR BUSINESS CARDS are right at hand.

E. The *Presentation* part of your Presentation: What do you play? What do you say?

### What to Play

Unless you're doing a "Silent" presentation, the music you play, the order in which you play it, and the sound quality of your demonstration will all have major impact on the success of your exhibit. **The recordings you select to play will be just as important as the equipment you play them on, so BEFORE the Show starts, select your "playlist" and STICK TO IT!**

Whether you're running "Open Door" or "Closed Door", THE ONLY RECORDINGS YOU SHOULD EVER PLAY AT A SHOW ARE THOSE THAT YOU *KNOW* WILL MAKE YOUR SYSTEM SOUND GOOD. **DON'T TAKE REQUESTS, and DON'T PLAY ANY RECORDINGS THAT YOU DIDN'T BRING.** There's no way of knowing what kind of awful trash – either musically, soundwise, or both – a Showgoer OR EVEN A REVIEWER might bring and ask you to play, and if you play it for him, and it IS bad, it WILL hurt your presentation: Bad music will drive people out of your room. And even worse, bad *sound* will drive them out of the room thinking you have a bad System! Unless you know the recording well enough, and LIKE it well enough to have brought your own copy of it, DON'T PLAY IT!<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Showgoer or reviewer play requests CAN be turned to your advantage: If you get a request that, for whatever reason, you want to satisfy, tell the person making the request that you're sorry, but that during Show hours you have to stick to a pre-arranged play schedule. Then offer him the opportunity for a PRIVATE audition of whatever he'd like to hear, either before or after Show hours, or, if they're nearby, in a closed session at your offices or factory. If he's interested in a private session, ask him to meet you immediately after the current demonstration

## **Roger Skoff *SHOW SPECIAL***

Page 11

Even your favorite recordings should be auditioned IN YOUR DISPLAY ROOM, (after you've got it set up as well as possible) *BEFORE* SHOWTIME. Different rooms have different acoustical characteristics, particularly in terms of bass and imaging, and even a recording that's an Ultimate-Killer-Godzilla-Rock'em-Sock'em-Showstopper at home or at your own sound room *could* prove to be a dud in the room you have at the Show!

After you've auditioned a number of recordings, and picked out those that sound best in your display room, it's time to choose which ones you'll actually use for your demonstration. In doing this, always remember that:

1.) TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING ISN'T A GOOD THING. **DON'T just play one or two kinds of music.** The broader the range of musical selections you play, the more chance you'll have that SOMETHING will appeal to every member of your audience; the better the "workout" you'll give your demonstration System; and the more opportunities you'll have to show off all of its good features. For this same reason, unless you're doing an "Open Door with Music" type of presentation, **NEVER play any recording all the way through.** Most Showgoers have limited attention spans, and unless you give them enough variety to keep them interested, YOU'LL LOSE THEM!

2.) JUST GOOD SOUNDING ISN'T ENOUGH. **Each of the recordings you play must also have ONE thing that it does obviously and outstandingly well.** This is your "kicker": the thing that will make Showgoers – even "Head-in-the-Door" Showgoers – give you their serious attention. As with the types of music you play, **the more, and the more *kinds of*, "show-off" performance you can dish up, the better your System will seem, and the more blown-away your audience will be.** Give them one recording that images like crazy; another that has massed violins that *sound like* massed violins (NOT just one BIG one); still another that'll knock their heads off with deep, *clean* bass. Give them one with a terrific female vocal; another with incredible dynamic contrasts. Another that... Well, you know what we mean. Go for it! In *this* case, MORE *IS* BETTER!

3) TOO LOUD IS TOO LOUD. **NEVER demonstrate at excessive volume!** It's discourteous to other exhibitors, and it doesn't even work! Every recording has its own "natural" volume level – the level at which it will sound best and most lifelike. That's the level you should play it at, and NO LOUDER. Really loud

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to make the necessary arrangements. **When you meet, be sure to get his name and phone number and email address, so you can follow-up!**

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 12

music may attract people to your room from distant parts of the Show venue, but, once they get within range, it will do just as much to drive them away!

