

Derek MacHale talks Trade Days

On the 8th and 9th of October, the industry came together for the Trade Days, with manufacturers and retailers from across the country meeting at the NEC in Birmingham to showcase new products, meet existing clients and importantly, talk new business. With 2017's exhibition promising the busiest, buzziest show yet, THIS caught up with Show Manager Derek MacHale to find out if he thought the show delivered.

"It has been a really good show," Derek commented, with the sound of conversations still filling the air on a busy Monday afternoon. "You can definitely feel there has been a buzz and excitement in the air which is exactly what we wanted. We know that there are still improvements that can be made and changes do not happen overnight, but I really feel that this show has proven that we have learned from previous years and have made the right moves."

Initially launched in 2014, Trade Days remains the industry's sole exhibition dedicated to the mobility and independent living trade, setting itself apart by offering manufacturers, retailers and distributors a space where they could talk business.

"It was important to us that we reinforced to the trade that Trade Days is still very much the must-do show if you operate within the industry and I hope people can see that the show is really heading in an exciting direction. We understood that adjustments needed to be made and I think given the time, we have really made our intent clear. Given a full year cycle, I am extremely confident that we will be in a great place," explained Derek.

This year's show introduced a number of new features to the show, including catering for attendees, a dedicated arena for practical advice and even a magician.

"The reactions to the new features have been really positive and exhibitors and attendees alike have really appreciated that we have tried to do something different," said Derek. "I think a big tick is the 'how-to' arena. In the past, the seminars have often been quite theoretical and very similar to what you find at other exhibitions. This year, the content has really been focused on practical advice that attendees can implement. That change in focus is subtle but important and the reception has been positive.

Derek explained that some speakers that had given presentations in 2016 found they had three-times the number of people visiting their sessions in 2017, with THIS Editor Calvin Barnett presenting a talk on how-to create good content garnering a large number of attendees.

"People also found the Trade Topics table useful. Getting a chance to sit down with an industry expert who is prepared to sit down, moderate a session, talk in-depth about a topic and give valuable advice is wonderful," continued Derek.

"I am a big believer in education at events, ensuring industries are sharing and learning new information, knowledge and best-practice, so those are the features I am proudest about. I would certainly say the 'product demo' area worked well as well and we already have ideas about how we can tweak it to make it even better next year. The funny thing is, some exhibitors told me that they were so busy on their stands, they didn't even get the chance to use it."

Discussing whether the numbers of attendees had seen a rise, Derek explained: “Numbers have been strong and I would be confident to say that we have seen growth somewhere between the 5% and 8% region, although we will have to wait until the official figures come out to confirm just how much.”

“I think everything has been well received and we just need to continue to build on that for next year. I would also like to say a huge thank you to all our exhibitors and attendees for your continued support.”

The website for the company is www.tradedays.co.uk