



PROPEL YOUR SUCCESS WITH A **'POP-UP' BOAT SHOW**

By **Bernie DeGraw**, *MRAA Senior Education Developer*

Sales have slowed and are struggling to recover. Customers seem to be hiding from dealers. Banks appear scared of lending. Inventory is back to normal, or worse even higher. Almost everyone has a trade-in vessel where they owe a lot more than it is worth. As a dealer principal, sales manager, or other leader in your dealership with a positive mindset, it may be the right time to go on the offensive and try something new. Like a pop-up boat show!

In your search to find a new way to engage customers and to get your sales leads and deals back, you may be searching for the right event. Instead of waiting and wondering, create your own pop-up boat show and attract the customers who seem so hard to find.

Last fall, a group of three dealers teamed up to have a local boat show on short notice in a location

not known for hosting boat shows. **It worked fantastically.**

That instinctive show turned out to be a hit in the community and a great selling event for the dealers. It gave them a chance to work closely with each other and to develop comradery and trust that will serve them well in developing similar opportunities.

If you've learned anything from this already challenging year, it's that you need to make a difference and influence the success of your dealership. A self-created show may just make all the difference.

This isn't simple. It will take effort to find a good location. You must talk with other dealers who are a good fit to join forces. And you must develop an agreed-upon plan.

It's helpful to start with some questions about holding a possible "pop-up" boat show.

1. Are there marinas, boat yards, entire lakes, or other non-dealership related boating destinations within a reasonable distance from you that are not adjacent to or within plus or minus 20 minutes of a dealership?
2. Is there an outlet mall, park, business with a large parking lot, or even an antique boat museum near those locations or at those locations you found in question 1?
3. Are there other dealers that have complimentary inventory and/or manufacturers that you would like to work with to have a small boat show?
4. When is the best time of year to have a show based on your needs, weather and when other shows occur?

The three dealers mentioned previously found a state park, near a state-owned marina and a privately owned marina that had no dealerships. In addition, that state park rented them a huge, mowed field that was visible from the main road. As the boat-show puzzle pieces came together, the trio decided they had found a pop-up show location.

The team that put on the event was very pleasantly surprised by the turn out and the sales that took place at their pop-up boat show. In fact, it rained two of the three days they had the show open. Yet, they were amazed to see customers drive in, put up their umbrella(s) and walk across the field to look at and buy boats.

Taking the show to the customers is one solution to finding buyers in this challenging market. Creativity, flexibility and cooperation between separate dealerships that consider themselves peers and friends can lead to a successful event even in difficult times.





THE MRAA 'POP-UP' BOAT SHOW CHECKLIST

Once you have a location selected, the work begins.

- Secure any permits for the use of the location.**
- Agree how costs will be determined and divided by peer dealers participating at the show.**
- Set the dates for the event.**
 - Confirm that you have scheduled and reserved any additional move-in/move-out dates needed.
- Establish customer show hours.**
- Determine inventory security for after hours and overnight.**
 - Does the venue have security?
 - Can the dealers hire outside security to be onsite when the event and/or venue is closed?
- Is there a charge to enter the venue and how will that be covered by customers or the dealerships or perhaps a sponsor of some sort?**
- Will the dealers charge for admission?**
- Consider other details.**
 - Is there convenient access to food and beverage?
 - If not available, can you invite food trucks or other similar services to the venue?
 - Are restrooms available and open for dealers and customers?
 - Do you need permits to invite other groups or businesses?
 - Will you invite businesses that provide other services to boaters?
 - Docks
 - Hoists
 - Paddle Sports
 - Canvas
 - Financing options
 - Other boating accessories that your dealerships may not provide.





THE MRAA 'POP-UP' BOAT SHOW CHECKLIST (CONT.)

- Should you invite other outside groups that may provide other “draws” or support for your event?**
 - Girl or Boy Scouts
 - Boating associations
 - Museum representatives
 - Other local or regional volunteer groups
 - Entertainment (Musician/DJ)

- Work with your peer dealers to ensure a diversity of boat models, sizes and types.**

- Determine the number of boats that will fit in the divided space.**

- Ensure that it is feasible to move in and move out the number of boats planned in the time you have reserved.**

- Work with your peers to create a welcoming layout for the overall display with each dealer handling the set-up of their own inventory.**

- Establish with your peer dealers an advertising budget and divide responsibilities**
 - Consider social media advertising shared and dealer specific.
 - Determine what signage is allowed, where it can be located and the size and type you will use.
 - Review the territory or region where you will be focusing your advertising.
 - Consider local advertising opportunities: Small newspapers, radio stations, electronic billboards, signs to be posted at local marinas or boat launch ramps, community docks, etc.
 - Each dealer should inform all their manufacturers in advance of the event in hopes the manufacturers will offer some advertising support, social media shares or even reimbursement for participation.

- Consider what to do should inclement weather occur during the event.**
 - Do you need individual tents for each participating dealer or perhaps one large one to share in a central location?
 - Is there a safe location if lightning occurs?
 - Is the surface you have boats parked on going to become slippery, muddy or create another concern?





THE MRAA 'POP-UP' BOAT SHOW CHECKLIST (CONT.)

- Each dealers should inform their insurance company of the event and their floorplan providers as well.**
- Pricing is critical. Participating dealers need to determine an agreed upon pricing strategy that allows customers to compare easily and fairly.**
 - All include or exclude rigging and prep fees in price signs.
 - All include or exclude delivery / transportation fees in price signs.
 - All include or exclude manufacturer discounts and/or rebates in price signs.
- All peer dealers need to agree to have at least one staff member present during the open hours of the event (provides customer service from each dealer and eliminates excuses as to why no one is “manning a particular booth.”)**
- Have fun and sell boats.**
- All peer dealers should determine a follow-up plan for pop-up boat show attendees.**

QUESTIONS?

Reach out to our education team to learn more.



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