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## ***Connecting Worldwide Exhibit Supplier Associations in North America***

In 1995 three past presidents of EDPA pushed to get the American association EDPA in the international marketplace. Koen Bogaert, Leslie Zech, and Holgar Nicolaysen of IFES encouraged Ingrid Boyd of EDPA to join IFES. Dalton Jenkins and Larry Kulchawik then carried the torch afterwards. At the time, EDPA membership to IFES was not fully supported by its members. Other EDPA presidents then followed to pave the way to help American exhibit suppliers compete internationally.

The dues payment required for IFES membership became a major issue, since not all EDPA members participated internationally. This dues fee became a value vs return issue for EDPA general membership. So ten years later IFES changed their by-laws to allow individual exhibit companies to be direct members of IFES, as well as the country associations they represented. Dues were then paid directly, and not through the association. This was a controversial move at the time, but in the end was the right move. This change opened the door wider for networking between countries and also opened the door for other country suppliers to be IFES members, since some countries did not have an active exhibit industry association. During this period, the two strongest exhibit marketing countries, Germany and USA, launched international chapters within their own associations. Both EDPA and FAMAB fully realized the international need of their members to find trusted partners, so they each created an international chapter to provide an added focus, knowledge, and networking for the exhibit supplier members doing international work. This was also an added source of revenue for the associations. There were times when both FAMAB and EDPA felt they did not need IFES or OSPI, since their mutual strength and influence in the expo business was so strong. In the end, these two powerful associations elected not to be myopic in they're thinking and realized the power of being a citizen of the world, rather than rule it with a few. Think big, act small.

The exhibit supplier members of both EDPA and FAMAB associations are entrepreneurial in spirit and are made up of some of the most powerful and generous exhibit companies in the world. They all believe in the power of trade shows. For their support and generosity, their members want value in their membership. The big exhibit companies also realized that they need to think big, but act small to be trusted among their colleges in their region.

Of all the country associations that have "international chapters," only EDPA has strong membership from exhibit suppliers outside the USA. The international members who join EDPA are looking for one thing — added business and trusted partners from a strong American marketplace. They are looking to expand and support their customers

outside of their own country region. American exhibit companies are also looking for trusted international partners to support their total efforts abroad. This two way exchange will eventually develop to create exclusive partnerships for the suppliers who manage multiple international events. I'm not sure how long this balloon will expand, but for now is still growing. IFES plays a strong role to provide a platform for fairness and cooperation between countries. As the globe turns, so do the locations selected to conduct a trade show. A united IFES stands in the belief that all countries collectively offer a unique opportunity to the end users when trade show venue locations continue to shift from country to country, and local knowledge and resources are needed.