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Digital Event News

In this issue: award-winning case studies, an interview with GDS Group, top tips, opinion and much more



Cardboard connections

AVATARS FILLED THE VIRTUAL AISLES
AT THE 2020 CONNEXION EXPO FOR
THE PACKAGING INDUSTRY

Connecting the corrugated packaging industry

The winner of the DEN Award for Best Digital Exhibition, sponsored by Showcase, was ConneXion by The Virtual Event Company and Brunton Business Publications. **Mike Fletcher** looks at how the corrugated packaging sector was brought together in a virtual expo

When the coronavirus pandemic struck in early 2020, global businesses were transformed overnight. For the corrugated packaging sector, the impact was two-fold.

Companies producing packaging for luxury goods saw orders evaporate, whereas those producing corrugated packaging for critical supplies such as e-commerce, pharmaceuticals, food and drink and the like, were running at around 120% capacity and required additional machinery to fulfil the demand.

Brunton Business Publications, publisher of International Paper Board Industry, The Packaging Portal and Corrugated Today, had witnessed this disruption. With the worldwide postponement of major trade fairs such as Drupa and Interpack, it saw an urgent need to foster an online community for packaging professionals, which could support businesses and facilitate orders.

The solution was ConneXion - a virtual trade show and

accompanying mobile community app, which shared news and video content (think LinkedIn for the corrugated industry).

The Virtual Event Company (TVEC) was tasked with challenging the status quo in the exhibition market to come up

with a digital platform and trade fair concept that would innovate, drive engagement and work across multiple timezones.

Hyperfair's virtual reality technology was chosen for its unique ability to engage an audience and allow visitors to do business on a more human level, via interactive avatars and native chat functionality.

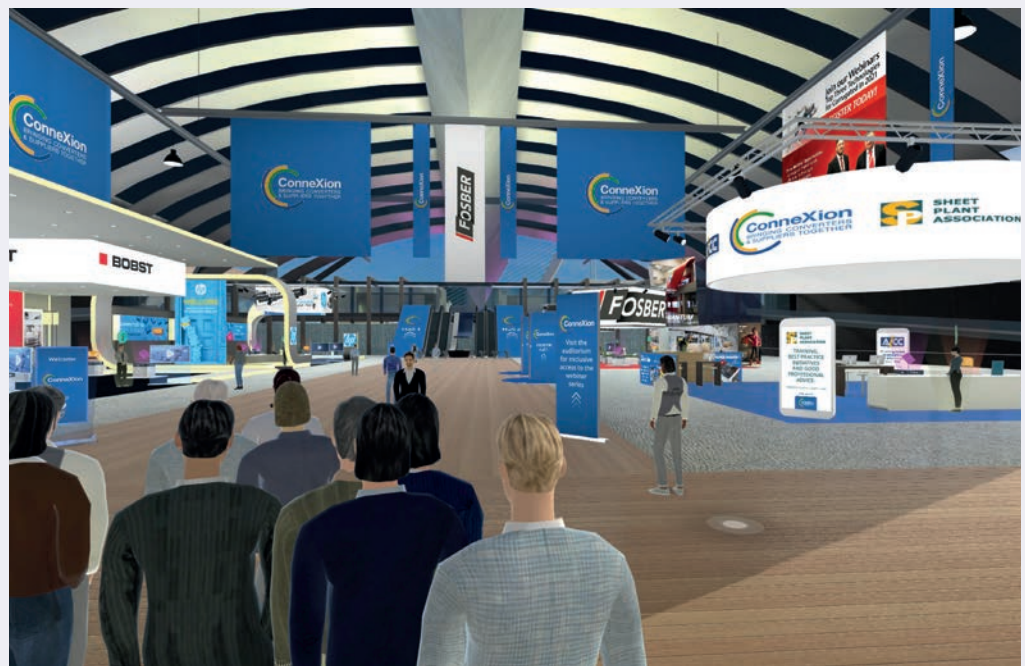
Some 35 partner exhibitors brought their products and services to life in a Virtual Reality (VR) trade show environment with 3D rendered stands, product showcases, live demos and downloadable collateral, whilst speaking with 2,314 registered visitors from across the world via chat, email or by phone.

