

# Let's come together

In the last of this series, **Steve Monnington** of Mayfield Media Strategies looks at some of the venues that go the extra mile in helping exhibition organisers launch their events.

The relationship between organiser and venue is multi-faceted. Organisers depend on venues to give them continuity of dates year on year and trust them not to accept competitive events. Venues depend on organisers not to move their events elsewhere. This relationship is crucial to the success of the event, but it rarely extends beyond that of landlord and tenant.

However, a number of venues have realised that a key part of the continuing growth of their business comes from new launches, and the traditional services of venue rental, security and cleaning are being extended to local sales, marketing and PR services. The venues want to attract more international business and anything they can do to help maximise the success of these launches for the organiser can only help increase occupancy rates.

Organisers often identify a gap in an overseas market for their brand, but have no expertise or representation in that country. They have their global exhibitors but have no ability to sell locally. They don't know who the most logical media sponsors are, which publications are most effective in delivering their target audience. Many of them partner with local companies, some of whom we profiled last month, but others want to maintain full control of their event, and this is where the innovative venues can play their part in working creatively with organisers to help them launch their events.

Cremona Fiere is situated in the middle of the Padana Plain in Northern Italy, the most

important commercial and economic location in Italy. Within 100 kilometres there is a population of nine million and 700,000 companies primarily involved in industry, agriculture and food. The fairgrounds are modern, the first pavilions were built in the late 1990s, with a total indoor exhibition area of 55,000 square metres, and conference facilities that can accommodate in excess of 500 delegates. The smallest pavilion is 6,000 square metres which means that even launch events as small as 1,000 square metres won't look out of place.

Most of the current shows that take place at the fairground are organised by the Cremona Fiere team and include the International Dairy Cattle Fair, Europe's most important event for cattle breeding, and Mondomusica, the world's leading event for musical instrument craftsmanship.

In order to attract more events from third party organisers, Cremona Fiere has decided to

launch a partnership programme.

"We have a great deal of experience in organising exhibitions in Italy and very strong connections with associations here, particularly in agriculture, food and handicrafts," explains general manager of Cremona Fiere Massimo Bianchedi. "So we decided that we should offer our expertise to help other organisers, particularly those from outside Italy, to launch their shows in our fair-ground. Like most venues, we offer special introductory venue rates and we also give the organiser a period of time after reserving the tenancy to conduct research to test the proposition, but our new partnership proposal goes much further."

Bianchedi is offering a menu of services that organisers can choose from. "We are offering sales, marketing, PR and communications and a problem-solving service for obtaining authorisations and dealing with the bureaucracy of public administration offices. Foreign

## Venue name: Expo XXI

**Location:** New Delhi, India

**Facilities:** Eight halls totalling 28,000 square metres, conference hall seating 850 delegates, six meeting rooms and a conference room for a further 360 delegates

**Partnership services offered:** Strategic positioning of the brand, local sales, marketing, PR and governmental support, to on-site logistics and registration

**Business development philosophy:** Managing director of Expomedia Events India, Raj Manek, says: "With our unique combination of having access to modern multi-functional event space in markets where existing venues do not fully respond to demands of today's organisers, along with local organising services, we are able to give international organisers and media groups the means to bring their established brands to new markets, without significant capital investments on their part, thereby adding real value to their business."

entrepreneurs often believe that, in Italy, they can act in the same way they do in the UK, or US, but it's a completely different set-up. We will help them find their way through the red tape."

An important part of the offering is a local sales service so that organisers can reach the smaller potential exhibitors, who they may not be aware even exist. "More than 70 per cent of the total Italian industry is based in the north and we can reach these companies directly from Cremona," Bianchedi explains. "For the rest of the country we will use our sales network."

On the marketing front, Cremona Fiere has a large amount of data available to help organisers research the potential for the show and Bianchedi believes that they can help them to save a lot of unnecessary marketing expenditure. "We can identify key associations and magazines, advise on the most appropriate media sponsors and organise a database for visitor promotion. Our press office has very good relations with key journalists and this can significantly reduce the amount of media spend," she says.

Presumably, Bianchedi expects something in return for all of these services? "It is important to us to get new exhibitions in Cremona and for them to stay with us for several years, therefore there will be a requirement for a commitment not to move the exhibition to another venue. In addition, we view this initiative as a true partnership, and while we are helping minimise the risk for the organiser, we also expect to share in the rewards either by owning part of the equity or through profit share."

Bianchedi believes that Cremona Fiere is the first Italian venue to offer such a partnership programme and it is now contacting overseas organisers who run shows in the sectors that have the most chance of success in Northern Italy.

One venue that has already consistently proved its ability to attract new events is the Palais des Festivals in Cannes. Over the last few years there has been a succession of high profile launches such as 3GSM, International Luxury Travel Market and the Millionaire Fair. Part of the attraction of Cannes is the glamour that comes from being the city of the film festival but the readiness of organisers to launch their events there is primarily due to the many different areas of assistance that the venue is prepared to give.

The launch of MIDEM, 40 years ago, was the result of the vision of the Mayor of Cannes to turn the city into a thriving business centre and today, marketing director of the Palais, Jean-



**Venue name: Koelnmesse**

**Location:** Cologne, Germany

**Facilities:** 11 halls, 284,000 square metres of indoor exhibition space, two conference centres including 26 conference rooms (1,400 persons per room)

**Partnership services offered:** 'Plus 2 concept' offers local marketing, local sales and access to an international sales force represented in 84 countries

**Business development philosophy:** General manager Jan Pothof says: "Koelnmesse Ausstellungen owns the hardware and the expertise of one of the world's leading venue owners and show organisers. With our partners we can define and provide what it needs to make a show successful in Europe's economically strongest region. Partnership for Koelnmesse means to combine the best of each partner's talents."

