

GLOBAL VIEW notes



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Partnering with U.S. Cities to Launch International Exhibitions

by Michelle Bruno

According to Adam Schaeffer, vice president, tradeshow and exhibitions for HelmsBriscoe, cities are investing in trade shows. “I am not talking about wooing shows to the city. I am talking about money on the table types of partnerships,” he writes in a recent blog post at TSNN.com. Schaeffer lists Messe Düsseldorf North America’s (MDNA) launch exhibition, MEDICAL WORLD AMERICAS, as an example. Their experience with the City of Houston underscores how other international exhibition organizers might be able to attract the attention (and support) of large U.S. cities.

Reputation

When the City of Houston began looking for global exhibition organizers in the medical field, they were naturally drawn to Germany’s Messe Düsseldorf. As the owners of MEDICA, the world’s largest medical marketplace, Messe Düsseldorf welcomes 4,500 exhibitors and 130,600 attendees annually to its convention center. It also hosts the MEDICA Conferences & Forums, the MEDICA EDUCATION CONFERENCE, the German Hospital Day and the European Hospital Conference, leading educational platforms for medical professionals and decision-makers.



Texas Medical Center

Market Sector Alignment

Messe Düsseldorf’s expertise and experience in the medical market aligned with the healthcare infrastructure and strengths of Houston. As the largest medical center in the world, Houston’s Texas Medical Center consists of 52 member institutions constituting a workforce of 92,000 and programs that include the University of Texas MD Anderson, The Texas Heart Institute and Baylor College—all ranked very highly in their respective specialties by U.S. News & World Report.

Quantifiable Economic Value

As discussions began between Messe Düsseldorf’s U.S. subsidiary, Chicago-based Messe Düsseldorf North America, and the Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, MD-

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NA's president, Tom Mitchell, began putting numbers together to quantify the economic impact that a medical show (of the size and scope MDNA envisioned) could bring to the city. While MDNA was approached by Houston, Mitchell recommends that other organizers looking to partner with a city contact the Convention and Visitors Bureau first to help with the calculations and shepherd the idea through the appropriate channels. "It's hard to come up with numbers for a launch show, but the CVB has a good way to help you get to that particular goal and they have an apparatus in place to sell it up the chain," he says.

Complementary Format

What could be a detriment in some markets—MEDICAL WORLD AMERICAS will attract a broad range of exhibitors through its horizontal format—is actually a benefit for Houston. "There are very few events like [MEDICA and MEDICAL WORLD AMERICAS] in the U.S. We have many vertical events here but few horizontal shows. We had to find the right situation. After talking to Houston and learning about the synergies [a large, diverse medical community interested in a broad range of products], it seemed like a good fit," Mitchell explains.

Package of Requirements

With the introductions and qualifying discussions concluded, MDNA was in a position to provide detailed requirements to Houston, including the size of the venue, the dates (so as not to conflict with MEDICA in November), hotel rooms and, says Mitchell, "a facility that had a vested interest in making this happen." In addition to paving the way for the new show, Houston also agreed to provide promotional support and assistance with educational content.

Proactive Cities

The launch of MEDICAL WORLD AMERICAS is part of Houston's ongoing strategy to develop new events that showcase the city's world-class industries and facilities. "Houston is trying to focus on attracting shows that are aligned with their industries—medical, oil and gas and



aerospace," Mitchell says. Exhibition organizers looking for municipal partnerships (for funding or other support) should look for cities that are proactive about serving the business sectors they have cultivated. "Other cities are talking about doing [what Houston is doing]. I do think you will see more cities taking an active role in pursuing specific types of shows," he adds.

The partnership between Messe Düsseldorf North America and Houston will come to fruition when the MEDICAL WORLD AMERICAS Conference and Expo launches April 28 to 30, 2014. Hoping to draw on the reputation of the MEDICA show in Germany and the large base of healthcare workers in Houston, Tom Mitchell expects 200 to 250 exhibiting companies and 5,000 attendees in its inaugural year.

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