

HORST FURSATTEL

Horst Fursattel, founder and owner of PADDLEexpo, comes back on the 2012 edition which marked the 10th anniversary of the show, and shares with us his vision on the future of the PADDLEexpo.

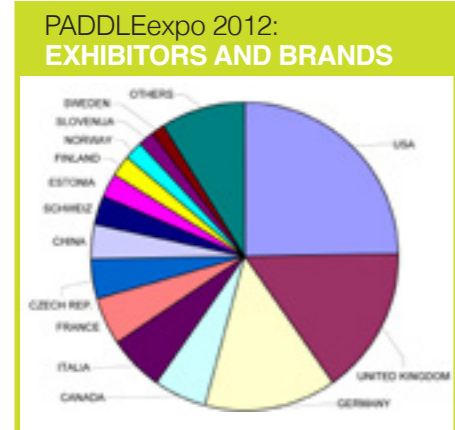
Industry Mag: This 2012 issue marks the 10th anniversary of the PADDLEexpo show. That must be a pretty awesome feeling, especially given the fact some people doubted the project at the beginning...

Horst Fursattel: Indeed, that's a great success of which the whole industry can be proud. Every project has its skeptics and the trade show idea was no exception. But actually there's nothing wrong with skepticism, because it forces everyone involved to take determined action. It would be more critical to mistake the expo today as a no-brainer. At first everything is new and exciting, enthusiasm and growth are overwhelming. But this will not automatically go on and on. It is great that the past 10 shows worked out well. This raises the bar for number 11. Hence, even after 10 exhibitions you cannot just sit back and relax.



Industry Mag: Up until this year, the show was called Kanu Messe. Why did you change the name to PADDLEexpo this year?

Horst Fursattel: It's never a good idea to change a well-known name. But in this case we had no option: with the SUP-Expo growing at a rapid pace, we wanted to find an all-embracing name which includes canoes and kayaks as well as Stand Up Paddling. Besides that, "Kanumesse" had developed from a regional gathering into a global trade event – this, too, is now reflected in the international term "PADDLEexpo".



Industry Mag: PADDLEexpo is now the world biggest paddlesport show – what percentage of attendance is made up of international companies?

Horst Fursattel: The percentage of international brands attending the 2012 PADDLEexpo was 86%, which presents an entirely different picture compared with the beginnings of the show. The German market has grown as well, but not nearly as strongly as the number of international exhibitors. Initially this had put considerable pressure on local manufacturers and distributors. However, the demand of additional customers coming from abroad has also increased and it continues to grow. This has turned PADDLEexpo into a large marketplace that benefits all parties: manufacturers, retailers and consumers. In recent years, the paddlesports industry has been growing faster than other industries and PADDLEexpo has certainly contributed to that development.

Industry Mag: Do you see an increase in attendance every year?

Horst Fursattel: Yes, in fact the number of exhibitors has constantly been growing for the past 10 years. The exhibition space has also increased each year.

Industry Mag: What about visitors – are those numbers increasing too?

Horst Fursattel: Yes, the number of visitors has increased each time. It's worth mentioning that particularly the percentage of international visitors has increased: customers who come all the way from another country are certainly interested in business opportunities and therefore of great value for an exhibitor. Our statistics show increasing numbers of both visitors and exhibitors, with higher growth rates on the part of the exhibitors. This intensifies competition amongst manufacturers and distributors, resulting in advantages for buyers and customers.

Industry Mag: What is your feeling about the year to come based on your own experience and the feedback you gathered at the show?

Horst Fursattel: The outlook is mainly determined by three factors: the economic environment, exhibitors and visitors. The current economic situation could arguably be better, but paddlesports seem to endure even difficult times. Cautious business practices of a lot of companies appear to pay off in these circumstances.

Exhibitors welcome the gained height in next year's exhibition hall but raise concerns about the reduced floor space available. But the decision for the relocation has been made and I am convinced that everyone will find a spot.

Like every year, visitors are the critical factor. Even regular visitors need to be attracted again and will evaluate precisely what benefits they get from the show before committing themselves to the journey. Exhibitors and the organiser are challenged once again to improve their performance. Both sides have become more and more professional over the past 10 years. One thing is clear: in the end, the success of the show depends on each individual buyer.

Industry Mag: As you mentioned, next year the show will take place in a different hall of the exhibition center. Rumor has it that it will be a lot brighter and have a higher ceiling. Was this a request from the people?

