



Summer
2001

															
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AMDA is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting environmentally responsible marine aquarium keeping as an entertaining, educational, and worthwhile leisure time activity.

Incoming Tide

AMDA WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS

Channel Islands Coral Reef Ornamentals Propagation-
Port Hueneme, CA
Fish & Other Ichthy Stuff- Oldsmar, FL
Ocean Environments- Ft. Myers, FL
ProAquatic Services Company- Pittsburgh, PA

Introducing our North Central Regional

My name is Steven Pro and I would like to introduce myself as the new North Central Regional Director for AMDA. I own an aquarium maintenance business called ProAquatic Services Company. I started this enterprise in October of 2000. Prior to this, I worked for Elmer's Aquarium and Pet Center in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. I began working for them in August of 1995 in their aquarium service department. During the next two years that I worked in the service department, I also spent time on the retail sales floor. In September of 1998, I was promoted to Service Department Manager. In this capacity, I coordinated and/or performed all of the deliveries and installations, as well as, the regular maintenance accounts. After working for Elmer's for five years, I decided to leave to start my own business.

In addition to my professional experience, I have been a member of the Pittsburgh Marine Aquarium Society, Inc. (PMASI) and the Greater Pittsburgh Aquarium Society, Inc. (GPASI). In 1999, I served on the Board of Directors of PMASI as the Special Events Coordinator. I was the Vice President in 2000 and I am currently serving as the President.

I have now decided to take on a new challenge. I have been fairly active regionally, but I feel as I should be doing more. As regional director, my first goal is to get in touch with my regional membership, foster a relationship with them, and then represent them to the best of my ability. My second goal is to sign up as many of the local stores as possible. I feel an obligation to strive for a 100% membership of the stores "in my backyard".

If you would like to contact me, please do so at 412-327-3805 or dspro@sgi.net

URGENT! NEW YORK LEGISLATION COULD CAUSE SHUTDOWN OF INDUSTRY IN THAT STATE!

Two bills have been introduced in New York State, Assembly Bill 7375 and Senate Bill 4755. The intent of these bills is to ban the trade of exotic animals such as tigers, monkeys, and venomous reptiles that present a danger to the public health. However, the bills are worded so ambiguously that if passed as is pet's rights activists could easily use the bills to shut down the fish/coral trade. The problem is that aquarium animals are not listed under "Companion Animals" that have been designated as appropriate wild animals to keep. Your help in this matter is urgently needed! We need to have fish and corals added to the Companion Animals list, and the only way to do this is by making our concerns known! I urge you to visit www.reefsource.com to obtain the short list of key house members that should be contacted. If you do not have internet access, please call me at 805-986-4301. -Mary

NEW MAILING LIST FACILITATES COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN AMDA BOARD & MEMBERS

When was the last time that you interacted with another retailer? I don't mean calling and cussing out your competition (grin)...I mean sitting down and sharing ideas, exchanging knowledge, and expressing frustrations about the business? The majority of you probably answered "Never". That's unfortunate! Combined together, the AMDA membership has centuries of experience! No man is an island unto himself, and if we are to succeed in this sometimes trying industry, it is important that we share mutual ideas and concerns. Hence the creation of the new AMDA Member Mailing List. Every member that has an e-mail address on file with our organization was automatically signed up to this new list in April. Some of our more recent discussions have been on the role of the airlines in our industry, and eradication of those pesky flatworms. Basically, each member that is signed up to the mailing list receives an e-mail when another member posts a topic, and in return any member that responds to that topic automatically sends the response to the entire group. It's easy, informative, and a free benefit of being a member. If you have not been receiving any of the e-mails, to join please contact Mary Middlebrook at marinewholesale@hotmail.com.



DID YOU KNOW???

Be careful when using plastic plants in saltwater aquariums. Fish with a lot of "bite power", such as puffers, triggers, tangs, and wrasses, can ingest pieces of plastic which can block their intestines and cause death.

