

出展世界

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拥抱数字化的 实体展

——访独立组展商协会主席
Cassandra Farrington

👤 本刊记者 / 付兵兵

独立组展商协会 (SISO) 是一个专为盈利性组展商提供服务的组织。同时，为盈利性组展商公司的首席执行官和高级管理层决策者们交流思想、分享经验、互相学习、寻求合作提供平台。过去两年多以来，疫情迫使现场活动关停，业界不得不寻求突破以满足参展商和参会者的需求。因而，该协会作为行业平台的价值更加凸显。SISO 因其召开的“CEO 峰会”而变得家喻户晓，是每年行业大咖最盛大的聚会。众多参会者利用此峰会寻求新的合作伙伴、新的并购机会或收购方，这也成为了推动其业务增长的最佳工具。

本期专访邀请到了 SISO 主席 Cassandra Farrington 就后疫情时代下的展览业走出困境，恢复增长、数字技术的发展及行业应对未来挑战等问题发表见解。

数字展和实体展相互融合

Cassandra Farrington 告诉本刊记者，对于 2022-2023 担任 SISO 主席的她而言，其强烈关注的不仅是要确保行业的生存，更关注后疫情时代行业的兴盛。SISO 不仅在搭建行业广泛交流与合作的平台中扮演着重要的角色，而且其宣传工作在助力行业度过疫情危机中起到了至关重要的作用。作为 SISO 执行委员会一名重要的成员，Cassandra Farrington 深知行业复苏后，这些有利举措仍有必要。此外，在度过疫情危机后，她也计划协助行业应对因地缘环境不稳定而产生的新的共同挑战。作为一名经验丰富的企业



Cassandra Farrington

参展商重视将线下实体展作为其营销组合的一部分；而参会者珍视亲眼目睹，亲身经历，将对产品或服务的亲身体验作为其决策的一部分。

家兼会展业的决策者，Cassandra Farrington 仍坚信强有力且富有价值的内容是打造社群的关键，可以帮助展会成功举办。

此外，疫情经验表明，参展商重视将线下实体展作为其营销组合的一部分；而参会者珍视亲眼目睹，亲身经历，将对产品或服务的亲身体验作为其决策的一部分。然而，疫情之下也有其它模式，包括线上互动，其重要性和可行性持续高涨。线下实体展的未来将依赖于进一步融合数字服务、线上互动及数字管理于一体，以确保线下

体验持续增值。

在大多数情况下展览业正回归至 2019 年的水平，个别时候甚至有过之而无不及。当前一些地区的疫情管控仍将持续，这就需要可对预知的未来制定完备的应急预案。特别是出行方面的限制持续给倍感无奈的会展主办方带来的挑战。尽管如此，线下实体展的回归一直深受所有利益相关者的青睐。主办方、参展商和参会者均关注其切身利益及如何克服此类障碍。针对行业的未来趋势，Cassandra Farrington 期待持续迎来数字展和实体展的融合。伴随会展人群更迭至年轻一代，这些数字服务将广泛盛行，也备受观众追捧。

行业增长离不开各方力量

提到政府政策对展览业的扶持，Cassandra Farrington 告诉本刊记者，很遗憾，美国政府在会展业方面支持力度微不足道，特别是针对线下实体展会活动更是如此。尽管某些机构享受到了重大支持项目如“薪资保护计划”扶持，然而行业中的众多利益相关者却无权享受此福利。由于没有政府支持，SISO 联合几个其它行业协会组建展览与会议联盟（ECA）——一群致力于为展览行业获得政府扶持进行游说的团体。ECA 已经成为了一家永久组织，并将代表展览业持续游说。

“鄙人未曾有过太多在中国展览市场工作的机会，但是很明显，中国展览市场在全球展览业中至关重要。当前，美国仍是全球展览业中最大的行业市场，这也反映了其作为最大经济体和最开放的市场之地位。疫情爆发前，中国展览业享受了一波可观的增长，这也反映了其经济的增长。我们希望并期待，疫情退去，边境重开，中国将再次迎来展览业与其经济的双重增长！”Cassandra Farrington 坦言，“随着中国成为区域最大的单一市场，亚洲经济及其市场对于全球展览业而言至关重要。为此，我们今年秋季将在新加坡召开亚洲 CEO 峰会，定于 10 月 5-7 日开幕，一场由 SISO、活动组织者协会（AEO）、新加坡会议与展览行业协会（SACEOS）和国际展览业协会（UFI）联合主办的专为领先商业活动领袖的邀约活动，旨在为亚太区展览业

