Inside This Issue

1 Smarter Pricing in Tent Rentals

2 Even the Loudest Sounds Can't Be Heard in Space

The Truth About Buying Rental Inventory

3 Matching Machines to Your Needs

4 Your Guide to the Great Barrier Reef's Most Epic Experiences

Uncover the Magic of Australia's Living Wonder

SWIM WITH TURTLES, WHALES, AND WONDER AT THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

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If you've ever dreamed of exploring a place so vast it dwarfs entire countries, Australia's Great Barrier Reef should be at the top of your bucket list. Stretching over 1,400 miles along the eastern coastline, this paradise is larger than the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands combined! The Great Barrier Reef is home to dazzling coral gardens, colorful fish, giant clams, and six of the seven known marine turtle species. From snorkelers to skydivers, the Reef offers something unforgettable for every kind of adventurer.

Underwater, the options are endless. Lizard Island is a snorkeler's paradise where you can float above giant clam beds and glide alongside green turtles. Divers flock to Cod Hole for an up-close look at the Reef's most famous marine residents, while those craving a more remote experience can hop aboard a dive ship to explore untouched corners teeming with biodiversity.

Prefer to keep your head dry? The 74 tropical Whitsunday Islands are perfect for cruising, whether on a bareboat charter or a luxury superyacht. For a show-stopping perspective, consider a scenic helicopter transfer to the Outer Reef. From the air, the patterns of coral, tiny secluded islands, and endless shades of blue make it clear just how massive this natural wonder truly is.

For a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, the Reefsleep Experience takes you to Hardy Reef after day-trippers have left. Snorkel, dive, or relax on the Reefworld platform, then enjoy a barbecue as the sun sets. When night falls, snuggle into your floating tent under the stars or take a night dive to see the reef glow in a completely different light.

Thrill-seekers, take note: Mission Beach offers a jaw-dropping skydiving experience over the reef and surrounding rainforest, plunging from 15,000 feet with expert guides to ensure an unforgettable ride.

No matter how you experience it (by snorkel, yacht, helicopter, or parachute), the Great Barrier Reef is an adventure that promises awe, excitement, and memories you'll treasure forever.

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STOP GUESSING AND PRICE IT RIGHT

Your Profit Lives in the Math

When I talk about pricing with party rental business owners, one thing keeps coming up. Many folks are still pricing based on their competitors. They bid to either beat their price, match the price, or go a little higher, hoping they seem more premium to the customer.

Setting prices like that is a mistake that sets you up to lose money.

Maybe your competitor doesn't understand their costs. Or maybe they've got different equipment, longer routes, or a setup crew that's not nearly as efficient as yours. If you copy their pricing without knowing how your numbers actually stack up, you could be sending gear out the door and bleeding cash on every job. You need a different model. You've got to base your price on your own costs rather than someone else's price sheet. And that starts with knowing your variable costs.

Variable cost is a fancy way of saying everything it takes to get something from the shelf, onto a truck, out to a customer, set up, cleaned, and back again. We call it shelf-to-shelf, and every item you have available to rent is different. Once you start breaking that down, the fog starts to lift. You'll finally be able to price in a way that works for both your customers and your business.

Let's look at an example. Say you're renting out a 20-foot-wide tent. It's a size you're comfortable with, and it fits your routes well. If your crew knows how to load and set it up quickly and has a smooth system for cleaning and restocking, your variable costs on that item are going to be fairly low. That's a win. You can price it competitively and still walk away with a solid profit.

Now compare that to someone else with the same tent who doesn't have those pieces dialed in. Maybe they fumble with the setup or drive across town in the wrong-size truck. Their costs are higher. If they try to match your price without realizing that, they'll lose money every time.

That's the power of understanding your numbers. It gives you clarity and a competitive edge.

The deeper you go with variable cost, the more you start to see your own business clearly. You'll figure out what kinds of jobs your team crushes and which ones always seem to drain your time and budget. Once you understand your real costs, pricing stops being a guessing game. You can do the math and work backward to figure out what price makes sense. And more importantly, you can say no when a job doesn't fit your numbers.

I had a big event come up one year and put a bid in. I knew the client and the site and could have easily taken the job. The vendor came to me and said he'd give it to us if I just adjusted our bid. But it didn't make sense for us to do that. I knew our numbers and how many other jobs were available that weekend. I also knew the competitor bidding against me didn't have a key tent in stock that he needed for the job. We did, so he'd have to sub-rent it from me.

I let the job go. He took it, and I rented him the tent. Then my crew was freed up that weekend to take on the higher-margin jobs we were already great at. Between the sub-rent and our other work, we ended up making a lot more money that weekend than we would have by taking the original job.

That only happens when you stop pricing like everyone else and start pricing like someone who actually knows their business. If you're still guessing or copying, there's a better way. Look at your numbers, understand what it costs to do what you do, and let that guide your decisions.

Guesswork doesn't build a business. Knowing your numbers does.

–Steve Arendt

Silent Space

THE SCIENCE BEHIND A UNIVERSE WITHOUT SOUND

Life on Earth can be hazardous to the human ear. Although sounds at 85 decibels or more can damage people's hearing after two hours of exposure, rock concert fans regularly experience 130 decibels, and exploding fireworks may reach 150–175 decibels.

