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## HMI 2005 Helps to Build Lasting Relationships

weekend together at the Rio All Suite Hotel and Conference Center where they dined, listened, bet big — and of course talked business. Additionally, a reception was hosted by the World Market Center before releasing attendees to their night out on the Las Vegas Strip.

Attendees included a global audience from as far away as Australia, England and Pakistan and as brave as some from New Orleans and Houston.

The crux of the event was the pre-matched one-to-one meetings where specifiers and suppliers were given 20 minutes to meet and greet.

"Having an opportunity to interact with representatives from

various levels of specifiers and buyers on a one-on-one basis was an asset. Often, we may have relationships with a principal of a firm, but to meet those in other capacities who affect the usage of our product is integral," said Elaine Schroeder, *kravetcontract* national sales manager.

"The effectiveness of the one-on-one appointments are far more valuable than a trade show," said Leslie Temples, director of sales & marketing, *Burteo Enterprises*.

The event gave suppliers the opportunity to meet potential clients one-on-one in an atmosphere that was laid back, fun, and conducive to education.

Two seminars were held during the event where attendees could voice their opinions on hot topics such as communication and design trends. 'What the

Specifier Wants,' which focused on improved communication between the supplier and specifier was moderated by Eric Schneider, *Sipco Publications* publisher, featuring Chelsea Dossett of *Gensler*, Ron Golbus of *Graphic Encounter*, Russ Haber of *Royal Oak Purchasing*, Christopher Wheeler of *BBG-BBGM* and Lisa Roth of *Montgomery Roth*. 'The Influence of Boutique,' which focused on the boutique look popping up in mid-market properties was moderated by Rebecca Goldberg, editor of boutique *DESIGN*. It featured Tony Attard of *Panaz* and the *British Contract Furnishings Association* chair, Jeff Orustein of *J/Brice Design*, Burt Boucock of *sfa design*, and Andrea Dawson Sheehan of *Dawson Design Associates*.

In addition to education in the traditional sense, many found the one-to-one meetings to be an informative format for finding out what works — and what doesn't.

"I really enjoyed the one-on-one, intimate meetings with vendors that I have done business with in the past. Local reps always ask to bring their national sales managers to our office because I have no problem voicing my con-



Above: Sandi Brown, senior projects designer, *sfa design*, Michael Schneider, president, *Sipco Events*, Helen Marcus, principal, *Zenith International*

cerns, which are typically the same concerns that reps hear from other designers. Often, manufacturers don't heed the words of their reps, discounting the comments as isolated gripes from disgruntled employees. I feel that in order to maintain a fair partnership and an enduring relationship, it is my responsibility to tell a manufacturer why I do or do not do business with them. Too often, specifiers are shown manufacturers' products, nod approvingly and then never specify the product. The shallow nod doesn't sell the product. Honesty does," said Tobin Schermerhorn, president of *TOBY*.

"I met people I would rarely encounter and had an opportunity to find out how they do business and hear about their experience in the industry. The fact that the event had so many international participants was a real positive for me. We are always looking for new, innovative products and we found several," said Andrea Dawson Sheehan of *Dawson Design Associates*. "At least 50% of the vendors I sat with were people I had never heard of or met in the past. Some were vendors I had met briefly at other shows but never had the time to talk with except in passing. Talking with them for 20 minutes was a luxury I never seem to have with my schedule."

"It was a great opportunity to talk to various vendors and, as a designer, let them know more of what I am looking for and also, have the one-on-one time that

you don't normally get," said Dianne Kraus, of *Diane Kraus Designs*.

Ultimately, the question was why did these busy professionals decide to give up their precious weekend time to go on the dating game and tread in the uncharted waters of this event? *SK Textile* owner, Debra Centurion said: "Everyone is so busy these days that when I call on designers during the working hours I feel like I am taking time away from designers' billable hours, and I don't want to be the company who does that. It's important to see the new products, but you have to weigh out the value to the client and designers."

Helen Marcus, president of *Zenith International* partnered with *Sipco Events*, and was responsible for buyer registration. "All the feedback that I received from all the specifiers and the vendors has been nothing but positive; they loved the smallness of it," she said. "I, as a vendor, have gotten nothing but wonderful replies from people wanting my catalogue and wanting to work together. There were some people that I hadn't met and some people that I had done business with but hadn't met in person and we bonded. As a vendor, I'm delighted. As a helper, I am exhilarated." F&E



Left: Tom Jung, principal, *Jung Designs*; Mary Baker, president, *Rak Thai*; Below: Chelsea Dossett, interior designer, *Gensler*; Russ Haber, president, *Royal Oak Purchasing*; Chris Wheeler, senior designer, *BBG-BBGM*; Lisa Roth, *Montgomery Roth* and Ron Golbus, president, *Graphic Encounter* talk about 'What the Specifier Wants'

