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Press Releases

Exhibitions generate €493 (\$551) billion in business sales each year, driving industries eager to recover and reconnect back to the show floor

By RX

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As industries and economies across the globe look for recovery platforms on the heels of vaccine progress, exhibitions fill a void left by economic crisis and isolation

Paris, France – 6 May 2021: Exhibitions, commonly referred to as trade shows or fairs, have a simple purpose – bringing industries together to build community and create supply chain opportunities.

But the industry itself is not a simple one at all: with over €493 (\$551) billion in business sales for attendees, exhibitions have an incredible impact on our global economy.

In addition, expenses of visitors and exhibitors generate a total impact of €299 (\$334) billion for both the value chain of the exhibition industry (organisers, venues and service providers) and the tourism related activities (accommodation, food and travel).

In the wake of a pandemic that has left commercial sectors and regional economies on the brink of collapse, trade platforms offer an opportunity to rebuild supply chains that have remained relatively stagnant throughout the pandemic, bringing buyers and sellers together to network, do business, learn and innovate at a time when they need it most.

Trade shows have developed into far more than booths displaying product—they have become marketplaces amplified by educational opportunities, innovation launches, and data-driven qualified lead retrieval opportunities, supported by social networking activities that unite valuable digital progress with the now-yearned-for magic of interpersonal connection. Last year, many of the 33,000 exhibitions held worldwide transitioned to digital solutions which leveraged best-in-class technology to create those critical supply chain connections.

But while digital solutions have proven invaluable during pandemic times, as economies re-open in response to progress against COVID-19, data shows that both sides of the supply chain are eager to return to in-person platforms.

Informa Markets, one of the world's largest organisers, has since seen a strong recovery in China where trade shows have been running since June of last year. At CBME, a leading platform for the baby and maternity industry, which attracted over 90,000 visitors, Julian van Gemenen, Vice President of M-cro Trade (Shanghai), said it turned out to be a very productive event. He confirmed: "We expanded our distribution channels and met many clients, acquiring 70 new distributors on the first day alone."

B2B event organiser, Tarsus Group, has also witnessed a strong return to live events in the region with attendance numbers at recent Chinese shows surpassing pre-COVID levels. The organiser has also resumed events in other territories such as the U.S. and Mexico where participants at Expo Manufactura heralded the return of in-person events.

Emilio Cuervo of Bricos commented: "it is very important to be at this exhibition because it allows us to be in direct contact with our current and potential clients. The impact of the lack of this event last year was very clear for us as several of our clients and leads are generated by Expo Manufactura."

Emerald, one of the largest event producer in North America, successfully traded the first US-based in-person event of the year, Surf Expo Winter, which took place at the Orange County Convention Center in Florida. The sentiment amongst customers reinforced the relevance and power of face-to-face trade events. Jeremy Serwitz, PULL Watersports, noted: “We are a ‘touch it, feel it’ retailer - nothing replaces that or the face-to-face relationships with our suppliers.”

At Informa Markets’ Palm Beach International Boat Show in March, which took place outdoors, customers in attendance echoed the sentiment that an isolating 2020 has led to a boomerang effect, bolstering the success of in-person trade platforms. “This was my 22nd year either attending or exhibiting at this show and this year in particular was without a doubt the most successful boat show I have ever experienced as far as ‘at the show sales. Now, nearly a week since the show ended, we have more than doubled our projected units sold,” said Todd Albrecht, President of Solace Boats.

Notably, 80% of exhibitions customers are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) hit hardest by the pandemic, equating to nearly 4.25 million small businesses who regularly turn to in-person trade platforms to meet qualified product buyers.

Donna Steakley of Fossil Rim, explained how Clarion’s Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show is always the first show of the year and how important it is to attend in order to place Spring orders for the coming year. “We need the ability to meet with our vendors to see the actual product and work on the artwork that is specific to our location. We are seeing a huge increase in customers and sales and know how important the face-to-face environment is to be able to write a large amount of orders.”

