

Amped-Up Marketing Efforts Prove Successful for Franchise Expos

New marketing campaigns set to launch West Coast Franchise Expo and Franchise Expo South.

BY JOEL GOLDSTEIN

M FV Expositions has launched an aggressive marketing campaign to keep franchise expos highly visible in a congested marketplace.

Partnering with agencies to help “amp up” messaging and capture the attention and interest of qualified franchise prospects, this new campaign launched with the 19th annual International Franchise Expo, the most high-traffic franchise expo in the country, conducted in April at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. The three-day event attracted more than 150 international delegations and thanks to increased marketing efforts, received widespread media attention in the greater D.C. Metro area, including live broadcasts from the show floor on the local FOX Television affiliate.

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Rich Agar, vice president of franchise development for School of Rock, a performance-based rock music program for students from ages 7-18, took part in the broadcast saying it was the highlight of the expo for the company.

“We had our Vienna, Virginia School of Rock Band here first thing in the morning and we were on live TV from right here at the show,” said Agar. “It was a great start to the expo and, as a result, we plan to spend as much time and resources possible on participating in expos and have already booked our space at the West Coast Franchise Expo.”

The IFE campaign was a targeted approach using television and radio spots, regional, national and international print, direct mail pieces, e-mail, social and online marketing to deliver our message to the Washington, D.C. area and surrounding metro areas using all these components, explains Tom Portesy, president of MFV Expositions.

“In addition to promotions and marketing throughout the United States, we also partnered with the U.S. Department of Commerce’s International Buyer Program to promote the Expo in more than 70 foreign commercial service offices around the globe and will continue this strategy for the West Coast Franchise Expo and Franchise Expo South,” said Portesy.

Here’s what other top franchisors and suppliers had to say about the success of the new marketing campaign at the International Franchise Expo:

Lowell Hawthorne, CEO of Golden Krust Caribbean Bakery, had the opportunity to meet with candidates from all over the world with the disposable income and equity to start their own businesses right away.

“You just can’t beat the face-to-face opportunity of being here at the expo,” said Hawthorne. “We appreciate every lead we collect, but nothing beats meeting face-to-face here at the show. The expo is a win-win situation for Golden Krust and we’ll be back to exhibit again.”

With 381 stores already open and plans to expand into Baltimore, Philadelphia and the mid-Atlantic region, Firehouse Subs Director of Franchise Development Greg Delks agreed with Hawthorne that nothing beats the face-to-face opportunity offered at IFE.

“It’s the best way to start a relationship. We’re not really here selling franchises this weekend. It’s our chance to build long-term relationships with the best candidates to grow our business,” adds Delks. “IFE produces great leads for us and that’s why we continue to come back. The quality of people that are here are educated and ready to buy a franchise.”

First time exhibitor 1-800-GOT-MOLD Pres. Allen Castleman, also stated that nothing surpasses this face-

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From left, School of Rock Vice Pres. of Franchise Development Rich Agar is interviewed by Fox 5 WTTG's Stacey Cohan.

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to-face opportunity of IFE. New to the franchise industry, IFE was a test for the mold removal franchise and due to the overwhelming response the company received, it plans to participate in future events.

"I've been in the franchising business for 30 years and the IFE remains an excellent show," said Castleman. "To be able to look into a prospects eyes and try to understand what they're looking for because we understand we're not for everybody; but to find that right person that understands our concept and can see themselves as a franchisee is beyond price."

Franchising veteran United Franchise Group attended the event with the goal to meet with more international leads.

"I have been part of these expos for more years than I care to remember, and the 2010 IFE has been the best show for us internationally that I have ever been part of," said Tony Foley, CFE, president of United Franchise Group Services. "We met with a couple on the first morning of the expo and by the afternoon they had returned to our booth with the completed profile application for being our new master franchisee for Sign-A-Rama in the country of Jordan. They came specifically to meet with us, this was the concept they wanted, so it's great for us to have a forum like IFE to do these deals. We've met candidates from Ecuador, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and they have all been high quality leads for us, best I've seen in years."

Chris Bailey with Bojangles' Famous Chicken & Biscuits also attended to keep in touch with the international franchise community. "We've been exhibiting at IFE for well over five years," said Bailey,

director of franchise development for the company. "People who are attending IFE have invested their time and money to be here. So you're seeing a more serious candidate on the show floor. The attendees we met at IFE are already successful business people. They bring their experience with them and the leads have been consistently excellent. IFE provides an excellent backdrop for everyone to do business."

Jeff Travitz, director of sales for The Goddard School, also noticed a vast difference in the quality of leads at this year's event. His company had its best show in three years.

"We collected more leads at the 2010 IFE than at all three expos we exhibited at last year," he said. "This was our fourteenth year exhibiting at the IFE and it was really worthwhile for Goddard. Good quality attendees and good conversations. We'll get deals out of exhibiting at this year's IFE and if we don't, it's our fault, not the expo's."

Dave Craig, marketing director of Yogen Früz, found the personal connection he made with prospects to be the strongest reason to exhibit.

"The advantage of exhibiting at an expo like IFE is the real, live people walking the expo floor," he said. "You can spend a bit more time with them; it's a bit more personal. You can answer their questions directly; it's just very different when you take it to the personal level compared to many of the leads we acquire through other avenues."

Other franchisors and suppliers took note of the increase in advertising and publicity IFE garnered this year.

"The expo traffic was excellent. When MFV publicizes a show, everybody in the area that has some notion they want to franchise attends," said Scott Kern, principle at FranchiseLawSource.com. "For me that's particularly good because many of the attendees are highly motivated, intelligent, successful entrepreneurs who are thinking that a franchise model may be good for my business. They come here just to see what they can learn and when they discover there are lawyers and consultants such as myself, they start picking your brain and the next thing you know you've met someone that's a potential franchisor. In fact, on Friday morning at the expo I met a candidate from Ohio ready to buy three units in a nationally known brand and I think he's my newest client."

The marketing efforts will continue at the upcoming West Coast Franchise Expo in Los Angeles, Nov. 5-7, 2010 and Franchise Expo South in Miami, Jan. 14-16, 2011.

As they have been doing for two decades, MFV Expositions and the International Franchise Association have a full schedule of franchise expos set for 2010-2011, with major events planned in regional locations, easily accessed by prospects in all regions of the country. ■

Joel Goldstein is director of marketing for MFV Expositions. He can be reached at jgoldstein@mfvexpo.com. For more on the MFV Expositions family of shows, visit www.mfvexpo.com.

The full 2010-2011 franchise event calendar includes:

- **West Coast Franchise Expo:**
Nov. 5-7, 2010;
Los Angeles Convention Center
- **Franchise Expo South:**
Jan. 14-16, 2011;
Miami Beach Convention Center
- **International Franchise Expo:**
April 1-3, 2011;
Walter E. Washington
Convention Center

Join MFV and IFA for this international exhibiting opportunity:

Milan—
Franchising and Trade Show
Oct. 15-18, 2010
Rho Fiera