

ERIC EVERARD – UFI President 2010/11

THEME: **KEEPING OUR DOORS OPEN**

Distinguished colleagues, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. It is an honour and privilege to address you as the new President of UFI.



First to **Manfred Wutzlhofer** for his achievements over the past year and to **Paul Woodward** for his support in preparing me for office.

I extend my best wishes to **John Shaw**, our departing president. Thank you John for your great work.

Last but not least I would like to congratulate **Dr Arie Brienen** on his selection as Incoming President.

There are three other people I would like to mention. Without their support over **many years** I would not be standing here now.

First I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my mentor and inspiration from my days at Reed in the early nineties: **Mike Rusbridge**, Chairman of Reed and one of the true “greats” of our industry.

Second my former boss at Reed, **Hakan Gershagen**. Hakan has been my constant supporter, advisor and friend throughout my career.

Third I would like to remember **Bernard Becker**, who sadly passed away in April this year.

Bernard was co-founder of Blenheim, and most recently Managing Director of Comexposium. But we remember him above all as a man who was **loved and respected** by his fellow professionals. His personality reflected the spirit of our industry and we all miss him.

MY ROLE AS PRESIDENT

I have learned so much from these and other great leaders and visionaries. Now as



President of UFI it is my pleasure and my duty to give something back.

A one-year Presidency is a very short space of time to do this, so we are very fortunate to have Paul Woodward and his fantastic team providing the continuity necessary to **get things done**.



If he is to make a lasting impact, the President of UFI must hope that his successor will build on his initiatives.

I have a responsibility to carry on the good work of Manfred, in particular to continue the initiatives he has already mentioned: Education, Sustainability and Cooperation with other institutions.

I am likewise happy to know that I am on the same page as Arie Brienen, my successor.

This sense of continuity makes it possible to think a long way ahead. We must ask ourselves, what will the industry look like in five years, ten years, twenty years?

What are the threats, and what are the opportunities? There is plenty to think about, but here are my top priorities.



MY PRIORITIES AS PRESIDENT

The first is **new technologies**.

In the exhibitions industry we have been rather slow to embrace the possibilities of new technologies. Industries such as airlines and retail have used online technologies to **make life easier** for the customer.

New technology is about **opening doors**. Invisible doors, out there in cyberspace. In other words, it extends our reach to a wider market.



But I sometimes feel the exhibitions industry still needs some **professional help** to overcome its technophobia. Industries that stay locked away in their comfort zone die. It's as simple as that.

We must recognize that our customers have less and less time. Marketing departments perhaps don't have the specialist events organizers they used to.

So we need to use technology to make it easier for customers to self-serve, for example with online booking.



SOCIAL MEDIA

We also need to be much more open and proactive when it comes to **social media**. You may think this also belongs under the heading new technology. If so, you already missed the point. Social media is about a fundamental **cultural and intellectual change**.

To put it bluntly, social marketing means an end to **old school** events PR. **You** no longer decide if an event is successful, **your exhibitors and visitors decide** because they now listen to each other far more than they listen to you.

We have to stop regarding this as a threat and turn it into **an opportunity**. Every exhibition is based on a community. Social media puts those communities online and makes them accessible to us. For the moment, most of us are talking about the potential of social media but few of us have learned how to profit from it.

In general, we must be open to new ideas and influences from inside and outside the industry. UFI will help get you to get there.

MEMBERSHIP

The next priority is **membership**.

We are rightly very proud of UFI's unique traditions but in a fast-changing world we must keep our doors wide open to new members with new and challenging ideas.



I would like UFI to become more representative of the **global** industry. In the Americas we can improve thanks especially to our partnership with SISO in North America and AFIDA in Latin America. In Africa we are making progress but there is room for improvement.

If we can speak for the global industry we will ensure that we always have a voice at the table when important decisions are made.

I would therefore recommend changing the U in UFI to universal!



SUSTAINABILITY

My next priority is sustainability.

I hope we are all now agreed that sustainability ain't going away any time soon, and that greenwash won't wash. Therefore we must move up another gear on the **sustainability** issue.

There's plenty we can and should do. If we fail it will only help our detractors. At easyFairs we have succeeded in creating extremely low carbon footprint shows with 100% reusable modules, reusable carpeting and so on.

At Artexis we have renovated Flanders expo to make it the most sustainable in Belgium, installing solar panels on its 54 000 square meter roof. These meet 70% of the energy needs and will save 22 800 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 20 years. Such projects will be vital to ensure the good reputation of the exhibitions industry going forward.



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

My final priority is to encourage the development of **special interest groups** that cut across regions and functions. I want to use my influence to encourage everybody inside UFI to think of our **different traditions** as a positive asset. Within this forum we intend to set up groups such as those running large international exhibitions, owners of family businesses, owners and managers of large, medium and smaller halls, entrepreneurs like myself and outsourced services organizations.

KEEPING DOORS OPEN

It is funny, sometimes when I enjoy a chat with a venue manager, they say "UFI, you are an association for exhibition organizers aren't you?"

Then when I talk to an exhibition organizers they say "You are an association for venue owners."



I want to work with you to ensure that everybody feels at home – and we all feel part of the leading global trade association – for everyone in the exhibitions industry.

The internet, and in particular the new social media, mean **doors must be open 24/7, 365 days a year**

Let's start by welcoming **one another's ideas** and breaking down barriers.

We must work together for the good of the exhibitions industry: organizers, halls, entrepreneurs, service providers.

Ladies and gentleman we are approaching the end of another great UFI conference so I will leave you with these thoughts for the year ahead.

FINALLY



Finally may I ask you to join me in thanking everybody, but in particular Paul Woodward and the UFI team, for making the conference a great success. I would also like to extend a big thank you to our host SACEOS and gold sponsors Marina

Bay Sands, and Resorts World.

I look forward to working with you and reporting on our progress in Valencia this time next year.