诸多国际主办也成功与中国展览机构建立伙伴关系，将重大的展览活动引入中国市场。这些活动已成为且将持续成为其服务于展览市场中极为重要的一股力量。

的复苏出谋划策。”

“与此同时，由于中国产品及其制造能力有着举足轻重的地位，因此，全球许多展览主办方将中国参展商作为其展览活动中重要的一部分。此外，诸多国际主办也成功与中国展览机构建立伙伴关系，将重大的展览活动引入中国市场。这些活动已成为且将持续成为其服务于展览市场中极为重要的一股力量。”Cassandra Farrington 补充道。

展会行业的未来一片光明

Cassandra Farrington 表示，数字展或线上展并未达成预期效果，因为这些数字活动未在撬动传统展览业的核心利益中发挥作用：促成买卖双方交易。然而，疫情时代，创新求变是有必要的且有潜在需求：把握参会者的数据点、更多的展出联络、行业荣誉和展会资料等，这些将使得线下实体展恢复生机。

从事会展业的人们在处理应急变化和突发事件方面很有经验。随着我们走出疫情阴霾，整个行业整装待发，将持续繁荣，持续创新，确保展览业在社区的感召、传播及激励下继续走向成功。看到线下实体展回归，甚至超出疫情前的水平，这是令人兴奋的。这反映了我们的行业给社区带来的价值以及包括 SISO 在内的行业领袖的努力付出。

“我目睹了行业势头一路高歌猛进的每次机遇，我相信我们能够成功摆脱后疫情下的重重阻碍，包括人力调配挑战、通胀顾虑及影响参展者的出行中断等。此外，我的直觉告诉我，务实和创新仍待加强以更充分地将数字化融入到我们的实体展体验中。我们观众的人群在变，因此，我们必须了解年轻一代更多样化的体验需求。”Cassandra Farrington 强调。

“我相信，行业的未来一片光明！随着我们从疫情的阴霾中走出来，我看到了许多的创新和革新，行业正重新聚焦我们长期以来强烈关注的问题，如可持续性、多样化及技术融合。期待我们共创美好的明天！”

Embrace the Digital In-person Events

—Interview with Cassandra Farrington, Chair of SISO

 Reporter/Fu Bingbing

SISO, the Society of Independent Show Organizers, is the voice of the for-profit show organizer. It serves as a place for CEOs, presidents and owners of for-profit events to collaborate, network, problem-solve and learn from each other's experiences. This function has been particularly needed over the past two-plus years, as the pandemic shut down live events and forced the entire industry to seek alternative solutions to meet the needs of their exhibitors and attendees. SISO is known most around the world for the "SISO CEO Summit," which is the largest gathering of leaders in the industry every year. This event is used by many participants to find new partners, new acquisitions or acquirers and is given credit by many as being their best tool for business growth.

In the following interview on this edition, Cassandra Farrington, the chair of SISO is invited to share her thoughts about the re-growth of the trade show industry as it emerges from the pandemic, the future development trends she foresees, the role China plays in the global exhibitions industry, the advancement of digital event technology and how the industry can successfully navigate any future challenges.

Integration of the Digital and Physical

Cassandra Farrington tells the reporter that as the 2022-2023 chair of SISO, the Society of Independent Show Organizers, she is keenly focused on ensuring the exhibition industry doesn't just survive, but also thrives in the post-pandemic future. SISO was a key player in the community-building and the advocacy work that proved to be instrumental in pulling the industry through the pandemic, and as a vital member of SISO's Executive Committee, Cassandra Farrington understands the need for these beneficial initiatives to



continue well past the industry's recovery. Besides navigating the receding pandemic, she also plans to help the industry tackle the new shared challenges created by instability in the geopolitical environment. A seasoned entrepreneur and industry executive, Cassandra Farrington remains a staunch believer that strong, value-providing content is key to building the community that makes a trade show successful.

The pandemic experience also showed that exhibitors truly value live, in-person events as part of their marketing mix, and attendees truly value the in-person experience of seeing, touching and experiencing the product or service as part of their decision-making process. However, the pandemic also made it clear that other solutions, including online connections, continue to rise in their importance and viability. The future of the live event industry will depend on further incorporating digital touches, online connections and data management to ensure the ongoing value of the live experience.

