

T S W Tradeshow Week®

2008 TOP OVERALL AND TOP TRADESHOW Internet Retailer Conference & Exhibition

Challenged Industry, Booming Sector

Despite the current troubles in the retail industry, **Internet Retailer Conference & Exhibition** Show Director Jack Love isn't worried about a thing. E-retailing is alive and kicking, Love said, a robust segment that grew 22 percent this past year, compared with the almost flat growth of brick-and-mortar store retailing.

And his four-year-old event, both a first-time winner and the 2008 Tradeshow Week fastest-growing show overall, is indeed proof that the e-retailing industry is not only vibrant, but also booming.

In 2005, the show started at the Hyatt Regency Chicago's Riverside Center with 45 exhibiting companies on a 4,500 square foot showfloor. The following year, it quadrupled in size to 187 exhibitors spanning 23,400 sq. ft.

In 2007, with 35,700 sq. ft. of space at the San Jose (Calif.) McEnery Convention Center, the show sprouted yet again – to 247 exhibiting companies.

From the very beginning, there was such strong interest in the show, Love said, that moving after two years from a hotel ballroom to a convention center was a necessary step that allowed Internet Retailer to really take off. So how does an event within a challenged industry attract such strong market interest? According to Love, the secret is the draw of a vibrant growing sector coupled with a tried-and-true business recipe for success.

Love is no rookie; he's built his fair share of shows from the bottom up before. As a 40-year publishing veteran whose career included two decades of overseeing conferences, he said he recognized the powerful growth potential of e-commerce around the time of the first tech boom. After leaving Faulkner & Gray, a media company he started in the late '80s, Love was driven by his entrepreneurial spirit to start another company – this time focusing on the e-retail market. Through the course of his career, Love said, he has honed an effective formula of developing a publication first then branching out with a variety of media, including conferences.

"(When you have) a cluster of information products under one brand, you can go very deep into a market," he added. "One product feeds off of and supports another. You build up a loyal clientele because you're serving their information needs with a variety of media." Eight years after its founding, and with Love at the helm as

its president, Vertical Web Media is a single-brand company with a magazine, directory, data book, Web site, online newsletter and two conferences under the Internet Retailer umbrella. With that foundation in place, launching the show was a "no-brainer," Love said, a logical extension of the company's printed and electronic media that already had developed a strong, loyal following.

"Once we established the magazine, saw a market growing and had established a strong base of people who really knew our brand, going to a conference was an easy thing," he added. Taking time to know the market, develop information products and study the competition was key to launching an event that represented the industry more thoroughly than other events, Love said.

Having strong editorial content in place also was key to building a successful conference foundation, he added. "Content is the driver," Love said. "This industry is changing so fast ... it changes every few weeks, it seems. In that type of a market, you need content. If you deliver it as we do, you're going to succeed."

With the June 2008 Internet Retailer at Chicago's McCormick Place and next year's event in Boston, Love said, the show will continue to rotate through regions where e-retailing markets are strongest: California, Illinois, Florida

and the East Coast.

Excited and inspired by the industry's potential for change and growth, Love said he looks forward to watching the retail industry shift increasingly toward the Internet as technology continues to evolve. As for the show's future, Love will aim high. He said he believes the event has the potential to become the "Comdex" of e-commerce events.

"The vision is to be the No. 1 e-commerce show in the world," Love said. "E-commerce is a massive industry – a new industry – and at the heart of it is e-retailing. ... We want to be the place where the industry gathers once a year."

–Lisa Plummer

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