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Exhibition World

Chinese New Era

Organiser tales from an
emerging superpower

Exhibition's hidden industry revealed

The international events logistics industry is an unsung hero of the industry, say its champions

- Words by Tom Hall

Charged with the physical movement of material to and from an event site, as well as for contractors providing customs clearance, lifting, handling, trucking and storage services, the logistics industry is competitive, with a focus on customer service.

The exhibition logistics industry has seen many changes, including a huge increase in smaller industry focused logistics companies, especially in key event locations such as Germany and the UAE, says Agility Fairs & Events Logistics business development director Garcia Newell.

"Logistics contractors have also raised the bar in customer service. With the exit of the UK from the EU looming, there potentially could be Customs border formalities; watch this space," he adds.

Event logistics association, the IELA, says logistics is the key for success, whether a customer wants to hold an exhibition in their home town or the other side of the earth. "One of the new and interesting challenges is the differences in national regulations. IELA is working on the compilation of firm



OH&S guidelines in compliance with its standards of performance for all members to follow. These guidelines are aimed at being the minimum standards if local OH&S guidelines are not strict enough," says IELA's executive director Elizabeth Niehaus.

These standards are vital to ensuring a credible industry, according to Ravinder Sethi, founder and chief executive officer, RE Rogers, who says quality and regulations are vital in a changing world. "I'm playing a lead role in the various associations (UFI, IEIA, IAEE, and IELA) where I'm involved at the highest level.

People ask what organisers should demand from the logistics sector, and the answer is obvious - giving a high level of service at competitive prices. And, of course, make sustainability and H&S a must in its operations," he adds.

"But, I'd also ask what logistics companies should demand from organisers. I ask for service providers to be treated as partners, and not contractors. More and more organisers very sadly appoint us with royalties and commissions to be more relevant than the quality of services we offer."

"The geographics are changing rapidly in India today. The market is expanding from the traditional Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore locations to cities as Chennai, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Goa, etcetera. So, our challenge is to remain market leaders with these changing geographics as well.

He adds that having developed a presence in Goa, Chennai and Ahmedabad is proof that RE Rogers is meeting this challenge head-on. "The logistics sector will pretty much remain the same from an operations point of view. One significant change would be giving Sustainability and health and safety a top priority in these operations," he adds.

Newell reaffirms the importance of association support. "I am a great believer in strength in numbers. Being part of associations such as IELA, ESSA and others allows logistics and other contractors to come together to discuss and set industry standards that enhances the overall show logistics experience. Being a member of an association is very important, and is much

more than joining and using the logo for promotion; to really make the association work for your company, members must get involved with issues that are pertinent to our industry," he adds.

Operating alongside industry associations and standards provide a framework to the way to do business, adds Paul Brady, sales and marketing executive, CEVA Showfreight. "Ultimately driving us to deliver long term value for all our stakeholders. An agreed set of standards are good for the customer and ensure the industry is pulling in the same direction."

There are also technical innovations occurring, with a number of logistics companies creating IT solutions such as show/event dedicated online web portals and traffic/on-site management systems, but Newell says having a strict USP helps you stand out.

"I believe its our ability to listen. By listening to our customers we have been able to understand more about their actual needs, and then having taken everything on board, tailor logistics solutions that are a match for what is required," he adds.

DHL DE's Judith Oppermann adds that digitalisation has truly reached exhibition logistics. "Tailor made solutions are a significant trend and will probably draw a new landscape to this sector. Having our own Innovation Centers in place, makes DHL well prepared and a leading innovation partner. Communication is so much faster now than a couple of years ago. Things which have been unimaginable a decade ago are now the standard nowadays. The real time tracking of goods is just one example of many."

The biggest change in the industry has to »





THE CASE OF PROJECT LEBANON
IFP GROUP (INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AND PROMOTIONS) SAYS LOGISTICS HAS TAKEN A PROMINENT PLACE IN ITS EXHIBITIONS.

Our customer servicing extends to our logistics and operations. Project Lebanon (pictured) is a great example of the efforts of our operations team. The event is part of our Project Series, 4 international construction exhibitions across the Middle East (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Qatar).

Besides setting up the B2B Matchmaking Platform and the Live Demonstration Theater at Project Lebanon, the team follows up and encourages all exhibitors to benefit from the show's features, guiding them before the show and offering on-site support during their meetings and presentations.

Additionally, the logistics and operations team is directly involved in the successful implementation of many elements of Project Lebanon's marketing strategy, particularly the invitation letters and the sponsorship packages. Project Lebanon offers free ready-to-send invitation letters (hard and digital copies), designed by our marketing team, to all its exhibitors.

