

US Organizers meet Global Venues

American show organizers explore opportunities for growth internationally

By Larry Kulchawik

Author..Trade Shows from One Country to the Next

In 2012 I conducted a survey with international exhibit suppliers from around the world. The findings were presented at the EDPA ACCESS meeting that year. The results of the survey. In 2012 the US marketplace was now beginning to take more seriously the idea of doing exhibits outside of North America. The rest of the world has been doing this for years. A small percentage of the largest US exhibit supplier companies were already

“What percentage of your trade show exhibit business services do you do for clients outside of your country/region?”

The response from seven World Regions:

Europe- 26%

Middle East- 67%

Asia- 23%

South America- 27%

Australia- 42%

Africa- 15%

North America- **5%** *(Why so small a percentage for USA?)*

doing so due to their customer requests to help them consolidate their marketing efforts and better control their message across the globe.

With so many North American trade shows taking place, and plenty of business to keep an American exhibit company and show organizers busy, why consider to do work internationally and take a greater risks? Kind of a dumb attitude, but was true. Few US exhibit companies were as aggressive about international before 2005. They were busy enough without it. Those that did are now leading the pack. Today in North America, companies are more willing than ever to explore international opportunities to grow their business. As a result, American show organizers and exhibit suppliers are more aggressive than ever to respond this new and pressing need. My guess is that the percentage of exhibit work outside of the US in 2017 has increased to **12%**. Still behind other countries, but on the rise.

Trade Show Executive (previously Trade Show Week) recognized this need and created the **Global Direct** event to address this new and pressing need to help US show organizers to meet and engage with expo venues from around the world. Rather than traveling the globe for site inspections and discussions, why not create an event that allows organizers to meet multiple venue managers from around the globe in three days? The events founder, **Steve Sind** and team, organized the event and created the focus of the agenda for the 3 day meeting in Lake Las Vegas-July 12-15, 2017.

"At Trade Show Executive, we believe that building bridges in our communities through the sharing of information that impacts our industry. There is no better time than now for US organizers to expand their brands into global markets. That applies not only to those who plan to go global for the first time but also to those who want to move their current overseas events into new markets," says **Gabrielle Weiss-Publisher & Editor/Trade Show Executive**.

The three day sessions with show organizers and global venues were organized like clock work. This group of high level executives had little time to focus on the insignificant. Each session was chock filled with valuable topics to provide food for thought when planning their global strategies. Between presentation sessions, the venues presented their facilities to small groups, and one on one meetings were conducted to really get to know and meet key contacts for new growth.



Global Direct opened with **Stephen Miller-PhD** Economist from UNLV. Stephen discussed the changing political climates and new global growth areas in the world for business in the next five years.

Day two opened with moderator **Jason McGraw/InfoComm** and a distinguished panel of experienced show organizers who addressed the question-*What is the right business model when organizing an event overseas?*

This session was followed by moderator **Larry Kulchawik** who addressed the topic-*How can show organizers prepare their exhibitors for successful participation when exhibiting abroad?* The panel consisted of global exhibit managers who shared their first hand experiences when planning shows abroad. **Don Schmid**-Global Director/ Pfizer and president of HCEA shared his successes and failures when planning for an international event.

Gail Hernandez-Global director for Cambridge Technology-Novanta, shared her thinking on how to select and prepare her exhibiting staff for engaging with visitors at international events. She also shared her views on how show organizers could help to prepare their international exhibitors for success.

Ron Burchett-CEO RE Rogers, shared his thoughts on best practices for shipping exhibit freight and client equipment abroad to international events. RE Rogers is a world leader in international trade show freight and is the official contractor for many shows around the world.

A last discussion group focused on security at world convention events. This is a hot topic of concern in our industry these days. The session was led by **Mark Herrera**- Director of Education for IAVM and past member of Homeland Security Office in the US. It was interesting to note the different points of view regarding this serious topic. To date, the US has not had any major violent disruptions (other than picketing) at US trade show facilities. Most venues and organizers are working together behind the scenes to take preventative measures given the volatile world we now live in. When there is a bombing anywhere it creates major concerns about attending a trade show in any given world city.

“The threats and preventive actions at convention events in the UK are taken very seriously at the NEC. NEC and the organizers work together to take preventive measures to be on the look out for suspicious people. Dogs are often used smell for bombs and arms at entrance gates. A major concern are ‘lone wolf’ suspects that can go unnoticed. Badging for entry helps greatly to better identify this who enter the venue/event” commented **Richard Mann**, director of Business Development, the NEC/ UK.

“Attendees at Chinese exhibitions are excellent to accept a long queue for security entry to a show. Guns are not common but knives are. Security to prevent bombing is not a major concern, but steps are taken to identify suspicious people”, says **Micheal Kruppe**, GM Shanghai International Expo Centre.

“Security measures are taken at Expo Guadalajara in Mexico, but major disruptions to date have been minimal. Precautions are created between the organizers and the Centre for each show”, remarked **Juan Gabriel Tamez**, director General, Expo Guadalajara.

Overall, **Global Direct** created an atmosphere of open communication between world venues and US exposition organizers. They need each other to succeed. The event provided a stronger connection between US organizers and International venues when deciding to take a trade show international. In the end, the cost investment and success of the exhibitors at international events is of the greatest concern when deciding to expand US trade show events abroad. Bravo to **Global Direct** for pulling this together and jump start the growth of US international opportunities abroad.