Big shows and big ideas filled the ballrooms of the St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort in Southern California this Fall during the seventh annual Trade Show Executive Gold 100 Awards & Summit.

The International CES was named the “Largest Trade Show” of 2013, and the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) was honored as “The Greatest Show on Earth” at this year’s annual salute to the largest and most-accomplished shows of year. The roster of 100 exhibitions totaled more than 43 million net square feet of exhibit space, and hosted more than 119,000 exhibitors and 3.6 million attendees.

The International CES topped the overall Gold 100 rankings with nearly 2 million net square feet. E3 joined the “elite of the elite” with its annual show that was 49th on the roster and also delighted exhibitors and attendees alike with its innovative ideas, strong participation, flawless execution and continuing upward trajectory. And size wasn’t everything . . .
The Remodeling Show/Deck Expo wasn’t large enough to make the Gold 100 list but still received two Grand Awards for its ability to keep buyers on the show floor and its outreach to exhibitors. “The trade show industry had plenty to crow about in 2013,” said Darlene Gudea, president of Trade Show Executive Media Group. “TSE and its 46 sponsors were thrilled to recognize not only the people who produce the nation’s largest shows, but also the ones with the most innova-
tive minds.” She noted, “The Class of 2014 was certainly an exuberant group and we were pleased to be able to celebrate in such a grand manner at the St. Regis, at the Monarch Beach Golf Links, and cruising around Newport Bay in Duffy Boats.”

Diane Bjorklund, vice president of events, added: “There was plenty of glitz and glamour and fun in the sun, but Gold 100 delegates were also privy to a lot of unique content and perspectives,” said Diane Bjorklund, vice president of events.

“CEOs and other senior managers spoke on their successes and setbacks, and on burning issues such as disaster preparedness, violent incidents and hidden hotel costs. There was an update on tech trends and show organizers who made the biggest splashes of the year mingled with executives from the top-tier convention bureaus and convention centers, general service contractors, registration firms and tech providers. The registered attendance of 174 was the largest in the seven-year history of the Gold 100.

The highlight of the Gold 100 was the Awards Dinner & Ceremony, when the Grand Awards are presented to the largest shows of 2013 and to shows that made a big splash in areas such as international participation, use of social media, or overall innovation.

Here is a rundown of the Grand Award winners:

1. Largest Annual Show. The International CES is a perennial contender for largest show of the year. How high is up? In 2013, the electronics extravaganza grew to a record 1,924,650 net square feet (nsf) and drew a total attendance of 152,759.
2. Largest Biennial Show. ICUEE, The International Construction & Utility Equipment Exposition, was the largest biennial show and the second-largest show overall in 2013 with 1,713,997 nsf of exhibit space. A packed program included a focus on new products along with the popular indoor “demo stage” which helped draw a crowd of 17,399.
3. Largest Semi-Annual Show. MAGIC was held twice a year, and both editions among the Top 10 Gold 100 shows of 2013. The August edition was the largest with 1,062,151 net square feet and ranked No. 3 overall.
4. Top Show Organizer. For the third time in seven years, there was a tie for the distinction of managing the most Gold 100 shows. Reed Exhibitions and Emerald Expositions each produced seven Gold 100 shows in 2013.
5. Fastest-Growing Gold 100 Show. ABC Kids Expo jumped into the Gold 100 after skyrocketing in each of its three metrics by an average 31.8%. The show’s successful return to Las Vegas earned it the 47th ranking with 351,000 nsf after reporting 297,800 nsf in 2012. It was the second-largest show in its history.

6. Best Program for Exhibitors. The Remodeling Show/Deck Expo did not make the Gold 100 rankings in 2013, but Hanley Wood Exhibitions earned a Grand Award for its special outreach program to exhibitors to help them achieve a strong ROI. The show’s marketing manager doubled as a personal marketing consultant for exhibitors, offering help with custom marketing campaigns for print, web and social media before, during and after the show.
7. Master of Co-Location. PRINT 13, which spanned 301,246 nsf and held the 59th ranking on the Gold 100, made extensive use of specialized events to expand the show’s reach into new printing technologies and sectors, and to overcome the ongoing contraction in the global printing market. Print 13 had not one, not two, but an unprecedented 67 distinct shows, conferences and other events wrapped around the main event.