Hobbyist Drop-out: The Number One Problem Facing Your Business & Our Industry

By Bob Fenner (Edited for space)

Many studies over the years have cited sources of business loss in the aquarium interests; lack of availability of hardy livestock, paucity of helpful information, poor merchandising and general business practices within the trade (more or less "solved" with the proliferation of mass merchandisers), the perception that aquatics is onerous in the way of maintenance... and occasionally, what is and has been to me the single largest cause of lack of vitality and growth in our trade; the high turnover in hobbyist-customer base. By some reliable estimates the average hobbyist stays in the interest less than a year; this is a real problem, or opportunity for those looking to build their business.

Ask yourself, "who is my best prospective customer?" Let me give you a clue, it's the same best advertisement/promotion of aquarium use in your area as well. Yes, "it's" your existing customer base, in particular the enthusiastic, avid intermediate to advanced groups that breed, display, and maintain live plant, fish-only and full-blown reef systems. These folks do the maximum to inspire and inform new customers by example, advice and sharing their excess spawns. The most successful geographic areas and their independent stores have a strong and growing core of these excellent hobbyists, do you?

Hobbyist/Customer Attrition: What Can Be Done?

You & Your Attitude: You are your best, in fact in the final synthesis, the only person who can effectively represent your business and the trades interests to your public. I can't emphasize how crucially important it is to hobbyists that we "be there" with useful information, interest and compassion when they have questions, problems, even suggestions.

I recently had a call from a fellow in the northeast who had a concern over his multi-thousand dollar reef set-up. He told me that upon telephoning another hobby-magazine writer, he'd been rebuffed... "Oh he's too busy writing articles and books to take hobbyist calls". Too busy? Can you imagine how damaging such an expressed attitude is? As an "industry person" these last three decades I assure you, the folks making these queries are THE REASON I'm here; I will never refuse their company or the opportunity to serve them. And neither should you.

Yourself: Content and Format. Basically, how much do you know and how good are you at relating it to others? Back to averages, the mean time for retailers in our trade in the U.S. is only around two years. Not long at all. How much business savvy along with product and livestock knowledge do most retailers possess? None so much that they cannot improve.

Knowledge is Power: be powerful. The field grows faster than a single human can keep up, but that's still no excuse for not trying. Read above

all else. Read the popular hobby magazines; this is the same material that your advanced aquarists are seeing and you should be scrutinizing it closely. Trends, new products, the latest in livestock imports; they're all there. And the trade magazines. Writers and publishers who with burning desire want you to succeed put their best in writing to aid your business monthly. Read the industry publications for their face value as well as what they say "in between the lines".

Also look outside the pet industry for more mainstream printed business advice. BusinessWeek, The Wall Street Journal and other sources list current best sellers. Allow these sources to bring you new ideas and insights to improving your store(s).

Hobby conferences and shows, and business trade shows are absolutely golden opportunities for getting the low-down on new and established products and livestock... as well as essential battery recharging. By all means, relive the fun and excitement of the interest and business by attending these events. They're stimulating, educational and profitable.

Your Store: Speaks volumes about you; your approach to the field as business, attitudes toward your living charges, and goals as a business person. Is it a warm, friendly hobbyist-oriented place with vivid displays as examples of what your clientele might aspire to have in their homes and workplaces? I realize that the tanks with most of the livestock you sell can't be fully stocked with live plants, décor or live rock, but a few designer set-ups are paramount to generating and continuing hobby interest.

Does it speak of your knowledge of the field, artistic abilities, and astute business practices? On the latter, do you rotate displays, employ seasonal "hooks", keep your staff bright and eager to serve? Is there enough of what it takes to bring in your new and especially year-plus "old" customers? How will you make it better?

Please excuse another personal anecdote. One of my all-time favorite endorsement and sales-tools involves a simple gravel vacuum hung over a sign announcing, "Lose Muck Now, Ask Me How". We sold gross after gross of these important maintenance tools and related paraphernalia before the days of Python Products, by simply demonstrating their use in front of customers. A huge part of the trepidation of new aquarists is how much time and trouble their aquarium may require for upkeep. All easily dispelled by a simple demo.

You should cherish and cultivate your relationships with these hobbyists; they are your single best means of growing your business. The ways of doing so are several, but undaunting. Above all else be informed and accessible to your customer base. Read, attend conferences and shows, hobbyists and trade; participate in your local aquarium societies undertakings. Remember who your best future customer is and where they are likely to come from; your existing intermediate to advanced consumers; don't let them leave the hobby for lack of your help and enthusiasm. In fact, make them your allies in creating new long-term customers.



