An interview with Katharina C. Hamma, Chief Operating Officer of Koelnmesse

With a revenue of €235 million, the last fiscal year has been one of the most successful in the history of Koelnmesse. How much did the IDS contribute to the results?

The International Dental Show is one of our most important events and there are only a few trade shows in Cologne that attract more exhibitors and visitors. Therefore, the trade fair makes an important contribution to our overall business results.

The number of registered exhibitors at IDS 2013 is already at the same level as the past show. What are your expectations for your first IDS?

In 2013, again in March 2013, with booths representing Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, Russia, Taiwan and the US. All these factors make Koenlmesse a very attractive location for trade shows in Cologne in terms of attracting exhibitors and visitors. The main advantage is, of course, that the IDS is the leading international trade fair organiser with a good reputation.

With regard to exhibition space, we have already achieved a new record with an area of 150,000 square metres. We will also exceed the number of visitors to IDS 2011. In view of this, we are doing a lot to be able to report a new record when the show ends on 16 March.

In addition, Koelnmesse is an internationally renowned trade fair organiser with a good reputation. A market study published in autumn 2012 indicated that Cologne is recognised worldwide as a location for trade shows, meetings and congresses, mainly owing to the before-mentioned central location and its state-of-the-art facilities.

The increase in industry participation is a result of the high demand from overseas. Where do the most exhibitors come from?

After Germany, there are a number of countries with high numbers of exhibitors, such as Italy, the US, South Korea, Switzerland, France and Great Britain. In addition, there will be dental trade show. Owing to this unique position, many companies have tended to place their focus entirely on the IDS, even selecting to participate in it rather than in regional or local shows.

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There is a counter at the fairground, for example, that serves as a contact point for questions with regard to copyright violations. Experts are also on site to provide information and further help. If necessary, Koelnmesse employees can also provide and establish contacts with lawyers specialised in this particular area.

Ahead of the show, exhibitors should ensure that they really own the trademark rights for their respective products and brands. Documentation should be at hand in order to be able to act in a case of a suspected copyright violation. Should an exhibitor find out that its trademark rights have been violated, it should immediately seek to obtain a declaration to cease and desist.

Should Koelnmesse be made aware of a past or imminent violation by an exhibitor, it will point out the legal consequences of this to the exhibitor. If the company has been convicted of product piracy, Koelnmesse reserves the right to exclude the company from exhibiting at all future events of this kind. We are very active in supporting our exhibitors in the fight against piracy.

One of your main goals as COO is also to homogenise business structures. What impact is this going to have on the IDS? I have been responsible for all business operations of Koelnmesse since early last year, which gave us the opportunity to utilise synergies better internally in our sales team and externally with our partners. All our events will benefit from this change, including the IDS.

For the IDS, you are working closely with the GFDI, a subsidiary of the German Dental Manufacturers. How has this collaboration been conceptually refined?

The GFDI as the organiser and Koelnmesse as the staging company share a long and fruitful relationship. In particular, we are implementing all measures necessary for the successful realisation of the show, including the acquisition and support of exhibitors, running promotion and marketing campaigns in order to attract visitors, and the logistics and organisation during the five days of the event. All this takes place in close consultation with the GFDI.

You have no prior work experience in dentistry. Have you been surprised by what field has its international trade fairs? I was surprised by the international trade fairs. I have been responsible for the overall concept, and if so when can we expect to see them implemented? It is too early to talk about this.

Both the GFDI and Koelnmesse consider the success of the IDS as confirmation of the show’s concept. Therefore, we will be sticking to the successful formula of the joint event in the near future, which entails focusing on the overall concept, and if so when can we expect to see them implemented? It is too early to talk about this.

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