



# Dubai Trade Show Tough Sell For American Rep

By Paul Wahl, Editor

**When Peter Ottowitz first went to work for the Al Fares Dubai trade show in the United Arab Emirates, most Americans hadn't heard of Dubai or the UAE.**

That all changed several months ago when a plan to have Dubai Ports World administer six United States Ports became a political hot potato.

Now, everyone has heard of Dubai, but not necessarily in a good light. Ottowitz's job for the trade show as chief salesman in the United States has become more difficult, and it wasn't easy to begin with.

"Entice people to go to Dubai," Ottowitz said from his home in Stow, Mass., where he operates a home appraisal franchise in addition to his sales duties with Al Fares Dubai. "I call manufacturers and try to open their eyes as to the opportunities in that part of the world."

Ottowitz began his career as an engineer, but always longed to have his own business.

"I didn't care if it was pumping septic tanks or what," Ottowitz said. "There was so much crap in the higher corporate yack."

After guaranteeing an SBA loan for Apple Polishes, a company that had gone under, Ottowitz and his wife, Connie, came into possession of several formulas for leather cleaning products. The company soon was on the road back to financial health, with Connie as the chief sales person and Peter doing what he could after hours and on weekends.

Eventually, the company grew to a point where the Ottowitzes figured it would support them, and Peter quit his day job.

Some years later, Ottowitz attended an equine trade show in King of Prussia, Pa., to scope out that sector of the leather care industry.

"The economy was down in the toilet, but people were still buying stuff," Ottowitz said.

An idea was born. Shortly thereafter, Ottowitz was able to purchase Bickmore, a floundering company that also specialized in leather care products.

Bickmore had been started in 1882 and once had plants in Canada, Germany, France and Australia. The company's

fortunes rested on the use of draft horses. Most of its products—especially the gall salve—were designed to help work horse owners keep their tack clean and supple.

With the advent of the truck and motors, the company fell on hard times. There was, however, brand recognition and some customer loyalty.

Under Ottowitz's watchful eye, Bickmore became a hit and gained market share in the equine industry. In 2000, Ottowitz's company, which owned Bickmore and several other brands, was sold to Exelda Manufacturing of Michigan.

**Through two decades of attending trade shows and working the equine trade industry, Ottowitz knew many of the players. That's what interested the organizers of Al Fares Dubai.**

"I turned them down at first, but then I figured, 'what do I have to lose?'" Ottowitz said. "I was looking for a small business to grow and didn't want to throw a lot of money at it."

Peter and Connie had tried retirement in Florida.

"I got sick of seeing people my age in Speedos," Ottowitz said. "I just couldn't take it."



## Peter Ottowitz Best of the Best – Sales Rep

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