The operations team is not only responsible for distributing the letters but also ensures the effective execution of the sponsorship material. From conception to execution, it is essential for us at IFP to help exhibitors maximise their ROIs in every way possible.

be technology, according to Brady. "From eco-friendly hybrid vehicles and tracking devices, to on-site traffic management systems and electronic signature capture, we have seen our industry develop dramatically."

Brady points to the EN Award winning Vehicle Recognition System (VRS), which CEVA designed in-house. VRS is a traffic management tool that helps freight achieve a transition from the lorry park to stand. "It provides CEVA and the organiser with an array of information about the vehicle, driver and load. Using bar-code technology, VRS creates vehicle passes and monitors the vehicle throughout the site. Organisation and control of the vehicle flow enables a more efficient site lifting operation."

Regional challenges are also afoot, according to CTA. "Asia is an exciting market and we are pleased in the growth that we've »

“ I ask for service providers to be treated as partners, and not contractors ”

Ravinder Sethi, founder and chief executive officer, RE Rogers,

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seen within our first two years of doing business there. Companies need to be aware of Chinese rules as the changes are often unclear. Groups like the US Commercial Services office and American Chamber of Commerce (Shanghai) can give some guidance,” he adds.

“One key thing for companies planning to exhibit in a show in China is to understand that the freight forwarder is the person who is going to get their product to and from a country (customs) and to and from the show floor. While companies can select their own freight forwarder for shipping to and from the country, the show organiser will assign the freight forwarder who will be responsible for picking your product up at China customs and delivering it to the show floor. Also, many local service companies do not accept U.S. credit cards like American Express so it is good to discuss payment options with your local vendors.”

International challenges are also rife for IFP Group (International Fairs & Promotions), which is developing specialised business platforms in developing markets across the

Middle East and North Africa.

IFP CEO Adrien Clavel adds: “Working in such markets is not without its logistical difficulties. However, with the aim of staging the most successful international exhibitions in the region, we approach logistics a little differently. Logistics are an essential part of our customer servicing; our operations team is continuously and directly supporting and following up with the exhibitors from the moment they receive their Exhibiting Manual until long after the show.

Besides being present on-site from the build-up until the end of the shows, IFP’s operations team sees itself as an ever-present partner for exhibitors. “Maintaining our brand image and reputation requires an exceptional implementation of our marketing strategies, which in turn needs successful logistical and operational execution.

“This coordination between marketing and logistics is clear for us at IFP. The success of several features of our shows (including the B2B Matchmaking Platform, workshops, demonstration areas and VIP lounges) was aided by logistical execution.” **EW**

LOGISTICS EMBRACES DIGITAL DB SCHENKER HAS SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WORTH MILLIONS WITH GLOBAL ONLINE MARKETPLACE USHIP

DB Schenker has signed a five-year partnership agreement with US-based online freight shipping marketplace uShip for exclusive collaboration in Europe. The goal of the partnership is to harness new, digital innovations that get freight moved faster and more efficiently.

“To keep innovating faster, we partner with companies that use promising digital business models” said Markus Sontheimer, CIO/CDO at DB Schenker. And Matt Chasen, the CEO of uShip, said: “DB Schenker has a clear vision of how technology and innovation can create a more efficient, higher-quality digital freight network.”

The uShip marketplace platform, which has been successful at matching shippers with carriers in over 19 countries, brings freight transport to mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. It will first be used in DB Schenker’s land transport sector.

Starting in late 2016, DB Schenker will launch its own online platform, which will use the uShip software platform to match drivers and cargo, enabling some 25,000 Schenker-approved transport partners to find additional cargo along their routes in real time. For shipping customers, the uShip PRO platform will mean faster service, because available transport orders and freight capacity will be visible immediately, including on secondary routes.



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process.

“The great possibilities of visualising items is extremely helpful as clients get a much better idea of the services and items,” says Frieda Barendse, head of exhibitor services of RAI.

Sales automation

“The idea of a self-service portal gives exhibitors much more flexibility when it comes to preparing their show participation. At the same time, exhibitor sales departments have more time to face clients and consult them with more complex requirements,” says Thorsten Kolbinger, managing director of Ungerboeck EMEA.

The benefit is two-fold: exhibitors are able to better visualise the products and the venue's sales efforts can be focused on the more personal side of the business. Proactive communications to exhibitors who have not yet ordered can be done quickly and efficiently. Additionally, emails can be sent directly to those who have items saved or with abandoned items in their carts. Information vital to the exhibitor's experience can be prominently displayed: deadlines for item or service cut-offs (including pricing tiers, i.e. standard/late), packages for commonly bundled items, scheduling of services or items ordered, and much more.

With the exhibitors able to manage their own experiences, the idea is that the venue's focus can then shift to creating an experience that is personalised. RAI reports higher exhibitor satisfaction as a result of its implementation. **EW**