

Exhibition World

BIKES, TARIFFS AND TAKEOVER DEALS

A time of troubles, or of opportunity? *EW* looks at the lessons for organisers from some recent big show news, fresh industry research and M&A activity, see p45-46.

Standard bearer

Good service is not only a matter of trust, but operational excellence, says International Exhibition Logistics Association (IELA)

The exhibition environment has changed. In times of uncertainty such as global security risks, unexpected circumstances in our daily workplace whether on-site or in the office, a great responsibility rests on the suppliers. Taking the flourishing growth of the exhibition business into account, it is a widely acknowledged fact that ever-changing demands on service are growing.

Facing this, trade show organisers, venue owners and vendors of the entire value adding supply chain must keep pace with even more specialised projects and requirements.

In particular, logistics companies meet extra challenges: shortened build-up and dismantling times, special needs for exhibition goods, security aspects, international shipments and the changing digital world in general. At the end, performance is key – no goods, no show.

IELA members approach these challenges with specialised services, passion and a self-expectation to serve beyond expected standards. IELA constantly strives to further improve training and educational programmes for its members and to provide platforms for knowledge exchange, enabling operational excellence.

IELA is committed to proactively strengthening relationships for a safer and more secure exhibition industry providing Safety and Security training workshops, guidelines etc. for organisers, venues and associations.

The association now has 173 members from 55 countries. More information, visit: www.iela.org



Heading for a breakdown?

Miriam Sigler, Director of UK organiser Ways & Means Events, says there is pressure to deliver shorter breakdowns at trade shows

Shorter breakdowns are absolutely doable for some shows, and often preferable for all involved. It's less cost for the organiser, more bookings for venues and means quicker turnaround of kit for contractors (plus an opportunity to actually make it home every once in a while for the ops manager!) – until something goes wrong that is.

As with everything in event planning, any good ops manager will have planned the get in and get out in detail, trying to anticipate where the problem areas are likely to be and ensuring everything happens in good time. However, there is always that one element out of your control; a crash on the motorway; a forklift breaking down; a lift not working – all of which can have a dire effect on getting out of the halls on time. There are ways around; as always team work, goodwill, favours and problem solving are key, but on a short breakdown there is very little room for leeway, especially in a venue with back-to-back bookings.

There are certainly times when a short breakdown is just not suitable. It can put huge amounts of pressure on the contractors and endanger exhibitors who are rushing to pack up while stands are being ripped

down around them. Something or someone ends up being compromised. Contractors being told to put more people on the job at their expense, ops teams begging for favours and venue staff staying on just that bit longer – again – to help out. This isn't a long term or sustainable solution.

Breakdown times need to be considered with just as much importance as build. It may be the least glamorous part of the show cycle, but it's just as valuable as build or open.

William Reed MD Events & Exhibitions, Andrew Reed, says the equation is: "amount of time available times the size of the task; divided by the number skilled people".

He adds that the issue is often around the quality of the part time staff available to contractors, given that the basic trade show infrastructure has often become commoditised, meaning there is little opportunity to make any money on, say, installing shell scheme.

"From an electrical point of view," Reed adds, "these people have to have basic qualifications but for other tasks you don't need any qualification. The real question should be, 'is there a sufficiently qualified pool of competent staff for all of the contractors to draw down on so we do not have a serious incident?'" **EW**