

90 YEARS OF UFI

# Back to the future

The global association of the exhibition industry will convene its general assembly from 4 to 7 November at the spot where it was founded in 1925, Milan. Paul Woodward will pass on the torch to the new Managing Director Kai Hattendorf. Both of them respond to a joint interview with TFI.

**Paul, what is your assessment after five years as UFI Managing Director?**

Well, I took over a completely renovated and well-positioned organisation from my predecessor Vincent Gérard. For me it was important to communicate the global profile of the exhibition industry and the great strengths of our industry. Personally, I had spent half my life in Asia, came back to Europe, and now had to take on a global perspective. This has meant that I spend a lot of time on the plane.

**Kai, what challenges face the new UFI Managing Director in the next five years?**

Unfortunately I have no crystal ball with which I can predict the future. Predictions can be made only for a limited period, but one thing seems certain: In the next five to ten years our industry will see faster changes than it has seen in the past 50 years. We want to provide our members with the best possible support in order to cope with this process. Personally, the new tasks will surely be tied to a noticeable increase in my long distance travel activities.

**What issues should be strengthened?**

**Paul:** Let's take digitisation. Because we are only at the beginning of the road. This does not mean that it brings an existential threat to the exhibition industry, but we need to adapt. Or we observe that, unlike before, exhibitors in Europe focus more on key markets such as Germany. Exhibitions in smaller countries need to address these questions.

**Kai:** Another example is human resources. Our industry has to find out how we can win young talents to work in the exhibition industry, and how to find the next generation of leadership. Or green events, which are increasingly receiving more attention.

**What can the UFI do for its members in these issues?**

**Kai:** As for green events, UFI formed a sustainability working group five years ago. It has produced very valuable insights that we have made available to our members. Other working groups have produced similar types of insights.

**Paul:** The ultimate aim is that our members deliver quality services at a top level. We would be happy as an association to make our expertise available. Just as important is the know-how transfer among ourselves.



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