In most cases, exhibitions are returning to their 2019 levels and in some cases, have surpassed these levels. Ongoing COVID controls in certain regions will continue to require careful contingency planning for the foreseeable future. Recovery from the pandemic – including specifically travel-related disruptions – continues to challenge event organizers who unfortunately cannot impact such factors. Nonetheless, the return of in-person exhibitions has been warmly welcomed by all stakeholders. Organizers, exhibitors and attendees are all focused on the benefits and on overcoming these obstacles.

On the future trends side, Cassandra Farrington anticipate that they will continue to see an integration of digital activations into in-person exhibitions. As the demographics of exhibition delegates shift to younger

generations, these digital touches will be widely expected and sought after by audiences.

Regrowth Indispensable from All Levels

Cassandra Farrington comments that unfortunately, there has been minimal support by the U.S. government specifically for live events and exhibitions while referred to the policy from local authorities. Certain organizations were able to take advantage of broadly-aimed support programs such as the Payroll Protection Program, however, many stakeholders in the exhibition industry were not eligible for this support. In part because governmental support was not available, SISO joined together with several other exhibition-related associations to form the Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance (ECA), a lobbying group dedicated specifically to this industry. The ECA has become a permanent organization that will continue to lobby on behalf of the exhibitions industry.

“I have not had much opportunity to work in the China market yet, but it is clearly a significant market for the exhibitions industry! The United States is still the world’s largest market for exhibitions, which reflects its status as the largest economy and the most open market. Prior to the COVID pandemic, the exhibition industry in China experienced substantial growth that was also reflective of its economic growth. We hope and expect that once the border and city closures brought on by the pandemic have been removed, China will again see the exhibition industry grow in line with its economic growth.” says Cassandra Farrington.

“The Asia-Pacific economies and markets are crucially important for the global exhibitions industry, with China being the largest single market in the region. With that in mind, we are launching the Asia CEO Summit in Singapore this fall. Set for Oct. 5-7, the inaugural, invite-only event for leading business event leaders is organized jointly by SISO, AEO – Association of Event Organisers, SACEOS and UFI, and is designed to set the stage for the revival and reimagining of the exhibitions industry in the Asia-Pacific region.”

“In the meantime, many exhibition organizers around the world count on Chinese exhibitors as a significant and important part of their shows due to the importance placed on Chinese products and manufacturing capabilities. Also, many international organizers have very successfully launched and partnered with Chinese organizations to bring significant exhibitions to the

Chinese markets. These events have been and are likely to continue to be extremely important to the markets they serve.” adds Cassandra Farrington.

The Future is Bright for the Industry

As far as Cassandra Farrington is concerned that digital events” or “online exhibitions” did not fulfill their promise. These digital events were not effective at the core benefit that has driven the traditional exhibitions industry: connecting sellers and buyers to do business. However, there were some innovations and evolutions that were necessary during the COVID era that remain in demand: better insight into the data points of the attendees, more curated connections, digital badges and event materials and more, which will find their way back into live exhibitions going forward.

The people who work in the exhibitions industry are very experienced in managing with last-minute changes and unexpected emergencies. This industry as a whole is well-equipped to continue to thrive as we exit the COVID era, to continue to innovate and ensure that exhibitions continue to succeed in their role of educating, connecting and inspiring their communities.

It is wonderful to see in-person events returning to, and in some cases, exceeding pre-pandemic levels. It is a testament to the value our industry brings to its communities, and to the very hard work that industry leaders – including SISO – have put into supporting the events community during this difficult time.

“I do see every opportunity for the momentum to continue, and we should be able to successfully manage the ongoing headwinds that are emerging post-pandemic. These include staffing challenges, concerns, travel disruptions that discourage participation in our events and more. Further, my sense is that real work and innovation remain to be done to integrate digital more fully into our in-person experiences. The demographics of our audience are changing, and we must keep in touch with the experience a younger and more diverse audience wants from a live event.” underlines Cassandra Farrington.

“I am confident the future is bright for our industry. As we emerge from the pandemic, I see a lot of innovation and retooling, and a refocus on the issues we have long felt strongly about – sustainability, diversity and technology integration among them. I look forward to seeing what we can continue to create together!” 