

NEWS

For immediate release

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ECEF Participants Told Vital Signs of Face-to-Face Meetings are Strong

WASHINGTON, DC, June 15, 2009—At the eighth and largest Exhibition and Convention Executives Forum (ECEF), June 11, Washington, industry leaders learned that the overall state of face-to-face meetings is healthy, while threats posed by the recession are limited.

In a case study of the 2009 International Sign Expo, Lori Anderson, President/CEO, International Sign Association, told ECEF participants how she turned a recession-driven decline in both exhibits and attendance into her association's "best show ever." Confronted with exhibitor downsizings, cancellation by its largest exhibitor and the failure of the leading sign manufacturer in the US, Anderson and her staff rallied, taking aggressive—and unprecedented—steps to generate positive "industry buzz" before, during and after the exposition.

Speaker Geoff Freeman, Vice President of Public Affairs, US Travel Association, warned participants that new federal regulation can pose even greater economic damage to the meetings business than the recession. Freeman asked event producers to join forces with the travel industry in a national campaign to communicate the "value proposition" of business meetings to lawmakers.

Three marketers appearing on a panel advised the audience that attendee quality remains paramount in corporate decisions to exhibit in an event and urged producers to provide detailed attendance reports to aid their decision-making. Margit Weisgal, President/CEO of Trade Show Exhibitors Association, led a discussion that featured Francesca Lendrum, Director of Marketing Services, NAVTEQ; Steve Seibert, President, Three Rivers Optical; and Beck Wentz, Director for Customer Events, AmerisourceBergen.

These marketers stressed that, despite the recession, show producers can win their continued business provided they demonstrate their events deliver

not “bodies in the aisles” but highly vertical audiences of ready buyers. More than other factors, the panelists agreed, audience quality influences a corporation’s decision to add or drop a show from its annual schedule, upsize or downsize a booth, and add or drop a sponsorship. Summarizing the discussion, Weisgal said, “Quality trumps quantity.”

These presentations were complemented by four others by Mike Cooke, CEO, dmg world media; Hal Josephson, President, MediaSense; Helen Marano, Director, US Department of Commerce Office of Travel and Tourism Industries; and Allen Blue, co-founder and Vice President, LinkedIn.

A record-setting 218 exhibition-industry executives registered for the eighth annual ECEF. The invitation-only conference focuses on high-level strategies for income- and asset-growth and protection.

“Our preliminary evaluations are extremely positive,” said Sam Lippman, producer of ECEF. “Attendees, speakers and sponsors that have responded so far have awarded an overall score of 4.8 for this year’s ECEF - with 5 being excellent.”

Several participants praised the annual conference.

“This year’s conference was terrific,” said Kathleen Schmatz, President/CEO, Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association. “It delivered plenty of ‘can do’ advice to utilize immediately, impressive networking and practical problem-solving opportunities. This conference is an imperative for us.”

“ECEF serves an important role in the industry,” said Britton Jones, President/CEO, Business Journals, Inc. “It brings the top management of many leading independent producers together with the best minds from association shows for a meaningful discussion of our most pressing issues and concerns.”

Peter Eelman, Vice President, Exhibitions and Communications, AMT – The Association for Manufacturing Technology said “ECEF had valuable content and useful take-a-ways in a variety of areas. And, my new President, Doug Woods, used ECEF to hear about the key issues our industry faces while meeting other association and business media Presidents, Executive Directors and CEO’s.”

The Platinum Sponsor for ECEF 2009 was the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority. Gold sponsors included Freeman and ProActive – A Freeman Company. Other sponsors included a2z; Axxcess Group; BDMetrics; Berkery, Noyes; BPA Worldwide Events; CompuSystems; Convention Data Services; C.W. Allen Group; Experient; EXPOCAD; The Expo Group; Fish; Frost Miller Group; GES; IELA; IMN Solutions; Jacobs Jenner & Kent; Map Your Show; NGN; Soma Media; and USI.

A free video archive of all ECEF 2009 sessions will be available beginning July 15, 2009 at www.eceforum.com.

ECEF 2010 will take place June 3 at the Mandarin Oriental in Washington, DC. Information will be available at www.eceforum.com starting mid August .

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