



The Chat Room

Travis Stirewalt, Vice President • CoatingDepot.com
5001 Trailwater Drive • Nashville, TN 37013 • 615/441-7988

E-mail: travis@coatingdepot.com

Where Are the Customers?

Over the last couple of years, media moguls and CEOs of media corporations have been asking the following question: Where are our customers and how do we get them back?

Recent information has left little doubt about what is happening with the viewing, reading and listening public.

Fewer Movie-goers

A couple of months ago, we experienced another episode of the Academy Awards. Movie experts and television media specialists will brag about the billion viewers that watched the show. Well, it is not the show that counts. While it was another record year for movie ticket sales, the real truth at the box office is that there were 43 million fewer movie tickets sold. The only way movie theaters were able to make a record year was to increase the price of movie tickets. In Nashville, TN, where I live, movie tickets cost about \$7.50 per ticket. In New York, ticket prices are around \$10 each.

What About Television?

Okay, so the movies are slumping. Television has still got the viewers. Think again. Television audiences are declining as well. Nightly network news viewers are down a whopping 30 million viewers—about 11 percent of the population. Local stations all over the country are facing a very real problem retaining viewers.

What about televised sports? Sports viewing is down across the board, with the exception of NASCAR, and many media insiders think that this number could drop dramatically soon, after the Earnhardt tragedy becomes a memory. And can you believe that the NBA is drawing fewer viewers than golf?

“As the entire world makes the online shift, we will see many changes in the way we do business, entertain ourselves and communicate.”

How About Radio & Print?

Radio has seen its own considerable amount of shakedown, with sagging markets across the country.

Well, how about the world of print publishing? Let's start by addressing Barnes & Noble, the largest bookstore chain. It lost \$34 million. Newspaper circulation has declined, and this is even at a time when our nation has a record population. Papers are reporting layoffs across the U.S. The only ones that are not in decline are the local alternative papers in many of the bigger cities that usually cover local music, art and dining information.

Magazines have had a tough year, too. With the number of niche magazines in print, the squeeze is on to get subscribers. This lack in readership, however, tends not to affect industry-related or trade publications. The strength of trade magazines, like *Plating & Surface Finishing*, *Products Finishing*, *Metal Finishing*, *Finishers' Management* and others that serve the metal finishing industry, as well as other industries, is that they tend to focus on industry-related issues that subscribers need on a regular basis.

So, Where Are the Customers?

They are on the Internet. Internet usage is up, not only in the U.S., but across the globe. When people do have time in our fast-paced society, they are going to the computer and

writing letters, checking their sagging stocks, reading free newspapers (there are plenty of them), reading free magazine articles (plenty of these, too—on any topic) and sending/reading e-mail. In addition, people are utilizing the Internet to share/steal music, watch videos, chat with and send photographs to friends and family.

The metal finishing community is dealing with these issues just like the rest of the world. More and more jobshop personnel are turning to the Internet to find answers and information. They are not only using the Internet for information, but also for sourcing and purchasing finishing equipment, chemicals and supplies. Publications that serve our industry are providing resources online as well. Like all other media, these publications are adapting to the Internet to insure that you, the audience, get what you need and want.

As the entire world makes the online shift, we will see many changes in the way we do business, entertain ourselves and communicate. We have only seen a glimpse of how the Internet will change our lives. *P&SF*