

HFN

November/December 2020

THE FUTURE OF HOME FURNISHINGS

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BEYOND'S \$1B
GROWTH PLAN**
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TOTAL HOME RETAIL INNOVATION & INSPIRATION

T H F N

The future of ... trade shows

MAKING MARKETS WORK

The place to network, learn and, of course, buy, trade shows are an integral part of the home furnishings industry. But this year, they had to postpone, cancel or pivot to virtual components; and for the ones that did have in-person markets later in the year, they had to rethink physical layouts and sanitation strategies. Here, trade show organizers talk about what worked this year, what didn't and where they see things going. An expanded version of this story is available at HFNDigital.com. — Andrea Lillo

What best practices did you learn this year?



Bob Maricich, CEO, IMC, organizer of Atlanta, Las Vegas and High Point markets

"At the start of the pandemic, we surveyed our buyer universe to get a feeling for where they were: the health of their businesses, their feelings on safely attending a market and whether and how they were planning to source products. A subsequent survey to exhibitors confirmed that while

markets are a necessity, they needed to be adapted during the pandemic. We concluded that we should continue with our plans to host in-person markets but would need to develop procedures for safer gatherings.

Guided by buyer sentiment, we were able to successfully adapt our market experiences. Pivots included postponing spring and summer markets; shifting to showroom-only markets for summer; presenting at-market programming online as webinars and digital content; and providing interim virtual sourcing and shopping tools."



Derek Miller, president, International Housewares Association (IHA), organizer of The Inspired Home Show

"In the wake of the cancellation of The Inspired Home Show in March, IHA converted many of the events and education that would have happened at the show to a digital format. The show's website features several product galleries; these are great resources for buyers, giving them access to

the exhibitors and products that were part of the special display areas, including the New Product Showcase, Global Innovation Awards (gia), Smart Home and Inventors Corner.

We also recorded and posted many of the educational sessions that would have taken place at the show. In addition, the new IHA Market



In IHFC at High Point Market in October

Watch Report is posted and available for download. The report features five specific consumer trends that not only shape home purchases, but also drive decisions made in all aspects of consumers' lives—and puts those trends into the context of how product developers and retailers can deliver on them. This report was then converted into a six-part webinar series that addressed the impact of COVID-19 on these trends."



Nicolette Naumann, vice president, Ambiente, Messe Frankfurt

"The pandemic has presented us trade fair organizers with completely new challenges, but we also see opportunities for the future. We are required to be flexible, but also courageous enough to launch new trade fair concepts.

Concepts that create new business-enhancing synergies will certainly accompany us even after the pandemic. For us, however, one thing is certain: in the long term, no digital meeting can replace the personal encounter and experience of products at physical trade fairs, but can only complement them in a meaningful way."

Jeff Kaufman, president, HFPA, organizer of the New York Home Fashions Market Week

"Start early—we made the call on September market late, which didn't leave enough time to vet our options and give companies enough time to build their virtual marketplaces. We've already made the call on moving to a virtual market for March, so we have [several] months to get everything lined up.

Need to open the site earlier than 8:30 a.m. on the Monday of market so buyers have a chance to get in and plan their week.

Over these last few months, the HFPA sponsored a monthly educational series open to the trade. We had a tremendous response with participants from over 60 companies joining the calls."



What could you have done better during the pandemic?



Cindy Morris, president and CEO, DMC, organizer of *Lightovation* and *Dallas Total Home & Gift Market*

"Everyone has navigated through this as best they can, and I want to complement our retailers on their ability to conduct business in myriad ways—whether that's in store, via delivery, social media or their websites. We were surprised by such quick retailer demand for in-stock and ready-to-ship items. We began creating lists of manufacturers with available products and shared that information with customers as quickly as possible. We had 90% of showrooms open for summer and fall

events plus we had Temps—getting that message out effectively was a challenge as we also promoted market dates, in-stock products and health and safety measures."

