

# Exhibition Industry Summit

Building A Better Tomorrow For The Exhibition Industry  
Hosted by the International Association for Exhibition Management

## The Exhibition Industry Manifesto

The observations, findings, and recommendations that follow are neither IAEM policy nor the policy of any of the associations whose members participated in the 26 July 2002 Exhibition Industry Summit at McCormick Place in Chicago. The comments that follow are offered for the consideration of all organizations and individuals in the exhibition industry and they represent the discussions that occurred during the Exhibition Industry Summit on 26 July. This manifesto should be viewed as an important first step in a long-term program that will enhance the real and perceived value of exhibitions to exhibitors and visitors.

Comments presented in three distinct categories as reported to the Chairman by the Working Panels (in some instances only one or two categories were reported back. The three categories are:

**Observations** – statements of apparent fact that in the aggregate depict a common perception(s) of the exhibition industry.

**Findings** – Conclusions of each of the working panels.

**Recommendations** – Suggestions for study or action.

In the pages that follow comments will be categorized and separated into the following broad topics:

- Building and venue issue
- Labor and work rules
- Set-up and removal
- Show management rules, regulations, and operations
- Transportation and shipping issues
- Attendance Promotion

## **Building and venue issues**

### **Observations**

- Facilities do not use uniform national rules, regulations and safety standards even though some guidance exists and could help reduce cost and confusion.
- Many users do not understand the value of using a convention/exhibition center.
- The financial models used by convention/exhibition centers are not commonly shared with or known by users.
- The financial models upon which many centers were first built have changed requiring many facilities to look for new sources of revenue.
- The need for uniform basic rules regarding building security and access will continue to grow.
- The reduction in the capacity and convenient location of marshalling yards is adding cost resulting from extending move-in and move-out times.
- Electrical requirements and rules are not uniform and often vary even within the same city.
- Buildings could join the efforts of Convention and Visitor Bureaus in helping to build qualified attendance for exhibitions.
- When buildings market themselves apart from the Convention and Visitors Bureaus it can be confusing.

### **Findings**

- Consumer shows have been at negotiating disadvantages with CVBs and Buildings because they typically do not fill hotel rooms.
- Because of local differences and variations in ownership and management it is difficult to standardize building rules, policies and procedures. There may be opportunities to gain exhibition industry efficiencies by doing so.
- Cooperation between buildings, cities, and general service contractors is critical to achieving cost reductions and operational efficiencies. Likewise, show organizers must have good relations with EACs. The need for increased cooperation among all parties is acute.
- The APEX initiative of the Convention Industry Council is in the process of designing accepted practices in the form of procedures, Requests for Proposals, and other operating forms and documents.

- Security will become a major cost driver and will be a critical component affecting the design and operation of marshalling yards, docks, buildings generally. Workers, show organizers, contractors, exhibitors and visitors will all suffer inconvenience and higher costs.
- Many public policy officials have traditionally taken convention, meeting, and exhibition revenues for granted and do not fundamentally understand the importance of the industry. The International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus is working with the US Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities to change this.
- Urban design guidelines and templates might allow building planners and architects to more adequately design convention/exhibition centers with required working spaces such as loading docks, storage facilities, and convenient service centers.
- In their eagerness to minimize building vacancy some CVBs and building sales staff are too zealous and double bookings have occurred and are likely to increase.

### **Recommendations**

- Facilities should become involved in helping to promote increased attendance.
- Buildings should focus attention on ways to reduce costs to show organizers and exhibitors and focus on the value delivered.
- Buildings must interact more with industry associations to educate exhibitors and show organizers about costs and ways to mitigate them.
- The industry should conduct regular Industry Summit meetings like this one in order to continue the dialogue that has begun and to keep the channels of communications open.
- The industry should develop best practices for electrical and security rules.
- There should be a national plan established for uniform badging of building workers and vendors.
- Show organizers and general service contractors should provide final drafts of exhibitor service kits to building managers to ensure that all rules and regulations are supported and that there are no inherent conflicts created by inadvertence.
- The development of an internet-based Expedia-equivalent service, an internet portal, that would enable exhibitors to shop with just one stop to access goods and services for their show participation would be highly attractive and widely supported.
- Communications between buildings and exhibitors and contractors should be enhanced and emphasized as a key on-going objective.

