



◀ **THIS CHOICE HOT TUBS EVENT** took place last summer during a 95 degree heat wave in Philadelphia.

entrances, he says, so he aims to get as close to the main entrance as possible, which automatically generates more foot traffic.

Jerry Sangiamo, sales manager for Choice Hot Tubs, says mall events are a great opportunity for customers to get as much hot tub as they can at half the cost. “A lot of them have kicked the tires at retail stores before and know the tubs cost \$10,000 to \$15,000,” Sangiamo says. “When it’s the same tub for half the cost, why not? The quality is there, and they can see and

The Mall Isn’t Just for Tweens Anymore

Choice Hot Tubs sees great results at mall sales event; last one sold 19 hot tubs

BY MICHELLE L. CRAMER

EVER THINK THE MALL could be a good place to gain exposure for your hot tub store? Keith Patridge, owner of Choice Hot Tubs in Boothwyn, Pa., and his staff set up in spacious mall entryways to maximize foot traffic. With 10 to 12 discounted hot tubs on display, Patridge has seen marked success with this strategy. In fact, Choice sold 19 hot tubs in four days at the last event, compared with an average of four to five hot tubs a week in its showroom.

“We do this to augment our sales,” Patridge says. “We have a regular showroom here in Boothwyn. The mall gives us the opportunity to reach out to customers that we may not be able to necessarily bring into our showroom. It’s a way for us to go out to the public versus relying on the public to come to us.”

March to October seems to be the best time to have a presence in the mall, Patridge says. He works with mall management to organize the promotions; in each case, he signs a lease to rent the space, and the mall benefits by generating more traffic, giving people another reason to shop there.

Patridge says a mall with an open area like an atrium seems to work best. Even better is being positioned right in front of an anchor store such as a department store. The larger malls have more

touch the tub.”

These discounts are possible because Choice doesn’t have the overhead costs of a retail location. While renting the mall space does cost money, it leaves room to significantly discount the price of the hot tubs. And the events are strictly focused on closing sales right then and there; leads are not a priority. “[The event] creates a sense of urgency,” Patridge says. “People know there must be a good deal because we’re set up in the mall.”

Customers won’t know about those great deals, however, if they don’t know about the event to begin with. Choice Hot Tubs gets the word out with newspaper ads prior to and during the sale. Once things get rolling, it has cars driving around the area with large signs on top promoting the event. Additionally, it hires sign-walkers to show off signs around the busy intersections close to the mall.

“We have people who are going to the mall to shop anyway and are happy to see us,” Patridge says. “On the flipside, we have people who were not planning on coming into the mall, saw our advertisement and decided to come to the mall to buy a hot tub from us.”

Sangiamo says it’s also easier to make sales at malls because of the casual atmosphere. “[Retail stores] usually wine and dine you, tell you to bring your bathing suit and spend the day sitting in every hot tub, and you’re overwhelmed with options, choices, and promises,” he says. “At the mall it’s a more relaxed sale and, with the right sales force, you can see the numbers we did.” ■

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