



SISO/UFI Deeper Dive: Case Study on World of Concrete

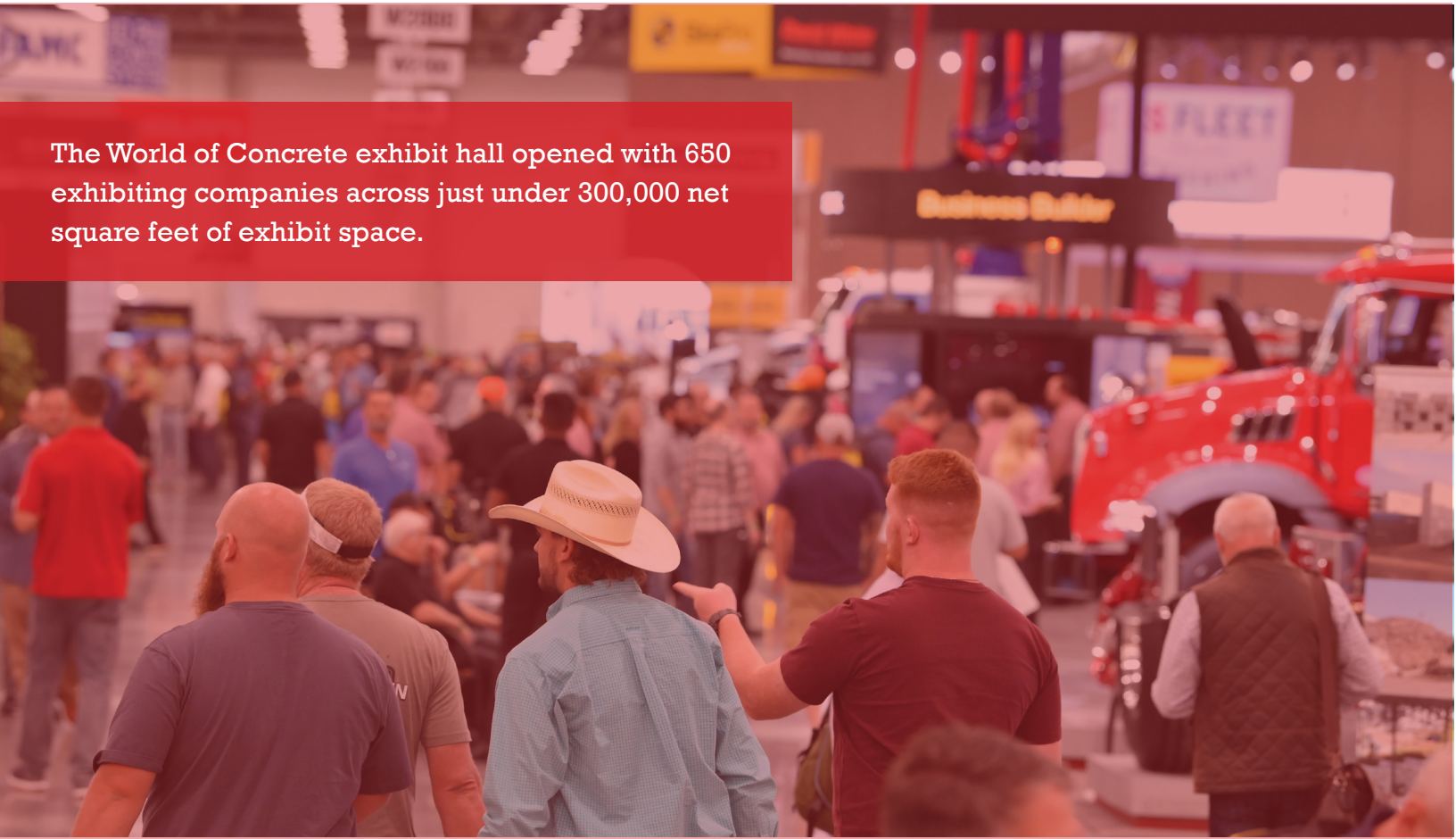
Informa Markets constructs a path forward
for trade shows in Las Vegas



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Overview

After safely and successfully producing a handful of trade and consumer shows in Florida since last October, [Informa Markets](#) led the way for the industry again by reopening the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) with the production of [World of Concrete](#) (WOC) 2021, held June 7-10. After being postponed from its original dates in January, the 46th edition of WOC was the first show to use the LVCC's new \$1 billion, 1.4 million-square-foot West Hall expansion.