Kristi Forbes, director, senior vice president, *Forty One Madison*, organizer of the *New York Tabletop Market*

"Looking back to the start of the pandemic, I really can't say I would have done things different. None of us had gone through anything like this before, so this was completely new territory. We were all in the same shoes, waiting for information and guidance from the city and state while things were changing by the day, really hour/minute. We complied with all immediate health and safety measures and are continuing to do so.



From Las Vegas Market this summer

In terms of spring New York Tabletop Market 2020, cancelling the event was painful, we had never canceled a show in the past, but we quickly kicked off a #TableTogether philanthropy program to support regional restaurants and it still feels like it was the right thing to do.

Coming out of the recent October New York Tabletop Market, we're very happy with our new upgraded virtual show hub and the programming we were able to create to bring our community together."

Miller, IHA

"Challenge often brings about change, and IHA is further enhancing the existing Housewares Connect 365 online directory, which already allows buyers to search to find thousands of companies, brands and products. The 2.0 version of this site is in development with a formal launch planned for early next year. The new site will have updated user interfaces and more robust search



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March

26-30
Maison &
Objet

April

13-16
New York
Tabletop
Show

April

17-20
Ambiente (part
of the Interna-
tional Consum-
er Goods Show)

April

17-21
High Point
Market

THE FUTURE OF ... TRADE SHOWS

functionalities. Along with this project, special topical activations are planned throughout the year to bring buyers and sellers together in a virtual format."



Tim Hart, senior vice president, Emerald Retail Group, organizer of NY Now
"I've been so impressed by the way the team at NY Now has come together to support our community of small businesses during 2020. And I'm delighted that we launched a digital product with 650 brands in seven weeks."

What new practices or changes do you think will stay long term or permanently?

Maricich, IMC

"The omnichannel market—in-person and digital—is here to stay. Our research showed that retailers had an interest in digital buying and our stop-gap tools offered during market disruption confirmed a quick adoption of this hybrid sourcing and shopping style. Based on evolving need for omnichannel sourcing opportunities and connected e-commerce solutions, IMC is accelerating the launch of Juniper, a full suite of new digital tools launching over the next several months. Our data hub and B2B web commerce capabilities are already live with in-

tegrated sales and marketing automation, CRM and associated mobile apps will launch early next year. At the same time, the new multi-line B2B JuniperMarket e-commerce platform, launching in Q1 2021, will optimize the market experience by allowing buyers to easily refresh best sellers, discover new products and transact with vendors on a robust digital platform as a complement to in-person, on-the-road and at-market sourcing and shopping.

Additionally, we discovered an appreciation for educational opportunities presented outside of markets. Well-attended webinars and virtual events during the pandemic have inspired a hybrid before market and at-market approach to seminars and events.

Morris, DMC

"The pattern of buying was already changing, and the pandemic has truly accelerated the inevitable. Buyers want to review products on their own schedule. That might mean for the next selling season or in the case of interior designers for their next project. We are ready when they are ready. Only Dallas has open-daily showrooms in balance with market events to successfully serve buyers year-round. Our new frontier is e-commerce, and we are rapidly making advancements to offer a digital marketplace solution in partnership with MarketTime—the B2B software company based here in Dallas. For 2021 we will be extremely well positioned to offer online and physical marketplaces serving buyers on their terms and on their schedule. You will never replace the in-person community and experience for new product discovery and networking in Dallas, but online options can complement that physical dynamic extremely well."



Julia Uhrek, group show director, Consumer Goods Fairs, Messe Frankfurt
"Special times require the best possible combination of physical and digital trade show offerings. As already mentioned, the live trade show experience on site is clearly always preferable—this is also reflected and confirmed in discussions with our exhibitors, associations and partners.

The International Consumer Goods Show is a unique combination of the Ambiente, Christmasworld and Paperworld trade fairs in the exceptional situation of a worldwide pandemic. In 2022, the events will again be separated and take place in the usual order cycle. However, we will continue to adhere to the concept of a digital trade fair supplement through the Consumer Goods Digital Days.

