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Notes

Behind the Scenes at **bC India**

By Michelle Bruno



bC India is the offspring of Messe München International (MMI) of Munich, Germany, organizers of the BAUMA global portfolio of construction shows, and the Milwaukee-based Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM), producers of the CONEXPO-CON/AGG construction shows. The “b” of BAUMA and “C” of CONEXPO form the name of the organizations’ first joint venture in India.

bC India was a first in many ways—the first joint venture for MMI and AEM, the first time AEM teamed up with another exhibition organizer to produce an event, and the first major trade show of construction equipment held by foreign trade show organizers in India. The show held February 8-11 welcomed more than 22,000 visitors and 508 exhibitors from over 30 countries. Only 30% of exhibiting companies were from India.

The co-produced exhibition was held at the Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai—reclaimed (vacant) land that the Indian government owns and rents. Show organizers were required to build a structure from the ground up—complete with air conditioning, solid floor, lighting, telecommu-

nications, restroom facilities and food concessions—to house the indoor exhibits.

The temporary building was seven meters (23 feet) high and featured a flat roof to evenly accommodate construction equipment throughout. The combined indoor and outdoor exhibit space measured 88,000 square meters (about 947,200 square feet). Organizers collected soil samples, performed weight testing, and added concrete reinforcements in some areas to accommodate the heavy machinery.

Most of the infrastructure for exhibitions in India is outdated or unsuitable with the exception of hotels. “If India wants to see professionally run exhibitions, they need infrastructure. The buildings [used for trade shows] are extremely old and deficient in terms of electrical wiring and telecommunications. There are challenges with air conditioning and lighting. Plus, shows that require outdoor exhibit space are difficult to accommodate because they use up parking area leaving no space for attendees to park,” says Megan Tanel, AEM’s Vice President, Expositions and Events.

Unlike trade shows in the U.S. that are controlled by general contractors, the bC India exhibitors arranged for their own services from exhibitor appointed contractors. They selected outside firms to provide hard wall stands (pipe and drape is not used

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outside the U.S.), customs services, transportation, lifting, handling, and storage facilities. Several official contractors are available on site to assist. Laborers are brought in, housed, and fed on site for the duration of the move-in, exhibition, and move-out.

Because safety standards in India can differ from those in the U.S. or Europe, AEM and MMI brought in technical advisors to work with the local vendors that handled equipment such as large cranes. “Although Indians want to get very involved in safety, operator training, certifications, and are more in tune with looking at engineer-approved layouts, you see people in flip flops hanging off of trusses,” Tanel explains.

“Customs procedures can definitely be a challenge,” Tanel says. “In most cases shipping [from the U.S. to India] is not as expensive as Russia or Brazil but westerners that go must expect that it’s not like domestic trade show shipping,” she adds. For example, in order to clear goods through customs in India, exhibitors are required to obtain a Letter of Authorization (allowing the customs agent to clear goods on the exhibitor’s behalf) and an Embassy Guarantee Letter (required for temporary imports when exhibitors are unable to provide the guarantee on their own). Tanel recommends working with a freight forwarder that has experience in India.

Foreign trade show organizers such as MMI and AEM often have different service requirements or ask for more than Indian vendors have typically supplied in the past. “You can’t go in with expectations that it will be like the U.S.,” Tanel says. “You should look for companies that have relationships with local vendors and understand your [unique] needs. For example, registration is very important to our members. They need attendee demographics information and verification. Managing the expectations is the key,” she says.

Despite the challenges, India represents huge opportunities for exhibition organizers, exhibitors, and service providers. The Indian Government has indicated that the gross domestic product (GDP) will soon rival that of China. “There is so much need for infrastructure and you are dealing with a very educated attendee base,” Tanel explains. U.S. companies have established operations in India and other international



An overview of bC India during the exhibition.



A glimpse inside the temporary structure.



Outdoor exhibit space at bC India.

exhibition organizers in fields such as medical, telecom, mining, and agriculture are producing exhibitions there. “What AEM was able to do should send the message that it is doable,” she adds.

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