



IELA REGIONAL TALK #6 - ASIA PACIFIC



Say it loud and proud: The Exhibition Industry can run shows safely. Collaboration is the major tool in combatting COVID-19.

Geneva, Switzerland – June 19th 2020



Following a complete shutdown with event postponements and cancellations within a very short space of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now entering a recovery phase with exhibitions and events partially being opened in certain regions and countries in the world. It was therefore on a far more positive note that IELA Committee Chairman **Ravinder Sethi**, Chairman & Managing Director at R.E. Rogers India, had particular pleasure in acting as moderator and introducing the **IELA RELOAD** online session « **IELA TALK #6 - ASIA PACIFIC Organisers & Venues** » on Tuesday June 16th, 2020.

The speakers included representatives from worldwide leading exhibition organisers and venues: **Mr. Anbu Varathan**, UFI Incoming President, CEO, Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC) and Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association (IMTMA).

Mr. Michael Duck, Informa Markets, Executive Vice President – Asia and Group Chief Representative in China.

Mr. Kai Hattendorf, UFI CEO & Managing Director.

Mr. Aloysius Arlando, SACEOS President, CEO of SingEx Holdings, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore investment company, Temasek Holdings.

Mr. S. Balasubramanian Pillai, IEIA President, Executive Director & COO, IMTMA / BIEC Bangalore

Mr. Michael Kruppe, SNIEC General Manager – Shanghai New International Expo Centre.

Mr. Mark Cochrane, UFI Asia-Pacific Regional Manager.

Mr. Rajesh Agrawal, Executive Director, Indian Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO).

With the recovery chronicle post covid-19 starting in Asia, over 100 participants joined the session and were eager to learn more about ASIA PACIFIC. **Ravinder Sethi**, Moderator, reflected on the industry as having « gone a long way » until today. Whereas a few weeks ago the session topics addressed theory and possible trends that could become reality, this session addressed current facts and hands-on experience so he was eager to open the round of discussion. The emphasis is on collaboration in order to look ahead and Ravinder took this opportunity to thank UFI for the excellent close partnership with IELA over the years. From UFI's perspective, **Kai Hattendorf** reiterated how UFI and IELA have a long history working together and confirmed that this active collaboration helps to serve the industry, even more so now in the current situation.

Anbu Varathan named the key challenges facing the exhibitions industry: travel restrictions, reduced activity in industry sectors and the implementation of social distancing measures. A **working cash flow** for the whole supply chain to the exhibition industry (logistics, accommodation etc.) is the priority in order to save jobs and businesses in lockdown. Some governments are investing in furloughing schemes but there is a limit to funding so the economy has to be restarted very soon. When exhibitions start to take place again, the tendency will be to organise small – medium-sized events but the cashflow must work. If there is no cashflow, there is no business.

Taking a look at the **global landscape**, **Michael Duck** confirmed that there were closed markets in the Asia Pacific region, with a possible opening in September in Australia, and outlined the recent uncertainty for shows soon to take place in Shanghai due to the latest COVID-19 outbreak in Beijing. **Aloysius Arlando** explained that Singapore was being very cautious and that Phase 2 of three phases would be introduced with the opening of the retail lockdown on June 19th, allowing also small gatherings.

Rajesh Agrawal from ITPO heads up the special campaign India MICE Alliance which assesses the tasks ahead for the revival of the BtoB exhibitions industry in India according to a set of guidelines/ SOP. He outlined how a collective voice for the industry has a meaningful impact on getting prepared to fully function in a post Covid world. This information was echoed by **Balasubramanian Pillai** who then confirmed that BtoB shows would boost the domestic industry which would then later promote business on an international level. He also addressed the priority of building confidence and outlined the concentration of IEIA's activities in webinars, information-sharing, post-COVID SOPs and intensified contact with the government and all stakeholders in India.

With specific reference to the **exhibitions world**, it was agreed that organised gatherings should take place but not mass gatherings. In the words of **Michael Duck** « BtoB shows are not BtoC » and the goal is now to « stimulate business by going by the rules ». This will soon be the case as **Michael Kruppe** confirmed that the SEMICON show will be soon be opening its doors at the end of June in Shanghai, having introduced very strict protective measures for all participants. **Mark Cochrane** confirmed that BtoB and BtoC events are suspended in Beijing until at least the end of July. He echoed the fact that the industry is « facing a number of issues before getting back on track » and winning back confidence of all event stakeholders. He drew attention to the UFI « Novel Coronavirus – Resources page » where important and regularly updated information can be found including the Global Framework for Reopening Exhibitions and B2B Trade Events, Good Practice Guide, an overview of government support programmes and advocacy resources.

Concluding with a look at the **European situation**, **Kai Hattendorf** confirmed that a few countries were further than others and openings were soon expected in Italy and Spain, worst hit by the pandemic. Travel and border crossings have been opened up and as from September, the calendar of exhibitions is full.

Active advocacy work and a strong communication campaign are strengthening the image of the exhibition industry and is bringing back confidence in an adapted environment for an economic restart. **Mark Cochrane** along with **Kai Hattendorf** fully support the advocacy role of associations in encouraging progress in the industry. Kai stated during the session « *Say it loud and proud. Let them know that we can run these shows safely* ». **Collaboration** is a major tool in combatting COVID-19, the biggest challenge so far of our generation.

When referring to venues, exhibition organisers, freight forwarders and stand contractors, **Michael Duck** said they should « *all work together and not separately....our relationships are very important for the future* ». Michael Kruppe supported this idea and explained what had been done over the last months working very closely with the Chinese government to create safety protocols and communicate the fact that « we are one of the most important industries in the world ». **Kai Hattendorf** mentioned that the WHO unexpectedly pointed out that the risks of organised gatherings including exhibitions can be outweighed by positive health effects which should be taken into consideration when making decisions at a local or regional level.

During the discussion it was clear that « **Going Digital** » is now a priority for most players in the exhibitions industry. As **Anbu Varathan** stated « *New topics, new subjects and new opportunities* » will be addressed including ideas such as pre-exhibition activities, conferences and matchmaking via digital solutions. It will be a challenge but maybe digitally it will be possible to control the density of the visitor flow in exhibition halls or make logistics more efficient with technology. **Aloysius Arlando** pointed out that digital platforms would allow a quick response should a similar lockdown situation occur again.

Ravinder Sethi concluded the session saying *"The Asia-Pacific region is paving the way for our recovery. Exhibitions, with post Covid systems, are successfully but cautiously reopening in the region. A great deal of credit for the reopening goes to our panelists who're working endlessly to get us back on the wheels. The knowledge and information they imparted at this session has been invaluable."*

- Full Replay available: https://youtu.be/1z_IPFKVOsk

**About IELA:**

The **International Exhibition Logistics Association** is the global industry network enhancing the professionalism of the transportation logistics and freight handling segments of the exhibition & event industry. IELA works with venue owners, organisers and national associations educating, training and sharing expertise for safe and secure operations around the world. The quality brand IELA is currently represented by 173 members and 31 affiliates in 56 countries.

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