

## I Do? I Do!

*It takes a real leap of faith to outsource part of your job, but choose your partner carefully and you'll both prosper.*

Outsourcing is like a marriage. You have to select your supplier as carefully as you would a spouse and watch your checkbook to be sure there are no surprises. But once you settle into this new relationship and both parties know what is expected of them, more freedom and comfort are given to both parties.

I've been on both sides of this relationship during the past 14 years so I know that letting someone else take care of the mundane, the logistics, and the minutia of trade show management is both a relief and a growing experience—once you take the plunge. But many of us were reluctant to take that first step. We wondered: Am I making myself expendable? Will they still need me once they see I can be replaced by a purchase order? What if the contractor can do this better than I? But these fears are unfounded—outsourcing allows you more time to focus on the strategic planning and not just logistics.

Exhibit managers around the world outsource different portions of their trade show marketing responsibilities. Most outsource transportation, graphic production, furniture rental, carpet rental, and I&D (installation and dismantling). Many others outsource storage, maintenance, shipping, and receipt of their property, while some outsource everything but staffing. It's no surprise that final design approval, theme development, and budget control typically remain in house.

To learn more about the outsourcing relationship from different points of view, the editors of *Trade Show Ideas (TSI)* facilitated a dialogue between several TSEA members—Greg Ward, Laura Munson, and myself. Laura, a trade show specialist for Convergys Corp., handles shows for this Orlando-based company and has outsourcing relationships with numerous vendors. In addition, she previously worked for a Canadian technology company that did virtually no outsourcing. Greg Ward represents the outsourcer; as Sales Manager for the Ohio-based Downing Displays, he provides a various services to an array of clients.

Following are excerpts from what turned out to be a fascinating discussion on the subject of outsourcing.

*—Bob Thomas, CME*