

HMAVIEWPOINT

The hobby business is a variety business



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What I have learned from being a hobby manufacturer is the importance of having a variety of products to offer at an affordable price point. My colleague Bob Rosenbaum gave me some simple advice when we started. He said the hobby business is a variety business. If you want to have a strong brand, you have to offer a diversified, exciting product line at an affordable price point for the consumer.

Now, what that means in the plastic model kit business is that it would be very hard to survive and be profitable with just selling model ships. Model ships are very nice, but you'd sell a lot more kits if you had planes, cars, figures, educational, space and sci-fi kits to go along with your model ships. By having this variety, you have diversified your line and now bring in all types of hobbyists to the brand.

Over the past year, we have implemented this philosophy and sales have skyrocketed. I listened to Bob's advice and injected it into our product line. I can't stress how important it is to listen to people who have been in the business for a long time and have the know-how to get products on physical retail shelf space.

I want my line to be carried in every hobby shop in America. I also want the line carried in mainstream stores like Hobby Lobby, which still has a dedicated hobby section for all the wonderful products that HMA manufacturers produce. Having this hard shelf space is vital to our industry as it increases exposure to the products. Many years ago, there were many stores in the physical space that had hobby sections and could make or break you with their orders. Beyond traditional hobby shops as they stand today, most of those stores have all but gone away, most likely never to return.

Let's just hope that more young people start getting into the business of owning a hobby shop. We have to show them that it can be profitable and exciting, but like anything else, it takes a lot of hard work. Nothing is just going to fall into place; you have to work extremely hard and efficiently for things to come together and for your business to be profitable on a consistent basis.

I would say this advice from Bob can translate and have great synergy if you are a hobby shop owner. By this, I mean that it's great to diversify your store inventory by not just selling model trains, remote control or only models. If you can expand and you have the space to diversify your shop, this will bring in as many consumers as possible. Make sure you advertise and have a strong online presence both socially and in e-commerce, and, as always, ensure you have good old-fashioned great customer service. **HM**



Hobby Manufacturers Association

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