Produced by global events organiser Reed Exhibitions, Reed Gift Fairs, is Australia's premier trading platform for buyers and sellers in the gift and homewares industry. For the first time since February 2020, Reed Gift Fairs Sydney was the first major NSW retail event to take place, meeting in Darling Harbour from 17 to 22 April. With over 8,400 attendees, the return of the event was greeted enthusiastically from small and medium size business owners alike. Said Lee Drury founder of Glass on the Grass: “I love having buyers and sellers in the same space at the same time, it is electric. As a small business owner who develops their own products, being able to meet with customers face to face is critical. And the Reed Gift Fair is the best place to do that. It’s also great when you’re developing new products to get feedback from customers. Thanks largely to Reed Gift Fair, we sell all our products all over Australia. 2020 was a tough year for everyone, but we finished strong and we’re looking forward to making 2021 a great year.”

Joe Clawson, Owner – Global Floral Resource, Inc., used International Floriculture Expo, organised by Diversified Communications, to expand his supply chain. “Going from one booth to another is quite different from the time you spend getting to and from a supplier’s facility... and if you do not like what you see, you move on,” he said.

Ensuring health and safety remains a top priority, the trade show industry has taken a deliberate and collaborative approach to consistency and rigor in their return to in-person experiences. Together the world’s leading companies have developed an industry-wide and medically-vetted approach to safety known as the All Secure Standard, which has been effectively put into practice at shows across the globe this year, further instilling confidence in a successful and safe return to in-person B2B commercial opportunities as economies re-open.

Europe is the third major exhibitions market after North America and mainland China, and the only market where trade shows have not been able to return at scale since the pandemic began.

Nevertheless, some events were able to present new practices such as the One to One Retail E-Commerce, an event organised by Comexposium. “This year is revealing itself on the edge, between crisis and recovery. Our industry has proven itself capable of adapting to the new situation and must now bounce back, with both ambition and responsibility. The leadership and excellence shown by the One to One events are the best allies of the market to move forward.” explained Bris Rocher, Director of the Yves Rocher Group.

UFI, the global association of the exhibitions industry, notes “the business [events industry](#) is a ‘meta-industry’: It empowers literally each and every industry globally through the market places and meeting places that it operates around the world – from machine tools in Australia to consumer goods in Europe, from construction materials in Asia to consumer electronics in North America.”

In addition to creating marketplaces resulting in hundreds of billions of dollars in business sales for thousands of global industries and millions of small businesses each year, exhibitions also deliver substantial economic value to regional economies, bringing 303 million visitors to host cities annually. The result is a meaningful infusion of revenue for the local economy, including small businesses such as restaurants, transportation services, boutique lodging, and more. Las Vegas alone attributes \$11.4 billion in economic impact to the conventions industry.

As the world begins to rebound from the devastating effects of a pandemic that has lasting impacts on both the economy and humanity, exhibitions offer a light at the end of the tunnel for both – platforms that provide economic recovery and celebrate the spirit of reconnection, at a time when economies, and communities, need them most.

The sixth annual Global Exhibitions Day, celebrated annually, will take place this year on 2 June 2021 and recognises the important role that trade exhibitions play in driving economies throughout the world. To learn more about Global Exhibitions Day, visit www.ufi.org.

List of #GED2021 partner associations under the UFI umbrella:

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ABOUT UFI

UFI is the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry. For further information, please contact: media@ufi.org or +33 1 46 39 75 00 – www.ufi.org.

ABOUT SISO

For more information about SISO – the Society of Independent Show Organizers – please contact: info@siso.org or +1-678-567-6465 – www.SISO.org

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ABOUT EMERALD

Emerald is a leader in providing market-driven, business-to-business platforms that integrate live events with a broad array media, please contact: beth.cowperthwaite@emeraldx.com – www.emeraldx.com

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Informa Markets creates platforms for industries and specialist markets to trade, innovate and grow. For more information, please contact: holly.wallace@informa.com or visit www.informamarkets.com.

ABOUT REED EXHIBITIONS

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ABOUT TARSUS

For more information about Tarsus, the global B2B events and media group, contact Jean Glennon jglennon@tarsus.com or visit www.tarsus.com.