"IDS makes an important contribution to our overall business results"

An interview with Katharina C. Hamma, Chief Operating Officer of Koelnmesse

In less than two months, one of Germany’s leading trade show organisers will again be welcoming dental professionals from all over the globe to Cologne for the 51st International Dental Show. Dental Tribune International had the opportunity to speak with Koelnmesse COO Katharina C. Hamma about the event and what can be expected from the world’s largest dental fair.

Dental Tribune International: Ms Hamma, you have been working as Chief Operating Officer of Koelnmesse since early last year. In your opinion, what makes the fairground in this city on the Rhine so special?

Katharina C. Hamma: One of the main advantages of Koelnmesse is its centralised location, with its host city Cologne literally in the centre of Europe. There are 155 million Europeans living within a radius of 500 kilometres, a significantly large share of the European Union’s gross domestic product.

The location and the accessibility of the fairground itself are optimal, as it is only a stone’s throw from the city centre. All means of transportation can be reached within minutes. During the show, all important long-distance trains will stop at the main station in Cologne, and at the Köln Messe/Deutz station. The Cologne/BNM airport serves 100 domestic and international destinations, and is a central hub for low-cost carriers.

The InterCity Express links Koelnmesse with four more international airports in Frankfurt/Main, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Brussels in Belgium. All these factors make it quick and easy for exhibitors and visitors to reach Koelnmesse.

Despite the weak global economy, the German trade show sector is doing surprisingly well and can think the reasons for this are:

The German trade show sector is leading globally and is one of the most important events and there are only a few trade shows in Cologne that attract more exhibitors and visitors. Therefore, the trade fair makes an important contribution to our overall business results.

The number of registered exhibitors at IDS 2013 is already at the same level as the past show. What are your expectations for your first IDS?

With a revenue of €231 million, the last fiscal year has been one of the most successful in the history of Koelnmesse. How much did the IDS contribute to the results?

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What role do your foreign subsidiaries play in this development, and what image does the show have outside of Germany in general?

Koelnmesse has a global network of affiliates in more than 80 countries that lend significant support to the main team in Cologne in terms of attracting exhibitors and visitors. The main advantage is, of course, that the IDS is the leading international dental trade show. Aiming to this unique position, many companies have tended to place their focus entirely on the IDS, even selecting to participate in it rather than in regional or local shows.

In addition, Koelnmesse is an internationally renowned trade fair organiser with a good reputation. A market study published in autumn 2012 indicated that Cologne is recognised worldwide as a location for trade shows, meetings and congresses, mainly owing to the before-men tioned central location and its state-of-the-art facilities. Over and above, Koelnmesse is considered to be a significant part of the attraction of Cologne.

Owing to the high number of exhibitors from the Far East, the exhibition will again be in focus at the up coming IDS. How have the existing measures been working out so far, and what will be done from your side to prevent the distribution of counterfeit goods?

We started an initiative called No Cop! Pro Original a couple of years ago that was intended to support exhibitors actively in their fight against counterfeits. There is a counter at the fairground, for example, that serves as a contact point for questions with regard to copyright violations. Experts are also on site to provide information and further help. If necessary, Koeln messe employees can also provide and establish contacts with lawyers specialised in this particular area.

My expectations are that we can surpass the figures of the last, very successful IDS again.

The increase in industry participation is a result of the high demand from overseas. Where do the most exhibitors come from?

After Germany, there are a number of countries with high numbers of exhibitors, such as Italy, the US, South Korea, Switzerland, France and Great Britain. In addition, there will be a comfortable for patients. I am looking forward to seeing everyone live at the IDS in March.

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Ahead of the show, exhibitors should ensure that they really own the trademark rights for their respective products and brands. Documentation should be at hand in order to be able to act in a case of a suspected copyright violation. Should an exhibitor find out that its trademark rights have been violated, it should immediately seek to obtain a declaration to cease and desist.

Should Koelnmesse be aware of a past or imminent violation by an exhibitor, it will point out the legal consequences of this to the exhibitor. If the company has been convicted of product piracy, Koelnmesse reserves the right to exclude the company from exhibiting at all future events of this kind. We are very active in supporting our exhibitors in the fight against piracy.

One of your main goals as COO is also to homogenise business structures. What impact is this going to have on the IDS?

I have been responsible for all business operations of Koelnmesse since early last year, which gave us the opportunity to utilise synergies better internally in our sales team and externally with our partners. All our events will benefit from this change, including the IDS.

For the IDS, you are working closely with the GFDM, a subsidiary of the German Dental Manufacturers. How has this collaboration been carried out?

The GFDM as the organiser and Koelnmesse as the staging company share a long and fruitful relationship. In particular, we are implementing all measures necessary for the successful realisation of the show, including the acquisition and support of exhibitors, running promotion and marketing campaigns in order to attract visitors, and the logistics and organisation during the five days of the event. All this takes place in close consultation with the GFDM.

You have no prior work experience in dentistry. Have you been surprised by what the field has to offer and, will you be visiting the show?

I have been welcomed warmly by the dental community and already learned a lot about the latest trends in dentistry. I am confident that there will be many innovations at the IDS that will make dental visit much more comfortable for patients. I am looking forward to seeing everyone live at the IDS in March.

This year, the IDS will take place in five halls. Are there any future plans for making the IDS bigger or more accessible?

Both the GFDM and Koelnmesse consider the success of the IDS to the confirmation of the show’s concept. Therefore, we will be sticking to the successful formula of the joint event in the near future, which entails focusing on business and product information presented at booths by exhibitors. Grouping halls according to dental specialties is currently not on our agenda. Whether changes will have to be implemented will be discussed with the GFDM after the next IDS.

Thank you very much for this interview.