The Remodeling Show/Deck Expo. Hourly exhibitor demos, nine live instructional clinics on the floor and the old reliable Happy Hour were among the ideas used to grip the attention of buyers and convince them to “stick around.”

9. Stickiest Show Floor. After attracting quality attendees to its show, Hanley Wood Exhibitions won the extra mile to keep attendees on the show floor of Remodeling Show/Deck Expo. Hourly exhibitor demos, nine live instructional clinics on the floor and the old reliable Happy Hour were among the ideas used to grip the attention of buyers and convince them to “stick around.”

10. Leader in Green Initiatives. The American Chemical Society’s Greener Meetings Program would make any show manager green with envy. Their...
entry was chock full of infographics, pie charts, tables and detailed information ranging from baseline metrics to concrete milestones achieved. They had fun with their program too, using a green mascot to roam the show floor. They also created sustainability challenges, student poster sessions and used social media to increase participation in greening efforts.

11. Most Innovative Show. Any show that brags about having a parade of “1,500 of the SICKEST rides on the planet” just has to be good. The SEMA Show offered that and more — drifting demos, tech zones, 50 business-building seminars, precision drivers racing around the GM Proving Grounds, and so many celebrities they had to publish a “Celebrity Appearance Guide.” The show ranked fourth on the Gold 100 with 1,060,000 net square feet.

12. Best 24/7/365 Show. Ranking No. 41 in the Gold 100 in 2013, E3, the Electronic Entertainment Expo, spanned 382,780 nsf in Los Angeles, but its presence was felt around the world and around the clock by the always busy video game community. The Electronic Software Association and IDG World Expo created a suite of tools and websites that gave virtual attendees an experience that was almost like being there, with behind-the-scenes event coverage, breaking news and interviews, virtual exhibitor booths, and an Interactive Show Map which depicted the show’s hot spots, in real time, enabling users to virtually follow the crowds around the floor.

Continued from page 41

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13. Social Media Superstars. A tie between the SEMA Show and Global Pet Expo. The 4th-ranked SEMA Show was one of the pioneers in the use of social media to stay in touch with its customers’ love of all things automotive. Today, Peter MacGillivray and his team have a fleet of followers numbering 170,000 on Facebook, 74,000 on Twitter, 19,000 on Instagram, and 5,500 on LinkedIn. The Global Pet Expo, No. 79 on the Gold 100, also had more tweets than a flock of parakeets. During the week of the show, there were more than 4,000 Tweets about the show, generating over 13 million impressions. The show’s YouTube channel had 29,000 views, up 58% over 2012.

14. Marketing Genius Award. Graphic Arts Show Company’s Chris Price earned his second Grand Award of the evening in this tribute to a show organizer that used extreme ingenuity and precision in drawing qualified new attendee segments. Chris and his team were able to increase attendance by 22% by identifying and reeling in customers from adjacent industries. His finely targeted strategy included co-location, segment marketing, a video news channel and exhibitor partnerships.

15. Greatest Show on Earth. E3, produced by IDG World Expo and the Entertainment Software Association, has become one of the hottest tickets in the worldwide video game business. As the BBC News said, “This year’s E3 is more than just the biggest gaming event in the calendar. It’s a starting pistol for the next phase of living room domination.” E3 achieved its must-attend status through excellence all around. For example, 100% of 2013 exhibitors felt that E3 has a positive effect on their brand and 95% of exhibitors planned to recommend their company to exhibit at E3 2014. In 2013, over $2.5 billion dollars in orders were written or projected into the pipeline as a result of the three-day event. E3’s social media presence surged, with a 220% increase (to 508 million) in Twitter impressions and 630% increase (to 232 million) in Facebook impressions. At this popular and information-rich event, speed, authority and visuals are the new currency for influencers.
Keynote Speaker Urges Honorees Not to Be Intoxicated by Success

Creativity may be lurking in the offices, cubicles and even the water cooler at your office, so trade show organizers should tap into the power of innovative thinking just as startups do. That was the message from Josh Linkner, entrepreneur, author and master of disruption who got the ball rolling with an inspiring morning keynote address at the Gold 100.

