

exhibition

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SHOWCASE



The industry all over the world is striving to restart operations even on a small scale as feasible in current scenario. Internationally, there have been few trade shows which took place despite Covid 19. These beginnings provide encouragement for industry worldwide to remain optimistic. In India too, despite all odds we should work towards a date to restart MICE industry keeping in view various projections of COVID 19 curve. As of now it seems that we can expect few exhibitions taking place in the third quarter of this FY. The India MICE Alliance and industry experts have formulated a SOP for re-opening of MICE industry in prevailing Covid 19 situation with all feasible safeguards for an organized gathering and have recommended the same to the Government for its consideration. We also need to think of small exhibitions on a regional format which is a need for the country keeping in view its size and diversity.

**Rajesh Agrawal, IAS,
Executive Director, ITPO and
Chairman, India MICE Alliance**



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IELA Talk #8 Americas – Winning Confidence Back



The International Exhibition Logistics Association (IELA) held the latest in its IELA RELOAD Regional Talk series on 3 July. Its IELA Talk #8 Americas – Winning Confidence Back was designed to leverage support to get the Americas re-opened

IELA RELOAD greeted a panel discussion on the situation of the Americas in the event and exhibition industry. Prominent speakers were invited to share their thoughts and give insight from their local region. Moderated by IELA Board Members, Mariane Ewbank, Director Fulstandig Shows E Eventos MC Ltda, Brazil, and Sandi Trotter, Director Business Development TWI Group, Inc. Canada, 6 top Industry Leaders from the Americas were introduced on the panel:

- Mary Larkin, UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry President & Diversified Communications USA President
- Amy Calvert, Events Industry Council CEO
- David DuBois, IAEE, The International Association of Exhibitions & Events President & CEO
- Sue Sung, Go Live Together Executive Director
- Marco A. Basso, Informa Markets Brazil CEO
- João de Nagy, Ubrafe Brazil Vice-President
- Celia Navarrete, Amprofec Mexico President & Informa Markets Mexico Executive Vice-President
- Daniel Galante, GL Events Brazil Director & São Paulo Expo Exhibition & Convention Center Director

Sandi Trotter opened the discussion with Mary Larkin who echoed consensus that "Collaboration is key" in order to bring the industry out stronger than ever from this

crisis. Important is that all regions are represented in the US. David Dubois stated that the US presents a situation similar to being "on a roller-coaster", well behind Europe and Asia regarding pandemic control. By leveraging support and joining forces, the success in re-opening safe shows will be based on the ability of "making sure that we have a united front" according to Mary Larkin, who then mentioned how the UFI forum has connected all industry actors to share information and intensify advocacy efforts. Sue Sung presented "Amplifying the Live Events Industry – Response to COVID-19" in which committed actions have been taken regarding health and safety, the consequent impacts, public awareness and legislation. She named the industry a "growth engine", with 6.640.000 jobs relating to live events and a total value of 419 billion US dollars. She continued to say "Events cover every sector of the US GDP" as the industry is made up of smaller shows in all sectors. There is certainly still a lot of education to be done as people do not automatically understand the industry. Commenting on the complete closure of shows, Sue Sung highlighted the fact that there are no half measures – whereas restaurants can partially open, trade fairs cannot.

In order to keep business going, virtual events and the increase in digital news have become the norm but as David Dubois commented "Virtual is not the answer". Celia Navarrete said that a "combination will be our new reality" and content will be of utmost importance in order to attract the audience. Marco Basso sees digital solutions as complimentary to face-to-face meetings which are the more effective way of doing business. Mary Larkin explained that having talked to customers from all industries on a regular basis, it is clear that the re-opening of trade fairs is awaited with anticipation, especially among small to medium-sized companies who rely on shows to fuel their business. Larger companies have the headache of controlling large numbers of visitors on their stand which causes eventual problems with visitor registration.

Her view is that trade fairs will become much more focused with less people under one roof in the exhibition halls, resulting from techniques such as staggered visitor entry. Marco Basso mentioned that there is also the aspect of more ROI being demanded from shows by exhibitors.

In Brazil, João de Nagy highlighted a similarly challenging situation. 2019 had been an excellent year and then early 2020 the industry was hit badly. Building confidence levels is very important as there is as yet no official date for re-opening trade fairs and events. Mariane Ewbank summed up the situation by saying that a clear vision is just not possible as the situation is very unpredictable and changes constantly regarding the pandemic. João de Nagy commented, he is "hoping for August, praying for September". However small and medium-sized companies cannot survive on the long term in certain industries. In the past, Brazil has witnessed a healthy rise in investment due to its positive economic environment.

A wide range of base products are produced in Brazil and so it is ever so important to have trade fairs to encourage more foreign investment. It is imperative that "trade fairs and corporate events should detach themselves from consumer events" in order to be recognised as a vital part of the revival process for the economy as a whole. Marco Basso reflected on his fight to keep shows and emphasised that strong partnerships with venues saved the day. The perception of trade fairs being mass gatherings damages the effect of any efforts being taken for the cause. As he explained there is a "domino effect" as European subsidiaries recommend the cancellation or postponement in Brazil of show participation as uncertainty grows. Celia Navarrete reported similar settings in Mexico where the BtoB market was hard hit by the crisis. Shows in sectors such as Hospitality and Construction are important for the country and there is hope that these can take place in order to boost the economy.