



NeoCon Dreams: How to Get Yourself to the Show

Dear Stephen:

I just started a new job as a sales rep for a furniture manufacturer. I love the job, the company, and my boss. No problems here. I started my career as a designer and transitioned into sales years ago. One of the best parts of all my previous jobs had been attending NeoCon in Chicago, which I've gone to every year. As a designer, I found it exciting to see new products. When I eventually got into sales, it was a great way to maintain relationships with customers and show them our latest products. I also have to admit that I liked the chance to mingle with my bosses from Corporate who are usually there and who I might not otherwise see that often. I love to see what my competitors are doing, so

I can better sell against them, (and it offers some fantastic career networking opportunities) Long story short, it's one of my favorite parts of working in this industry. My problem is that the manufacturer that I'm with now limits the number of people who can attend NeoCon, and I'm concerned that I won't make the cut. If I make a big deal out of it, I'm concerned I'll be pushing my luck with my new boss. What do you think? I really want to go!

- Needy for NeoCon

Dear Needy for NeoCon,

Everyone in the contract furnishings industry wants to go to NeoCon, and they should. It is to us what Disney World is to

ten year-olds, except far more important. Today, even with the internet, attending NeoCon and showing new products there has become a necessity for companies that want to be recognized as legitimate resources to the A&D community and their customers. If you are in sales at a manufacturer or a dealer, attendance is equally as important if you want to be a resource for your clients. Salespeople at manufacturers and dealers can also use NeoCon for the critical benefit of getting to know and have face time with the executives from the factory, who will, no doubt, be there. A&D folk tell me that to be considered a real player as an architect, designer or dealer, you have to show up in person, as well. I still remember my first NeoCon as a



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

sales rep for Haworth many years ago; it was a thrill, and it's just as fun and exciting today! So now on to answering your question... The best way to get you to NeoCon is to find a customer who is going to be there and explain to your boss that this customer wants a presentation (showroom tour) from you personally at NeoCon. That usually does the trick, even for new people like you. Or just make it happen: find that customer and put it together. After all, showrooms and NeoCon are all about the "customer experience" today and you need to make yourself a part of that. Even a fancy tricked-out showroom does not mean a thing without a salesperson face

to face creating a client relationship. If all else fails, feel out your boss, you can always pay for a room yourself, or get a roommate, Airbnb, etc. Just do not do it if you will be alienating your co-workers, if they are not going either. Many cities have local follow up's to NeoCon. In NYC we have "First Look" at the NYDC in July. However, nothing beats going to the real thing. NeoCon is as important to everyone in the office furniture industry as the Cannes Film Festival is in the film industry. I'll see you in Chicago, you better be there!

- **Stephen**

*P.S. Come meet me and members of my team during NeoCon in Chicago. Whether you want to talk to me about hiring or just are looking for a new career, I am happy to talk. E-mail me for your appointment today at Stephen@viscusigroup.com. By the way...How many of you know what NeoCon stands for? Well, according to the Chicago Tribune it stands for the National Exhibition of Contract Furniture, and was shortened to NeoCon by etiquette expert Letitia Baldwin, who worked in the Kennedy White House. Smart idea to shorten the name Tish, I like NeoCon much better! **BoF***