



CAB ceo Justin Ratcliffe looks at why CAB are hosting the CAB Pavilion at FIT Show 2019 by reflecting back in time...

Typically, a common response to questions about why UK construction shows attract only a fraction of the audiences of their Euro counterparts is: “But we’re simply not a Euro Hub destination for exhibitions, like the ones at BAU or Fensterbau or Glasstec...” We simply can’t ignore the importance of such shows in the UK, and in our sector, there is no doubt that the FIT Show is THE show for the fabricator and installer. Things though have changed somewhat over the years.

As a young Plumb Center graduate in 1986, I was intrigued as the company launched its new brand ‘on tap for the trade’ (still more or less the same 33 years later) at the major Plumbing and Heating Show at the NEC. The company encouraged local branches to lay on coaches to bring customers to the show. How times have changed...can you imagine a fabricator or installer or even a systems company doing the same in our sector today? Let’s not forget the 80s were the heyday for construction exhibitions. I will never quite forget the excesses I saw at my first ever Interbuild in 1980 which seemed to fill the whole of the NEC! The buzz, the pure theatre...and those who are old enough to remember will know exactly what I mean..

Times have moved on and shows like businesses have had to re-create themselves. The digital marketing revolution is only one obvious factor in all of this. The old adage that ‘people buy from people’ is still true and a major factor as to why exhibitions, including the FIT Show are still highly relevant today. Time is a major factor today – companies have to work harder to attract visitors as time management at exhibitions is far more ruthless these days and many visitors will have pre-determined (thanks to digital marketing) the stands and personalities that they want to see, hence why pre-show marketing is so much more important nowadays.

The FIT Show as a young vibrant exhibition that has grown each time (the marketing spend in 2019 is around £600k), is a good example of one that has worked hard to drive visitors to the show for a good reason. The organisers also know that they must get the exhibitors to work harder each time – the ‘Everyone’s Going Live’ campaign is a great example of this, encouraging the use of short video messages with individual corporate reasons to visit each brand. Has it worked? To date the show appears on target for 10k visitors and its pre-registrations are 30% up on 2017 at the same stage.

So Why a CAB Pavilion?

The CAB Pavilion will again act as a host to several members. Almost 30 members of CAB’s aluminium in building supply chain will be exhibiting and 11 of them will be on the pavilion in the very centre of Hall 20. Creating an aluminium hall adds value and saves precious time for the visitor.



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To support the member companies on the pavilion, *The Fabricator* magazine will again be running a special FIT Show supplement, which will detail each business. Additional supplements and show guides during the exhibition will signpost the pavilion giving visitors a clear reason to visit. The synergy of having supply chain businesses close together and the opportunity for exhibitors to introduce customers to them cannot be underestimated and helps bring some ‘buzz’. With CAB actively highlighting 14 sectors in its supply chain membership, this makes activities like the CAB Pavilion reception (Tuesday pm, 21 May) an extremely popular event when the member exhibitors across the show can get together with their guests to celebrate partnerships within our sector

A videographer will be making an individual corporate video of each pavilion member while they are at the show creating further added value and a reason to be involved.

What are CAB’s messages?

CAB will be highlighting the launch of its pilot *Closed Loop Recycling Scheme* and the benefits of being involved, getting visitors to register their interest. The association will also be highlighting three key training programmes that it is developing to support members and the sector: curtain walling installers courses, fabricator and installer skills card training days and a curtain walling installer trailblazer apprenticeship (21 months).

In addition to all of this it will be highlighting the ongoing added value for membership from technical and marketing support to training seminars and regional members’ events. □

Justin Ratcliffe

For further information on the CAB Pavilion at The FIT Show 2019 contact justin.ratcliffe@c-a-b.org.uk or the CAB office on 01453 828851.