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# Exhibition World SNIEC

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**FACE to  
FACE?**





UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry promotes, represents and serves the interests of the world's leading show organisers, fairground owners and operators, major national and international associations of the exhibition industry and industry partners. As a non-political and non-profit organisation, UFI's main goal is to serve the exhibition industry worldwide and to emphasise its unique marketing characteristics for the development of world trade.

Present on six continents, in 84 countries, UFI is a unique and neutral forum for dialogue dedicated to all professionals involved in the trade fair business. Serving the exhibition industry since 1925, UFI applies its professional experience and renown to providing its members and the industry with the extensive know-how required to meet the challenges of ever-changing needs.

Being a member of UFI is a proof of quality and international recognition. Over 4,500 trade fairs and exhibitions are organised by its members. More than 900 of these are international exhibitions, approved by UFI, based upon strict and exacting quality criteria, assuring excellent services for the benefit of exhibitors and visitors.

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# Leveraging industry expertise

Looking ahead in 2021, the International Exhibition Logistics Association (IELA) explains some of its work and initiatives during challenging times

“

In the late fall of 2020, our view for the future was cautiously optimistic. Then the

strength of the second wave of Covid caused a re-evaluation of the prognosis,” says Sandi Trotter, IELA vice-chairperson, and director business development TWI Group Canada. “With lockdowns returning to most parts of the world, the optimism for a gradual restart in late spring 2021 has now been moved to late summer/ early fall.”

She believes industry reopening will be reliant on several pillars, including wide vaccine distribution, which would allow venues to reopen by building confidence among attendees, exhibitors and organisers.

Covid Health & Safety guidelines and protocols will remain essential at all events, Trotter believes, and says all parties must have the secure knowledge that a safe event means minimised risk for attendees and exhibitors. Indeed, IELA was one of

the first associations to create and publish a key document outlining safe operating procedures in a Covid environment.

Of crucial importance is the restoration of confidence in the industry on the part of government bodies, which must, says Trotter, recognise that trade events are vastly different from mass gatherings such as concerts and similar public events.

“IELA,” she notes, “is a trademark for high quality and safety.

“Professional events where IELA is involved install procedures for controlling access, contract tracing and more,” Trotter adds, pointing out that IELA has been supporting its members to intensify their lobbying efforts to instill confidence with legislative entities who approve any reopening.

Most events taking place in the near future will be hybrid events, IELA recognises, combining live with virtual attendance. Trotter says the general industry consensus

shows that attendees, exhibitors and organisers all prefer live events to purely digital. “It is widely recognised that human nature is largely tactile. There is an inert need to see, touch and smell which cannot be achieved with a virtual event,” she says, and is proud of IELA’s reactivity in supporting its members during the pandemic. Among such actions, she highlights the IELA RELOAD programme which she says has been hailed internationally for its relevance, content and spirit.

A similar initiative implemented during the pandemic is a new online market experience called ‘WHAT’S NEW?’ wherein new services and products are displayed “by IELA Members for IELA members”. This new IELA platform is a marketplace for new revenue streams which, in turn, supports a faster recovery for the IELA membership.

“IELA is able to accompany the exhibition logistics industry in developing its innovations and practical solutions for the future and therefore contribute to a more efficient and secure environment,” Trotter says.

The association has examples to cite here, such as IELA member Neil Goatcher, MD, Exhibition Freight Ltd UK, and John Knight, MD EF-Engineering, who have presented their ‘Fresh Start System’, a sanitisation system to be offered as an extra service to venues for fast and optimal sanitisation of an entire exhibition. Goatcher explains: “We aim to explore how we can support other IELA members in offering this service to their organiser or venue clients. If marketed correctly, this is an added revenue stream for all companies, and also to the organiser, so everyone can benefit financially.”

IELA members Monelisi Gaji and Thula Khumalo, with EF-GSM South Africa, have presented on the marketplace platform their Virtual Exhibitor Service, which allows brands to keep attending events



Left: IELA has led on event safety procedures.



abroad and exhibits to keep moving to events.

IELA realises also that these are difficult times for members and the Management Board has also taken the unprecedented decision to reduce membership fees for 2021. Trotter emphasises that it is paramount that the industry retains its sustainable and expert service providers during reconstruction and beyond.

#### Education

Throughout the pandemic, during several editions of online virtual discussions and educational seminars, IELA members have benefited from both the wisdom of a host of qualified guest speakers as well as from the insight and support of fellow members.

Educational programmes have become very important as industry talent and special skills have a tendency to be lost during inactive periods. The recruitment of younger generations in the industry is a priority for IELA, which is intensifying its events in this field: The IELA 2020 Operations Summit was a great success, held virtually in November 2020 and attended by 74 participants; while the Winter Seminar 2021 (an educational seminar for newcomers to the industry) will take place virtually

from 28 January-2 February with a focus is on Building the Future in the New Now.

Trotter notes that the association's strategic plans to support the industry in 2021 include a high level of industry advocacy, such as the IELA Ambassador programme and partnering with national industry associations around the world. "To date, IELA has signed Memorandums of Understanding in 14 countries," she says, and explains how it hopes its IELA Red Alert Campaign can become a voice of the industry, projecting the underlying urgency through its message: "This is our industry, our passion, our world, our future and the one all event professionals rely on for the survival of the exhibition and event industry".

Trotter underlines that IELA welcomes and supports initiatives from other national and international players in the exhibition industry and states its aim is to create one unique and strong voice when communicating with government bodies and advocating for financial measures to rebuild the industry.

She says full IELA support will continue, as in past years, for special events such as The Global Exhibition Day, and describes IELA as an "association comprised of

professional, passionate individuals, who in many cases, have made exhibitions their life's work". This, she adds, has clearly been demonstrated in their dedicated efforts over the past year.

When asked what IELA and industry's prospects are in 2021, Trotter says: "We will rise from the ashes to rebuild a strong, vibrant industry that is a major contributor to economies around the globe." **EW**



**Sandi Trotter** began her career in exhibition logistics in 1993 with TWI Group Inc. and in 2014, she directed the expansion of the company to include Canadian domestic shows and become a licensed Canada Customs Broker. She has been a member of the Canadian Exhibition Logistics Association (CAEM) for over 15 years and was the chairperson of the IELA Membership Working Group. She joined the IELA Board of Management in June 2019 and was appointed vice-chairperson of the IELA BOM in September 2020.

IELA is currently represented by 167 members and 27 affiliates in 56 countries.

All IELA Guidelines are available on the Organiser and Exhibitor portals (free of charge) via [www.iera.org](http://www.iera.org)