However, you wouldn't need earplugs or noise-canceling headphones to listen for any of those activities in outer space. In fact, the product of any loud sound in outer space is ... crickets.

How can the rich smorgasbord of sounds we hear on Earth not exist in space? Sound cannot exist in a vacuum. To be heard, sound waves require a source, a medium to travel in, and a receiver.

Matter vibrating in oscillations called sound waves allows us to hear sound. The vibrations caused by a jet plane taking off reach 120–140 decibels or more. Those sound waves travel through the medium of air surrounding the plane. If the powerful reverberations of the jet's massive engines are loud enough, people nearby can hear them and feel the vibrations.

The source, the medium, and the receiver work together like a successful defensive play in baseball: The batter (the source) hits a ball, the shortstop (the medium) fields and throws it to first base, and the first baseman (the receiver) catches the ball to complete the play. The play never happens if the shortstop (the medium) isn't there!

In space, the medium is the missing shortstop. Interplanetary space consists of nothingness, lacking the air, gas, or water to serve as a medium through which sound waves can travel. So, when a person or machine emits a sound in outer space, the waves dissipate. A meteor plummeting toward Earth would not make a sound passing through the solar system. But as soon as it entered our planet's atmosphere, which serves as a medium, we would hear any sound the meteor makes here on Earth.

So, if you are ever fortunate enough to orbit the Earth on a space flight or visit the International Space Station, you can feast on dazzling views of Earth outside your window, and the thin blue line of its atmosphere blanketing the planet. But beyond your crewmates' chatter and the sound of the spacecraft's own engines, you will hear only a vast, interplanetary silence.

Avoid the Inventory Money Pit

A BETTER WAY TO BUILD STOCK

When you work in the party rental business, buying inventory can be kind of a black hole because of how many different things are available, including tents of various sizes and styles and a long list of accessories that go with them. Having inventory on hand is essential for a growing rental company. But what is the right inventory?

With over 30 years in the industry, I've spent plenty of time on both sides of the trade show table. At a show, it's easy to look at something and think, "That item will pay for itself after just two rentals." And it sounds logical. If you buy a tent for $2,000 and rent it for $1,000, it's paid for itself after two uses, right? Not quite.

You have to look beyond the sales side and focus on profit. What does that tent actually earn each time it goes out? You might rent it for $1,000, but various things eat into that, including labor, fuel, and storage. Account for those things, and you could be looking at $700 in costs. So, you've really earned $300, and it will actually take six or seven rentals to earn back what you paid.

If you're not thinking about the profit of each rental, you're going to end up upside down. Make that mistake too many times, and you'll have a warehouse full of inventory and no cash to run your business.

So, what makes something worth purchasing? Often, the best items are those that fit your workflow and complement something you already rent. Accessories like tent lights and sides typically have a low added cost but a high margin because they ride along with existing labor. Accessories like silverware are great to have, but the margin is lower because it takes time to count, collect, and clean.

Also, tread carefully with trendy items. That gold flatware may be hot now, but not in six months. And finally, always think about the resale potential of your inventory. If you can sell an item later, that allows you to squeeze the last bit of residual cash out of it.

Ultimately, it comes down to viewing your inventory as an investment. There are always shiny new things available, but the trick is buying items that earn, turn, and fit the way you work.

Before & After

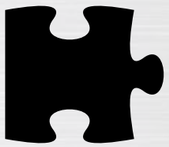
FIND THE RIGHT TENT WASHER FIT

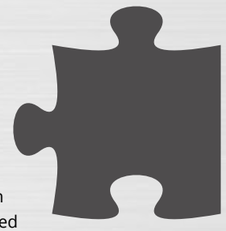
Thinking Beyond Size

For many people buying a tent washing machine, their instinct is just to pick a small, medium, or large and be done with it. But I always stop and ask a few questions because what they really need isn't size. It's a solution.

Think of it like a doctor's visit. Say you have a headache that won't go away, so you go down to the clinic. Your doctor won't just write a prescription without talking to you first. They're going to ask questions to get to the root of a problem. You might just want some headache medicine and be on your way, but what if it comes back worse?

It's the same thing when you're buying something for your rental company. A product or service should do more than just solve a problem in the short term, especially if it's a larger purchase. Consider your company's long-term health and how that product supports it. What's the why behind that thing you're buying? What are the benefits you're interested in? When it comes to tent washers, people have entirely different reasons for wanting one and a different set of problems they're hoping it will solve.





That's why I always start the sales process with a conversation to learn more. One customer may only run the machine once or twice a week, so productivity isn't a benefit for them; they just want super-clean tents. Another customer with a similar-size company might be more interested in speed. Then there's automation. Some people want a machine that does all the work. Others don't mind tending the machine a little more if it'll save money upfront.

We also talk about where a company is headed. Some have stayed the same size for years and aren't looking to grow. Another company might be expanding fast and aiming to be the go-to in their city. My goal is to match customers with machines that fit their company now and in the future.

Knowing what machine to buy starts with knowing the problem you're trying to solve. Once we figure that out, the rest comes easy. If you're thinking about a washer but aren't sure what you need, let's talk.