



In times of politically prescribed contact restrictions, what does the future hold for trade shows or other face-to-face events?

The plastics sector is not the only one challenged by this question but, as a capital goods industry, it is particularly hard hit. In the attempt to offer life support for major events, a limited number of options are available. The shows can be postponed to summer, as Arburg has done with its Technology Days, the VDI with its PIAE automotive congress or Nuremberg Messe with its Toy Fair for 2021 – in the hope that seasonal factors will have checked the spread of infection by then. Or a strict hygiene concept can be imposed, which reconciles infection protection with the need for information by all the participants, and minimizes personal proximity between exhibitors and visitors.

Tightrope Walk to the Show

The fact that this tightrope walk is possible was demonstrated in September by Caravan Salon in Düsseldorf, Germany, with over 100,000 visitors over ten days. The catalog of measures, which applies to organizers and stand builders, just as much as to exhibitors and visitors, includes the following: routing in open areas, distance marking at entrances and in front of booths, video monitoring of visitor streams, open-top booths, tables with clear partitions, powerful, constant air-exchange systems, obligatory mouth-and-nose covering (except at seats). The number of visitors per day is limited. Visitors must acquire E-tickets in advance and may only enter booths after the tickets are scanned. On the positive side, this could even make for a more relaxed, less hectic trade-show atmosphere.

The alternative is digital shoes, as have already been organized by individual companies as well as commercial suppliers. Despite the specific advantages of this genre, it has still not achieved the charm of a face-to-face trade show: the technical exchange between exhibitors and customers, as well as direct feedback from the users at the exhibit, spontaneous sales closures and personal reunions – all this should make the greater commitment worthwhile. Even though it will probably take even longer before we can enjoy the reward of booth parties once again.

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