

A PROFITABLE AND FUN DAY OUT

THE few marketing managers in the flooring industry who query the need for trade shows or their value are evidently out of step with many of their counterparts in other sectors. The just published 2008 annual survey compiled by the respected EventView organisation reveals widespread optimism about the future of exhibitions.

The survey questioned over 1,000 top marketing managers from leading companies across western Europe. Its findings firmly debunk the minority view that trade shows will be killed off by the internet or supplanted by direct marketing (which many describe simply as junk mail).

Although the economic downturn is forcing cuts in marketing budgets overall, a third of executives interviewed actually plan to raise spending on 'live events' during the next 12 months. They affirm the belief that trade fairs potentially offer a better return on investment than other forms of marketing activity. Furthermore, a substantial number – 44% – believe that the importance and role of exhibitions will increase even further.

An average of three quarters (76%) of visitors to trade fairs are decision-makers with buying responsibility, according to recent studies by the Association of Event Organisers.

In Britain, where the expanding events industry is worth over £3bn, the (fourth quarter of 2007) Bellwether report on UK marketing trends, has a finding which flies in the face of all the cynical claims. British companies, on average, spend more on trade shows than on PR or marketing research, and about the same amount as on the internet and digital media.

As the internet rapidly proliferates, the growing perception is that it swamps 'surfers' with a surfeit of information, much of it irrelevant, misleading or inaccurate. Attendance at trade shows, on the other hand, gives visitors reliable real-time data and valuable personal contact with suppliers.

Unlike digital media, trade exhibitions facilitate face-to-face contact: Shaking hands and looking people in the eye. It also stimulates networking and direct customer feedback, while building brand awareness and providing hands-on exposure to products, a big bonus with floor coverings.

Even in economic boom times a number of newly launched events will fail, but those which are clearly focused on specific sectors and which offer worthwhile visitor attractions will survive and prosper in good years and bad.

One example is Floorstyle, running alongside The Tile and Stone Show, at ExCel in London from June 29 to July 1. Aside from the 150 plus exhibitors, there are seminars presented by leading industry personalities, practical demonstrations by experts, a tile fitting competition, and much more. It promises to be a profitable and fun day out for visitors. (See page 59)



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