Linkner, author Disciplined Dreaming, joined the Gold 100 festivities from Detroit, where he is CEO and managing partner of Detroit Venture Partners, a firm that is a major player in revitalizing the business base of the Motor City and restoring it to its past glory by using new and “disruptive” strategies and tactics. He advised the audience of veteran show organizers and well-established executives to adopt the swagger and imagination that start-ups use. “Creativity is a currency,” said Linkner, whose latest book, “Road to Reinvention,” was published this year. The good news is that creativity is 85% a learned behavior, and managers who create “a systematic approach to creativity” can be rewarded with the proverbial “bigger bang.”

Linkner’s five steps to a visionary and inspired environment:
1. Encourage employees to propose daring ideas by removing the fear that a failure will be career-ending and then provide support to develop promising suggestions. “Strip out judgment and celebrate the idea. Keep asking questions. Go five levels deep,” he said. “Mistakes are the portal of discovery.”
2. Shed the past and look to where your company is going. Linkner used his native Detroit as an example of a city with a proud manufacturing history that is now embracing tech startups.
3. Defy tradition by looking for new ways to do things if the current practice isn’t working. “Our instinct may be to throw money or people or other resources at a problem,” he said. “Try throwing your imagination at it. You may wind up with a better idea.” Linkner used the example of a children’s hospital that dressed window washers in super hero costumes. “Get scrappy and think like a start-up entrepreneur, even if you are part of a major global company. Sometimes, having fewer resources forces you to use your imagination. “Make do with what you have at your disposal,” Linkner said. For example, GE painted MRI machines with a pirate theme to make the procedure less scary for kids. Instructions like “Lay still so the pirates don’t tickle you,” took away their fear.
4. Get scrappy and think like a start-up entrepreneur, even if you are part of a major global company. Sometimes, having fewer resources forces you to use your imagination. “Make do with what you have at your disposal,” Linkner said. For example, GE painted MRI machines with a pirate theme to make the procedure less scary for kids. Instructions like “Lay still so the pirates don’t tickle you,” took away their fear.
5. Push the boundaries, think big, and leave the competition in the dust. “Decide what is going to separate your event from competing events by a factor of 10,” Linkner said.

Linkner said he viewed the trade show industry as one that “is ready to reinvent itself,” and the people who are its leaders are ready, able, and more than willing to get on with the job. “When people say, ‘That’s the way things are done in our industry,’ those are fighting words for change,” he said.

Gold Recap continued on page 48
CEOs Share Successes and Challenges

During the CEO Forum, Phil McKay, president and CEO, nGage Events, moderated an executive-level panel that featured Joe Loggia, CEO, Advanstar Communications Inc.; Dennis Slater, president, Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM); and Chris Kersting, president and COO, Specialty Equipment Market Association.

McKay asked the three industry leaders about how their portfolios are faring in 2014. All reported strong growth. “We started with aggressive goals, and our trade show business outperformed expectations,” said Loggia. “We hit all the benchmarks that we set pretty much across the portfolio. We think 2015 will be even better.”

At the start of the year, AEM’s growth was more conservative but Slater says the association is now tracking better than budget in 2014. “Revenues and attendance are 10% higher than we expected, and exhibit space is up 5%.” Kersting said he expected 7% top-line growth for the SEMA Show, which was held 10 days after the Gold 100. “Last year’s show surpassed our biggest show prior to the recession, and this year’s show will be bigger than 2013,” said Kersting.

