



ROGERS
WORLDWIDE

GLOBAL VIEW

Notes



THE SEARCH for a Dedicated Partner

By Michelle Bruno

The ability to transport an exhibition shipment from one part of the globe to another depends on the experience and expertise of an overseas partner—another company with the same mindset, attitude toward customer service, and understanding of the deadline driven nature of the business. Finding knowledgeable companies is one thing, uncovering those rare gems willing to expand on the notion of “normal working hours” and able to deftly navigate the cultural barriers and customs red tape that can prevent a shipment from arriving on time, is another.

The search for reliable overseas partners begins with a list of criteria including:

- Financial stability
- Licenses and insurance
- Dedication to exhibitions
- English-speaking staff
- Excellent track record
- Established relationships with customs authorities
- Experience working in the main convention centers
- Access to lifting equipment and skilled labor
- Access to warehousing facilities

- Established relationships with government entities
- Membership in trade associations such as the International Exhibition Logistics Association (IELA)

Companies outside the U.S. are required to be proficient in many more areas of the business than their U.S. counterparts. For example, the logistics companies handle customs clearance, delivery to the show site, delivery to the stand and removal (and storage) of empty cases. After the show, they perform all of the same services in reverse order. They are often contracted to perform lifting and positioning services as well as unpacking and repacking the shipments.

Besides being excellent logisticians, a desirable partner is also a good sales organization and bill collector. The overseas representatives are expected to follow up on sales leads and secure shipments from local companies exhibiting in U.S. shows. They are also required to issue invoices in the country of origin, collect money from the exhibitors and remit it promptly to the U.S. partner.

The most valuable partners are those in a position to secure business opportunities, such as official appointments from trade show organizers and venues in their own countries, in reciprocation for the same prac-

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tice on the U.S. side. The ability to work in difficult markets such as Russia, India, Brazil and China is also a plus as Americans continue to increase their trade show participation in these regions.

Financial stability and resources are a huge factor in a successful partnership. Owning warehouse facilities near the port or airport and having offices in several cities across the country are huge advantages. Being able to provide bank guarantees to support temporary import bonds for U.S. exhibitors is also extremely beneficial.

Making the “ground rules” and operating procedures clear is important for starting and maintaining a strong partnership. Rogers Worldwide, for example, has carefully selected agents willing to adhere to a strict set of performance standards including:

- Offices and agents are fully licensed, registered and insured
- Immediate (same day) acknowledgement of all customer inquiries
- Quotations returned to exhibitors within 24 hours
- Offices staffed with experienced transportation specialists
- Competitive bids obtained from carriers to provide most economical service package
- Stringent financial requirements for all offices and agents
- Personalized service

Rogers’ offices and in-country representatives also maintain relationships with local customs authorities, transportation services and labor unions so that they can anticipate delays due to port congestion, labor actions, weather and other circumstances.

Despite the vetting, communicating, and relationship-building required to find and work with a good partner, it most often comes down to dedication. As those who have worked in the industry for any length

of time will attest, exhibitions are more than a job. They are a “lifestyle.” Finding a partner who lives and breathes that philosophy is a rare find.

International Exhibition Logistics Associates



The majority of reputable logistics agents worldwide are members of the International Exhibition Logistics Associates (IELA). Like many professional and trade associations, IELA works toward creating standards, representing member interests, and sharing information with the objective of enhancing the reputation and professionalism of its members.

The 25-year old organization plays an important role in the global exhibition industry. In addition to providing performance standards for “contractors involved in the physical movement of material to and from an exhibition site,” the association acts as a formal liaison between its members and associated industries such as show organizers, exhibit designers and stand builders.

Membership in IELA is limited to companies that meet strict criteria. To apply applicants must submit the following:

- List of owners and the percentage of ownership
- Amount of freight (tonnage) handled over the past two years
- Revenue for the past two years
- Primary contact persons
- List of official show appointments
- Financial statements for the past two years
- Letters of recommendation from two existing IELA members
- Membership fee

Rogers Worldwide was granted membership through its sister company in May 2009. For more information, visit www.iela.org.

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