"It could not be a more fitting opening for this convention center than the World of Concrete," said NV Gov. Steve Sisolak during a ribbon cutting ceremony prior to the exhibit hall opening on June 8. Other guests included Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) President and CEO Steve Hill, LVCVA Board Chairman John Marz, who is also a Henderson City Council member, and Clark County Commission Chairwoman Marilyn Kirkpatrick.

"We spent 15-plus months carefully working to balance the health and safety of the public with our economic vitality," Sisolak said. "It's been a long time coming, Nevada, but we made it."

Originally set to open in January 2021 with CES, the West Hall features 600,000 square feet of exhibition space, including 328,000 square feet of column-free space. An open-air atrium features a 10,000-square-foot digital screen. Offering views of the Strip, a 14,000-square-foot outdoor terrace can hold receptions of up to 2,000 attendees.

The WOC exhibit hall opened with 650 exhibiting

companies across just under 300,000 net square feet of exhibit space. The show drew 18,254 attendees over the course of three days. By comparison, WOC 2020, held Feb. 3-7 at the LVCC, drew about 54,000 registered professionals and 1,310 companies exhibiting across more than 700,000 net square feet. International visitors came from 29 countries outside of the U.S. The 2020 show generated \$59.6 million in direct and \$103 million in indirect economic impact.

Sisolak and other local government officials applauded the return of the hospitality and event industry that had largely been shut down since March 13, 2020. There was much to celebrate: In 2019 prior to Covid-19, the meeting and convention industry represented \$11.4 billion in economic impact to the Southern Nevada area.

In addition, there was plenty of media buzz over the debut of the LVCC Loop, the underground transit system developed by Elon Musk's The Boring Company. The \$52.5 million people-mover system transports convention attendees in all-electric Tesla vehicles throughout the

Show Dates and Location

World of Concrete 2021

Dates: June 7-10, 2021

Location: West, North and Central Halls and Outdoor Diamond and Silver Lots at the Las Vegas Convention Center

200-plus-acre campus — all 40 feet beneath the ground.

Construction on the Loop began in September 2018 and continued through the pandemic. The transit system became fully operational Monday, June 7, as WOC's educational session kicked off, allowing up to 4,400 convention attendees per hour to be whisked across the campus in just under two minutes — free of charge. The walk takes about 25 minutes. Vehicles travel at a maximum speed of 40 mph and are staffed with drivers initially, with the plan to operate them autonomously in the future.

WOC's opening came on the heels of Las Vegas' full reopening to 100% capacity on June 1.

The show was the first large-scale U.S. event

that did not require masks for fully vaccinated individuals, following the May 13 update to the CDC guidelines that advised that masks and social distancing are no longer necessary for people who have been fully vaccinated from Covid-19. (Beginning July 30, the state of Nevada adopted an emergency directive requiring facial coverings indoors for everyone, both vaccinated and unvaccinated).

"We are thrilled to be returning to the live event format, especially in the home of the exhibitions industry in the U.S., Las Vegas," said Nan Walsh, President, North America at Informa Markets. "There is an unparalleled magic about in-person connection — from sharing laughs with old friends, creating new ones, learning from industry experts, and seeing and feeling the latest products and innovations. We are so happy to be the first large-scale trade show to return to the show floor in the U.S., and the first to use the Las Vegas Convention Center's incredible new West Hall, and through that partnership I believe we are signaling a return to business and connection that is needed now more than ever."

In this white paper, SISO and UFI take a deeper dive to provide insight into how Informa produced WOC safely and successfully. We interviewed key show executives, as well as exhibitors and attendees to get a pulse on the confidence levels for the return to large-scale in-person events as the world re-emerges from the pandemic.

Backstory

Originally scheduled for January 19-22, WOC was



postponed due to Covid-19. “Hill said negotiations with (Informa Markets CEO Charlie) McCurdy began around Christmas, and Informa Markets needed a firm commitment that Las Vegas could host the show by March,” according to an [article in the Las Vegas Review Journal](#) (June 8, 2021). “Kirkpatrick worked with Clark County health officials to affirm that the LVCC could safely host a large gathering.”

During the pandemic, Informa Markets “relied on vendor partners, like the Las Vegas Convention Center, now more than ever,” said Kevin Thornton, Senior VP of Operations, North America for Informa Markets. “Our vendors have been flexible in terms of timelines and contract terms, and we wouldn’t have been able to produce these events without our partners’ support.”

