

The Key Buyer Appreciation Program

Introduction

VNU Exhibitions Europe organises around 60 national and international trade shows and is the market leader in the Benelux area. The VIV trade shows are part of the VNU Exhibitions Europe portfolio. VIV trade shows are connecting markets world wide for innovative animal production and processing from Feed to Meat. The VIV trade shows are organised in Europe (The Netherlands), Thailand, China, India, Turkey, Mexico and Russia.

The VIV Vulcano edition

VIV Europe 2010 will go down in the records of VNU Exhibitions Europe as the 'VIV Vulcano-edition'. Whilst preparations for the trade show were in full swing and the prognosis was looking very promising as pre-registration visitor numbers were at record level, the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland was sending dark clouds over Europe. Aviation was seriously disrupted by the volcanic ashes, which subsequently led to a serious disruption of the well organised trade show in Utrecht. Visitors and exhibitors – in particular those from Asia, the Middle East and Russia, but also visitors and exhibitors from as close as the UK and Ireland, stranded halfway across Europe or were not able to fly at all. The estimated attendance figure dropped considerably. A mere 10,455 visitors attended VIV Europe, less than half what was expected before the ash cloud struck European skies. Many exhibitors had planned customer events and meetings which had to be cancelled due to the diminished attendance. Corporate meetings with distributors and agents could not take place.

The ash cloud may have darkened the European skies, VIV, ever customer orientated, kept a clear view on the need to compensate the exhibitors for this unfortunate situation. Even before VIV Europe stands were dismantled, the first concept of the key buyer appreciation program (KAP) was presented. Though legally VNU Exhibitions Europe was not obliged to compensate the exhibitors and the VIV Europe exhibitors fully appreciated the unique circumstances caused by the calamity, VNU Exhibitions Europe felt the need to accommodate the industry, while at the same time strengthening the VIV portfolio. In addition, the reputation of 'partner of the industry' was at stake.

The KAP program

The key buyer appreciation program was a unique offer to the VIV Europe exhibitors and their preferred buyers. VNU Exhibitions Europe offered 10,000 nights in good quality Bangkok hotels during the VIV Asia event. Exhibitors could book these rooms in advance - with a maximum of 2 night per person - and offer the accommodation as a gesture to their guests or use it for their stand crew. This meant exhibitors would have a strong pushing factor in convincing potential visitors to attend VIV Asia 2011.

There were 2 conditions attached to the KAP program. First, the free nights could only be offered by the 650 VIV Europe exhibitors during the VIV Asia 2011 event. Secondly, guests could only avail of the KAP program discount after attending the VIV Asia 2011 event.

How does it work?

The KAP process is built up in 6 simple steps:

1. The exhibitors receive a personal login for the KAP booking website
2. Exhibitors inform their potential guests and visitors of the KAP procedure
3. Exhibitors and/or visitors book the accommodation on the KAP website with the provided login
4. Upon arrival the hotel provides the KAP guests with a KAP voucher
5. At the VIV Asia event KAP voucher A can be exchanged for a KAP Redemption voucher
6. Upon departure the KAP guests hands in the KAP Redemption voucher and the 2 complimentary nights will automatically be deducted from the hotel bill.

Objectives

The KAP program had 3 clearly defined objectives:

1. Offer VIV Europe 2010 exhibitors the opportunity to participate in VIV Asia 2011 as the first and most prominent international meeting place on the agenda to compensate for the international client contacts missed in Utrecht. The KAP program was introduced to boost international attendance to VIV Asia, with specific focus on:
 - Asia-Pacific (non-Thai)
 - Middle East
 - Africa (South Africa, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt)

2. Stimulate current and potential exhibitors to increase their investment in VIV Asia 2011:
 - Directly in additional stand space
 - Indirectly in organizing international distributor/agent meetings and related F&B and Travel & Stay services
3. Build goodwill with both the VIV industry and Thailand, as Thailand was suffering from declining (business) tourism after the riots in May 2010.

Actions

Partners in operation

To ensure a solid and smooth operation VNU Exhibitions collaborated with both VIV Asia co-organiser NEO and Creative Destination Management CDM. CDM was responsible for the operational side of the process, consisting of website hosting, design and maintenance, hotel reservations and hotel instruction. NEO conducted negotiations with the various hotels in Bangkok. VIV representatives personally visited hotel management and hotel chains to carry out negotiations.

Communicating the KAP program

The KAP program was targeted at all 650 VIV Europe exhibitors, identified key buyers and (potential) VIV Asia exhibitors. They, in turn, could offer the free lodgings to their guests and visitors. Therefore, the KAP program could not be integrated in the visitor campaign. The KAP program campaign consisted of:

- Monthly eNewsletters to 650 VIV Europe exhibitors
- A dedicated KAP program website
- Service calls: Personal contact by phone
- Personal contact with VIV representatives
- Press releases

The KAP program is based on appreciation and compensation. The personal contact with VIV representatives by phone or in person was by far the most important trigger factor in the campaign. In addition to the financial gain for the exhibitors and their relations, the gesture of the KAP program was of considerable additional value.

Results

KAP nights

From the 10,000 complimentary lodgings made available by VNU Exhibitions, 3,600 were used by VIV Asia exhibitors for their guests and visitors.

International client contact opportunities

The VIV Asia 2011 event was an immense success. With 28,978 visitors present at the event, the number was up by 39% compared to VIV Asia 2009. VIV was able to offer the exhibitors the opportunity for more international client contacts, with more international visitors from a wider diversity of countries (101, compared to 93 in 2009).

	2009	2011	Increase
Visitors	20,831	28,978	+/+ 39.10%
International visitors	10,147	16,264	+/+ 60.28%
AsiaPacific	5,818	9,241	+/+ 58.83%
Middle East	357	587	64.42%
Africa	37	67	81.08%

Volume of the event

The VIV Asia event had a substantial rise in volume. In addition, the number of exhibitors increased by over 20%.

	2009	2011	Increase
Volume sq.m.	12,800	16,046	25.35%
Number of exhibitors	568	701	23.41%

Customer appreciation

The gesture of the KAP program was appreciated by both visitors and exhibitors. Visitors rated the show with an incredible 8.4 out of 10. The organisation received many compliments of the VIV Asia visitors, using the KAP program during their stay.

On average VIV Asia exhibitors gave the exhibition a 8.0 out of 10 compared to a 7.7 in 2009. The results of the KAP program cannot, however, just be measured in numbers. The KAP program was initiated to express our appreciation of our key buyers. In return the VIV team were showered with appreciation and compliments for this initiative by the exhibitors affected by the ash cloud calamity at VIV Europe 2010. And, as we all know, a satisfied customer will always return.