

Q: TODAY'S POP BUSINESS - POINT OF PURCHASE OR POINT OF ATTACK?

A: It's a fact of any business that the way in which it describes itself by the people in it changes over time. "Doctors" are now "physicians," "stewards" and "stewardesses" are now "flight attendants," "food" is now "cuisine."

There has been a change in how the Point of Purchase industry refers to its products and services as well. This change runs concurrently with the way in which the simple act of "Shopping" has evolved into the far more complicated "Retail Experience." "Shoppers" who used to go "Shopping" are now "Guests" embarked on a "Retail Journey."

The POP business now describes itself as "In-Store Merchandising" and "Visual Communication." Making fundamental changes to how a process, product, or service changes is not necessarily good. Complicating matters for the sake of making it sound fancier does not make that process, product, or service any more valuable. The only way that happens is if the process, product, or service actually does deliver more value for the price paid.

Then why is this happening, and why is it happening in the Point of Purchase industry? Why does it seem as if we are attacking the very business that keeps us in business by calling it something else?

There could be several reasons:

- 1) Word inflation adds a false sense of increased value that may falsely justify a higher price.**
- 2) Some people in particular industries have to constantly churn phraseology to justify their jobs.**
- 3) Sometimes people feel that if they can refer to a simple job with a complicated descriptor it makes them more important.**

All of the above have some validity, but it could be argued that the underlying change in the POP nomenclature is to take the "selling" out of "sales" and the "buying" out of "purchase." There is resistance in society to call "Selling" what it is - selling. To some people this is a dirty word.

It should not be. When it comes right down to it, if someone is not selling and someone is not buying, money does not change hands and everything comes to a grinding halt.

The POP business should not think it is re-inventing itself, or hiding what it does, just because it found some fancy words to work with. As an industry let's rejoice and embrace what we do: facilitate sales for manufacturers and retailers by telling a brand story and highlighting product attributes.

There is nothing wrong with that - just like there is nothing wrong with making an honest dollar.