



Exhibit Designers +
Producers Association

Global Insights

News, insights and trends for exhibit & event designers and producers worldwide

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EDPA Q&A: Dan Cantor Opens Up

New EDPA President Dan Cantor has big plans for the organization in 2009, plans that he's already started to put into action.

In a recent visit to EDPA headquarters in Norwalk, Conn., Cantor sat down with EDPA Communications Manager Rory J. Thompson and talked about his plans for the organization, what he sees as the group's strongest assets, and how he thinks the industry will shake out in these uncertain times.

Rory Thompson: What are your priorities for the EDPA in 2009?

Dan Cantor: We've got a lot of challenges ahead of us in the coming year, and we've already taken steps to address those. First off, as I mentioned at the AC&SS show in Miami (in December), we need to enhance our "Membership Value Proposition." What I mean by that is we need to, as a group, develop and promote our educational initiatives, provide resources for our members' business-improvement efforts, and increase our members' networking opportunities. These are all within our grasp; we just need to make them happen.

RT: What else?

DC: We also plan to grow our designer-producer members. We know that by utilizing our prospect/membership/chapter database, we can better identify new member prospects and promote our membership benefits to them. Our future strength will be in our numbers.

RT: How do the EDPA Chapters figure into your plans?

DC: The Chapters play an important part in our growth, and we'd like to see their role expand. We hope to standardize Chapter branding and operating policies, while providing and promoting a number of educational initiatives and resources for Chapter meetings. Our hope is that we can help them grow, while at the same time cultivate new national members from the Chapters' ranks.

RT: We've heard that you plan to make the EDPA a strong advocate for your members. How do you hope to achieve that?

DC: We've already taken steps to increase our engagement with other industry associations. We plan to collaborate with them on industry promotions and issues, as well as to promote the role of independent designer-producers and related suppliers to our industry and exhibitors.

continued on page 2.

WELCOME

Dear EDPA Member:

That famous opening quote from Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times," can aptly describe the changes in our industry over the past year. Times ARE tough. But even in the worst of circumstances, opportunity abounds if you know where to look, and that's where your membership in the EDPA comes into play.

Sensing a sea-change in the market, we switched management companies in 2008, aligning ourselves with Red 7 Media. The impact was immediately noticeable, as they stepped up with a new logo and updated website, and superbly managed our annual AC&SS conference in Miami in December. Those who attended raved about the show.

And I'd like to personally thank our outgoing President, MaryBeth Gieser, who guided us through one of the most difficult years we've ever experienced. Her steady hand at the helm helped make my transition into the job that much easier. We've laid out an aggressive agenda for our organization this year, which you can read about in my Q&A in this newsletter. We intend to draw upon all the resources of our members, to involve you more in the work we do, and to ramp up our efforts with our local chapters. Our strength lies in our numbers and our collective knowledge.

As always, if you have any ideas to talk about, I'd love to hear them. There is no substitute for experience. Feel free to drop me a line anytime at the address below. Remember, we're all in this together.

Sincerely,

Dan Cantor
President - EDPA
dcantor@hamilton-exhibits.com

INTERNATIONAL

International Breakfast at Exhibitor Show

LAS VEGAS
TUESDAY
MARCH 24



There will be an EDPA International Chapter breakfast meeting on Tuesday, March 24, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., during the Exhibitor Show at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

Please join the EDPA International Committee for this informative presentation and discussion of goals and plans for 2009 and beyond. All are welcome to join.

To reserve your spot, please e-mail EDPA member services coordinator Kimberly Wilson at Kwilson@edpa.com or call her at 203-852-5698.

The meeting will be held in Tradewinds "ABC".



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continued from page 1.

RT: What do you see as the group's strongest assets or strengths?

DC: The EDPA has a variety of different member segments. The one thing they all have in common is that they're customer-focused, and know that their success is dependent upon the exhibitor's success. Our ability to work together as designers, producers, general contractors, transportation companies and industry suppliers is very valuable and of paramount importance to us. Those relationships need to be developed further; we need to take advantage of our different member segments and explore how we can address industry issues more efficiently in the coming year.

