

Spirited Showing for Retailers

L.A. Mart brings back pep rally event to boost facility's tenants.

There weren't any girls in short skirts shaking pompoms at a recent L.A. area "pep rally." That's because it wasn't for a football game.

The L.A. Mart Gift Association, the L.A. Mart's organization for gift, accessory and home furnishing showroom owners, staged its second annual Prosperity Pep Rally on June 15. The event was designed to lift the spirits of more than 200 retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers.

Organizers said the atmosphere was peppier than last year.

"We wanted to pump them and encourage them to look at their businesses in different ways," said Joanne Rackow,



Peppy: Rally eventgoers.

president of the L.A. Mart Gift Association and owner of the Joanne & Co. showroom. "And this year, there wasn't that depressed feeling in the building."

The rally at the 200-showroom L.A. Mart in downtown Los Angeles brought together showroom owners whose

businesses were hurt by the recession.

While discussions at last year's event centered on how to stay alive, this year's rally emphasized the benefits of networking, and provided advice on how showroom owners could change and grow their businesses.

"We had a motivational speaker who brought home the whole concept of building personal connections," said Peggy Coleman, vice president of marketing at L.A. Mart.

Also, Rackow advised showroom owners that they have to adapt to changing circumstances. She cut back on the amount of home furnishing products at her showroom and started stocking more baby products because they were stronger sellers. She also added women's accessories.

"For some people, change is scary," Rackow said. "So it's a matter of putting a more positive spin on it."

—Alexa Hyland