When McKay asked about their appetite for risk, Loggia warned: “Don’t mistake risk for investment. As an industry, we must invest all the time and be willing to break things and start over.”

For example, Loggia cited Advanstar’s flagship event, MAGIC, which is held in February and August. “It’s completely different than it was before the downturn,” he said. “We have added a number of new segments. In 2008 and 2009, we rebuilt the portfolio around where we thought the industry would be today.”

Slater said AEM uses a similar approach for CONEXPO-CON/AGG, its triennial event that will be held in 2017. “It’s a mature show, but the reality is we dismantle it every time and look at what worked and what didn’t,” said Slater. “Right now, we are focused on enhancing the attendee experience, and we are investing a lot in this area.”

Speaking of investments, McKay wasted no time asking Loggia about the sale of Advanstar. “UBM announced in early October that it agreed to buy Advanstar for nearly $1 billion,” said McKay. “What does it say to the business community about the value of trade shows?” Loggia responded: “UBM bought Advanstar because of our trade show business, not print. What that says is there’s still a lot of money to invest in the best way to engage industries and their customers.” When asked about the offspring that this new marriage will produce, Loggia said Advanstar has the opportunity to expand its brands internationally in Asia and Europe. “With UBM’s infrastructure of 3,000 employees worldwide, it will allow us to make calculated risks in other countries,” he said.

McKay also asked Kersting about SEMA’s integration of the Performance Racing Industry (PRI) Trade Show and the International Motorsports Industry Show (IMIS), both of which were acquired by the association in 2012. It was an unusual turn of events for an association to buy a for-profit organization. “We consolidated IMS and PRI in Indianapolis,” said Kersting. “We made some hard determinations that were influenced by the fact that we are an association. We put profitability aside and eliminated the duplication of shows. Conservatively, I’d say we saved industry members $7 to $8 million annually. When we look at ROI, we take that into account.”

McKay also asked Slater about how AEM has diversified beyond its triennial CONEXPO-CON/AGG and its biennial ICUEE, the International Construction & Utility Equipment Exposition. “We made a decision about 12 years to go all in,” said Slater. “We decided to build verticals, like World of Asphalt, in the off years, and to expand internationally through partnerships and joint ventures.” Despite its dominant position today, Slater said AEM learned the hard way. “We couldn’t make it work in China,” said Slater. “CONEXPO Asia used to lose $700,000 a show.” After partnering with Messe München GmbH, Munich Trade Fairs (Shanghai) Co., Ltd., and a trio of Chinese construction trade associations in 2009, AEM now nets $700,000 for each show in China, he said. “When we go overseas, we’ve taken the tact of working with local and global partners. It reduces the risk.”
Case Study: How to Reinvent a 100+ Year Old Show

A laser-like focus on quality and sensory experiences made for a well-received session featuring Cosmoprof North America’s Daniela Ciocan, director of marketing and Eric Horn, show director. Cosmoprof placed 90th on the Gold 100 and has been showing steady growth in recent years thanks to the strategy and teamwork of the dynamic duo.

The 2013 show grew to nearly 210,000 net square feet, and the momentum continues. Said Horn: “We used the entire show floor this year. Next year, we hope to grow into the new floor that Mandalay Bay is building.”

The secret to the success of Cosmoprof is a focus on quality. The philosophy was developed when the Professional Beauty Association and Italy’s Bologna Fiera teamed up in 2003 to revamp the show as a rebirth of an exhibition launched back in 1904 by the Beauty and Barber Supply Institute, Inc. The show is now a vibrant and high-style gathering of the beautiful people who sell beauty in salons, spas and top-tier department stores.

Ciocan and Horn described their path to reinvention before an audience of show organizers who shared their enthusiasm for making trade shows an exciting sensory experience which allows their attendees to consider themselves part of an elite group.

A major step taken in that direction by Cosmoprof was creating an ambiance that places attendees in a high-fashion environment. And that meant an appropriately beautiful setting at Mandalay Bay, which Horn said caused some initial sticker shock among long-time exhibitors.

