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

“IDS makes an important contribution to our overall business results”

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 COO Katharina C. Hamma about the event and what can be expected from the world’s largest dental fair.

Dental Tribune International: Mr Hamma, you are 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 from the fairground. This 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 stations in Cologne and at the Koeln Messe/Deutz station. The Cologne/Bonn airport serves 100 countries via national 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, Dusseldorf, 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. My question is: why?

The German trade show sector is leading globally and foremost, it is a sector that has flourished successfully even in times of economic difficulties. Moreover, trade shows are a very effective marketing instrument.

Germany also boasts a very stable economy and demand for industrial goods. In addition, why do trade shows in the country are of particular interest for companies wishing to expand their business in Germany?

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?

17 joint participations again in March 2015, with booths representing Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, Russia, Taiwan and the US.

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 affiliations 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.

Owing to the high number of exhibitors from the Far East, the issue of counterfeiting will again be in focus at the upcoming IDS. How will 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 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, Koelnmesse employees can also provide and establish contacts with experts in dentistry. Have you been surprised by what the IDS field has international reception, 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. How can exhibitors face the overall concept, and if so when can we expect to see them implement these measures?

Both the GFDI and Koelnmesse consider the success of the IDS 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 particular areas will currently not be on our agenda. Whether changes will have to be implemented will be discussed with the GFDI after the next IDS.

Thank you very much for this interview.

Katharina C. Hamma, Chief Operating Officer of Koelnmesse, (IDS/Photo: Ingo Dauerer/VEHMS/MEDA, Germany)