

Surf's up, and so is business



Surf Expo drives revenues by connecting show attendees year round and upselling exhibit space and sponsorships.

Outfitting water sports enthusiasts who dream of ripping the waves at Oahu's North Shore, or serenely paddling the lakes and waterways of Georgia and beyond, begins at the semi-annual Surf Expo. It's the premium conference and exhibit venue for the Board, Beach and Fashion industries. Thousands of exhibitors and industry experts gather at Surf Expo to display and demo the latest innovations in surfing, skating, stand-up paddle boarding, swimming, fashion, and gifts.



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– Roy Turner, Show Director, Surf Expo

The man with overall responsibility for this mega show is the affable and easy-going Roy Turner. Roy takes his big job in stride, though, casually mixing with skate and surf champions (Tony Hawk and Kelly Slater,) swimsuit models, and senior executives of industry leaders such as Billabong, Carnival Cruise Lines, and Disney.

“We bring the Board, Beach and Fashion industries together to preview what's new in the marketplace and we work hard to innovate and keep each show valuable and exciting,” said Turner. “We put together the total beach experience including resort destinations, equipment, swimsuits and product demos.” Attendees have the chance to not only network with others in the industry but actually try out products. In the wakeboard pool you can surf and wakeboard right on the show floor, and world champion free-divers take the plunge into a super-deep diving pool.

One of Turner's greatest challenges is to continuously provide more value for attendees and exhibitors. For attendees that might mean helping them navigate the complex event floor, or helping them more easily find the vendors they came to see. For exhibitors this means simply giving them more and better opportunities to connect with their prospects.

To help him achieve that, Turner works with MarketArt to deploy the You Are Here interactive map and directory system on the event floor, on the event web site, and on mobile devices. The system provides interactive maps, wayfinding, powerful search tools, planning tools for attendees, and online-community building.

MarketArt brings audience engagement technology to shows like Surf Expo by helping attendees find and connect with vendors, exhibitors and speakers before,

during, and after the show. And considering the ubiquity of smartphones and tablets, Surf Expo attendees – any show attendees, for that matter – demand the productivity of the multi-platform web, mobile, and wayfinding tools that You Are Here provides. By providing an interactive online directory, attendees can plan ahead by mapping their path around the show. Once at the show they access touch-screen monitors throughout the exhibition space to direct them to specific booths, conference rooms, or special events such as demonstrations or entertainment.

“With budgets squeezed on travel and show duration, the MarketArt solutions help attendees make the most of their time and connect with the people they need to,” said Turner. And he relies on MarketArt all year, not just during show times. “The shows are huge events where everyone is pumped up and having fun,” said Turner, “and we try to keep the attendee engagement going year-round as well.”

The technology can also be a powerful sales tool in attracting vendors to participate in the show. Turner can assure vendors and exhibitors that they will be easily found by

Delivering Innovation and Event Engagement

Travel and show budgets squeezed

- ▶ Floor/mobile/web solutions put in place
- ▶ Glowing feedback from show director, exhibitors and attendees
- ▶ Show organizers monetize year-round engagement

a diverse audience and can customize the on-site monitors to promote exhibitors, products, events and sponsorships. MarketArt also tracks touch-screen monitor clicks and traffic patterns so he can identify the premium locations within the exhibit space – and charge accordingly.

“They enhance our back-office operations by giving us the tools to track booth space inventory, determine pricing, sell advertising – all the things that go into planning and administering the show,” said Turner.

Scott Crawford, Senior Director of National Sales for Global Experience Specialists (GES) introduced Turner to MarketArt. “My team does hundreds of shows in Florida each year and Market Art has solid solutions and people to make things go smoothly,” said Crawford. He should know since GES manages trade show services and logistics around the world.

“These shows are demanding and complex, and no one does a better job from start to finish than MarketArt. They are reliable – and agile – so they can respond quickly to the last-minute changes that are inevitable when planning and managing big shows.”

So what's the secret to Turner's success in running a Top 25 industry show? You might think it's the spine-tingling experiences, or the celebrity guests, but the smiling faces of his team at the Surf Expo website tell the real story. “At ‘Surf’ we all love the challenge and we try to keep it fun. And this industry is made up of genuinely good people having fun, too.”