“Our costs went through the roof,” Horn said. “Some exhibitors pulled out of the show temporarily but all of them eventually came back. They realized that it was better for the industry because Cosmoprof is a show about beauty and it has to look beautiful.”

New segments and new exhibitors have been an important ingredient of Cosmoprof’s growth. And while the aesthetics of the show may scream “high end,” Ciocan said her marketing team aggressively court new startups and smaller companies that make up a large share of the beauty products industry. “In fact, a majority of our business is done with startup companies,” she said. “Our job is to help them promote their business.”

The show floor at Cosmoprof offers a number of choices for new exhibitors, including packages that guarantee one-on-one meetings with key retailers, the recruitment of influential bloggers who come to the show, a sample bar that puts products in the hands of focused buyers, and an upscale pavilion for new companies. A chic lounge area for a select group of small companies is a good example of the opportunities Cosmoprof offers its exhibitors. The gleaming white décor and central location on the floor is an enticement to smaller companies that are invited to join. “It was profitable from its first year,” Horn said. “People used to dislike being in the center of the floor, but now it is a hub of activity.”

The high-end features on the show floor as well as its overall aesthetics give Cosmoprof an image that convinces exhibitors that this show is the market leader and will stay on top.

Field said hardlines, Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity all play a role, but he thinks cellular is the future. “Ask venues to install a DAS (distributed antenna system) because it empowers you to have LTE speed levels via cellular networks in every accessible location in a venue — from meeting rooms to bathrooms,” said Field.

“It puts less burden on the Wi-Fi.”

In addition, he said Reed asks venues that are hosting its trade shows to consider updating their Wi-Fi infrastructure if it is more than 10 years old. “The winning formula is DAS with the major carriers plus quality dual band Wi-Fi equals success,” said Field. “Success means your customers stay connected.”

To accomplish that, he asks the venue for free light business use in all accessible areas of the building. “I’m talking about the basics, like making a phone call and checking e-mail, not streaming video,” he said. Field commended the Sands Expo in Las Vegas for leading the way, starting two years ago, and the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center to New York for their recent efforts.

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“We had 151,000 attendees at New York Comic Con in October at Javits,” said Field. “We had some minor challenges as they learn the new system, but the new Javits infrastructure handled the capacity without any problem. They are heading in the right direction!”

Field also discussed how Reed is using technology to track traffic trends on the show floor. Reed has deployed Instant Counting mats, which go under the aisle carpet, and quantitative assessment devices (quads), which are access points that capture Mac addresses. “Both have their pros and cons,” said Field. “We can assess overall traffic flow, as well as dwell time in each area.”

On the pro side, the mats are discreet, wireless and battery-powered, but the installation is easier than the mats and they are lightweight, he said. “But the quads only pick up those with Wi-Fi turned on, which is averaging about 60% of attendees and growing,” said Field.

“It’s also anonymous, but you can gather unique customer data if it’s combined with a mobile app.”

Finally, Field addressed beacons and ibeacons, which both use Bluetooth low-energy (BLE) wireless technology to provide location-based information and services. He discussed the pros and cons of both technologies.

On the plus side, ibeacons can:

* Alert customers who are not currently running the event app,
* Message proactively based on location (such as welcome messages),
* Capture traffic trends and prompt action (such as printing a badge from the app when entering the venue).

However, he noted, “They can only identify location within about a 10 to 15-ft. radius, so they can’t be used for geo-location,” said Field.

Beacons can offer GPS-like features, which is ideal for providing turn-by-turn directions on the show floor. “They offer highly accurate location awareness,” said Field. “At worst, it’s six to nine feet. At best, it’s three feet.” But beacons can only function when the event app is running on a smartphone.

Reed deployed beacon technology at three shows, including the National Hardware Show, JCK Las Vegas and the Global Gaming Expo (G2E), in 2014. “We haven’t used ibeacons, but we are planning to use a combination of both in the future,” said Field.