DID YOU KNOW???

The Calcium Balance Brick can be placed in a reef system's sump and will dissolve until levels of calcium and essential elements in the saltwater are at appropriate reef levels. These nifty bricks can be purchased from HBH Pet Products, P.O. Box 967, Springville, UT 84663-0967.



THE CURE FOR THE SUMMERTIME BLUES

By Mary Middlebrook

As editor of this newsletter, I love summer- it means you have a lot of spare time to read this! As a livestock wholesaler, I hate summer- it means I have plenty of time to work on the newsletter! All kidding aside, summer is the thorn in the side of most pet industry professionals- especially aquarium shops. For me, as for many of my customers, the industry came to a screeching halt around the first of May. This is a little earlier than the normal June slowdown, and is possibly due to factors such as economy "jitters", tax time hitting too hard back in April, and nice weather that came a little earlier than normal.

So now that it's here, what can you do about it? I used to own a retail shop in a college town. The students were about 50% of our business, so on top of the normal summer slow down, half of our customers left town for the summer! Here are a few tips that my husband and I employed, and a few tips I've picked up during the 12 summer seasons I've had to endure in this industry!

Have an Open House



You know those dry goods sales reps that come in and want to "walk your aisles" to sell you a bunch of stuff? Utilize them! If the retail shops are slow, so are the distributors. Give them a call and ask them if they would come in on a Saturday for an open house. They can bring in samples of their products, offer special discounts for the open house attendees, talk to your customers, and donate items for a raffle. Advertise the open house both in your store and in the local paper- try placing a small, inexpensive ad in the classified section under "Pets". And don't forget to notify the local aquarium club!

Take Advantage of Specials



Many livestock wholesalers and dry good distributors will offer weekly specials during the summer to help increase sales. I know that many of you just use specials to make a higher markup...this is not the time of year to do that! For example, during the summer I offer many corals in special "lot" pricing- by 2 and you get them for \$9.99 each (or less). A smart retailer will take a coral that he pays \$10 for +\$2 freight and sell it for \$20. Not your normal markup, but believe me it will increase traffic in your store! Take a few items each week and call them "Sizzling Summer Specials" or something similar. Get them in to buy a inexpensive animal, and chances are they'll pick up something else they need while they're there!



Utilize Your Local Aquarium Club

Summer is a good time to offer a store tour to your local aquarium club. Offer a special deal, like 10% off to members who attend the tour, to sweeten the deal. Explain what goes on "behind the scenes" and the steps you take to provide them with the healthiest animals and best customer service.



Get Some Outdoor Exposure

Regulations vary from city to city, but check into getting a changeable sign to place outside of your store that is easily visible from the street. We had one of those big flashing electric signs with the large changeable plastic letters...but many cities won't allow those. Something as simple as a brightly colored, large lettered plastic sign will work. Contact your local sign maker (Look in the yellow pages under "signs" or "banners") and have them make you a heavy duty, lightweight plastic sign about 4'x3'. One side can say "This Just In...New Shipment of Saltwater Fish and Corals!" with a nice picture. The other can say something similar about another product you carry. The day you are offering a new shipment for sale, hang the sign outside (chains and hooks will work fine). DO NOT leave it there all of the time or it will become ineffective. Customers who might be driving by but not intending to stop in just may change their mind if they know you have some goodies inside!

Lifeguards Aren't Lifesavers....Ponds Are!



If you are an aquatics retailer and you don't tap into the pond market each summer, you are missing out on a huge money making opportunity! Even if you are strictly a "marine" store, you should seriously consider doing ponds between April and August. In fact, my husband and I are talking about digging some ponds here at our facility to hold koi and water plants to help pull us through the summer season. Marine sales boom from September to April and then die. Pond sales boom from April to August and then die. You do the math! No slow season for my business sounds like a good deal to me! You don't have to have tons of space to deal in ponds. I'd stock one nice pond set up- liner, pump, filters, etc.. to help with impulse buys, but don't carry every size...let customers pre order to their specifications. Stock a few of the popular pond products- water clarifiers, fountain kits, koi food, etc... Have a couple of tanks for koi. A good way to do it is to buy a couple of 50 gallon + stocktanks from your local farm supply store. They're cheap, durable, and allow the customer to look down on the koi- the same perspective they'll have from their pond. If you do a water change every few days and have a good filter, you can pack quite a few koi in! Use another stock tank for water plants. These are great sellers. When pond season is over, the tanks are perfect for curing live rock! Another benefit to drawing in the pond people is that they usually have money...after 4 months of coming in to buy their pond stuff and seeing your cool marine tanks, they just might decide to set up a reef tank to get them through the long winter!

