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Exhibition World



Reaching the peak

Reed's Mike Rusbridge on his ascent to the top of the world's largest organiser



FAIR IS FAIR

JEAN-FRANÇOIS QUENTIN SPEAKS TO MIKE TRUDEAU ABOUT
GEO-ADAPTATION AND EASYFAIRS' SECRET TO SUCCESS

It might not be completely fair to say EasyFairs is – like European airline EasyJet – the low-cost carrier of the exhibition world, but it's a tempting comparison. The minimal, cookie-cutter form and the low-cost, low-margin business model boosted by premium services for an extra price bears a resemblance to low-cost carriers. Remember this though: Other low-cost airlines market themselves not only as the cheapest airfare in Europe, but also the most reliable. And if it's reliability your exhibitors are looking for, you could do worse than take a leaf from EasyFairs' book. Coiling for a period of intense but measured expansion,

organiser is preparing to breach the levies and pour into Latin America, India and Russia. EasyFairs CEO Jean-François Quentin and marketing director Julian Kulkarni were kind enough to share how – and why – the company is moving in this direction.

“We want to grow, we want to go into different sectors, we want to go into different geographies,” says Quentin. “But I think you should start with what you have in your portfolio. The customer focus is also fundamental. I think the success of any big company in this sector has to be customer-centricity and I think we sometimes forget that.”

Attack of the clones

Quentin defines two differing approaches to geocloning: Mono-geocloning and multi-geocloning. A mono-geocloner is a company with a single show concept that it exports to multiple countries. Art Basel is an example of this. A multi-geocloner on the other hand, is a company that has multiple different show concepts it spreads around. EasyFairs uses this model and its Packaging Innovations and Solids and Maintenance brands are two examples.

There are also several levels of geocloning companies: National, continental and global. EasyFairs is a single-continent multi-cloner, because although it pushes more than one brand of show into different countries, it remains within European borders.

This may be about to change. Quentin tells *EW* the company has had offers of partnership from companies in Mexico, India and Brazil. All of these are promising geographies under the close scrutiny of international organisers.

So how would the tried and tested EasyFairs method change in a move to Brazil, Mexico or India? “The basic methods would remain the same, but as the countries in question are so vast, it may well be possible to geoclon a brand such as Packaging into many different cities in one of these countries or regions,” says Kulkarni.

“Due to time differences we may consider building excellence centres in regional hubs with strong partners. We would use the same methodology and adapt it locally. The technology works in any language or character set, so we would continue using this. But of course we would keep the core concept the same while looking for new concepts locally that can be cloned.”

Filling the gaps

For some organisers the world is like the old boardgame Risk, wherein the player gathers resources and then pours into another country,

90%

Proportion of EasyFairs growth that comes from organic business including show launches and geoclones. It costs the company less to launch shows than to acquire

wiping out the competition and using the momentum to move across one border after the other. This however is a war of attrition and spreading a show brand too thin will have a negative effect on the parent shows. Remember, in a specialist market exhibitors talk to each other.

For EasyFairs the approach is more studied and patient. The company has offices in 10 European countries where teams monitor markets and look for opportunities. The company also analyses the calendar for exhibitions that might compete with one of its brands, then studiously avoids them.

“We don’t necessarily compete directly but we find market gaps by looking at competitive shows,” says Quentin. “It’s about looking at the calendars of these shows and then it enables us to launch. If there is a strong show in a country every three years, we could still use our brand as a complementary show in intervening years.”

When EasyFairs does move however, it moves fast.

Of dogs and riddles

In a presentation at this year’s UFI European Open Seminar in Ghent, Belgium, Quentin made a distinction between four different types of shows: The stars, cash cows, dogs and question marks of the widely used Boston Consulting Group matrix.

Each is measured on two axes: Market share and market growth. Cash cows are shows with high market share but low market growth. Stars are those with high market share and high growth. Dogs are the ugly ducklings of exhibitions: Shows with both a low share of a slowly-growing or even shrinking market. Question marks or riddles occupy a small share of a fast-growing market.

“When we started with EasyFairs in Europe, we looked at some of the dogs and question marks that other organisers had and said ‘that’s where we are going to launch our shows,’” Quentin said. “What was a dog or a question mark for some of the other operators became cash cows for us because of our business model. What’s good for us may not be good for you.”

Kulkarni explained to *EW* that the shows EasyFairs looks for are exactly the kind that other organisers might look to be rid of. “This is an example of where some show concepts were in the past attractive for a big national show with

THE VOCABULARY OF GROWTH

Geocloning: The launch of an established show brand in a new country, tweaked for the local market but recognisably the same show.

Mono-geocloner: An organiser with a single show concept that it exports to multiple countries.

