

## Sales **Q&A** **by Dan Cole**

**Q** We just got the final report on the attendance at our last show, and it fell by 10 percent. I'm worried about how that's going to look to exhibitors. How do I sell against falling attendance?

**A** You've got a perfect opportunity to turn lemons into lemonade.

If the final report to which you're referring is an actual audit, you can first point out the positive factor that your organization uses an audit and therefore your figures are trustworthy and reliable.

Next, be honest and candid. Don't run away from the results of the audit. Rather take the opportunity to acknowledge this objection, empathize with the concern and then focus on your customer's actual attendance objectives. Were they trying to reach all of your attendees, or were they target-

ing specific individuals or segments? Perhaps you can use your audit to help demonstrate that these segments or targets were actually at the show, and therefore mitigate their concern.

Your organization's public relations or marketing department should develop talking points for your sales team to articulate reasons why attendance might have slipped and exactly what the show will be doing throughout the year to bring those numbers up.

Perhaps the drop represents a healthy attrition of attendees who might not have been the most qualified in the first place. I know of several organizations, including my own, that are taking more aggressive measures to pre-qualify their trade attendance and denying access to those who don't fit the stringent attendance criteria set forth by the show.

---

*Dan Cole is Vice President of Sales and Business Development for the Consumer Electronics Association, which draws nearly 2,500 exhibitors to its largest annual show, the International Consumer Electronics Show. Cole is a regular speaker on sales-related topics at industry events. In 2005, the International Business Awards named him Best Sales Executive. He can be reached at: [dcole@ce.org](mailto:dcole@ce.org).*