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!



DID YOU KNOW???

You can receive a FREE subscription to Pet Business Magazine just for the asking! Each monthly issue contains articles, product listings, and special reports of interest to industry professionals. Go to www.petbusiness.com to sign up online or call (215) 788-7054.

ARE YOU GIVING YOUR CUSTOMER WHAT THEY WANT?

by Mary Middlebrook

As a wholesaler, I don't have the opportunity to interact with hobbyists like I did when I was in retail. Although I sell to retailers, it is the hobbyist that is actually my customer. If the hobbyist likes my animals and my style of doing things, then you'll make money, which means you'll continue buying from me. Because I don't have one-on-one interaction with hobbyists, it is important for me to reach out to them and see what they want. Therefore, I spend a few hours each week on the various hobbyist discussion boards and chat rooms teaching, learning, and listening. I HIGHLY recommend that you do the same thing. Hobbyists, especially the advanced ones, are getting frustrated with their local fish shops (commonly referred to as LFS on the internet). I'm sure you're thinking "They all want me to sell them something for nothing, otherwise they go buy mail order". Not necessarily. Although I have corresponded with unrealistic hobbyists who don't understand the overhead involved in maintaining a retail shop, many of them do understand your position and want to support you...but you need to give them that little something "extra" that they can't get from ordering livestock over the phone at a mail order company. I recently posted a thread on one of the discussion boards entitled "Finally, a chance to tell the LFS what you want". The response was overwhelming! Here are a few of the most popular comments that I think you will find invaluable IF you take the time to take them to heart and put them into practice.

- ◆ Livestock tanks should be clearly marked with the animal's name and price. No guessing games. Scientific names would also be a plus.
- ◆ Don't tell a hobbyist something just to make a buck. Back up your sales with knowledge and customer service, and you'll have a customer for life!
- ◆ Show more compassion toward the animals. Don't sell things like Goniopora or Moorish Idols to beginners. Don't carry animals like groupers, sharks, etc.. that get too huge for most hobbyists tanks. Don't have starving/sick fish in your main display system. Don't keep incompatible fish together as tankmates. Remove dead/dying animals immediately.
- ◆ Stay up-to-date with new advances in the hobby. Deep sand beds, plenum systems, and refugiums are the current trend... are you knowledgeable about these types of filtration?
- ◆ Better selection. Not the same old bubble corals and yellow tangs week after week.
- ◆ Offer sales occasionally to get the hobbyists excited about new items and to cut them a break.
- ◆ More captive bred fish and captive propagated corals!

I'm telling you right now- if you don't give your customers high quality animals and service you will lose them to mail order companies. If they aren't getting the benefits of your knowledge and expertise, a nice variety of healthy, well-kept animals to choose from, and the most important thing...customer service... then why should they pay a higher price at your shop than they would at a mail order company? I urge you to start listening to your customers. If you'd like to read the entire thread containing all of the hobbyist responses to my post, go to www.amdareef.com and click the "Hot Survey-Click Here" link.

GET ACTIVE!

These are the things that AMDA members should be taking part in this quarter.

- ◆ If you aren't already on the new AMDA mailing list, contact Mary at marinewholesale@hotmail.com. See pg. 1 for more details.
- ◆ Make sure you take advantage of your membership discounts by using the AMDA Purchasing Power Coupons!
- ◆ Check out the new and improved AMDA website at www.amdareef.com. Make sure you read the minutes of each board meeting so you can see the progress AMDA is making!
- ◆ Plan on attending MACNA! See page 7 for more information.
- ◆ If you have any submissions for the newsletter, they would be greatly appreciated. We need articles for the regular features, businesses to offer discount coupons, Did You Know blurbs, and anything else you would like to share with the membership! Please send submissions to:

MSI
417 Hueneme Rd #135
Port Hueneme, CA 93041

YOUR COUPON COULD BE HERE!

