

# The 2011 DRN EXPO!

## A retailer's guide to the show

BY LIBBY DOWD

Customers have finally begun spending again. You've got their attention, now it's time to arm yourself with fresh retail strategies that will turn them into frequent buyers. The *DRN* Expo will help you do that. "The retailers I meet at trade shows understand that what made them successful in the past will not necessarily make them successful in the future," says retail consultant Doug Fleener. "Those are the retailers who keep up, the ones who change and evolve."

Every year Georgia Tetradis, 2010 *DRN* Award of Excellence winner, shops for her Greenwich, CT-based store Beam & Barre at the Expo. She says it helps keep her inventory fresh and contributes to her success. Tetradis' advice to retailers: "Count what you have first. There have been times I've had to call the store to check in with my manager," she says. "And be open to new products. Part of the fun is the discovery. You can always buy just a few pieces and this is the place to do it." Read on for *DRN* Expo tips, and prepare for the show with advice from our expert speakers.

### MEET THE EXPERTS



**Mike Kraus**, keynote speaker, will show you how to improve your customer's shopping experience in "**Give Your Store Image a Makeover.**"



**Laurel Tielis** will offer moneymaking event ideas in "**Ka-Ching! How to Ring Up More Sales—Easy Events and Promotions.**"



**Doug Fleener** will demonstrate staff training techniques in "**Raise The Bar! How to Create an Extraordinary Team.**"



**Leslie Groves**, *DRN* columnist, will share her secrets of great displays at "**In-Store Displays: Attention to Detail Equals Success in Retail.**"

## 3 To-Do's Before You Get to the Expo

To make the most of the *DRN* Expo, you need to prepare. Follow these tips from our speakers:

- 1 Set up meetings with major suppliers before you arrive.** You want to maximize your time, says keynote speaker Mike Kraus.
- 2 Look at your promotional plan for the upcoming year.** "By knowing the key events ahead, you can approach vendors and ask if they'd like to participate," says Doug Fleener. Consider holding a trunk show or ask for giveaway items to include in gift bags. "A vendor's involvement has to be win/win," he adds. "If you place an order and make a commitment to a company, it's the perfect time to ask for additional support."
- 3 Know your sales figures from the previous year and which areas are trending up.** Fleener also suggests checking in with local studios to see if their dress codes have changed. "At the Expo, there are incredible show specials from vendors, and if you can take advantage of them, terrific," he says.

## How to Network Better

Meeting other storeowners and creating lasting business relationships is one of the biggest advantages to attending the *DRN* Expo. Here are easy ways to get the conversations started.

- ✓ **ARRIVE EARLY.** "If you're the first person at the cocktail party, people arriving later will turn to you with their questions," says Laurel Tielis. "You become the authority, and that makes it easy to connect with people."
- ✓ **DON'T GIVE AWAY YOUR BUSINESS CARDS.** Instead, make it your goal to collect other people's cards. "Then you control the contact," says Tielis. Of course, you should be equipped with cards of your own, but asking people if they'd like to take one, rather than saying, "Here's my card," shows respect and professionalism.
- ✓ **WIDEN YOUR NETWORK.** Retailers outside of your region will be more likely to share their ideas, since you pose no threat to their business. "One mistake I see people make is not meeting enough people," says Doug Fleener. "Don't hang out with your old friends. Even if you're a veteran retailer, a person with one or two years of experience can offer a fresh perspective."
- ✓ **TURN TO THE DRN EDITORS.** If you're not comfortable interrupting a conversation to introduce yourself, ask one of the *DRN* editors to do it for you. We're here to make your visit enjoyable and productive, so let us know if there's a particular person you're looking for, and we'll gladly introduce you.

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### WHAT TO PACK

Here's your can't-miss list of what to bring.

- A camera or camera phone to upload images to your Facebook page. "You can be in a vendor's booth trying to decide if you like something," says Doug Fleener. "Take a picture, upload it and ask for your followers' feedback on it."



- Pictures of your store. You'll have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with Designs & Display expert Leslie Groves. Show her your problem areas and ask for suggestions. Having these images may also be helpful when you share ideas with fellow retailers.



- A guide to Las Vegas. "Make sure you give yourself some free time," says Mike Kraus. "Working sunup to sundown for several days is exhausting. After all, it's Vegas."



- Any reports you need. Fleener suggests bringing your annual sales, quarterly sales and information on department trends, so you can shop with confidence.



- Comfortable shoes. "I don't care about aesthetics when I'm walking up and down those aisles," says Beam & Barre owner Georgia Tetradis. "Comfort is key." Tetradis also packs a notebook and snacks to keep her stamina up.



- Goals. "Have a plan," says Fleener. "Why are you going and what areas of your business do you want to concentrate on?"

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\* **Haven't signed up yet?**  
Visit [www.drnexpo.com](http://www.drnexpo.com) to register.

### DRN Expo Don'ts

- ✗ **Don't** rush out of the room after a breakout session. "You have an opportunity to ask questions of experts, one-on-one, and you don't have to pay for it," says Laurel Tielis. Introduce yourself to the person sitting next to you in each workshop, adds Mike Kraus. "View every avenue as a potential networking opportunity," he says.
- ✗ **Don't** waste your newfound knowledge. Review material at the end of each day and translate those lessons to your business. "Try to make it actionable," says Doug Fleener. "If you go to my session on training staff, schedule a meeting with your employees or make a to-do list for when you return to the store," he says.
- ✗ **Don't** keep the details to yourself. "You want to let customers know you were at the Expo," says Tielis. "Right after the show is the perfect time to host an in-store event to show people pictures, share fashion trends and preview what new items are coming in." You should also host a review session with your staff when you return to work.

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