RT: What would you like to see more of from the EDPA membership?

DC: We need to play a much bigger role in promoting face-to-face marketing, and how trade shows and events can be optimized for maximum effectiveness. We are also way too silent when the mainstream media talks only about the relative cost of events, without mentioning the benefits and efficiencies that events can offer if executed properly. The publicity surrounding Apple's departure from Macworld is the latest example. All industry associations need to engage in this effort.

RT: How do you see the exhibit industry evolving this year?

DC: Our economic climate is causing exhibitors to re-evaluate their programs and the events in which they participate. This is a good thing; the days of just "going to the show" or "just being there" without justifying the expense involved are over ... and should be. All service providers are now being compelled to propose ways that their clients can improve the efficiency of our medium. In my opinion, to participate as an exhibitor in an event and not engage the prospective customers pre-show or via a dedicated web presence is wasteful, and you'll never maximize your return. As designer-producers with direct end-user relationships, we need to be more vocal about how trade shows can be incredibly productive. We need to better promote the invaluable expertise of EDPA members.



Some Good News: International Tradeshow Marketplace is Holding its Own

EDPA's Justin Hersh sees strength overseas



Despite the current economic woes impacting every aspect of the tradeshow and event business, the outlook remains brighter for those casting their eyes overseas.

That's the opinion of Justin Hersh, EDPA's newest officer and founder & CEO of Delphi Productions in Alameda, Calif.

"There has been a trend for more than 10 years where clients and exhibitors have increasingly become internationally focused in their event marketing programs. They're on a continued drive toward more global brands and are taking a worldwide approach in their work," he said.

Hersh made the remarks recently while talking with Global Insights Quarterly about the international scene and how events fit into that niche.

"We see EDPA members doing even more overseas in the coming year," he said. "International business clients are expecting them [EDPA member companies] to be able to provide support wherever their tradeshow programs take them."

Hersh was also asked how global tradeshow and events might be forced to change or adapt in the coming year, given the challenges of the marketplace.

"We don't believe the climate is going to change all that much overseas," he said. Hersh noted that America was affected earlier than European countries by the current economic crisis, but added that "shows outside the U.S. have stayed stronger, longer," and that "there is a higher commitment to the value of our shows overseas."

Citing Germany as an example, he said that country was a "mecca of tradeshow," drawing a wider clientele and viewing itself and its shows as being mostly an export market. "There are a lot of countries that are not so far away" from Germany, he said, "so they get numerous international visitors and their shows generally reflect that."

Hersh added that in his experience, overseas countries tend to view tradeshow marketing "as a more significant part of their portfolio" than do most companies in the U.S. He noted that European companies especially place a greater emphasis on face-to-face communication. "Trade shows are an effective way to do that," he said.

But it's not all sellouts and smash-hits, Hersh admits.

"Like the domestic market, international is going to 'tighten up' a bit," he said. "But some of that will result in a focus on quality over quantity." And Hersh doesn't think that will necessarily be a bad thing.

"There may be slightly fewer people, but the quality of leads will be better for the customers," he predicts. "Tradeshow marketers might have to look farther afield for business, but that might make the international field more attractive."

Hersh said that all the colleagues and peers he's spoken to in recent days have high interest and curiosity about the international marketplace, seeing it as a well of opportunity.

"China—Asia in general—has been such an explosive marketplace," he said. "While this economic downturn is going to put a damper on all local activities, it's not going to change the fundamental path into the international arena."

And the EDPA is going to help lead the charge, he added.

"There has always been a strong contingent of American companies that have been global in their outlook," Hersh said, "and the EDPA's International Chapter has been promoting member access to international markets. Consequently, there have been a lot more global companies joining the EDPA both to access the U.S. market and to form strategic partnerships and alliances with American companies that want to be able to help their companies."

"EDPA has been a good meeting ground to bring them together."