On March 18, right after Gov. Sisolak increased large gathering capacity to 50%, Informa announced rescheduled dates in June. “Informa Markets’ World of Concrete (WOC) will be the first large show to return to Las Vegas June 8-10 at the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC), pending the imminent approval of the Large Gathering Certification by the Department of Business and Industry,” according to a [press release](#).

At that time, Nevada’s directive required meetings, trade show and entertainment venues to certify through the state’s Department of Business and Industry that they would follow the state’s health and safety requirements and protocols and adhere to the prevention principles that have remained consistent: maintain safe social distancing, wear face coverings and practice good

After being postponed from its original dates in January, the 46th edition of World Of Concrete was the first show to use the Las Vegas Convention Center’s new \$1 billion, 1.4 million-square-foot West Hall expansion.



hygiene and cleaning measures.

WOC submitted plans and was granted certification 60 days out from the show, but the approvals ended up not to be needed when the show opened on June 8. Throughout the pandemic (and like never before), show organizers have been subject to evolving government restrictions that vary at the local, state and federal levels.

“Unfortunately, there’s not a checklist to reopen a show,” said Thornton. “It differs based on timing and location. It’s a moving target, and it’s fluid. Our advice: Work closely with the city, venue and local health department. They are the ones that have the best information from the state level. Be willing to adapt. We had policies in place three

weeks before the show that we changed based on CDC guidance. All communication with your exhibitors and attendees needs to be transparent and clear. The LVCVA was our advocate to the government affairs office, the state Department of Business and Industry, and the Clark County Health Department.”

The feeling was mutual. During the ribbon cutting ceremony, Hill said the four-day show wouldn’t have happened without the efforts of McCurdy and the confidence he and his staff gave to Nevada, Clark County and the LVCVA.

Despite rumors of potential labor shortages for set up or tear down, WOC execs reported no issues with union labor. “It makes a good headline, but

that’s not what we experienced on the ground,” said Thornton.

The show provided shuttle buses from hotels to the convention center. There were concerns about transportation services such as Uber and Lyft not having enough drivers or surge pricing. “We recommended to our staff that they schedule rides the night before,” Thornton said.

Attendance Matters

Before moving the show to June, Informa conducted an attendee survey, which was managed by a third-party research firm. The results: “80% of respondents reported they were likely to attend in June and 97% viewed the decision as favorable to the industry.”

June is a busy time for the construction industry, and the organizers knew the timing would likely impact attendance. Plus, travel into the U.S. was still largely restricted when the show opened in early June.

“Canada and Mexico draw a large number of attendees for us, and Canada was not open to travel to our show in the U.S.,” said Lauren Lamb, VP of Marketing, Conference and Strategy, Informa Markets. “Our attendees and exhibitors are essential workers, so there’s not as much fear around health and safety because they have been working.” Lamb said about 45% of WOC attendees are new each year, and 2021 was no different, except there were more first-time attendees from the show’s virtual event in January who were now able to attend in person.



“For me, this is like a daddy Disneyland. I just love coming here and seeing the new technology.”

Mike Michelson, COO, Hydro-Arch

We interviewed a number of attendees on site, and there were several themes that stood out:

Still attracting first-timers. “Our company comes every year, but this is my first time attending,” said Alex Keling, Carmona Construction, a concrete finishing and placing shop based in Seattle with 150 employees. “I am excited to be here. There’s so much to learn and so much new equipment to see. I’m impressed with the laser screed I saw.” Carmona sent 10 employees to the show. Other first-timers, like Susie and José Padilla with JJP Concrete, based in Fullerton, CA, who drove from Orange County to buy at the show, said they felt comfortable with the health and safety considerations.

Looking for products that make life easier. “I came to see what’s new on the market,” said Padilla. “I saw a compact driller that would make my life easier for little jobs, but I haven’t decided yet. This show is amazing. It’s like going to the mall for concrete tools and equipment. I am definitely planning to come back in January.”

Looking for new vendors. “This is great show, and I look forward to coming in every year,” said Bill Ashton, President and Owner, Olympus Precast, a company based in Salt Lake City with 130 employees. “I’ve bought equipment here just about every time I’ve attended. Some exhibitors I was looking for weren’t here this year, but I did find a vendor that I needed to talk to, so the trip was worthwhile.”

