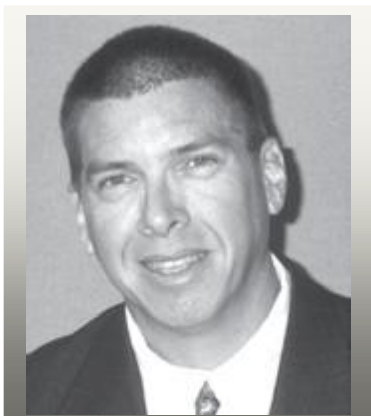


# How To Find Big Savings at the Buying Show

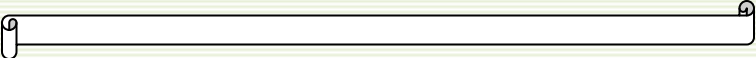
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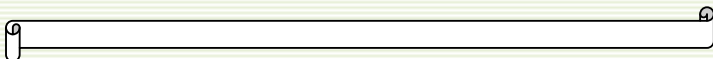
Kenneth Thigpen, BS, RRT, FAARC

Mississippi manager Kenneth Thigpen explains how he has saved \$75,000 over the years by making deals on the Exhibit Hall floor at the AARC International Respiratory Congress.





When the ribbon is cut on the Exhibit Hall at the AARC International Respiratory Congress this December, thousands of attendees will flood into the hall to see the latest in respiratory technology. But the AARC show is more than just a chance to see what's out there — because it's also a Buying Show, where attendees can make deals right on the Exhibit Hall floor, often taking advantage of special discounts that more than pay for the trip to the meeting. In the following interview, Kenneth Thigpen, BS, RRT, FAARC, administrative director of pulmonary services at St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson, MS, shares his experiences with the AARC Buying Show and how he has put it to good use for his facility over the years.



**AARC Times:** When did you first take advantage of the opportunity to make a deal to purchase equipment at the AARC Congress, and how did that transaction work out?

**Thigpen:** I bought three ventilators the first time the floor was opened for purchasing. I saved around \$15,000 on this single transaction.

**AARC Times:** How many times have you made or initiated transactions on the Exhibit Hall floor, and what makes you continue to pursue this purchasing option?

**Thigpen:** I have utilized this approach six or seven times so far. Given the financial pressures hospitals are currently facing, being a good steward has never been more important. This gives us managers opportunities to save money above and beyond what we could normally enjoy with even the most robust Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) agreement.

AARC Times: What kinds of equipment have you purchased?

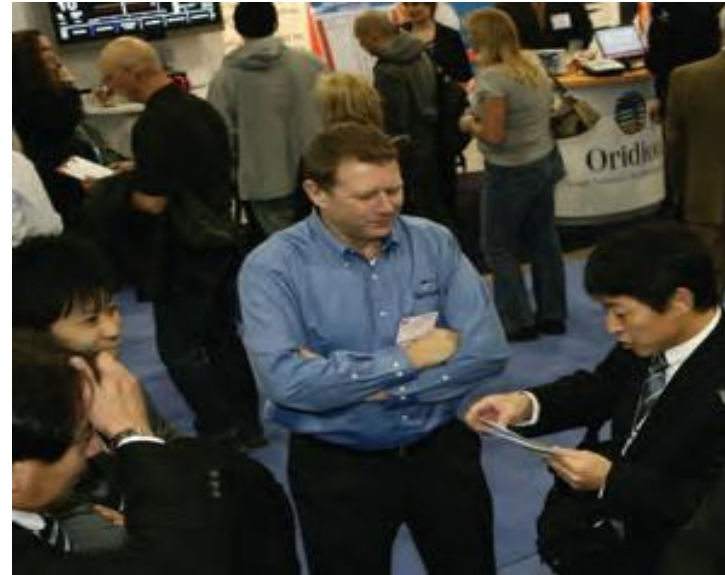
**Thigpen:** So far, I have purchased ventilators on four occasions, with a fifth order currently in the works, plus blood gas analyzers, blood gas data management systems, and noninvasive delivery systems.

*AARC Times:* What did you have to do to convince your administration that taking advantage of the Buying Show was a good idea?

**Thigpen:** When I advised my administration that we could purchase equipment for less than our GPO targets and less than those sales recorded on *MD Buylines*, I got their attention.

*AARC Times:* How much money have you saved your facility over the years from this purchasing strategy?

**Thigpen:** A conservative estimate would be in the neighborhood of \$75,000.



*AARC Times:* How does it help justify your trip to the meeting?

**Thigpen:** With savings like this, it's almost a no-brainer. For example, I typically buy three to four ventilators at a time, and I usually save enough per ventilator to more than cover my meeting expenses.

*AARC Times:* Some people may think you have to sign on the dotted line right there at the meeting. Is this true, or can you get the special Congress deals simply by *initiating* the sale there?

**Thigpen:** I love working with the exhibitors on the floor of the show because it gets back to people, relationships, and a handshake agreement. We typically agree on the purchase terms at the show, then I come back to work and process a purchase order within our agreed-upon timeframe. It gets back to doing business the good old-fashioned way!

**AARC Times:** What would be your top five tips for other respiratory therapy managers who might be thinking about taking advantage of the Buying Show concept at the 2010 AARC Congress in Las Vegas?



## Thigpen's 5 Tips

- 1. Know what you want** — determine quantities, preferred equipment, vendor, etc.
- 2. Do your homework** — research *MD Buyline* or other similar websites and determine what the best deals have been for the equipment you want. Equip yourself with the knowledge of what others have done and then prepare to work a better deal.
- 3. Start laying the groundwork with the appropriate people at "C-Level" — your CFO, COO, CNO — or whoever would typically sign off on a purchase.** Tout the ability to get absolute best-price while you've got all the decisionmakers there. Explain to them that vendors will either bring in people, or have them readily available, who can make a deal happen in a short time. You simply cannot get this kind of access from behind anyone's desk — I don't care how good a negotiator they might think they are. Let them know that you should be able to save your institution enough money to offset the expenses you might incur by attending this meeting.
- 4. Start laying the groundwork with your vendor prior to the meeting.** Let them know you plan to pursue a purchase, and you're going to be coming to see them. Give them a fair warning to get those pencils sharpened.
- 5. Get ready to have a great time!** Vendors enjoy getting to work on deals this way as much as managers do, or so it seems. It's a great relief to get away from the prescription of GPOs, if only for a little while. ■