Photo by: Exposures Photography, LTD.



AC&SS Show Hits the Mark

The EDPA held its annual AC&SS show in Miami this past December, and by all accounts the show was a smashing success.

The speakers went out of their way to mention that they enjoyed the lively discussions and, given the many requests the Association has received for copies, the presentations were timely and appreciated.

Thanks should go out to everyone who donated to the silent auction and bid on the offerings. According to the committee, we raised over twenty-two THOUSAND dollars!

Members may also have noticed that we're sporting a new identity. It was launched at the show and is also the basis of the newly redesigned EDPA.com.

Attendees were welcomed by EDPA Executive Director Jeff Provost, and heard presentations by both outgoing president MaryBeth Geiser and incoming president Dan Cantor.

"This year's AC&SS provided yet another opportunity to meet new faces (60 first time attendees), re-new old friendships, get valuable industry insight—especially during interesting economic times—and experience quality education and superb networking opportunities," said EDPA Board Member Jay Burkette. "EDPA equals great value in our minds!"

The trade-show floor served as the bustling hub of the conference, and contained a range of the best that the exhibition design industry has to offer. From ceiling-skimming fabric displays to the latest in graphics and services, the trade show floor brought suppliers and buyers together to do business.

"I can't imagine ever missing an EDPA Convention," said incoming President Dan Cantor. "Many of my closest friends are my competitors, and mentors. I learn something new about our industry or my business literally every hour of the event, and have a great time in the process."



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AC&SS 08

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- Abex Exhibit Systems
- AFR Event Furnishings
- Art Guild/Avaton
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- TS2
- TWI Group, Inc
- Uniplan
- United Van Lines
- Warp Corp.
- Yellow and Roadway (YRC North America)
- Zenith Labornet



Calendar of Events

MARCH

- 4: **Best Events Expo NY**, Sheraton NY Hotel & Towers
- 22 – 26: **Exhibitor 2009**, Las Vegas
- 3/29 – 4/1: **SISO CEO Summit**, Grand del Mar Resort, San Diego

APRIL

- 27 – 29: **Event Marketing Summit**, Chicago Marriott Downtown

JUNE

- 10: **Las Vegas EDPA Chapter Foundation Golf Tournament**, location TBA
- 13 – 16: **HCEA Annual Meeting**, Tampa, Fla.
- 24 – 25: **Excite!**, Earls Court, London, UK
- 25 – 28: **IFES Convention 2009—“It’s About Change!”**, Paris, France

JULY

- 20: **EDPA Board Meeting**, McCormick Place, Chicago
- 20 – 23: **TS2 McCormick Place**, Chicago



SEPTEMBER

- 28: **TrendWatch LA**
- 28 – 30: **Event Design Forum**, The Highlands Hollywood, Hollywood, CA
- 30: **Best Events Expo L.A.**, Renaissance Hollywood Hotel, Hollywood, CA

OCTOBER

- 12: **Randy Smith Memorial Golf Classic**, Stone Mountain Golf Club, Stone Mountain, GA
- 26 – 28: **GRAVITY FREE: 2009**, Chicago History Museum

NOVEMBER

- Date TBD: **Best Events Expo Boston**, Sheraton Boston Hotel

DECEMBER

- 2 – 4: **EDPA 2009 Annual Conference & Supplier Showcase**, Renaissance Esmeralda, Indian Wells (Palm Springs) CA. (760) 773-4444
- 8 – 10: **Expo! Expo! IAEE’s Annual Meeting & Exhibition**, Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta

EDPA 2009 Officers

EDPA's purpose is to champion the prosperity of member businesses engaged in the design, production, and service of exhibits, events and experiential environments. The success and integrity of our industry will be advanced through education, networking and advocacy. The following are the EDPA officers for the new year:



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CEO
Hamilton Exhibits

PRESIDENT-ELECT

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For more details and contact
information, visit EDPA.co



10 Norden Place
Norwalk, CT 06855