Vaccinated attendees feel comfortable. “Even

though the event is smaller than usual, it’s nice to be out and talking to people and not wearing a mask,” said Ashton. “It’s wonderful to actually talk to people face to face. I’ve been vaccinated, so I didn’t have any concerns with health and safety.”

More one-on-one time. “It’s definitely different and smaller from years past,” said Mike Michelson, COO, Henderson, NV-based Hydro-Arch, who has attended WOC for approximately 20 years. “I like it a little more intimate. I got a little more one-on-one time with some of my vendors. Some people I only see once a year when I come out here. It’s been the only show since Covid, so I was chomping at the bit to get this one open. I wanted to get out of the house and get out of the office.”

Advancing new products. “I love to see the advancement of products,” said Michelson. “I like to think that some of the ideas these companies have ... I gave it to them 10 years ago because I said, ‘You got to fix that.’ And then down the road, they’re fixed.”

Like Daddy Disneyland. “I brought my oldest son, and I’m introducing him to the world that’s out there,” said Michelson. “For me, this is like a daddy Disneyland. I just love coming here and seeing the new technology. I literally could spend five days here if I wouldn’t get in trouble at work because I could just talk to everyone.”

Finding ways to generate new revenue. “I found a J bot, an overhead drilling robot, at the Hilti booth,” said Michelson. “It’s a rental three-year contract at \$15,000 about a month. That was just the talk, but we don’t have a deal on paper yet. If

we do it right, it can be a money maker.”

Craving human interaction. “I missed the human interaction,” said Michelson. “I love hearing from people all over the world and how they do things. We’re missing a lot of internationals. When I meet people from Australia and Japan here, it’s just fun because then you sit with them and talk about their methods of building and our methods of building this.”

Virtual not the same. “I did a few virtual events, but it’s just not the same,” said Michelson. “It’s not the same as hands-on. For some of the accounting and computer programs, we do virtual and that’s very helpful. But when it comes to taking a look at a piece of equipment, it’s not the same. I like to get my hands on it, see it, hear it, and look at it.”

Find new gear. “Our company comes here every year, but this is my first year,” said KJ Fisk, Quick Cut, a St. George, UT-based company that does concrete cutting, cord drilling, demolition and grinding. “My goal here is to check out new concrete gear. I don’t mind that there’s not a million people stacked on top of each other. We are getting some new products for our company. I found a product that cleans off slurry and keeps it from sticking.”

Exhibitors: Ready to Return

“World of Concrete is grateful for the support of all the participating exhibitors and attendees who braved the heat of a June event and paved the way for an even larger and stronger return in

January 2022,” said WOC Group Director Jackie James. “We would like to thank them along with our cosponsoring associations and media partners who supported this endeavor throughout a very challenging 15 months leading up to this important industry event.”

In a typical year, 13% to 15% of exhibitors are international, but international representation was down because they simply couldn’t travel into the U.S. Informa Markets reported there were new first-time exhibitors at WOC, due in part to the fact that there haven’t been other shows.

We interviewed exhibitors on site, and here’s a sampling of what they had to say:

Reunited and it feels so good. “The overall mood has been almost euphoric of people getting out and being back ... in doing things normal — no masks on — it’s been a really upbeat mood of the show,” said Jeff Sass, VP Marketing, Hendrickson, a company that manufactures heavy duty, suspensions for trucks and trailers, as well as lift axles and bumpers.

Opportunity to see more customers in one place. “We’ve seen a lot of customers here in the last two days that we haven’t seen in a year because either they were not accepting visitors or we’ve cut down on our travel quite a bit,” said Sass.

Quality of attendance. “We anticipated overall attendance would be down,” said Sass, who had six employees travel to the event to staff the

booth. “We have been pleasantly surprised at the quality of the attendance that have been here. And the actual foot traffic has been a little bit higher than we anticipated, which are both good.”

Ready to buy. “We’ve had a high-quality experience with customers at the show who want to learn and are ready to buy,” said Tom Burton, Product Director for Construction Equipment and National Accounts, Kubota, whose company was showing compact construction equipment in its 50- by 60-foot booth. “It’s just not a high-volume show. Our team wanted to get out, and it’s important for us to be here. It’s our first show since the pandemic.”

Demand is high, supply is not. “The market is extremely strong, as strong as it has ever been in construction,” said Burton. “We cannot provide enough equipment. We’re not the only industry impacted. It’s not going to turn on like a light switch. I don’t know when the lights turn on, but it will not be this year. We will be into 2022 before this levels off. That’s the reality right now.”