- Show organizers should partner with buildings to educate exhibitors about how to do business at the venue on a regular basis one year in advance of the event.
- A Task Force should be appointed to study the potential conflicts arising from buildings' increasing interest in securing sponsorship revenue from exhibitions in their buildings. The objective of the Task Force is to develop best practices and guidelines for the guidance of all parties.
- "Clearing houses" of Exhibitor Appointed Contractors (EACs) would allow facilities to know who has been approved.
- The early access (one-day early for general service contractor's equipment only) policy that some buildings are permitting should be promoted and encouraged among all buildings as a way to save needless expense to exhibitors. Currently some buildings will permit early access to general service contractors if the space is available 30 days prior to scheduled move-in at no additional cost.

## **Labor and work rules**

### **Observations**

- The labor experience of exhibitors is often perceived as:
  - Involving some degree of inconvenience(s)
  - Confusing
  - Involving multiple jurisdictions.
  - Involving overlapping jurisdictions.
- There is concern about the cost, quality, and value received by exhibitors.

### **Recommendations**

- The need for education exists and should be directed to:
  - Show Organizers
  - Exhibitors
- We must educate union labor about "who the customer is" and how important they are.

- The Exhibit Service Contractors Association (ESCA) and the Exhibitor Appointed Contractors Association (EACA) should partner in future labor negotiations, which typically is a three to six yearlong process. Future emphasis should be placed on:
  - Cost and Quality issues.
    - Education labor about exhibitions.
    - Proper tools and safety techniques.
    - Customer service including dress, behavior, code of conduct.
  - Educating exhibitors and show organizers.
    - Work rules and jurisdictions.
    - How to simplify the system.
- A central internet-based resource could be created to provide a city by city (jurisdiction by jurisdiction) listing of work rules and jurisdictions – something that will be investigated by ESCA and EACA.
- The account executives of general service contractors should be schooled on new or revised work rules.
- Labor should be supplied to exhibitors throughout the exhibition.
- Labor calls should be made by name rather than in bulk.
- Union leaders should be routinely invited to industry events and exhibitions.
- Negotiations should focus on shifts rather than straight time versus overtime recognizing the unique nature and timing of exhibitions, especially set-up and dismantle times.
- Develop and distribute a list of exhibitor’s rights vis-à-vis union labor and work rules.

## **Set-up and Removal**

### **Recommendations**

- Facilities, CVBs, and show organizers should coordinate so that the set-up and removal schedule avoids over-time costs to exhibitors whenever possible.
- General service contractors and the show organizers of events that abut each other should communicate to avoid needless inefficiencies in the set-up and removal schedules of the two events.
- Show organizers should promote to exhibitors the presence of exhibition industry associations that can be of assistance to them in providing education and information.

- More attention must be focused on eliminating overlapping jurisdictions and cost prohibitive work rules, especially as they relate to set-up and removal.
- The logistics challenges and attendant costs associated with set-up and removal should be explained to exhibitors regularly.
- Show organizers should provide opportunities on-site to address set-up and removal issues and concerns with exhibitors including Forums at which exhibitors can provide feedback to show organizers and others.
- It is important to manage the expectations of all parties on every level about all relevant aspects of the exhibition industry.
- Communications and education efforts must be enhanced.

## **Show Management Rules, regulations and operations**

### **Observations**

- It is important to focus energy on increasing value while also reducing costs. Value is the more important component.
- It would be effective to post audience demographics of the current exhibition at the event in lieu of posting the data for last year's event.
- Exhibitors need help understanding how their investments in exhibitions are distributed. Cost illustrations can help achieve this.
- Exhibitors need assistance to identify ways in which they can reduce their costs. A printed fact sheet would help achieve this objective.
- Most general service contractors are able to work with exhibitors to create operating budgets for exhibitors.
- Show prospectus is a good vehicle to deliver cost distribution data on a show specific basis to visitors and exhibitors.
- Exhibitors could be interviewed individually and in focus groups to determine how show organizers can help enhance the value of their events.
- Simplifying the exhibit service manual and offering it to exhibitors in a variety of media (print, CD-Rom, Internet-based) would be worthwhile.
- Show organizers can educate exhibitors and vice versa.

- Joint programming by IAEM, TSEA, and others would help promote a uniform “value of education” message to exhibitors and others (labor).
- Some sponsorship opportunities may not increase the value of participation for exhibitors.
- “Display rules and regulations” (IAEM Publication) is not uniformly adopted.
- Fees assessed by some show organizers associated with the presence at their events of EACs can be controversial and provocative.

