

quality

Automechanika as a global brand

By James Hilton



Stephan Kurzawski, Vice President of Messe Frankfurt and Global Brand Manager, Automechanika.

The Automechanika fairs are well-known across the globe. Be it last year's Automechanika Moscow, this year's Automechanika Roma, or next year's Automechanika Istanbul, these exhibitions have become a by-word for the auto industry. The organizer, Messe Frankfurt, has been organizing fairs and exhibitions for over two decades and is Germany's biggest fair and exhibition company. It was around a decade ago that they launched the first international edition of the Automechanika fair.

Messe Frankfurt today holds nearly 113 events across the globe, 69 outside Germany. The company says that its Automechanika brand has built up a band of loyal exhibitors who travel across the globe along with the fair, drumming up business in different countries. Many want to highlight their products to automobile and equipment manufacturers. The company is clear that its biggest event is Automechanika Frankfurt. Each year, and in each edition, Automechanika focuses on a particular service or product. At the 20th edi-

tion of Automechanika Frankfurt, being held September 16 to 21 2008, the main theme will be global warming and its impact on the automotive aftermarket.

The exhibition is expected to attract 4,600 exhibitors and around 160,000 trade visitors.

Held every two years, Automechanika Frankfurt offers trade visitors a unique range of products in the automobile parts, car wash, workshop and filling-station equipment, accessories and tuning sectors. The fair is unparalleled in terms of size and internationality with around 40% of trade visitors and 80% of exhibitors at the last event coming from outside Germany. Covering nearly 300,000 square meters of exhibition space (gross), the Automechanika occupies the whole of Frankfurt Fair and Exhibition Centre.

Automotive Industries (AI) spoke to Stephan Kurzawski, Vice President of Messe Frankfurt and Global Brand Manager, Automechanika.

AI: Looking back, to what do you attribute the success of Automechanika?

Kurzawski: Firstly, Frankfurt has been a renowned trade fair site for more than 800 years. Today, the Frankfurt exhibition grounds are the third largest in the world, with 578,000 square meters in total area, nine halls and an adjacent congress centre. Secondly, we work closely together with a lot of associations within the industry who all contributed to the development of the Automechanika brand on different fields. The result is that today Automechanika shows a unique range of products in the automobile parts, car washes, workshop and filling-station equipment, accessories and tuning sectors. Thirdly, we have built up a global network over the last twenty years comprising 14 subsidiaries, five branch offices and 48 International Sales Partners on four continents. 1400 employees support the Automechanika brand in over 150 countries. That is a lot of know-how and manpower!

AI: What was the vision when the first Automechanika was held in the 70's?

Kurzawski: The first Automechanika was born "of necessity" and its success is therefore all the more remarkable. Because of the crisis in the automobile industry in 1971, the IAA Motor Show was abandoned and in its place, the first Automechanika exhibition was organized. Thus firms involved with motor vehicles, with equipment and accessories and other similar companies which would usually have exhibited at IAA were given the opportunity of an equivalent show-case, and specialist groups with an interest in these areas also had the opportunity to get an overview of the range of products on the market. As a result, the decision was taken to organize the trade fair for the following year as well in order to create an event which would alternate with the IAA show. With an additional 100 exhibitors, the second Automechanika inspired great enthusiasm during the five days it was open.

AI: Did you expect the Automechanika brand to be such a big hit?

Kurzawski: I have been the brand manager of Automechanika since 2004. Back then I took over a strong brand and an ex-



Getting down to business at Automechanika Thailand.



Automechanika Argentina.



Automechanika Shanghai.



Networking at Automechanika Shanghai.

cellent team. The tradefair industry has become more and more difficult over the last few years, so I am very proud and happy that we launched three more successful Automechanika fairs around the globe during this time - the latest events were in Moscow, Rome and Toronto, and Johannesburg is coming in 2009.

AI: Where do you see the Automechanika brand going from here?

Kurzwald: We will continue observing and analyzing the world's markets in the future so that international manufacturers and buyers have the chance to make contact with national companies and business partners. Our events outside Germany represent launching pads into emerging markets, especially for small to medium-sized companies.

Automotive Industries (AI) also spoke to Thomas Aukamm, Director of Automechanika.

AI: Tell us about the choice of themes for the Automechanika exhibitions.

Aukamm: The Automechanika exhibitions cover the worldwide market, especially in the

aftermarket sector – more completely in terms of depth and breadth than any other event. In Germany, competing events only overlap with parts of the Automechanika nomenclature. Over recent years, the Automechanika has developed into an international innovation hub. The renowned Innovation Award, which was awarded for the first time in 2004, points out the efforts and development our exhibitors create in terms of new products and services for the international markets. The Innovation Award as well as the Innovation Show serves as a platform to communicate new concepts to media and potential buyers.

AI: What impact do you think this year's theme of the environment will have on the participants and visitors to Automechanika Frankfurt?

Aukamm: Our participants and visitors are used to the fact that the complementary program concentrates on topical issues and future-oriented developments. In line with the current discussions in the automotive industry, the next Automechanika will be green. A new feature will be a "Green Directory", an environmentally-oriented directory for visitors, which guides them to products and services that set new standards in the fields of emissions protection and sustainability. Another new feature is the publication of an Automechanika Study dealing with the impact of the discussion about global warming on the automotive aftermarket. It offers important recommendations for taking decisions about innovations. Additionally, topics of current issues affecting the trade and workshop sector will be discussed and solutions offered at the Automechanika Academy. By putting emphasis on the environmental topic we also want to point out what kind of investments will be important in the future.

AI: Tell us a about some of the issues in different countries and how Automechanika tries to reflect this diversity.

Aukamm: At Automechanika Frankfurt we have exhibitors from about 80 different

countries and visitors from more than 140 nations. Thus Automechanika Frankfurt is the international mirror and business platform of the market.

The spectrum of products to be seen at the individual international Automechanika fairs is tailored to the needs of the regional market concerned and can include replacement and original parts, workshop and filling-station equipment and accessories, as well as cars and trucks. Depending on their orientation, these events give international exhibitors access to local, regional and international markets. We offer our customers both, knowledge of the international automobile sector and expertise in trade-fair marketing. Our aim is to provide our exhibitors with a uniform standard of quality at all our fairs

AI: What are some of the new exhibitions being planned by your company?

Aukamm: In 2009, we will launch Automechanika South Africa in Johannesburg from March 18 to 21. We frequently rethink the existing portfolio of our shows and search for new locations. Australia and India are also blank spots on the Automechanika map. We'll go anywhere the industry wants us. **AI**



Thomas Aukamm, Director of Automechanika.