

# Entertainment firm owner creates 'one-stop' business

Continued from Page One

to his customers' needs, he could successfully expand his firm in several directions.

"I found that customers are very conscious about shopping around and that they want the best deal. I found the biggest complaint was that after booking the hall and entertainment, they'd have to go about shopping for other things such as videography and decorations. I figured I'd incorporate that with my entertainment and let the customers book everything with me."

Anthony's hunch has paid off: About 80 percent of his DJ customers also opt for videotaping and 40 to 50 percent also purchase their decorations from his firm. Certain that he has identified a new market and a new niche, Anthony, who graduated from a commercial high school and majored in marketing in college, is looking into opening a small catering hall in May.

Emphasizing that he is not interested in competing with the large catering halls in Rockland, many of whom recommend Top of the Line Entertainment, Anthony said his offering would be similar in size to a legion hall and would serve small corporate affairs and small private parties.

In addition to striving for diversification, Anthony's formula for success involves ensuring that he will be recommended by individual clients as well as catering halls. "I have to keep a good relationship with catering facilities," acknowledged Anthony.

When my sales reps talk to the catering managers, they ask about previous jobs we did and if our people worked well with the maitre'd. We're in someone else's house and we have to go by their rules."

Another of Anthony's winning approaches is to work out of an office with contemporary furnishings, which, he says, reflects that the firm is in tune with what is current. Many competitors do not have an office, relying instead on visiting clients at their home.

"I used to do that," said Anthony. On request he will visit a client at home. "A year ago I'd go and travel to a house. I'd be there one hour. I'd use three hours of the day on one customer. Now in three hours I see three customers as opposed to one. Having an office also projects a certain sense of professionalism.

"When each client walks through the door, you have to have your jacket on, have the paper work out and be ready to

go, and make sure the presentation is ready," said Anthony.

His efforts don't stop there. If a customer books on the spot, Anthony quickly mail outs a thank you card for their business. "I want to let you know I'm thankful for your business. After you hand me a check, I'm not going to forget about you. Customers want to know that their money is being appreciated."

And if a customer gets away without signing on the dotted line, Anthony waits a little while for them to reconsider without pressuring them too much and then makes a follow-up call offering a second presentation to a family member who may not have been present the first time.

Since he doesn't advertise and relies strictly on word of mouth to promote his business, Anthony also sends thank-you cards to acknowledge customers who recommend him.

Anthony who is aware that he has a great deal of competition from part-time people who "are really saturating the market," said it is crucial for a firm such as his to have several teams available to book. He employs five teams and sends out up to three on a regular basis, saving himself as a back up in case a performer is sick.

Having adequate insurance is also important. Although insurance is expensive, Anthony said that because "The business is mobile, insurance is essential."

While booking parties and performing parties is time consuming, Anthony still finds time to promote the corporate portion of his business, which currently has him providing video films for businesses and taping video shows which air on local cable station. Next month, he plans to aggressively pursue corporate accounts, such as pharmaceutical companies whom Anthony maintains are increasingly using video as a tool to present their products.

This spring, Top of the Line, which already provides the music at numerous Rockland school dances, will call on high schools and local dance schools to promote its videography services for proms and recitals.

"You have to know how to stay competitive in the field, you have to be continually growing," he said, pointing out that he attends trade shows in New York and Florida to keep up with the latest in lighting equipment so he can better serve his customers, who always ask, "What's new, what's hot and at a reasonable price?"



**ALL BASES COVERED** — James Anthony, owner of Top of the Line Entertainment, stand behind a display that combine elements from the various services he offers.

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By SANDRA LEVY

NANUET — James Anthony was just a teenager when he grabbed a microphone at his cousin's wedding reception and proceeded to teach the guests all of the latest dances.

Today Anthony, owner of three-and-a-half-year old Top of the Line Entertainment here makes his living doing what he enjoyed as a teen. But in addition to working his magic at parties, Anthony is continually searching for new ways to expand his entertainment business.

Describing his firm as a "one stop shop," Anthony's current menu of party offerings goes way beyond DJ companies' usual fare of dancers, stages, props, party

favors and laser light shows to include videography, custom decorations and party centerpieces.

The Rockland resident, who is adamant about doing his part in building up the economy in Rockland, currently employs 25 people and that number is sure to grow as his plans to expand take shape.

"I was always good with people and was told by friends that I was very energetic. At parties I was the one to get the guests out on the dance floor. I enjoy that. I always hated just sitting at parties," said Anthony, who, in addition to excelling at creating high energy levels at parties, was astute at realizing that by paying attention

See: ENTERTAINMENT, Page 10