Are you a manufacturer/distributor/wholesaler?? Would you like to get information about your company out to the entire AMDA membership?? Then place a coupon in the next issue of the AMDA Newsletter!! This advertising opportunity is currently FREE to AMDA members, so what are you waiting for? Contact Mary Middlebrook at 805-986-4301 or marinewholesale@hotmail.com for



DID YOU KNOW???

Damaged corals may look ugly, but they will normally recover. Set up a tank just for "Second Grade Corals". Sell them CHEAP. At least you're making some money off of them and giving them a chance to survive. A much better option than the trash can!

PRODUCT REVIEW

The Tunze Power Magnetic Pane Cleaner

By Rick Oellers



Many of our members are service companies and, boy, this one is for you. I am talking about the Tunze Power Magnetic Pane Cleaner. For years, I have tried every cleaning magnet, only to be disappointed. Most would, at

best, work fairly well on aquariums up to fifty-five gallons. As an aquarium professional, with tanks up to one inch thick, I searched in vain for something more heavy duty. I even thought of making my own with speaker magnets, but never found the time to try. I first heard of this magnet from Lance Ichinotsubo, former owner of Rainbow Seascapes. Unfortunately the importer of this product was out of business and it was unavailable in the U.S. Then at last years MACNA, Perry from Champion Supply was showing me his newest batch of toys, when I spotted this jewel among his merchandise. I purchased it on the spot and have since purchased four more for my staff. The price tag is a hefty \$100.00 wholesale, but it is worth every penny. This baby can handle one-inch thick aquariums, even with a nylon cover I use to prevent scratching acrylic tanks. Just as with any quality tool we use in our trade, you get what you pay for. I highly recommend this product for any aquarium service company. For more information contact Perry at Champion at 1-800-673-7822.

**Want a free AMDA membership?? It's easy!
Just use the coupons found in every AMDA
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than pay for dues!**

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NETTING KNOWLEDGE

Business professionals use every tool possible to create success. The internet offers a wide range of information for you...animal husbandry & identification, new technologies, product information, and much more! Each newsletter will highlight a website of particular interest to AMDA members. Please take a moment to visit the featured site, and don't forget to check out AMDA's site at www.amdareef.com!!

WetWebMedia

www.wetwebmedia.com

This month's featured website is Wet Web Media, the homepage of Robert (Bob) Fenner. Many of you probably know Bob as the author of *The Conscientious Marine Aquarist*. Bob has "lived" the science, hobby and business of aquatics in the Philippines, Japan and United States in all phases; collector, wholesale, jobber, retail, design, construction and maintenance and all levels; manager, owner, hatchery worker, retail clerk, technician. Except for a stint teaching high school sciences for four years, he has worked all his life in the field of ornamental aquatics.

Wet Web Media is an extensive resource of articles and FAQ's concerning Marine, Freshwater, and Brackish Aquaria, Ponds, and Plants. In addition, there is a section devoted exclusively to helpful and insightful articles for industry professionals. A great example is the article in this newsletter on page. 2 discussing how to help prevent hobbyist drop out. This article was taken directly from the website, and believe me, there are many more that you will find to be just as invaluable to you and your business! There is also a Q & A section, where you can submit questions to Bob concerning any aspect of aquaria related topics. I highly recommend that you visit this site and utilize all it has to offer!

-Mary Middlebrook

Check out the new AMDA ad in FAMA Magazine!

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DID YOU KNOW???

Did you know that there are reliable and safe products to use for ich and oodinium infestations in a full reef system? "No-Ich" and "Revive" can both be obtained from Fish-Vet, Ivy Mill Road, Reisterstown, MD 21136 (410-526-0573).

ACRYLIC VS. GLASS

Choosing the best material for your needs

By Rick Oellers

One of the many choices the marine aquarium professional has to make is whether to use glass or acrylic aquariums. While glass aquariums are less expensive and much more available on the East Coast, I find the benefits of the acrylic aquariums far outweigh the cheaper price of their glass counterparts. As an aquarium sales/service company, with almost twenty years of experience, I would not even consider using a glass aquarium in my business. The fact that acrylic is up to twenty times stronger, 15% clearer and weighs less than glass lends credence to my opinion. The bent front corners and many more styles available make my aquarium displays stand out among the competition using glass. The acrylic used in today's aquarium does not yellow and is more scratch resistant than the plastic tanks of the past.