Horst Fursattel: In 2013, the PADDLEexpo will be back in hall 7A where the show was held in 2008 and 2009. This location offers daylight and twice as much vertical space up to the ceiling, which makes it ideal for presenting outdoor products in an attractive way. Hall 7A is situated on the east side of the exhibition center where another big daylight hall is currently being built. As soon as that one is finished, PADDLEexpo will have ample space again.

Industry Mag: What is the benefit of PADDLEexpo for the paddler?

Horst Fursattel: PADDLEexpo is both a crowd puller and censorship. Every year the calendar of the canoe industry starts with this show. Manufacturers come to see where the demand is and where they stand amongst competitors. Self-evaluation and re-adjustment of the business are the result. Despite being uncomfortable for some, this incentivises economic discipline and enhances innovation. In the end, such a competitive environment leads to new, better products and reasonable prices – the two most important benefits of PADDLEexpo for the end consumer.

Industry Mag: What can you do to make the show even better do you think?

Horst Fursattel: Plain and simple: do my homework to meet and, where possible, exceed the expectations of all trade show participants. The to-do list is long and there is no lack of ideas. But it is facts and not plans that matter. Even though part of the work is already done, there is still much left to do. Not a spectacular but a proven strategy.

Industry Mag: You were both a manufacturer and a distributor before you started the show – is that where the idea of the show comes from? Based on seeing things that were needed but did not exist?

Horst Fursattel: Until the year 2000, the European canoe industry was happy to be present at the OutDoor trade show in Friedrichshafen. Except when the OutDoor was rescheduled from September to July because of sports fashion companies, our customers stayed away. Had the original OutDoor date stayed the same, paddlers would probably still be happy to attend this show. In retrospect it was, of course, a lucky incident for us that this happened since it allowed paddlesports to step away from the world of rucksacks and hiking boots and become emancipated as an independent industry.

Industry Mag: Are we going to see an opening to clothing companies in the future, or do you want to stick to a paddlesports-specific show?

Horst Fursattel: Further companies exhibiting at PADDLEexpo are very welcome as long as one condition is met: the company needs to have an authentic connection with paddlesports through products and employees.

Industry Mag: But that doesn't mean you aren't working hard at attracting an even bigger number of shops and buyers from all horizons, including mainstream shops, right?

Horst Fursattel: This is correct and we are investing a lot of money and effort in promoting the expo, which pays off. Both trade show and paddlesports are frequent topics in related media. But keep in mind: since PADDLEexpo does not aim to be a mainstream show, it is more attractive for specialist shops than for mainstream sports retailers.

IN RECENT YEARS, THE PADDLESPORTS INDUSTRY HAS BEEN GROWING FASTER THAN OTHER INDUSTRIES AND PADDLEexpo HAS CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTED TO THAT DEVELOPMENT.

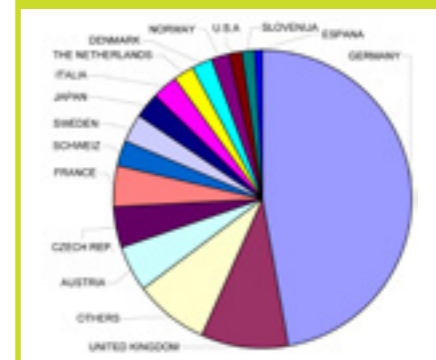
been established. It was at the trade show where manufacturers, retailers and editors have met in person for the first time. Based on these contacts a network for the exchange of information, goods and emotions has rapidly evolved. Today this network reaches far beyond Europe and includes members of 47 nations from the Pacific to Eastern Europe and as far as South America. All paddling nations have one collective annual meeting point – I think this is great.

Industry Mag: Where would you like to see the show ten years from now?

Horst Fursattel: In the year 2022 the sport will have evolved. We will have additional means of communication and flights will be more expensive. PADDLEexpo will have to adapt to these developments and create new offers, but the basic principle will remain the same. Even in 2022, personal contact, direct exchange and trust will be essential components of successful business relationships. And this is where the trade show has its strengths: suppliers and buyers face their competition, meet at a global market place and sit down together to discuss and examine products ready at hand. It will stay exciting!

DURING THE THREE SHOW DAYS 3602 PEOPLE FROM 47 NATIONS WENT THROUGH THE DOORS TO THE HALL, SHOWING 1991 INDIVIDUAL TICKETS: 1464 VISITOR TICKETS

PADDLEexpo 2012: ATTENDEES



Industry Mag: What is your biggest source of pride/satisfaction about the show?

Horst Fursattel: Through my trade show, European paddlers managed to come closer without losing their identity. The variety of languages and cultures in Europe is also reflected in the diversity of paddling communities in each country. This has geographic and historic reasons and is widely appreciated. But since the emergence of PADDLEexpo, connections have