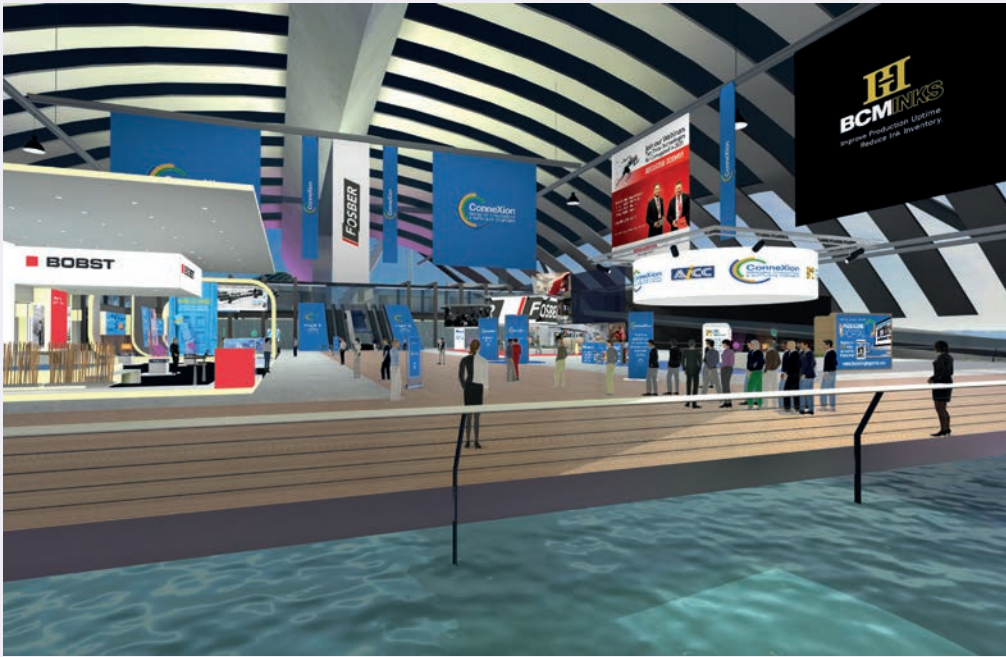
Visitor avatars could interact with each other, as well as with stand holders, swap business cards, access pre-recorded conference content, and even change their bespoke look and attire before walking the

▶ **AVATARS COULD INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER, SWAP BUSINESS CARDS AND EVEN CHANGE THEIR BESPOKE LOOK AND ATTIRE.**

show-floor.

In the three months leading up to ConneXion, TVEC helped Brunton Business Publications to create stand specifications, manage the logistics, floor-plan and timeframe, plus produce





► IN THE FIRST WEEK ALONE, BOBST GENERATED SEVERAL MEANINGFUL ENQUIRIES, WHICH MORE THAN JUSTIFIED ITS €180-A-DAY INVESTMENT.

and upload content.

Throughout ConneXion, which ran between the 2nd and 28th November 2020, TVEC acted as technical and client support. Post event, TVEC helped Brunton to analyse avatar-based behavioural analytics and manage exhibitor follow-ups.

TVEC CEO John Saunders says: “By TVEC providing end-to-end event management to source the perfect platform and deliver content with high-end production values and hands-on technical support, Brunton Business Publications

was able to support the corrugated packaging sector and offer a high-value proposition to replace cancelled shows in this sector.

“Brunton’s belief in the power of a virtual trade show platform has enabled it to not only keep a global industry truly connected but has also facilitated business during a particularly difficult period.”

ConneXion’s results were staggering. Almost 6,000 virtual business cards were exchanged (1,618 on the opening day), over 7,000 conversations occurred via the chat

functionality and registered visitors attended the show over 6,000 times. The average visitor dwell time was around 47 minutes.

The first exhibitor to sign-up to ConneXion was packaging machinery supplier, Bobst. The company, headquartered in Switzerland, opted for a Platinum virtual stand package that cost a little under €5,000 to run for the full 27 days of the show. In the first week alone, Bobst generated several meaningful enquiries, which more than justified its €180-a-day investment.

Daniel Brunton, managing director of Brunton Business Publications said: “When companies around the world saw what TVEC had helped us to achieve, we were inundated with stand requests during the opening few days. It’s a three-month lead time to deliver a virtual stand solution however, so we were in the tough position of explaining that they would

have to wait until we do the next event.

“By being able to exhibit for longer without actually having to ‘man the stand’ the whole time, it not only makes more financial sense but it also paves the way for an evolved mindset whereby partners can see who has downloaded a brochure and follow-up on leads via digital analytics.

“TVEC was incredible at helping us go from staring down the barrel of lockdown to creating a GDPR compliant virtual market-place, which had the support of 35 partner companies.

“We’re now in talks with industry trade associations in order to support their members with future partnered content. It’s a platform that can benefit everyone and help to develop community in a virtual world, even after the physical world is ready to reopen and in-person events can finally return,” says Brunton.

As DEN was going to press, a week-long 2021 outing of ConneXion was getting underway. On the first day, 744 attendees visited, spending an average time of 45 minutes within the virtual show environment. In addition, 1,244 conversations had already taken place by the close of day one and 714 business cards changed hands. **U**