4) The most important point of all about your music is to REMEMBER WHY YOU ARE PLAYING IT! It's *NOT* to entertain you or your troops while you "do" the Show; IT'S TO SHOW OFF YOUR PRODUCT(S) AND TO GET PEOPLE TO WANT TO BUY THEM. Certainly Shows do get boring for the people who have to work them. And certainly playing your favorite music could help to while away the hours that you're "trapped" in your room, but that's not what you or your company are paying thousands of dollars a day to do. You can do or play whatever you want to before or after Show hours, but WHILE THE SHOW IS ON, PLAY ONLY THE MUSIC ON YOUR PRE-PLANNED PLAYLIST. NEVER PLAY ANYTHING UNLESS IT DEMONSTRATES AT LEAST ONE FEATURE OR CHARACTERISTIC OF YOUR PRODUCT THAT WILL HELP SHOWGOERS UNDERSTAND WHY IT'S SO GREAT AND MAKE THEM WANT TO BUY IT. Rotate through the same few musical selections over and over again, if you have to, but NEVER STOP SELLING!

### **What to Say**

As important as your music and the quality of your sound are, **the real key to the success of your presentation will be what you say, NOT what you play.** The reason for this? Simple: No matter how well you set things up, not everyone in your demonstration room will have a seat in the "sweet spot"; not everyone will have the ears or the listening skills to hear all of the neat things your system is doing; and not everyone will be impressed by (or even notice) the same things to the same degree.

That's why you want to **tell them what they're hearing; tell them what's so good about it; and tell them why that's important.**

The formula followed by the most effective and *convincing* public speakers has always been **Tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you told them.** That's the formula *you* should follow, too!

In the introductory part of your talk, whether for a full-scale presentation, or just to introduce a recording you're going to play, **tell them what you're going to play** (which components; which recording) **and tell them what they're going to hear** ("You'll hear each individual instrument, perfectly defined, perfectly placed, surrounded by its own envelope of "air", within the overall ambience of the concert hall") While the music is playing, **tell them what they're hearing.** ("Notice the imaging; Notice the perfect focus, Notice the amazing quality of the soundstage, See how you can tell the exact size and shape of the hall".) When it's finished, **tell**

## Roger Skoff **SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 13

them what they heard and why it's important. (*"You just heard the Whizbang 9 preamp, the Velociraptor 2000 amplifier, the Catapult Banshee loudspeakers, and a full set of Mindbender Reference Series cables in an absolutely phenomenal display of imaging and resolution. This is the kind of performance your customers [or, if you're presenting to distributors, your dealers and their customers] want and need to have, and no other combination of products at anywhere near their very modest prices can give it to them"*)

The formula *works*, and by selecting the recordings you play so that each has a "kicker" – that ONE very important special thing that you can *talk about* – you'll find it very easy to put into effect.

Not only does the formula work, it works for EVERYTHING. If, instead of having music, you decide to do a "Closed Door, Silent" presentation, you can still use it. Here's how:

### For a Lecture:

- (Introduction) "Hi, today we're going to be talking about room acoustics, and we're going to tell you exactly how you can improve the acoustics of all of your demonstration rooms."
- (During your talk) "If your room is shaped like *this*, the "Boom Tombs" should be placed *here* and *here...*"
- (Conclusion) "Well, as promised, we've shown you how, with just a little effort and a few dollars' worth of acoustical materials and treatments, you can make a considerable improvement to the sound of each of your listening rooms" **And DON'T forget to add:** "If you have any further questions, or need to buy any of the things we've talked about, give us a call or come and see us. We'll be happy to help you in any way we can."

### For a "Test"

- (Introduction) "What we're going to be doing today is a listening test to find out if power amplifiers really *do* sound different. The amplifiers we'll be listening to will be the Velociraptor 2000, a solid-state unit, and our own Glowplug 6, a new tube amp using just a single Western Electric anode. We're going to play the same music, at exactly the same

measured volume level through both amplifiers, and, without telling you which amp is which, we're going to ask YOU to tell us if you can hear the difference."

