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The Cooperative Role of World Trade Show Associations

As the world rapidly continues to grow as a single global marketplace, it is critical to keep the global marketplace vibrant and diversified to avoid a monopoly by a chosen few to control it. This is already the case in a few venues like in Moscow where you must build and install with the official contractor only. With consolidation of service providers, the result may be that trade shows get cheaper, but creativity will be stifled and all exhibits will begin to look the same. Is this a good solution?

In spite of the political, religious, and resource differences we have between countries, a cooperative spirit, and an uninterrupted path to free trade, is required. There are many exhibit industry association from all countries in the world. An excellent umbrella association is UFI, which encompasses venues, show organizers, and exhibit suppliers. Another is **IFES** (International Federation of Exhibit & Event Services) who was created to be a unifying federation of country *exhibit supplier associations* with a mission to bring harmony for the **exhibitors** who market internationally at trade show events. **IFES** has declared this to be their mission among nations. With regard to global trade show marketing, trusted and **unbiased leadership** is needed to guide the way for the common good of exhibitors. An organizational example might be the United Nations, World Trade Center, or OPEC. Each have their faults, but their mission is understood—global unity and fairness for people of all nations. It seems that this agreed vision always is interrupted by a power struggle that leans political. I feel that a good idea remains a good idea when followed as agreed. Good ideas to create a viable global marketplace cannot be abandoned each time a conflict arises. The unified vision remains, but actions are then put on hold till the dust settles and power moguls back off. The world will never be perfect and in harmony with each other, but our common vision for a unified global marketplace can be reached in part through trade show marketing with help from impartial associations like **IFES** who have no single countries agenda.

I see **IFES** also playing a role to connect country exhibit suppliers and encourage them to view themselves as world thinkers, and not a part of an inner circle circle of exclusive partners. Powerful American, British, and German exhibit suppliers must humbly see the world of trade shows as a unique market with cultural differences. Sensitivity, and a willigness to accept these differences when working abroad, will create a cooperative environment to enhance the power of face to face marketing through trade shows and build a stronger world economy.

There is no right way, there is no wrong way, there is only a different way. Know and respect what is different and influence change when it appears that a monopoly is tying our hands and making us all look to be the same shade of grey.

*“As a trade show association leader, **IFES** must build on its perception as an unbiased leader that has no country preference. As the world continues to shift with power and resources IFES companies are ready and able to adjust and cooperate with each other to provide trade show services anywhere in the world. The IFES agenda is to support our mutual end customers (exhibitors) to grow and to contribute to the success of a one world economy”*, comments **Voicu Sferdianu**/Expo Design System and IFES President.

The dedicated IFES members and the country associations who support them will make it easier for world corporations to succeed seamlessly across the globe. Combining our different flavors to create a new recipe for the good of the exhibitor will always be better than creating an exclusive and limited trade show supplier recipe where everything looks the same in order to make it cheaper. In the next five years, we cannot prevent corporate consolidations from taking place in the exhibit industry. I believe that the exhibit supplier/organizer giants will continue to grow in each of seven regions of the world and will cooperate with the same entrepreneurial spirit as that of the smaller design and production companies. I hope I am correct here, and also believe in the value of *think big, act small*. In the end, *exhibitors* rule, but we as world exhibit suppliers must act as a guiding light to provide fair and creative solutions that push to support cooperation between countries to grow a strong world economy for all through trade show marketing.