Hybrid participation. “There was lots of planning to make sure that we could have a digital element to our booth,” said Brittany Buchanan, social media and PR lead, Bosch. “For us, that meant day one going live directly to media through an invite only behind the scenes here’s what’s happening at the show. On day two, we did a live stream to end-users on YouTube with a walkthrough of the booth and products.”

Capturing content. “We started noticing how much our users wanted to be here and couldn’t,” said Buchanan. “We started on a smaller scale



last year. This year we knew we had to get bigger, so we produced two live streams. We have a full camera crew here to capture what’s happening in the booth and share it out. We’re only going to do more of it now after this show.”

Shipping delays impact supply. “Of course, we have the same constraints that the industry has in terms of shipping and logistics,” said Buchanan. “We’re doing our best to work through as much as we can to get our products into our user’s hands.”

Showing new products. “We had launched a ton of new products last year, so it was getting those out and getting the word out about all of our new launches,” said Buchanan. “That was really the goal of us being here.”

Engaging with attendees. “We knew it was going to be different, and we would have to adjust

“While the attendance numbers have been smaller, the engagement has been off the charts.”

Brittany Buchanan, social media & PR lead, Bosch



to that,” said Buchanan. “While the attendance numbers have been smaller, the engagement has been off the charts. Customers want to get their hands on the products. They want to see it. They are excited to meet here.”

Timing is everything. “It’s a different time of the year, so we have a different audience here,” said Buchanan. “June is a busy month for most of the construction industry, so the people who are here are here for a reason. That makes us happy because we are excited about our products.”

Demo products. “When it comes to holding and putting a tool in someone’s hand and the conversations you have, there’s no replacing it,” said Cory Stück, Event Marketing Manager, Husqvarna Construction Products, whose company had a 5,000-square-foot booth in the parking lot so attendees could demo any number of products. “That’s how you show people what your tools are and why they’re the best because they can start cutting and to see what it feels like.”

Stück said Husqvarna’s original plan for 2021 was to build a 50,000-square-foot booth, which the company will now do in 2022.

What’s Next

Since WOC, Informa Markets has hosted five events in Las Vegas, including:

- Vegas Cosmetic Surgery (June 2021)
- The International Surface Event (June 2021)
- WasteExpo (June 2021)
- The Aesthetic Show (July 2021)
- Inside Self Storage World Expo (July 2021)

Informa has more events in Las Vegas planned for the rest of 2021, including:

- MAGIC Fall (August 2021)
- International Roofing Expo (August 2021)
- SupplySide West & Food Ingredients North America (October 2021)
- International Sanitary Supply Association ExpoShow North America (November 2021)

WOC 2022 will return in January 18-20 at the LVCC.

One takeaway for other organizers: “You must have nerves of steel,” said Lamb. “We are now doing multi-scenario crisis planning for live, in-person and hybrid that we didn’t do before.”

Thornton’s advice: “Start early and partner with the venue and CVB. In other places, some venues and cities don’t have guidance from the state, but we have to be ready to quickly ramp up when we get that guidance.”



Nan Walsh

President, North America, Informa Markets

What was New at WOC 2021

- Masks not required for fully vaccinated.
- All governments restrictions lifted on June 1.
- There were temperature checks and thermal scanning with wristbands.
- No carpeting and wider aisles.
- Event postponed from January to June.
- Contactless registration and digital badges used for the first time at WOC. Informa Markets used digital badges at MAGIC in February.

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With more than \$125,000 in cash and prizes to be earned, masons from across North America were invited to WOC in Las Vegas to compete in the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 after winning a regional series qualifying event.



About SISO – SISO members include companies, corporations and other for-profit entities that own, produce or provide full-service management of “face to face” trade shows, consumer shows, expositions, conferences and events. SISO membership is a combination of large corporations and small entrepreneurial enterprises that do business around the world. SISO’s almost 200-member companies produce thousands of events around the world. SISO’s Mission is to meet the common needs of our members by providing peer networking opportunities, education, industry information, streamlined business processes and best practices in the industry.



About UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the global trade association of the world’s tradeshow organisers 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 directly represents more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 60 national and regional association members. More than 800 member organisations in 83 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Around 1,000 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. UFI is supporting the work of global, regional, and national institutions that deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. On this page, we are listing some resources for UFI members and the industry at large: <https://www.ufi.org/industry-resources/coronavirus/>.

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