We are now developing a completely new 'digital experience' for 2021. All participants benefit from new additional digital networking features. The ticket includes, for example, livestreaming, matchmaking and chat functions. After all, we want our customers to receive new business impulses even under pandemic conditions—business development, and this globally, is our mission."



The Health Check Station at High Point Market in October



Kaufman, HFPA

"Regardless of when we go back to an in-person market, we believe that the virtual component will remain and become part of how we do business 365 days a year. While the hope was that there was going to be a common platform that all, or most, textile companies would use as an entry point, each company figured out a way to communicate with their customers and will continue to refine that process as they move forward. Some are building their own platform, others are using platforms that are already in the market. The common theme coming out of market was that everyone figured it out, meetings were very focused and productive and there was a lot of confidence that we could transact business this way as long as we need to and want to."

How are you measuring the success of the virtual tradeshow?

Morris, DMC

"For January we will hold a virtual component of our Lightovation trade event, which is the largest residential lighting show in North America. The virtual event will be done via our partner MarketTime and the goal is to offer buyers unable to attend Lightovation the ability to review new products, survey trends and place orders directly via the site. This will be our first virtual event, and it's optional for manufacturers and buyers so we are measuring success by initial interest and participation."

Forbes, Forty One Madison

"We were pleased to see that most of our community registered for access to the virtual show hub. We also saw very high traffic and engagement compared to our usual website traffic. Time spent on our website increased nearly 700% for market!"

Hart, Emerald

"Digital is a marathon, not a sprint, so while it's very important to gather and act upon customer feedback in the short term, the true value will be measured in the medium term (six months plus)."

Longer-term success will be measured by how the reach digital provides our

community converts into in-person participation. Our mission is to present new brands to buyers, whether that's in-person or digital."

What's your best guess about when buyers will come back in force?

Maricich, IMC

Buyers are already returning to markets and more than ready to do business. With each market, more and more buyers are comfortable with travel and market attendance and have adapted to new health and safety requirements. The task at hand for IMC is producing buying opportunities where buyers can get business done, safely.

At our physical markets, our focus is on presenting the in-person discovery that buyers are seeking in this unprecedented time. The overwhelming acceptance of our Together Safely protocols at the 10 markets we have produced since June 2020 has been encouraging. As a result, we will expand our winter 2021 Atlanta and Las Vegas Market offerings to include the return of temporary exhibits with proper safety protocols and social distancing procedures in place.

As the situation continues to change, we will adapt with it. We will continue to iterate our Together Safely protocols with the most current information from public health experts and local and state government officials. We will adjust the market experience as needed to provide the most opportunity for our customers."

Morris, DMC

"We have been holding productive and safe events for months, and we are also anticipating strong attendance in January across all shows just as we experienced in the summer and fall. We actually rebounded quickly and have seen daily traffic return to 85% of usual and our market traffic at 65% to 85% of usual. But in addition to the larger markets we have also seen consistent drive-in traffic during Open House events and First Monday & Tuesday events. We are providing buyers with more frequent buying opportunities throughout the year. In fact, for 2021 we will have more than 30 buying events on campus."

Forbes, Forty One Madison

"We have found that buyers are still consistently working! Buyers in the region are making visits to the building or making virtual appointments with brands and showrooms. We hope the Spring 2021 market will be a more robust in-person experience than this year; we are fortunate to have so many major retailers located in the Northeast."

Hart, Emerald

"Buyers will be ready just as soon as large scale trade shows are permitted to stage. There is a lot of uncertainty right now as we head into Winter and COVID-19 cases rise, but the buyer appetite is strong, as we've seen based on engagement with our Digital Market and our ongoing communication with buyers." ●



From Messe Frankfurt's Nordstil trade fair this summer

August

7-10
The Inspired
Home Show

August

8-11
NY Now

Sept.

10-14
Maison &
Objet

October

4-7
New York
Home Fashions
Week

October

5-8
New York
Tabletop
Show

October

16-20
High Point
Market