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Engredea's Market Quickstart Program Looks Beyond Traditional Exhibitor Recruitment Methods

By Michelle Bruno

Many foreign companies—especially those from emerging markets—lack the preparation and information necessary to be successful exhibiting in U.S. trade shows and penetrating the large American market. Even those with breakthrough products and advanced supply chains are sidelined by the daunting task of understanding cultural perceptions, federal regulations and b-to-b sales and marketing channels. The organizers of *Engredea*, the trade show for new ingredients, packaging, technologies, equipment and services for the global nutrition industry, recognized the huge opportunity to cultivate potential foreign exhibitors by bringing the training to them.

It's not unusual for trade show organizers to offer exhibitor education on a variety of topics from lead generation to booth etiquette to attendee engagement tactics. Some also provide exhibitors with market briefings from industry leaders. These opportunities aren't at all helpful to prospective international firms and they do little

to prepare the sales agents on whom the foreign companies rely to help them build successful exhibit-marketing programs. *Engredea* has designed the Market Quickstart program to prepare both types of organizations for the rigors of exhibiting and the requirements of selling into the U.S. (and European) nutrition market.

In an industry that relies heavily on an international supply chain, the Market Quickstart program represents a clear path to growing the exhibition. "When we decided to look at the [international] marketplace, the business opportunity was very obvious to us. Sixty to seventy percent of ingredients come from outside the U.S.," says Len Monheit, executive director of *Engredea* and the Nutrition Business Journal (a division of New Hope Natural Media, a Penton Media company). The program so far has focused on firms in the People's Republic of China, India and Japan—all hotbeds for the expanding global food and beverage ingredients market.

Market Quickstart focuses on "companies providing healthy ingredients for supplements, food, beverage and

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personal care.” So far, the 1.5-day workshops in Shanghai, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore have attracted 97 participants in China and 130 in India. The program debuted in Tokyo and will also take place in Fukuoka, Japan this year. It features lawyers, advertising executives, exhibit-marketing experts and sales channel specialists discussing food safety regulations, market opportunities, communication, best practices, quality and supply issues and other critical topics associated with selling ingredients globally, but particularly in the U.S.

The program has been very successful. “We want a return on investment and we built an investment plan that [senior management] was willing to support. In 2012, we received sponsor support so that this year will end up revenue neutral. In 2013, the program will be revenue positive,” Monheit explains. The number of Asian exhibitors in *Engredea* resigned at triple the normal rate between 2011 and 2012. Monheit is hoping that the program yields net-new exhibitors by 2013. In addition, organizations in China and India have commissioned *Engredea's* research division to deliver several new projects for them.

Although the Market Quickstart program confirmed much of what *Engredea's* team already suspected—many companies in emerging regions are unprepared for doing business externally—they gained additional insight into the participant companies and their internal capabilities. •

“We discovered some great products, great science and great supply chains. The technical and scientific expertise out of India was a real surprise. The approach they take to process chemistry and business from a technical standpoint is amazing,” Monheit says.

Although one of the goals of the program is to expand the number of international companies exhibiting in *Engredea*, Monheit has always positioned the program as a two-way channel for business. While some U.S.-based exhibitors have voiced concerns about “training the competition,” Monheit’s experience with Market Quickstart has uncovered overseas investment opportunities for U.S. companies as well. The program could also be a blueprint for other shows in the New Hope Media portfolio.

Engredea's Market Quickstart

program is a prime example of looking beyond traditional marketing methods to grow a potentially lucrative exhibitor segment. Such an initiative is especially useful in emerging markets where trade publications, media outlets and communication channels for marketing a trade show are limited or non-existent. Although a program of similar magnitude might be out of reach for many organizations with limited financial and human resources, the concept of using specialized training and face-to-face engagement to attract customers can, even in smaller doses, represent a new way to reach international prospects.



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