For Reed, all of these technologies play in a role in enhancing the value of its face-to-face events. “Venue connectivity leads to better adoption of mobile tools offered at shows,” said Field. “Higher usage of mobile gets a higher number of users captured for traffic trends, and higher adoption of mobile tools and apps leads to better analytics that can be combined with traditional traffic trend data to deliver a better customer experience.”
Industry leaders identified some of the issues they face during a panel discussion at the Trade Show Executive (TSE) Gold 100 Awards & Summit. Issues addressed included advocacy and education, the need for an industry PR campaign, working with venues, and safety and security concerns at events. The overriding conclusion was that the industry is stronger when it works as a unified force.

Burning Issues Part I Addresses Education, Advocacy and Rates

Tom Cindric, VP of Hanley Wood Exhibitions, moderated the panel that included Larry Arnaudet, executive director of ESCA; David DuBois, president & CEO of IAEE; and Lew Shomer, executive director of SISO.

Advocacy, Education, Promotion

Larry Arnaudet said that much of his time is devoted to advocacy. In answer to Tom Cindric’s question regarding whether union rules and regulations will become more exhibitor-friendly, Arnaudet said that changes have been made, and that “work rules and regulations are coming into modern times.”

Lew Shomer said the industry needs to take a strategic and tactical approach to educating those outside of the trade show industry. He said more educational institutions need to be made aware of face-to-face events as an industry. Industry associations are developing presentations to take to schools and these can be plugged into existing curriculums, he noted. David DuBois said IAEE, along with the U.S. Travel Association and other groups, is taking a holistic approach to developing an aggressive public relations campaign. “Our focus is on showing the value of exhibitions,” he said.

Working with Venues

As convention centers face increasing pressure to cover operating costs, Cindric asked whether the way rent is calculated and charged needs to change. Shomer said that most venues are sensitive to the needs of show managers and that if there are changes, then all parties will need to change together. Arnaudet added that the trade show is a three-legged stool, with the venue, organizer and contractor as the critical components. When only one leg is affected, the others are affected as well.

Safety and Security

Cindric asked the panelists how they’re educating members on preparedness in light of Ebola and safety and security concerns. Shomer said that show organizers are limited in what they can do. “You have to be aware, but you can’t take everyone’s temperature,” he said. “And how do you control 5,000+ people?” Gregg Caren, executive vice president of SMG, responded from the audience that there are risk factors for some events, and those who need to be prepared, are prepared.

An Industry Working Together

What has changed since Team San Jose attempted to provide in-house labor at the San Jose Convention Center? Shomer answered, “One mistake in San Jose made us stronger as an industry. We’re all working together as an industry representing different stakeholders.”

Burning Issues Part II Covers Terrorism, Pensions, Data Breaches

The second round of Burning Issues that heated up the Gold 100 Summit focused on topics that go beyond merely creating an enjoyable and productive experience for exhibitors and attendees. The four-member panel, moderated by Hanley Wood Exhibitions Vice President Tom Cindric, tackled the potential uncertainty show organizers face over security and the future of their workforces in the age of minimum wage mandates, deferred retirements, and President Obama’s controversial Affordable Care Act.

Trade and consumer shows are particularly at risk for violent incidents — from workplace violence to those making political “statements” to terrorism — because they are soft targets with a high concentration of vulnerable people. Media coverage of a traumatic incident would impact the industry as a whole, ranging from reluctance to travel, cancelation of flights and hotel reservations, postponement or cancelation of events, and other consequences.

Many show organizers are not prepared to deal with such situations. “A reaction is not a solution,” veteran show manager Jack Chalden, president of Chalden & Associates, told the audience. Chalden’s remark captured the overall theme of taking proactive steps to protect employees, venues and other assets. Chalden said that preparation, development and activation of an industry-wide security plan should be undertaken quietly. He also emphasized that comprehensive security education resources should be developed for event producers.

