

UFI announces 2014 ICT and Operations global competition winners

Paris, April 23, 2014: UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, organizes annual industry-wide competitions to recognize and reward the best initiatives in a variety of related areas. At recent UFI Focus Meetings held in Poznan, the winners of the 2014 ICT and Operations & Services competitions were selected by participating exhibition professionals. IFEMA (Madrid) was chosen over Fiera Milano S.p.A. (Milan), and UBM plc (London) as the 2014 UFI ICT winner for its entry answering the question, "What have you done to fit your IT team to the future"? Fira Barcelona, in a tight contest with Freeman SP (USA) and UBM Tech (USA), was selected UFI Operations & Services award winner for its entry meeting this year's topic, "How to create an excellent attendee experience onsite."

The IFEMA winning ICT entry focused on a balance between internal corporate development and outsourcing management. The proper selection of new apps, systems and tools combined with the updating of IT personnel skillsets are at the core of IFEMA's efforts to anticipate the evolving technological needs of the company. Presenting the measures taken to reach these objectives, IFEMA's Rubén Rodríguez (Systems Coordinator) commented, "We have evolved from a horizontal, function-based organization to an organization oriented to processes and services." IFEMA's attention to IT development has had a direct impact on the organization's marketing and customer sales channels. Without increasing the IT workforce, IFEMA has lowered exhibition management costs by assigning in-house personnel to strategic tasks with greater added value, increased customer participation in their own contract processes through web apps, reduced internal costs through online sales systems and reduced manual errors through a high degree of automation. Rodríguez concluded saying, "We are fit for the future, ready for the challenge of new technologies, and balancing our strategic resources to serve our goals. We are invisible – but essential!"

Fira Barcelona's winning UFI Operations & Services entry focused on the creation of an "mPowered experience" where the "m" in mPowered emphasizes the importance of mobile technology to the event experience, and "powered" highlights the active, event "experience" of the visitor. Building on three pillars, B-informed, B-fast, and B-connected, the programme objectives target real-time information access, time-saving in venue services, and maximized networking opportunities. The commitment of all operations departments to a common goal was essential to the programme's success. Services ranging from mobile registration and badging to real time catering and public transport apps enabled the visitor to use his smartphone to create his own exhibition experience. Xavier Michavila - Technology Services Director of Fira Barcelona explained, "The 'mPowered' living project concept places the excellence of the exhibition experience into the hands of the visitor, thus maximizing his return on the investment required to attend an exhibition event."

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Paul Woodward, UFI Managing Director, applauded winners and finalists, saying "It's our objective with these competitions to give exhibition professionals the opportunity to exchange interesting and innovative ideas, and techniques. We are always pleased to award exhibition organizations from around the world for their high-level contributions to our industry".

The winner of the 2014 Education Award has already been selected (Milton Exhibits Group, Hong Kong), and the winner of the 2014 Sustainable Development competition will be announced in June. UFI's 2014 Marketing competition is still underway and entries may be provided until June 2. The International Poster Competition is currently calling for art of the fair poster entries and the winner will be announced in September. UFI's competitions are designed to recognize and honour those in the exhibition industry who have successfully implemented creative and results-oriented initiatives. More information on these UFI competitions is available at www.ufi.org and any questions should be addressed to award@ufi.org.

Photo #1: (Left to Right) Matthias Tesi Baur, Vice-Chair of the UFI ICT Committee with the 2014 UFI ICT award winner IFEMA's Rubén Rodríguez.

Photo #2: (Left to Right) 2014 UFI Operations & Services Award winner Xavier Michavila (Fira Barcelona), is joined by competition finalists Marc Pomerleau (Freeman Enterprise, USA) and Christopher Watters (UBM LLC, USA).

UFI is the global association of the world's leading tradeshow organizers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI's main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry.

UFI represents over 630 member organizations in 85 countries around the world. Over 900 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.

For additional information, please go to www.ufi.org

or contact :

Lili Eigl

UFI Communications Manager

lili@ufi.org