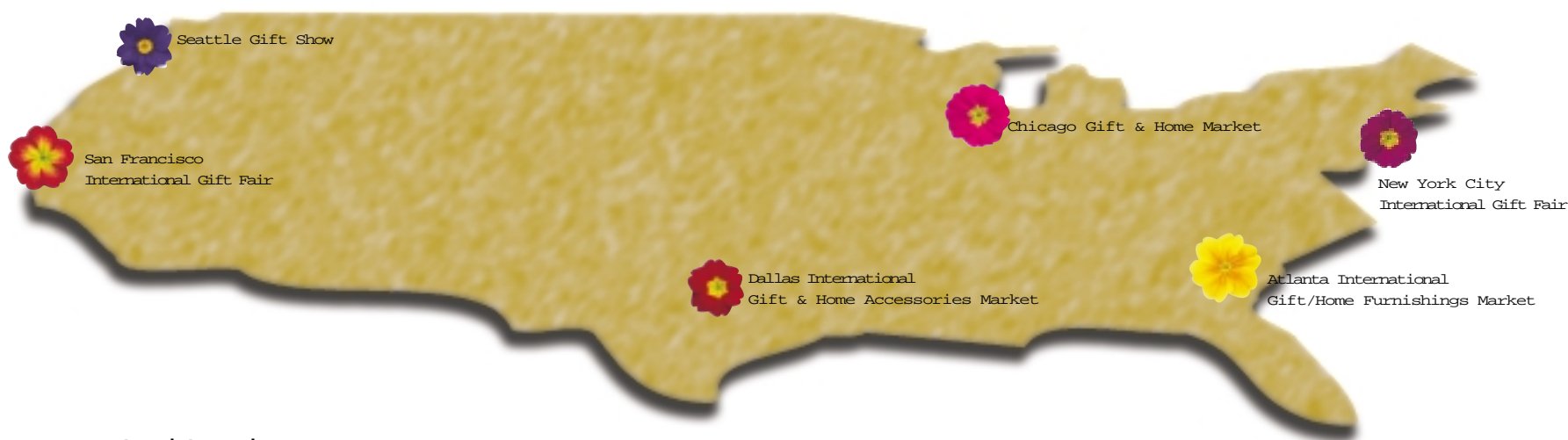


# Shopping the Shows



The universe of gifts is constantly changing, and if you're not shopping the gift shows for the latest trends, you're getting left behind.

By  
Elizabeth Pensgard

**T**he most important thing you can do at any trade show is show up. Shows that cater to gifting are no different; you must keep abreast of trends to better serve your customer base. After all, if you don't provide your customers with what they want, they will go elsewhere, and where else can you better determine trends in products than at a gift show?

## SUCCESS SECRETS

Veterans of trade shows will tell you that knowing your market means examining market trends locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally. For example, a local gift show would be in your state. A regional gift show would be within one day's drive of your business — west, midwest, east regionality. A national gift show could potentially be a show located on the opposite end of where you are located in the country, and international gift shows are

typically located in a major city within another country — Paris, Milan, London.

Another important reason buyers should experience trade shows is their ability to see the merchandise first-hand and determine its quality. The seasoned buyer will spend days combing over merchandise, noting new and continuing trends, and testing for quality and the best pricing. A pro will never place an order on first sight, or buy impulsively. Gifting shows, like everything else in life, must be taken in moderation. Impulse buy, and you could miss out on a trend, meanwhile wasting money. Wait until you get home to buy and you miss out on some substantial discounts.

Indeed, placing orders at, not after, the show is the secret for success of many gift show veterans. However, orders should be placed only after spending time reviewing merchandise and taking careful notes. Take in as many aspects of the show as you can, act stealthily and make only calculated decisions. ♦



The following are some of the more popular regional, national and international gift shows that serve our industry. There are many, many other gift shows, at least one in every state. To find a show closer to home or to explore the variety of available shows, check out [www.cyberexpo.com](http://www.cyberexpo.com).

