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# Did you enjoy the fairs?

Once again, it was an autumn of "fairs": IBIE in Orlando, Modern Bakery in Moscow, FIE in London and half a dozen regional fairs and exhibitions. These all demonstrated that a lot of money is obviously made in the baking industry, so much so that some is needlessly thrown away.

The space rates are exorbitantly high, the admission charges steep, but the services offered by fair ground owners and fair organizers in return are sometimes inadequate in comparison. Orlando is not Las Vegas – this describes the real problem of this year's IBIE, but there were other unpleasant experiences that could have been avoided.

Even though the official figures indicate success; the visitors not only appeared in lesser numbers, they were also less international. One can argue about whether this show still fulfills the demand for internationality and whether the fair organizers can be blamed for this development. Certainly, they can be blamed for the organization inside the hall and the layout of the hall including the arrangement of the stands. There were some aisles where hardly any visitors were seen. Channeling the stream of customers and visitors is an art, mastered by every supermarket manager. Why not by fair organizers?

In the past 30 years, I have found interesting and new things at every fair because I systematically wander through all the aisles. Unattractive parts of a fair are a waste of time and money and signal insufficient planning competency.

This is not only true for Orlando, but for all the other autumn fairs. Sometimes, this is further exacerbated by constructional shortcomings of the fair grounds. This year, the Modern Bakery Exhibition took place on two levels in one hall. The stairways which connected both levels looked as though they were leading the visitors into some type of lumber room in the basement, instead of being a circular tour through the fair. Currently, Moscow is amongst the most requested fair grounds in the world and it would seem that the owner of the fair ground is not willing to invest money and labor in order to eliminate the constructional shortcomings. So it is the task of the fair organizer to show some initiative to remedy this obvious deficiency as much as possible.

Less fantasy and more professionalism was needed in London. Some visitors, after an average of two hours on London's local public transportation system and then having finally made it to the fair ground in the Docklands had the pleasure of queuing for a considerable time to obtain an admission ticket. This led to visitors who had only planned to be at FIE for one day having their time drastically reduced to just a few hours.

There is no doubt that fairs are an important marketing tool for the suppliers and an important information medium for the experts of the industry. However, they are not the only marketing tool! It is time to think about one's own cost-benefit assessment; and the fair organizers should not rest on their laurels regarding service quality and wait until the current fair boom tapers off – as it most certainly will – unless some serious changes are made.

Sincerely yours,



**++ Hildegard Keil, editor-in-chief**  
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