

Exhibiting their skills behind the scenes at BTME

January 2018 saw one of the most successful BTME shows in Harrogate's history, with a record number of exhibitors and visitors. Here, Tony Evans, MD of PAN Publicity Ltd, tells Turf Business what happens behind-the-scenes and how such a large-scale event comes together so well; perhaps you were one of the visitors and were also wondering how it's done?

"It all starts almost as one year's show closes. Each client has to be canvassed as to how the show went for them; if the stand layout was OK and if the position in the hall (or indeed the hall they were in) was good. We have to make sure the show organiser knows any change of position that our clients want to make and, even if they all want to stay put, they have completed their booking forms in time to secure the space.

About six months before BTME starts, we have to design the stand layout and graphics. We construct all of our stands using an aluminium extrusion system that is owned by us and 'hired' out per stand build.

Whilst every stand is bespoke, we do

try and use common heights and lengths of material. This isn't always possible and differing lengths have to be fabricated in our workshop. A bill of materials is made up for each stand and correlated on a master spread sheet in order to be sure we have enough stock materials to build all the stands we are contracted to do. Adaptations to designs can be made to avoid buying new parts when existing ones can be modified to suit.

Components and construction

The fabric of the construction is filled with graphic panels, either solid, flexible fabric or opaque if we are making a light box. Spot lighting then completes the components needed for

the finished design. Accessories like tables, stools, racking, literature racks and TVs have also got to be considered at this stage.

It is always difficult to get clients to address the issue of stand design so far in advance and it sometimes takes several requests before we can get started – unless of course the design is unaltered from the previous show. All designs are drawn initially in a two-dimension software package to make sure the footprint will fit the allocated space, and then transferred into a 3D package to produce colour visuals. It's normally at this stage that the clients get interested because they can see exactly what the stand will look like!

Whilst, at this stage, the graphic

elements are not necessarily confirmed we can proceed to – nothing is 'just in time' here! As we know what graphics are needed, the final design and artwork can wait until nearer the show.

Around one month before the first day of building, we put together the main construction components into the loading crates. Each stand has to have their own crates in order to deliver them directly to their stand position. At BTME 2018 our nine stands were split over three halls – A, B and M and it would be time consuming to have a central stock and having to keep visiting it over the build-up days.

Loading is next, on the Friday before BTME week. Because of the weight





It's day three and the team are erecting the DLF stand ready for BTME.

restrictions for commercial vehicles we have to be sure we don't overload them. We choose to hire our vans rather than own them in order to give us the maximum flexibility for each event. For BTME 2018 we had three vans; a Luton with a tail lift for the graphics panels; furniture; TVs and tools; an extra-long wheel base for the metalwork (max 4M long) and a short wheel base for the electrics (spot lights, fluorescent tubes, etc).

Roads and loads

Having travelled the 250 miles from Great Yarmouth to Harrogate on the Friday evening we were ready to begin unloading on Saturday. We were able to unload the long and short wheel

base vans of their crates directly into a holding area inside Hall A, and then distribute them to each stand area. With regard to the Luton bodied van, we had loaded the graphics panels in the reverse order of stand building so would only need to unload them as they were needed. This saves them getting damaged or wet (it did start to snow!) whilst waiting to be used. The furniture and racking were unloaded onto pallets and left in the holding area inside Hall A - ready for when they would be needed. The TVs were safely stored in the BIGGA organisation team's office - a great thank you to them.

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people on an exhibitions' organisation team. They know the time constraints we are under and help from them is always appreciated. Mike Coleman has been in charge at BTME for a number of years and we have always been fortunate to have him on side – Lucy Mellor is now taking over and is as equally conversant of the needs of exhibition contractors. It would be nice if other trade show organisers used the same type of people!

The order in which we build the nine stands is dictated by the products on display and the availability of the halls. As Hall M was made available from the Saturday lunchtime, we started there. All three clients had machinery that would need to be brought in as early as possible on the Sunday in order to aid the stands at the front of the hall. We completed them by 6pm teatime and retired to the pub! 8am Sunday saw us back on site where we completed three in Hall B and one stand in Hall A – again a 6pm finish and a swift half in the pub before dinner. Monday is normally where 'all hell lets loose' and every pop-up display you've ever seen makes its way into the halls – but not at

7am thank goodness! We cracked on and started to wind down by lunchtime. But nothing is ever over until you clean up. All those empty crates had to be stored away along with all the cardboard boxes from the furniture. It only remained for the TVs to be connected up and working – then the snagging. Not much this time, just the odd blown bulb, the extra literature rack required and the 4-way extension lead for Johnsons Seeds that they always need, and always remember when we're all done – this year a tap on the shoulder in the pub reminded us.

Half the team went home, to return again on the Thursday, whilst the other half stayed on and carried out Public Relations work for our clients. A total of four press conferences; one press lunch; an evening reception and several meetings were crammed in over the two and a half days.

The show's over

Breaking down is just the reverse – pack the TVs and furniture away; distribute the crates to each stand; break the stands down, pack the materials into the crates; take the

graphic panels to the Luton, etc. We started at 2pm on the Thursday and had seven stands broken down by nine in the evening – the rest on the Friday morning in the three hours up to 10am. Back on the road by 10.30am and unloaded at our works by teatime.

We couldn't do it without dedicated staff – and they wouldn't do it if they didn't enjoy it!

We don't always do such mammoth builds, normally it's one or two stands at a show, but BTME and SALTEX represent the industry that we excel in and therefore has many clients.

Nor is exhibition building our only forte, we manage most marketing disciplines for our clients from Advertising to Brochures – and most things in between."

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