One advantage acrylic has over glass is that one can drill holes in it fairly easily, for filter upgrades and bulkhead fittings. I use a carbide tipped hole saw to drill my holes and have not cracked a tank yet.

The only disadvantage I have found with acrylic aquariums is that if you are careless you may scratch the acrylic panels. However, if you do scratch a tank you can now purchase a scratch kit made by Rainbow Plastics. This nifty kit will take our just about any scratch on acrylic. Two AMDA members, Champion Supply and U.S. Aquarium (Also an acrylic aquarium manufacturer) distribute the product that is actually called Micromesh repackaged.

When cleaning, one must also make sure that one does not use harsh cleaning agents, for they may cause damage to the acrylic. I use a product called Brillianize by Kleenmaster and Novis acrylic polish to give my aquariums a sparkling shine.

One problem I have had, as well as other professionals, is getting algae off the inside glass with out scratching. There are two methods I use to clean my tanks. For light algae growth, I use a simple Doobie cleaning pad (found in most supermarkets). This is a sponge encased in a nylon mesh that is non-toxic to aquariums. For tough encrusting algae, I use a 1/4 in piece of acrylic that is 4" x 8" in size. By using this as a straight edge, I have no problem getting even the most stubborn algae off my tanks with

out scratching. You also can use an acrylic ice scraper as well. I have tried all the soft plastic scrapers on the market and I don't feel they work as well.

When purchasing an acrylic aquarium, be sure to use a company with a good reputation. Working with acrylic takes skill and you should beware of "fly by night" companies that work out of a garage. If a price seems to good to be true, you are taking a big chance in getting poor quality. When installing an acrylic aquarium, you must make sure the entire bottom of the tank is supported.

WESTERN MARINE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

By Randy Goodlett

One of my motivations for flying out west every year or two is to attend the Western Marine Conference. This year the conference was smaller than usual, but the talks were as stimulating as ever. Actually, this year's format was a bit unusual in that the workshops outnumbered the talks. Most of the leaders or speakers were the same ones you might hear at MACNA, but there were also a couple of new speakers and one of these, Carmen Carrouche, had to fill in at the last minute. For someone who put a talk together on very short notice, she did an excellent job. Carmen's talk was on breeding sea horses and it was not only highly enlightening but very timely. Carmen took us through her trials and tribulations as she worked to breed both the *Hyppocampus redii* and *H. kudos*. Initially she had close to 100% mortalities, but as she worked to correct her problems and find solutions, her efforts led her to achieve almost 0% mortalities. She found along the way that females were more hardy than males, that she had to keep introducing wild caught individuals to her breeding stock to keep up the viability and she achieved her biggest breakthrough when she began to use plankton-tow caught calanoid copepods (specifically *Tigropus californicus*). Her anecdotes on how she would go down to the shore and throw in a large plankton net to fish a good rip tide beneath a bridge and how she would invariably have to answer all sorts of questions about what she was doing were amusing. The copepods were key to the sea horse juvenile's survival, for most fish are born without digestive enzymes and the copepods are just loaded with all sorts of such enzymes and fatty acids. They also autolyse rather rapidly upon death, so using them as a food source requires a regular cleaning up of dying or dead ones from the nursery tank. She said that the copepods were the real trick and once we as an industry learn how to raise such copepods, we will be well on our way to raising all sorts of larval marine fishes. This is easier said than done. I actually used to do this type of work years ago at a coastal marine research facility, and although I could raise one cohort or generation of certain species of temperate calanoid copepods in large kalwal vats (we were using them for heavy metal toxicity tests), the next generation never seemed to survive parasite problems. I was very happy to find that at least one company that was at the conference (LiquidLife USA from Corona, CA) will be attempting to do just that (raise copepods for a food source). I do hope that they and others do succeed in this endeavor, for it could lead to a variety of fish breeding success stories. Although I did not get Carmen's business address (she does sell her sea horses to hobbyists and to stores), her e-mail address is carmen@rivers.net.

