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LOGISTICS DURING BUILD-UP & DISMANTLING

The aim of this report on Logistics during Build-up and Dismantling is to give some “insight” into the logistical elements involved in these two operational phases and to identify the challenges the exhibition industry currently faces in this area, such as adopting new technologies and overcoming barriers and resistance.

While the fundamentals of exhibition logistics have basically changed very little in past decades, new factors are influencing logistics management – in particular the support and control of physical handling now provided by information technology (IT), trends towards shorter fair duration and towards major events splitting into several smaller ones, the emphasis for trade show companies on cost/benefit ratio.

Exhibition industry logistics are a small, specialized niche market. Some equipment is only used infrequently (once or twice a year). Others have a high setup and capital cost (e.g. scanners, programming).

Current challenges stem from the “need it now” business culture and the new technologies available on the market. Service providers are subject to new and pressing demands, specifically for immediate process management information, instant consignment tracking and rapid cost analysis. This overall context puts venues and service providers under constant pressure to reach high financial targets, to meet tight deadlines and to work in limited space.

New technologies such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID) will help meet some of these demands. GPS enable constant location monitoring, tracking and routing recording at minimal cost. RFID ensure customised data capture and transmission - offering potential for huge improvement in customer service delivery and offerings to customers. IT connectivity has enabled the development of user-friendly web portals to streamline main processes including sales, complaint management and orders. On-site logistics are optimized through the development of enhanced traffic management systems.

The impact of the current economic and financial crisis is an additional challenge, with consequences on temporary import bond costs and client tax liabilities. There is an increasing focus on logistics as a revenue stream providing short-term financing until the exhibitor has paid the stand-builder or event-planning agency.

The courier delivery system is threatening freight forwarding. The courier system assumes that customs formalities have been completed but in the case of trade fairs, goods and equipment are often temporary imports. In addition, the zip code methodology for delivery point is not sufficient to locate a stand in a hall. At many shows, dealing with failed deliveries requires a dedicated operational solution, forcing service providers to ensure customs clearance, storage and delivery to the client.

Against the background of consolidation within the logistics industry itself venue owners are starting to opt for ownership of contract logistics made possible by new centralized management systems capable of controlling all on-site logistical processes.

Health and safety measures which have always been critical to the logistics industry are being given more and increasingly detailed attention, particularly risk awareness training and management. Finally, sustainability issues such as overall waste management and energy efficiency as well as vehicle emission controls and fossil fuel consumption, are increasingly being addressed by operators and service providers.