“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 31st International Dental Show. Dental Tribune International had the opportunity to speak with Koelnmesse CEO 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. This is 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/Deutsch airport serves 100 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 in comparison to the United States. Owing to the high number of exhibitors, the exhibition space and visitors. With regard to exhibition space, we have already achieved a new record with an area of 150,000 square metres. We will also exceed the number of visitors to IDS 2011. In view of this, we are doing a lot to be able to report a new record when the show ends on 16 March.

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 dental trade show. Owing 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-mentioned central location and its state-of-the-art facilities. Owing to this, many businesses have decided to expand their business in Germany.

My expectations are that we can surpass the figures of the last year. We have successfully increased the number of exhibitors, exhibition space and visitors. With regard to exhibition space, we have already achieved a new record with an area of 150,000 square metres. We will also exceed the number of visitors to IDS 2011. In view of this, we are doing a lot to be able to report a new record when the show ends on 16 March.

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With a revenue of €235 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?

The International Dental Show is one of our 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?

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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 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 Copy! 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 fair-ground, 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, Koelnmesse employees can also provide and establish contacts with lawyers specialised in this particular area.

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 made 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 CEO 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 GFDI, a subsidiary of Koelnmesse. How has this collaboration been developing?

The GFDI 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 GFDI.

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 visits much more comfortable for patients. I am looking forward to seeing everything live at the IDS in March.

This year, the IDS will take place in five halls, with the very first trade show in the area. In terms of copyright, the show is very well organised and offers a high level of quality. 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 GFDI.

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