

CONVERSATION

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What do you do with AWEA?

I've been with AWEA for a little over three years and was brought on to focus on the business operation side. I focus on membership recruitment and retention, developing strong member engagement programs. I focus on all our conferences and education programs as well as publications and webinars, and generally all the things we do for the industry in terms of education and content to encourage them to become members and continue to be members.

What goes into planning WINDPOWER? What challenges do you face?

One of the biggest challenges of a show like WINDPOWER is that it's different every single year. It's both its biggest advantage in terms of why people value it and kind of its biggest challenge in the planning of it.

It's in a different city every year. The convention centers are completely configured differently. So we really have to start with a blank sheet of paper every year. And that's something that we literally did at the 2016 show. We kind of blew up the model that we had been using for a number of years and implemented a very different type of experience for our attendees. Namely being, we got rid of the distinction between people coming to go to the educational sessions and the people just coming to go to the trade show. It's now one registration, one access, one pass, and you get access to everything. And we found that was hugely well-received in 2016, so we are continuing and even building on that.

And in Anaheim, we are going to be delivering all the educational content right on the show floor, so that people can, within moments, go from meeting with their biggest customer to sitting in an audience listening to CEOs of some of the largest wind companies in the country, and making that a much more efficient experience for attendees and maximize their time there.

What should WINDPOWER guests expect?

We have a great program. We have three general sessions. We'll be kicking off each morning with the show opening bright and early at 9 a.m.

And that was something we did in response to requests from exhibitors and attendees who wanted access to the show floor as early as possible, so we were able to deliver on that as we brought the general sessions to show floor.

We will all gather in five different education stations across the exhibit hall and hear a great, live lineup of panelists who are on our website. And then in the four other education stations, we'll have the content being simulcast. It'll be a virtual experience, but we'll be able to deliver the content to literally thousands of people throughout the show floor as well as online. Anyone can watch the general sessions online.

We put a lot of time and effort in not only the staff, but people who are participating in the general session. And there's some great information in there. So we just made the strategic decision that we want as many people as possible to be able to take advantage of that content. Not only can everyone in the show hear it, but across the world, people can log in and get access to the general sessions.

How has WINDPOWER changed over the years?

It's a decades-old show. And it started as a very small event in a ballroom-level basement of a very small hotel. And it's grown from that very small gathering of a few hundred

professionals in the industry similarly to the growth of the industry itself of being much more of a niche industry to being a huge multinational, billion-dollar industry.

We're quite large. We're in the top 70 largest trade shows in the world. It's grown just as the industry has grown. Certainly the most dramatic changes have come in the last two years, but even my predecessors always looked to tweak things to continue to improve the value and the effectiveness of the event for the attendees.

The education program was sort of an add-on to the trade show piece over time and grew to become a substantial reason for people to come to the event. And then our changes last year of integrating those two pieces and making it hopefully much more valuable for everyone were also big changes.

Another thing that we're doing differently that's part of that continuing evolution of the event is almost every company that participates in the show conducts massive amounts of business development meetings while they're there. The amount of contracts and great work that is done to grow the industry at WINDPOWER is huge. And we provide opportunities for people to do that. And we're providing that like the other components right on the show floor. So you can have your booth or you can rent a private meeting space to conduct those more confidential meetings.

What's unique about this year's show?

We have a couple of things ranging from small silly fun stuff to things much more substantial. One thing we're doing differently this year in this effort to make it fun and a different and a unique experience is to

take advantage of the uniqueness of the city we're in. And in Anaheim, we're hosting our welcoming reception at Angel Stadium. We'll bus out all our thousands and thousands of attendees over to Angel Stadium, and they'll be able to tour the dugout and the locker room and have a great opening reception with food and beverage.

And if you are a member of our Wind PAC, which is our political action committee, there's even an opportunity to go in the outfield and throw the ball and catch it and have a unique on-field experience at Angel Stadium.

We heard from our members last year that they want more opportunities to meet people they don't already know. It's easy if you've been in the industry a long time and you go and you know thousands of people who are at the show. But there's a lot of new people, whether they're new professionals or new companies that are getting involved in the industry, they don't know anybody. And so we have what we're calling meet-ups.

Every morning we have a way for people to sign up and go for runs, starting your day off with some exercise and hopefully meeting some people you don't know. And we also have some informal meet-ups at different local cool places. There's a packing district that's a new and up-and-coming area in Anaheim.

So we're having a meet-up there for anybody who's registered, and then we'll have AWEA staff members there sort of helping to organize it, but really it's just an organic opportunity for people to get to know others.

And then, of course, you can't be in Anaheim and not involve Disney a little bit. So we have an informal meet-up on Thursday afternoon after the show closes where folks can get together and go to Disneyland.

Once WINDPOWER 2017 is in the books, does AWEA do a post mortem? What's involved with that?

That's something we do after every event, regardless of the size. With WINDPOWER, it's a little more formal just because of the size and the importance of the event. So we have the traditional attendee survey.

We solicit feedback directly from everyone who was there. But we also have a marketing taskforce of leaders in the industry, and we get together every summer after the show and just talk about it. Did it work for you? Were you able to accomplish your business objectives? And generally, the answers are yes, we do a good job. And then it pivots to what do we need to fix and what we can do better and continue to add value and improve the experience. All these different enhancements we come up with are derived from that process.

What are you personally looking forward to?

I am really excited about hosting the three general sessions on the show floor and simulcasting them. Anytime you're involved in meeting planning and conference development, you get a lot of good ideas that people have done before. I'm sure somebody's done (simulcasting) before, but this was a general idea we developed through talking.

So I'm really excited to see that in play and see how people are able to take advantage of the opportunity for all the many thousands to get the opportunity to get the benefits of the general sessions as opposed to just a couple of thousand who choose to go to the convention center and sit in a theater for a couple of hours. I'm really quite excited about that.

And definitely the live online streaming. That's just such a great way to get our message out to people across the world. ♪