In the next issue, I will give a synopsis on the workshop conducted by Eric Borneman. The topic is Making Your Own Fish Food.



DID YOU KNOW???

Help stop tankmate aggression! If you have structures in your sales tanks (rocks, etc...), move them around to different locations right before you introduce new arrivals. This breaks up the territories of the existing fish and they are less likely to attack their new friends.

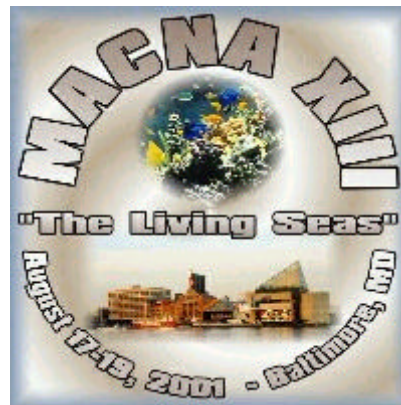
THE MODERN MARINE RETAILER SERIES- PART TWO

By Rick Oellers

In the first part of this series, I discussed ways to survive in this evermore-competitive industry. Positive attitude, quality merchandise, good service and knowledge are great ways to get an edge over the competition. Still, we must not forget that providing reasonable prices for our customers is critical to keep our customers from the superstores and mail order companies. In this article I will give you tips that helped me not only survive, but thrive. The best way I found to keep my retail prices low was to play the same "game" that consumers played with me (detritus does indeed roll downhill). First, you should have at least two wholesalers that you do regular business with. In the Northeast we had two that delivered weekly to my store. These wholesalers would send me a booklet of sale specials every month. I would look forward to receiving these specials with the same anticipation as a child looking forward to Christmas. I would pour a cup of coffee, sit down with the special list in hand and highlight the sale items that I carried with a yellow marker. The marked items would be the merchandise that I would order for the following month. Between the two wholesale special lists, I could purchase a good portion of my stock with savings up to 50% off wholesale. Another way of getting a better discount is to attend a regional trade show. Most regional wholesalers spend a lot of money at these shows to have their presence known. They are at the show to drum up "your" business. This is the time to negotiate a regular discount from your wholesaler. One really needs to play hardball to get the best discount. Do this with each vendor until your feel you've reached the best discount you can get. I know this seems a lot of work, as well as an antagonistic behavior on ones part, but after working as a vendor at a trade show myself, I can tell you that this is how the "big guys" conduct business. Purchasing power may also be obtained by forming a co-op with other AMDA dealers. Most manufacturers will not sell to a single store. However a co-op may have the buying power required to make the manufacturers minimum order. One of the best advantages of being an AMDA member is the ability to network with quality dealers and the best people in the industry. I must tell you that this way of low ball purchasing should only apply to hard goods. Since anyone reading this should be an AMDA member I shouldn't have to tell you to never sacrifice the quality of livestock to get the best wholesale price. There are other ways to be competitive. Some stores will match a mail order price if the customer gives a non-refundable deposit and waits until the item arrives. This will at least keep the consumer in your store. In my store I would let a new reef customer order his/her first load of live rock at a substantial discount. After receiving a deposit, I would "piggy back" the live rock with my regular live rock shipment. Many times this would enable me to

get a better bulk rate on the rock. The customer would be required to be at my store when the shipment arrived, so there would be no handling or unpacking of rock on my part. If you have any other purchasing tips to share with other AMDA members, please feel free to E-mail me or send it to Mary for the "Did You Know" tips. Next month, I will be giving you tips on how service can make or break your business.

UPCOMING EVENTS



AMDA will be holding a public meeting for all members. Please plan on attending! Visit www.masna.org for more details.



November 26-December 1
Orlando, FL

<http://gnv2.ifas.ufl.edu/~conferweb/MO/>

ATTENTION WHOLESALEERS, MANUFACTURERS, AND

Want to let the AMDA membership know about your products or service? The best way to do that is by placing a Purchasing Power Coupon in the quarterly newsletter! More quality companies are needed to offer AMDA members discounts and specials. Placement of a coupon advertisement is currently **FREE OF CHARGE** for AMDA members, but this will be changing! Take advantage of this free advertising opportunity while you can! Please contact Mary Middlebrook at 805-986-4301 or marinewholesale@hotmail.com for more information.