“There is a sense of urgency around security,” Chalden said. “And it’s not just the large events that could be affected. Think of the impact of an incident at a small conference of CEOs.”

The odds of a bomb are low, but cyber attacks on major U.S. companies seem to be on the upswing. The idea of thieves stealing credit card and personal information by breaching a show’s registration system means show organizers, hotels and service contractors need to be up to speed on the latest security protocols for payment cards.

“Make sure that any vendor you are working with is protecting your data,” said Heidi Voorhees, senior vice president of housing for Experient, a Maritz Travel Company, which handles more than one million registrations annually.

Heather Ronnow, executive vice president of Global Experience Specialists (GES), added, “It’s also about making sure your own employees understand the nature of the data that they are entrusted with and the latest (security) protocols that exist.”

Those employees can range in age from Millennials who were raised on technology to Baby Boomers who have had to learn on the job. “How do you get these different types of employees to engage with one another?” said Voorhees, who suggested a mentoring strategy in which the younger staff members impart their experience with computers and social media to “make sure the employee who has been there a long time isn’t stagnating.”

The so-called Silver Tsunami of seasoned employees in the ranks of companies nationwide has brought the issue of pensions, or lack thereof, into the spotlight. Of particular concern is the potential for shortfalls in municipal pensions at city-owned convention centers, and in the convention center union plans that service contractors pay into.

Union plans rely on new employees and new employers chipping into the pot. But labor reforms have curbed the size of the workforce at some trade shows and, at the same time, wobbly city finances have undercut municipal plans.

Will the unions and city hall begin putting pressure on the convention centers to raise prices in order to reduce the red ink? Gregg Caren, executive vice president of ESCA, convention centers and business development at SMG, told the audience that the need to keep prices competitive would likely prevent such a development.

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Dealing with Incorrigible Reporters

To round out the Gold 100 Summit program, Mark Bernheimer, founder and Principal of MediaWorks Resource Group and former CNN International news correspondent, gave the audience a crash course in how to deal with today’s ever-changing media environment.

“It’s hard to define who’s more dangerous today: the journalism school graduate or the citizen reporter,” he said. For the former, it’s a profession; for the latter, it’s a hobby — and the hobbyists are gaining ground, he said. “One person with a phone can equal a news story,” he said.

Those in the trade show industry also need to remember that bloggers rely on traditional media for their information, so show executives need to use caution when speaking on the record about their shows and industries.

Bernheimer’s recommendations — interspersed with video clips of interviews that didn’t go so well — include:

• Choose your interviews carefully and prepare by anticipating questions.
• Be aware of ‘ambush interviews’ that try to stir or play off controversy.
• Set your own objectives and achieve those first before helping the reporter accomplish his/her objectives — but do give them a story that you want out in public.
• Speak in reporter-friendly language rather than industry lingo, and give them some usable quotes.
• If you are not the most qualified person to provide an answer, say so and offer to put the reporter in touch with the right person.
• If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so.
• Don’t answer questions you don’t understand or those that require speculative answers.

• NEVER say ‘no comment’ because it implies that you are hiding something.
• Never speak off the record.

Bernheimer concluded the whirlwind lesson doing a mock interview with Gold honoree, John H. Riddle, president of Riddle & Associates, who manages The Clean Show. Bernheimer put Riddle through the ringer, questioning him about his show and the industry. How did he do? Bernheimer gave Riddle high marks for deferring some questions to the cleaning association leadership rather than trying to answer them himself and also for referring questions about green efforts to the industry experts.

Coming Up Next
Trade Show Executive’s Gold 100 salutes the largest trade shows of the year every Fall. TSE is surveying delegates and sponsors on their site preferences, dates and session desires for the 2015 event. Feel free to send your comments to Trade Show Executive staff as well.

The fastest-growing exhibitions take the spotlight in the Spring at the Trade Show Executive Fastest 50 Awards & Summit, May 19-21 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. Make plans to attend now!