**Venue name: Palais des Festivals et des Congres**

**Location:** Cannes, France

**Facilities:** 26,000 square metres of exhibition space, 26 conference rooms

**Partnership services offered:** Access to databases covering specific industry sectors and 11,000 corporate clients, incentive agencies and travel networks. Access to a database of over 4,000 journalists, three year reduced price venue agreement (40 per cent discount on actual space used in year one). Commission from hotel rooms

**Business development philosophy:** Marketing director Jean-Jacques Lottermoser says: "We understand the risks taken by the organisers for a launch, therefore we participate pro-actively. The partners' success or failure becomes then our common result. Life is a festival of experiences. We are all allowed to fail once but we are committed to ensuring that our partners don't fail with us."

Jacques Lottermoser, ensures that the restaurants and hotels continue to be an integral part of the exhibition scene. "The hotels have a vested interest in promoting business all year round, not just from April to October and they know they have to play the game. We have 7,500 hotel rooms in Cannes and when we tell them that we need their rooms for an exhibition, they ensure we have as many as we need."

Working with the hotels in this way also brings a financial benefit to the organiser. "With up to 52 per cent of the hotels' business coming from exhibitions and conferences, the hotels are ready to pay to attract organisers and their shows," explains Lottermoser. "The sum of 10 euros per room for 2,000 people

staying two nights means 40,000 euros for the organiser, either paid to them as a sponsorship, or paid to the Palais to offset the venue hire cost. It helps underwrite an important part of the launch costs."

Lottermoser's philosophy on support for the organiser is geared around the international nature of the events that take place at his venue. "We don't offer the venue to national events, we believe that Paris and Lyon are more appropriate for these. We are a town of 70,000 people, and the events that succeed here are international events. Typically they have less than 15 per cent French exhibitor participation so organisers aren't looking for local sales support," he says.

Instead Lottermoser offers a considerable

amount of marketing and PR support. "We organise advertising throughout the city and in the hotel lobbies and rooms to give the impression that every event is a major one. We also have a database of 11,000 corporate clients, incentive agencies and travel networks. They receive details of all our exhibitions and, in turn, they submit these to all of their clients, so the information is reaching significant numbers." The in-house PR office organises regional press conferences for the organisers using a database of 4,200 journalists.

Lottermoser also buys databases for sectors that he believes can be successful in Cannes. "We use them to market to the major companies to hold their own seminars, incentive meetings or product launches," he explains, "then when an organiser wants to launch an exhibition in that sector we let them use these databases for their own marketing."

Discounted rates over the first three years of the event are offered to organisers, so does this mean a three year minimum commitment? "We aren't interested in doing this for a one shot opportunity, so we do expect events to stay with us for at least three years," says Lottermoser, "but we also play the game, and if the show is cancelled due to commercial reasons we don't invoice anything."

The Palais de Festivals isn't acting as a traditional exhibition partner in the way that Cremona Fiere is, but it is doing everything it can to ensure the success of each event and offer far more to the organisers than most venues. However, it doesn't expect a financial stake in the show. So how can it do this?

"I understand that it may sound contradictory," Lottermoser says. "But one of the reasons we can do this is because we already have 300 days of occupation, so the business is solid and in looking for additional business in this way we are not risking too much. We have this attitude because we know there is a new generation of shows coming up and we want to facilitate their launch."

"Also we are a small centre with less than 30,000 square metres of space, so we act as an incubator for events up to 15,000 net square metres. When they grow larger, they will move on and we have to replace these shows with new business. Even with this high occupancy rate, we need to show that we are always interested in new business."

Some of the venues that provide additional services to help overseas organisers launch their events are profiled here. It's encouraging to see that there is a conscious move towards understanding the challenges faced in launching events.



**Venue Name: Jaarbeurs Utrecht**

**Location:** Utrecht, Holland

**Facilities:** 11 halls, 100,000 square metres, all conference facilities

**Partnership services offered:** All local services required by an international organiser can be provided through the sister company, VNU Exhibitions Europe, covering sales, marketing, operations etc. Existing partnerships include a joint venture with Reed Exhibitions (Infosecurity and Storage Expo) and a licence agreement with IDG (Linuxworld). Operational services can also be provided by Jaarbeurs Utrecht. Specific terms can be provided in case of new launches

**Business development philosophy:** CEO of VNU Exhibitions Europe Jime Essink says: "International partnerships prove to be an excellent way to grow the business. The combination of a strong international brand and network and a strong local network and dedicated project team offers the best chances for success."



**Venue name: Cremona Fiere**

**Location:** Cremona, Northern Italy

**Facilities:** Four halls totalling 55,000 square metres, outside space of 22,000 square metres with full services, four conference rooms holding 500 delegates

**Partnership services offered:** Local sales, local marketing, PR and communications, help with researching viability for the event, help with approvals and authorisation

**Business development philosophy:** General manager Massimo Bianchedi says: "We need to act as a true local partner in order to make it easy for overseas organisers to launch their brands here and to realise the potential of the Italian market."