



# **How To Work A Boat Show to Your Advantage**

(and efficiently)

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**Tips include  
buying a boat to  
spending the day**

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## **Working a Boat Show to Your Advantage**

When buying your first boat, the boat show is a great place to begin. It's also a great place for veterans to learn what's new, whether it's in boats, electrical or laws changing.

In an interview with Joe O'Neal, show director for the New England Boat Show in Boston, he talked about his main goal for the show. "The goal is," according to O'Neal, "to create a marketplace for the dealers and the manufacturers to sell all their products. And to create a marketplace for the consumer to come in and hopefully in one day or two days, view everything they need to view to make a decision. You can imagine how much time, effort and money you have to put in to go from dealership to dealership trying to figure out what you want for a boat. So, it's really a win-win situation for the consumer and the dealer."

The show also offers a variety of seminars such as: knot tying, navigation, qualifying for a captain's license, radio communications, boating for women, etc.

## **Working the showroom floor efficiently**

At first glance, walking onto the showroom floor can be overwhelming. In order to get the most out of your day, you need to have a plan of action. So, what's the best way to get the most out of a boat show?

- Grab the exhibitor list as you enter the hall then walk around the perimeter of the show and see who's there. Look to see which booths are busy. If a booth is empty, is it because there's no one there or is it not appealing to the visitor. Are the exhibitors all standing around talking to one another with hands in their pockets; are they eating, reading or actively engaging with potential clients? What kind of raffles are they having? Does the raffle represent the company's product or are they just using the raffle to grab your attention? If the later, don't expect a call from them for business.
- Make notes next to the exhibitor's name of which you'd like to go back and talk to.
- Check out the schedule for the various seminars and make note of the ones you'd like to participate in. Make note of where the seminars are being held in case you need to get back there in a hurry.
- Once you've circled the place, then go back and start talking to those you need/want to see, grab their information (brochures, business cards, etc), talk to others in the booth (both exhibitors and boaters) and climb on board the boats you're interested in.

Don't forget to take notes along the way to review later when you're home.

At home, go through all the information you've collected and your notes. Research the boats online, call your boating buddies and/or ask questions in various forums (ex.

TheNauticalLifestyle.com or MassBaySailors group in Yahoo). Then go back again to the show armed with pointed questions.

- On the second day, you can concentrate all your time talking with specific manufacturers, insurance companies, mortgage reps, etc.

## **7 Things to Consider**

Go more than one day. If you're serious about buying a specific boat, ask the manufacturer for a pass to come back again and spend more time with them. This is when having your family with you makes sense. Because, when it's time to make that final decision as to the type of boat that's right for you, John Crosby of NorthEast Yacht Brokerage says; "there's a formula to try to figure out what is the best style and size boat for their needs." That formula is:

- What's your past boating experience?
- Where you currently do your boating?
- Your family size. How many people, how old or rather, how big are your children.
- How many friends do you want to take out?
- Where do you want to go?
- How long are you going to stay on the boat overnight? Is it for a week? Or just day use?
- Will you be cooking on the boat?

Buying a boat can be an expensive proposition, especially if you purchase the wrong type of boat. These questions can help steer you in the right direction. Plus, answered honestly, the right boat will provide you with a great boating experience for a long time.

So, while you're at the show, let your family climb all over the boats, see which ones fit your needs and theirs. Try out different size boats as well. You'd be surprised how much better a 27' or 28' boat feels in comparison to a 26' boat.

A good salesperson should also be able to point you in the right direction just by watching the little ones on a boat.

## **4 Mistakes when buying a boat**

1. *Not having a slip* – If you've decided you want to keep the boat at a particular marina, yacht club, or on a mooring, the first mistake is not having a slip or mooring before you buy the boat. It is much easier to get this done first because once you've bought the boat; you now have someplace to put it. Otherwise, you may be scrambling trying to find a slip that might be nonexistent at a particular spot. The boat show allows you to talk with various marinas, meet their staff, get prices and confirm a spot. Then, if you happen to be buying a boat bigger than

originally planned, go back to the marina or yacht club and renegotiate a bigger slip, if need be.

2. *Buying a boat too small* – Though there is only one or two feet difference in a 26' boat and a 27 or 28' boat, that difference gives you a lot more beam and room to move. That extra foot or two could make a huge difference in comfort and lifestyle. At the show you can climb aboard, go down underneath, lie on the bed, let the kids run around the center console and see if it's roomy enough for everyone.
3. *Not having a survey done* – whether buying a new or used boat you'll want to have a competent surveyor check things out. Just like you wouldn't buy a home without a home inspection, the same holds true for a boat (at least anything over 25'). The boat show provides opportunity for you to talk with surveyors and insurance companies to find out what's required on your part. At the end of the day, though, it's best to get referrals. But, again, at the show at least you can get questions answered and enough information to make a rational decision.
4. *Warranties* – these, too, are also very important to discuss with the manufacturer. Many of them have great incentives to buy at the show, but don't be fooled. Do your homework and check out the resale value of your boat. You just never know. Something could happen and you'd be forced to sell your boat a year or two later.

Mortgage/finance representatives have booths at the show as well. Though most have comparable interest rates and services, talk with them to see whom you can relate with. If you're not sure, ask them some hypothetical question and watch their body language as they answer. If you feel like they're side stepping your questions – walk away. On the other hand, if you find one you relate to, find a second and/or third one. After the show is over – if you don't hear back from them – don't bother calling them. They don't want your business. Ask for referrals from other boaters also. The boat show is a good source for meeting these reps since they specialize in boats.

### **First time buyers**

A boat show is a great opportunity for you as a first time boater because you can spend a day and walk around the show. You'll see 90% of the boats that are available in the area on display, maybe a bit more. You'll get a feel for what style boat you like and how big a boat you think you'll need or can handle. Then, once you narrow that down, pick up all their information. Go back and talk to at least 5 finance companies to discuss what the terms are and what the deposit is that's required. Then go to most of the insurance companies and get insurance quotes right then and there of what it would cost to insure the boat. Nowadays, marinas and yacht clubs want at least \$300k liability so get your quotes for at least that much. Next, go back to one of the dealers or a local marina where you think you might be boating and find out what it would cost to commission the boat in the spring, then decommission it in the fall. Unless, of course, you plan on storing the

boat in your own yard. When you leave the show later that day, you should walk away with a complete understanding of what this boat is really going to cost you. The advantage here is that you won't have to drive around to different dealers or make lots of phone calls to mortgage and insurance companies. Everyone is under one roof!

### **Tips**

The biggest tip is to plan on spending the day at the show and walk around to see what you like. The purpose of the show is two-fold: first and foremost for the vendors to show or sell their products, but more importantly, without you they can't do this. But, their main objective is to answer all your questions so you can make a qualified decision.

Bring your kids with you and let them run around the boat. And, if your spouse goes sailing with you (or you want them to and they currently don't), have them come to the show as well to climb aboard the boats. Get them involved in the decision-making. You'll be glad you did.

For kids there's a lot more room in a center console than a boat with a windshield and deck. It's more practical than a little cabin and carpeting.

A bow-rider is good if you want to put a lot of people on the boat and just go out for the day.

Don't be afraid to look at a boat that's an extra foot longer than you were considering. That extra foot may be just what you really needed.

If you're looking at a used boat (offered by the yacht dealers at the show), buying a boat kept in Florida or down South is not necessarily a better deal. You need to take into account the number of days the boat is in the water, used and where it's stored (indoors or outdoors).

For more information on upcoming boat shows, products, interviews and seminars visit:

<http://www.TheNauticalLifestyle.com>