

Fish where the fish are!

CORPORATE ENTERTAINING, OFTEN LINKED TO CHARITABLE FUND RAISING, INCREASES THE EXPOSURE OF OUR SPORT TO 'NEWCOMERS'. IT'S A POTENTIAL CATCHMENT AREA THAT NEEDS TO BE EXPLOITED — BUT HOW?

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There's a strong 'Concurrents' flavor about this issue – with a plea from Steve Fischer to the over 'sixties' not to give up on the sport because of the 'march of time', a debate on the 'pro's and con's' of cash prize funds for the Concurrents, a Shooter's Spotlight on DeeAnn Massey and your Shooting Questions answered by Super-Veteran W. Ray Newman.

During our research and preparation of these articles, an often heard phrase was '*Young shooters are the life blood of our sport*'. Can this really be true? Do a

quick survey at your local club and ask your fellow members how they got into shooting and, more to the point, how old they were at the time. I am willing to bet that the majority were over 30, older even, and often recruited via a friend or family or a corporate entertainment event. They would have been at a stage in their lives when things were more settled, the kids a bit older and the mortgage more manageable. In short, they would have more of what marketers call 'disposable income'.

Clay shooting, as we all know only too well, is not a cheap sport. It takes a considerable amount of disposable income to get into the game and once hooked it disposes of your future income just as efficiently! In terms of marketing and the future promotion of the sport, we should do all that we can to encourage youngsters whilst also understanding that, without support from their parents, they are the least able to afford to participate in the sport. Not only are they strapped for cash now, but the problem will get worse as girlfriends, marriage, families and other pressures take priority. Even the converts you make initially are likely to drop out in significant numbers.

In reality, we need to be targeting the more affluent thirty somethings, for these are the



people who will keep gun shops, shooting schools and shell manufacturers in the manner to which they would like to become accustomed! It means competing with other sporting activities that attract such people and their recreational dollar. It means also giving the sport an image of quality, because our 'newcomer' is likely to be discriminating. As a sport we must accentuate the positive, the things that make our sport so addictive, and work hard to eliminate the negatives that still dog it. And it is at well organized corporate events – often linked with charitable fund raising – that our sport can best be promoted to 'newcomers'. But having attracted their attention, the hard work begins – maintaining their interest and ensuring that they are encouraged to find out more about shooting sports.

How that is achieved and who should have the responsibility for

administering and executing the follow up is the question that needs to be addressed – because without such a follow up the chances are that the 'newcomer' will slip through the net. Perhaps there is a need for a National promotional strategy to promote all shooting sports and all clubs/schools to ensure our 'newcomer' has the information, contacts and enthusiasm to continue his interest – wherever he or she lives.

Unfortunately marketing is not a strong point for most of us (with a few honorable exceptions). Perhaps the sport now needs a central focus and may even need outside professional marketing help. Before that, it needs associations, manufacturers, retailers and everyone with a vested interest in growing the sport to come together – and that just might prove to be the hardest part of the whole job.