



Future Conference and Exposition Concepts

DHI Staff, in conjunction with the Conference and Exposition Council, has for many years been diligently working to enhance the content, quality, and subsequent attendance and participation at the annual Conference and Exposition. These efforts had yielded, up until the recent economic recession, an increase in average distributor attendance in the first decade of the new century over the previous decade.

Unfortunately, significant manufacturer consolidation which climaxed in the late 1990's/early 2000's, but which has continued at a lesser pace in recent years, has decreased the number of exhibiting companies and subsequent exhibit booths since that previous period. This, coupled with the subsequent migration of numerous independent sales agents to factory employed sales representatives, has caused a notable decline in the total attendance at our annual event, despite the increased distributor participation.

These factors have often led to the perception that the Show is in decline, in need of urgent repair, should be held less frequently, or even abandoned. DHI has conducted significant research over the recent years with our industry constituents; manufacturers, distributors, and sales representatives, and the results tell us quite otherwise. There is still a very distinct need within our industry's distribution channel to gather together at least once a year for channel partners and prospects to network and to see new products and suppliers they might not otherwise throughout the year.

Recently DHI contracted a well-known exposition industry consulting company, Tradeshow Logic, to evaluate the research already completed and to conduct additional extensive interviews with our constituents. We felt it is extremely important to bring in an outside expert who could have an objective view of the changing needs of our industry and our Show, and could lend their exposition industry expertise to improving our event.

After completing their research, Tradeshow Logic facilitated an intensive two day meeting of the Conference and Exposition Council, comprised of representatives from all three industry constituents, to review the results, deliberate recommendations, and propose solutions for the DHI Board of Governors to consider. From this process came two recommendations that the BOG approved for final consideration:

#1...Continue to enhance the current Annual Conference and Exposition to increase value and participation, while developing an Annual National Executive Summit to be held either in conjunction with the annual convention or at a separate time and place.

#2...Conduct two or more Regional Conference and Expositions each year, in place of the annual convention, but scaled to reduce costs while increasing participation. Additionally, conduct an Annual National Executive Summit held at a separate time and place.

DHI staff has been charged with further developing these two event models, creating business models to determine the value proposition to our industry constituents and the financial impact to the Association, validate these concepts with these constituents, and develop transitional plans for either concept selected. The BOG would then approve the concept determined to be in the best interests of the industry as a whole.

We are sharing this update with you now in order to solicit initial feedback to these two concepts and the direction that we are considering in DHI's role as the facilitator of our industry's distribution channel relationships, as well as the primary provider of industry education to our members. In order to better understand these two concepts and for you to provide feedback, we are outlining some additional preliminary information about the event concepts, as have been developed to this point. Therefore what we can share with you now is only very conceptual, without details concerning locations, actual costs, etc. Most importantly, the continued development of these concepts will be decidedly driven by your feedback and input.

The National Executive Summit is intended for executive management positions with a manufacturer, distributor, or independent sales agency. The goal is to provide access to executive level personnel with networking opportunities and business information sessions not available elsewhere in our industry. The programs would focus on industry trends and issues, business education, political and economic insights, with national recognized speakers and presenters.

The conceptual format would be 2 ½ days for these educational sessions, networking events, and optional recreational activities. It would include business sessions at breakfast and lunch, networking receptions and dinners. There would be no formal product displays, but products could be a part of the pre-scheduled private meetings between manufacturers and distributors conducted in hotel room suites as part of the format.

The event could be held in conjunction with the annual Conference and Exposition, but more than likely at a separate time and place. If so, it would be rotated around the country at resort facilities, encouraging social networking recreational events, such as golf, tennis, etc. as options on the agenda, as well as an optional pre or post "stay and play" opportunity for the attendee and their family.

The Regional Conference and Exposition concept would involve re-engineering the current annual event to a scale that would allow it to be conducted at minimum of two, but possibly three or more times per year, and rotated around the country in cities with strong regional population density, but with a focus on economic travel and hotel rates. It would be designed to bring the features and benefits, programs and agenda of the current Annual Conference and Exposition, on a somewhat reduced scale, to a larger number of prospective attendees due to the reduced cost of travel and accommodations.

This lower cost strategy is intended to appeal to more distributor firms in closer proximity to a Regional event, and as importantly for them to bring more employees from their firm than to a national annual event. In order to contain costs for exhibiting suppliers, self-contained convention/hotel facilities would be utilized with lower exhibit costs such as booth space, labor, and material handling. An imposed booth size limitation, as well as utilizing standardized pre-fabricated displays customized by each Exhibitor with graphic treatments, is also an option under consideration. The goal is to bring a greater number of attendees while lowering the cost of exhibiting, increasing the value of participation to Exhibitors.

The event would retain our current 2 day format, with the potential for an optional third day prior/post to the main event for pre-scheduled private meetings between manufacturers and distributors in hotel room suites. Conference educational programs would be focused on technical, mid-management level, and CEP points classes, rather than executive level programs, and with a possible focus on regional topics and issues.