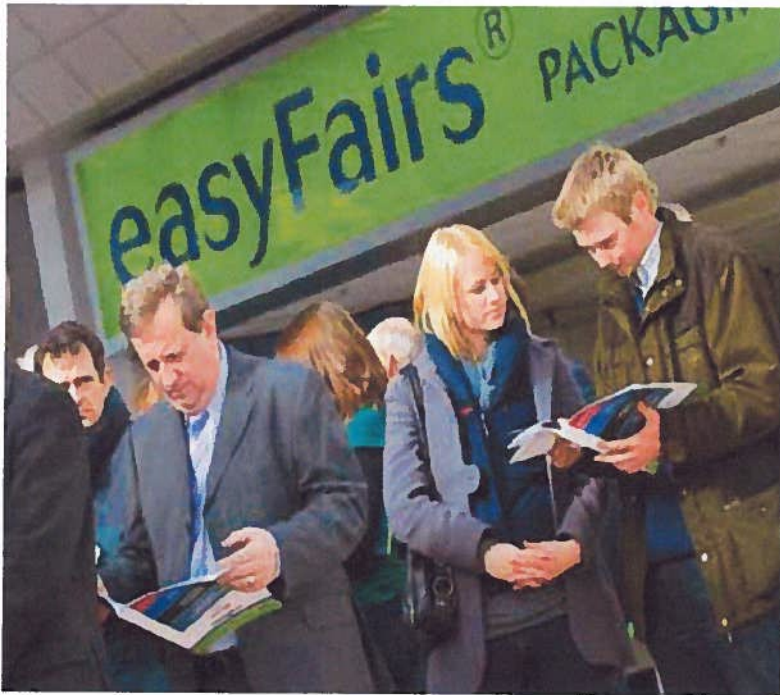
Multi-geocloner: A company with multiple show concepts which it moves to several countries.

Star: A show that has a large share of a fast-growing market. Often your most promising and exciting show.

Cash Cow: An exhibition that has a large share of a slow-growing market. Very reliable.

Dog: A show with a small share of a slow-growth market. Consider divesting or disbanding these shows to streamline the portfolio.

Question Mark: A show with a small share in a high-growth market. Tantalisingly promising, but requiring a decision to either cultivate or be divested.



Above:
EasyFairs' model means it costs the company less to launch a show than acquire one

exhibitors having large stands and great expense," he says. "As the markets have slowed or declined, there is less need for these big, all-singing-all-dancing national shows. Instead, demand for sales-focused trade shows on a smaller scale, such as those EasyFairs offers, has increased."

In fact EasyFairs has found that, particularly in the industrial sector, other organisers and venues are happy to pass over these shows so it can breathe new life into them with its model.

Going organic

The geocloning method is working so well for

EasyFairs that 90 per cent of company growth is organic, through launches of cloned shows, and only 10 per cent through acquisitions. "With the business model we have we can integrate a show in less than two months," Quentin tells *EW*.

"People very quickly feel part of our company. Other very acquisitive players take years and their philosophy isn't to have a very quick integrative approach.

"It costs less to launch shows for us than it does to acquire. By definition when you are buying a show you are buying profits. Instead, we are developing profits. The investment is much lower.

"On the other hand, if there is a strong show somewhere that complements our portfolio it wouldn't make sense to try to compete or launch against it."

Quentin says each country is different and certain characteristics need to be determined before moving in: Is the market centralised or decentralised? Saturated or not? "Small countries have been a little easier to develop in because small countries have smaller companies and many agents, while distributors don't have a big sales force. For the smaller countries our formula has been well-received but in some small countries and in the bigger countries we have developed regional rather than national shows, especially if it's a vertical market."

EasyFairs' method is not for everyone, but instead of looking to launch rising stars or acquire cash cows, organisers could take a cue from this model for growth and re-evaluate the best way to enter new markets. After all, sometimes it's best to stick to what you know. **EW**

EasyFairs planned launches in the company's current financial year (1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012)

- Fastighetsmässa Göteborg 2011 (Sweden, September)
- Fastfood and Café Göteborg 2011 (Sweden, September)
- Restaurangexpo Göteborg 2011 (Sweden, September)
- Project Build 2011 (Belgium, September)
- Pumps and Valves 2011 (Netherlands, October)
- Sähkö 2011 (Finland, October)
- Welding Week 2011 (Belgium, October)
- Metal and Plastic Subcontracting 2011 (Belgium, October)
- M+R Brussel/Bruxelles 2011 (Belgium, October)
- Print and Publishing Schweiz 2011 (Switzerland, October)
- Logistics Madrid 2011 (Spain, October)
- Packaging Innovations 2011 (Netherlands, December)
- Foodtech 2012 (Norway, February)
- Prosessindustri 2012 (Norway, February)
- Transport and Logistikk 2012 (Norway, February)
- Vedlikehold 2012 (Norway, February)
- Restaurantexpo 2012 (Norway, March)
- Personal 2012 (Sweden, March)
- Henkilöstö 2012 (Finland, April)
- Prosessiteollisuus 2012 (Finland, April)
- Process and Analysteknik Öresund 2012 (Sweden, April)
- Industriebouw 2012 (Belgium, April)
- IFEX 2012 (UK, April)
- Automation and Engineering 2012 (Belgium, May)
- Ipexpo 2012 (Sweden, May)
- MeCaTech 2012 (Poland, May)
- Packaging, Processing and Logistics 2012
- Recycling Technologies Schweiz 2012 (Switzerland, May)
- Packaging Innovations 2012 (Germany, May)
- Medicinteknik and Medicinisk IT Öresund 2012 (Sweden, May)
- Garage Schweiz 2012 (Switzerland, June)