**ATLANTA INTERNATIONAL GIFT/HOME FURNISHINGS MARKET**

July 9-19 (temporaries); July 12-16 (permanents)  
Contact/location information:  
AmericasMart  
240 Peachtree Street, Suite 2200  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Contact Registration (404) 220-2446; AmericasMart (800)-ATL-MART  
Fax (410) 721-9636  
[www.americasmart.com](http://www.americasmart.com)  
Size of the exhibition space: 4.2 million square feet

**CHICAGO GIFT & HOME MARKET**

July 24-31 (permanents); July 27-30 (temporaries); Sept. 12-14  
Contact/location information:  
Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc.  
Suite 470, The Merchandise Mart  
200 World Trade Center Chicago  
Chicago, IL 60654  
312/527-7687; (800) 677-6278  
Fax: 312/527-7981  
[www.merchandisemart.com](http://www.merchandisemart.com)  
Ratio of traveling to permanent exhibits: 650/300  
Number of people who walked the show last year: 30,000  
Number of exhibitors at last year's show: 650 temporaries; 250 permanents  
Other events available for attendees:  
Sample Sale (to the trade only), November 4-5, 2002  
Speakers? Yes.  
Demos? Yes.  
Number of different product categories the exhibitors represent:107  
Size of the exhibition space: 650,000 square feet  
Dates of 2003 show(s):  
January Chicago Gift & Home Market  
Jan. 22-29, 2003  
Temporaries: Jan. 25-28, 2003

Gift shows are a great place to find innovative new products. Pictured clockwise from right: Alsi Arts windchime; Maine Garden Products carryall; AW Pottery containers.



**DALLAS INTERNATIONAL GIFT & HOME ACCESSORIES MARKET**

June 20-27; Sept. 21-24  
Contact/location information:  
Dallas Market Center  
2100 Stemmons Freeway  
MS 150  
Dallas, TX 75207  
(800) DAL-MKTS (800-325-6587)  
info@DMCMail.com  
Fax: (800) 637-6833

Size of the exhibition space: 6.9 million square feet  
Dates of 2003 show(s): Jan. 15-22, 2003

**NEW YORK CITY INTERNATIONAL GIFT FAIR**

August 10-15, 2002  
Contact/location information:  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center and Passenger Ship Terminals  
Pier 92 & 94  
NY, NY  
Attendee registration: (800) 272-SHOW  
www.nyigf.com  
Contact: Jung-Eun Kim (914) 421-3272  
Number of people who walked the show last year: 45,000  
Number of exhibitors at last year’s show: 2,900  
Amount of time the show has been taking place: 51 years  
Other events available for attendees: “Only in New York” Retail Tour;  
New Buyer Orientation; Gifts and Decorative Accessories 51st  
Annual Retailer Excellence Awards Gala Dinner; Broadway show  
“Mamma Mia.”  
Speakers? Yes.  
Demos? Yes.  
Size of the exhibition space: 638,000 square feet  
Dates of 2003 show(s):  
February 1-5, 2003  
Galleria, Javits North Pavilion, Piers 88, 90, 92  
February 1-4, 2003  
Pier 94  
February 2-6, 2003  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center

With so many companies in such a small space, it’s easy to spot new gifting trends.  
Clockwise from right: Ibis & Orchid wall vase; Windy Willows decorative birdhouses;  
Oogamy plant holder.

**SAN FRANCISCO  
INTERNATIONAL  
GIFT FAIR**

Aug. 3-7, 2002  
Contact/location information:  
Moscone Center &  
The Concourse Exhibition  
Center  
Moscone Center north/  
south esplanade  
747 Howard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 974-4000  
Fax: (415) 974-4073  
www.sfigf.com  
Number of exhibitors at  
last year’s show: Over 1,900  
Number of different product  
categories the exhibitors  
represent: 16  
Size of the exhibition space:  
650,000 square feet  
Dates of 2003 show(s):  
Winter show date: February 15-  
19, 2003

**SEATTLE GIFT SHOW**

Aug. 17-21  
Contact/location information:  
Washington State Convention &  
Trade Center  
800 Convention Place  
Seattle, WA 98101  
(800) 346-1212  
www.seattlegift.com  
Ratio of traveling to permanent  
exhibits: 150 permanent  
Number of exhibitors at last  
year’s show: 895 companies;  
1,460 booths  
Other events available for  
attendees:  
Opening night reception  
Speakers? Yes.  
Demos? Yes.  
Number of different product  
categories the exhibitors  
represent:12  
Size of the exhibition  
space: 141,086 net square feet  
Number of buyers: 12,814  
Dates of 2003 show(s): Jan. 5-29,  
2003

**SPRING FAIR  
BIRMINGHAM**

Feb. 2-6, 2003  
Contact/location information:  
National Exhibition Center  
Birmingham, England  
011-44 (0) 121 767 5511

ukinfo@tps.emap.co.uk  
Number of people who walked  
the show the year before last?  
109,960  
Number of exhibitors at  
the show the year before last:

4,170  
Amount of time the show has  
been taking place: 25 years  
Number of different product  
categories represented: 10  
Number of buyers: 80,000

Dates of 2003 show(s): Feb. 2-6,  
2003 

Elizabeth Pensgard is an editorial assis-  
tant for Lawn & Garden Retailer.