### **Recommendations**

- Attention must be focused on increasing the exhibitor’s ROI while at the same time curtailing costs wherever possible.
- Show organizers should publish event demographic information that has been audited and prepared by an independent source to increase its credibility.
- Develop a budget work sheet for the use of exhibitors that reflects all possible line items of expense with typical illustrations included.
- Advise exhibitors of the abilities of general service contractors to help them with their budget preparations.
- Show organizers should establish easy-to-use communications for exhibitors to use before, during, and after their events.
- The exhibit service manual must be streamlined and simplified.
- Create a series of joint education programs among industry associations that will deliver high quality information to exhibitors.
- Customize “Display Rules and Regulations” (IAEM Publication) to provide for special needs of different industry segments such as Medical/Healthcare; Technology; Retail’ Manufacturing events.
- Show organizers should become more informed about local labor rules and jurisdictions so that they can advise exhibitors to employ strategies that will reduce or eliminate excess costs.

## **Transportation and shipping issues**

### **Observations**

- Some exhibitors include airfare and drayage in “Shipping costs”.
- Land use policies at some convention centers and the inadequate number of docks add to costs, especially when marshalling yards are located miles away from the facility.
- Handling policies sometimes result in surcharges to drayage such as multiple stacked levels and double-stacked crates.
- Lack of education leads to higher costs.
- Exhibitors would benefit from information and resources in the form of newsletters, websites, and seminars that address transportation issues.
- Changing the ‘force time’ leads to forced freight shipments and higher costs to exhibitors; almost always a source of dissatisfaction.
- Some general service contractors are bundling transportation services into their packages which can lead to higher costs to exhibitors.

### **Recommendations**

- Show management, associations and publications should direct information to exhibitors about transportation issues segmented into:
  - Drayage
  - Shipping
  - Marshalling
  - Advanced
  - Direct
- Develop a glossary of transportation terms
- Include new illustrations of transportation issues in exhibit service kit such as definitions, drawings, and charts.
- Contractors must provide exhibitors with more realistic estimates of unload and load times.

- Do what you say you will do and stay true to the exhibit service kit (i.e., keep force at the published time no matter what).
- Show organizers and general service contractors should conduct joint on-site seminars at events to inform exhibitors of processes and procedures.

## **Attendance Promotion**

### **Observations**

- While there are many exceptions, most exhibitions are witnessing a decline in visitor attendance.
- There may be a demographic issue inhibiting attendance the result of new and different generational values.
- It is important to reach new buyers and visitors using effective new channels.
- Exhibitors must be helped to become savvier exhibition marketers. Most do not do a good job of it today.
- Some corporations are now using their own exclusive exhibitions to launch new products and technology.
- The value proposition of exhibitions could be increased.

### **Findings**

- Medical and Security industry exhibitions are enjoying attendance increases.
- Some corporations hold the notion currently that exhibitions are not working.
- Education programming (Conference content) of exhibitions is the key to attendance for many visitors and buyers, especially if they required a superior's authorization to attend.
- Some exhibitions are not "visitor friendly" in layout, registration processes, and organization of the show floor/schedule.
- Matchmaking programs that bring buyers and sellers together could be stepped-up by learning more about the relationships between the two.
- "New generations" need to be addressed using new methods and through many different media.
- Research that reveals how we can market the value of events would be beneficial.
- It is a challenging task to identify top buyers and quantify their spending.

- The Return on Investment (ROI) of visitors should be a key focal point
- Define how attending has high value for individuals as well as corporations.
- Utilize 3-dimensional marketing to place products in front of customers.
- Show organizers and exhibitors must partner to promote qualified attendance by buyers.
- Show organizers can prove that they deliver education, new products, and networking opportunities at their events.

### **Recommendations**

- Promote the importance of face-to-face events by providing credit for CEM, CAE, and CMP designation holders who attend exhibitions as well as seminars and conventions.
- TSEA and HCEA should collaborate to produce joint exhibitor training programs
- Pre-show and on-site surveys should be enhanced with more specific data collected.
- Redirect marketing resources to capture more visitors.
- Develop visitor loyalty programs for those who attend and buy.
- New tools to help exhibitors market themselves to visitors would be very helpful.
- “Solution-based Selling” should be directed to both exhibitors and visitors.
- Establish VIP Buyers lounge programs and similar amenities for key buyers.
- Establish PR campaigns (i.e., the Milk Producers Council) to promote the value of exhibitions that are based upon empirical research.
- Examine ways to provide adequate funding for PR campaign(s).
- Contact the Plastics Council to learn about the success of their PR program.
- Show organizers must allocate personnel to attend marketing seminars as well as exhibition marketing seminars (broaden the learning spectrum to include other marketing media).
- Focus efforts on higher education facilities to deliver the message that face-to-face marketing is important and effective.