(During the test) "Okay, we've just heard one of the two amplifiers. Now we're going to play the same music at the same measured level through the other one. Listen carefully. Is the sound of both identical? Or can you hear differences? If you can, what are they? Frequency response? Tonality? Imaging? Is the bass the same? The treble? YOU'RE the one who will make the final decision, so *whatever* you think, after the music stops, mark it down on your testsheet"

(Conclusion) "We've just done some serious comparative listening to two different amplifiers to find out if they really *sound* different. You've heard them for yourselves, and ..."

Just as a final note, we told you that the formula works for EVERYTHING, and we've shown you how, even for a no-music demonstration, you can use it to your advantage. Well, "everything" really *means* EVERYTHING. It's NOT just limited to presentations given at a Show. TRY IT IN YOUR EVERYDAY DEALINGS WITH (as appropriate) YOUR DEALERS OR DISTRIBUTORS. YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT HOW MUCH IT WILL HELP YOUR SALES!

### **Part 3. Making sure that everyone knows his part**

One of the biggest and most common mistakes made by exhibitors at all kinds of Shows and events is the failure to let each of the people who will be part of the exhibit team know EXACTLY what his or her duties will be, and to provide the tools and coaching necessary to properly perform them.

If you're going to give a verbal presentation, **REHEARSE IT UNTIL YOU CAN DO IT PERFECTLY!** If your salespeople are supposed to make sales on the spot, **LET THEM KNOW THAT THAT'S WHAT'S EXPECTED OF THEM.** The same thing goes if they're just expected to set appointments for later sales calls. **LET THEM KNOW!** If you're going to do a "Closed Door" presentation, and have someone out in the hallway giving out tickets or doing "crowd control, **TEACH THEM HOW TO DO IT!** If someone is going to be answering questions, **MAKE SURE HE EITHER KNOWS THE ANSWERS, OR KNOWS WHO ELSE TO ASK!**

## **Roger Skoff SHOW SPECIAL**

Page 15

Pick the right people for the job, tell them what's expected of them , **TRAIN THEM TO DO IT**, and *GIVE THEM A SCHEDULE*. You DON'T want to have all of your people go to lunch at the same time, or have someone "disappear" and have to wonder where he is!

### **Part 4. Planning EVERYTHING**

As you've seen, the success of your Show participation will depend not on any one big thing, but on how well and how thoroughly you do a whole series of crucial small ones. The best and THE ONLY way you can be sure that all of these things will be done (or even *thought of*) is to plan everything in advance.

When a Show is first announced, and you first make your decision to participate, THAT'S when your planning should start! Sit down and try to **think of every aspect of your Show participation**. Look at a map of the Show venue. What's the likely "traffic pattern" for the Showgoers? Which room is most likely to be visited by the most people? That's the room you want to be in! How long will the Show run? If you're a small manufacturer or distributor, should you close your offices or factory during that time? Can you afford to? If not, who's going to "mind the store" while everybody else is off at the Show? Is the Show in or near your home town? If it's NOT, will what you can achieve at the Show be sufficient to justify all of the expense and effort it will take for you and your people to go? How will you and your people get there? What transportation arrangements will you need to make? Will you need a hotel? How many rooms? For how long? What kind of presentation should you do? Which products should you display? What kinds of displays and special furniture will you need? How much of which literature? How many other exhibitors will you be able to get to use your products at the Show? What should you offer them? How will you keep track of whatever products you loan out? How will you get everything to the Show? Will you be selling there? How much inventory should you bring? What will you do if you run out? How will you get everything back from other exhibitors? Do you need to get it back on the spot? Or can they simply ship it back to you? How will you get all of your own things and people back home? What arrangements should you make? When?

*Now* you've got the idea. It's easier than it sounds, and it WILL make all the difference in the world. DO IT!

And good luck at the Show!