

Two decades of EXPO in review

Trade show history offers guidance for future events

By Vicki Jones, Editor

With the cancellation of the 2021 IDAExpo, we decided to publish a recap of the past two decades of Expo events. It features insights from several industry experts and offers a blueprint for how to continue to develop and enhance our annual industry event in the future.

The future of Expo

In May, IDA announced that Expo will be held every other year beginning in 2022. The updated 2022 IDAExpo+ will be held April 5-8 in Las Vegas, Nev. “Offering Expo every other year will encourage creativity, commitment, and attendance,” said Pat Lohse, Clopay vice president of marketing.

Garaga President, founder, and CEO Michel Gendreau said, “I think moving the event to a two-year format is the best action to move ahead. With information and communication so accessible, suppliers don’t need to show product at Expo every year.”

The bi-annual decision

Kevin Pettiette, former IDA president and owner of Smokey’s Garage Door, said that the initial concept was proposed by Gendreau. IDA Executive Director Mike Fischer and Pettiette first met with Gendreau during the 2019 Expo in Salt Lake City, Utah. Pettiette said, “That conversation with Michel was eye-opening.”

After several additional Zoom meetings and evaluating the results of a survey distributed by DASMA, Pettiette said that he had a greater understanding of the costs our supplier members are bearing. “We decided that we needed to try the bi-annual schedule.”

The Expo is a very important source of revenue for the IDA. Pettiette said that the primary goal of the new schedule is to make sure that it is sustainable for the long term and benefits both the IDA and DASMA members.

The value of IDAExpo

“The Expo is a great platform to visit with existing and potential customers, meet with suppliers, and see the evolution of product offerings on the market,” Gendreau said.

Lohse said that talking to dealers in a trade show setting like the Expo helps build confidence and foster relationships. “Dealers like

to know the people they are buying from, and Expo is a great venue for that. They enjoy discussing products and programs with us, and it is a great way for us to receive feedback from them.”

Pettiette said, “As an owner of a small to medium-sized company, the Expo trade show and the seminars offered during the show are of great value to myself and my team.”

Attending the annual Expo has been beneficial to both suppliers and dealers over the years. What can we learn from past shows?

“Vegas always wins”

In 20 years, the IDAExpo has been held in seven different cities: Atlanta, Ga.; Atlantic City, N.J.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Nashville, Tenn.; Salt Lake City, Utah; and San Antonio, Texas.

Since 2000, Expo has been held in Las Vegas a total of nine years, and it’s clear why this hot spot is so popular. Seven of the top 10 most-attended shows took place in Sin City. Nashville, Tenn. is the only other city that somewhat rivals Vegas’ attendee numbers.

“Vegas always wins as the most popular location,” said Tom Wadsworth, former editor of Door + Access Systems Newsmagazine. “It’s popular not because of its East or West location, but because it’s Vegas. The city’s wide variety of attractions and gambling make it a major magnet for our industry.”

TOP 10 LOCATIONS (based on total number of attendees)

#	City	Attendees	Year
1.	Las Vegas	5,017	2006
2.	Las Vegas	5,011	2004
3.	Las Vegas	4,817	2008
4.	Las Vegas	4,617	2000
5.	Orlando	4,301	2007
6.	Nashville	4,144	2005
7.	Las Vegas	4,132	2010
8.	Nashville	3,989	2002
9.	Las Vegas	3,609	2018
10.	Las Vegas	3,575	2016

Seven of the top 10 most-attended shows took place in Las Vegas, Nev.

Attendance is a roller coaster

Why are some shows more attended than others?

Location appears to have the greatest influence, but there are several other variables to consider, including the time of year, the days of the week the event is held, the economy, and a global pandemic, to name a few.

The most well-attended Expo was held on May 2006 in Las Vegas with 5,017 total attendees. The second most-attended show took place two years prior with a total of 5,011 attendees. Both events were hosted in May and in Las Vegas.

The least attended show (held March 3-6, 2020 in Salt Lake City, Utah) had 2,123 people attend. However, this show was plagued by several unique issues, including the onset of a global pandemic, a first-time Utah location, and an earlier-in-the-year event date.

When comparing dealer versus exhibitor attendance, the data provides additional insight. For example, the overall attendance for the 2015 Expo was 2,700. But for every five people at that show, three were attendees, and two were exhibitor staff. That's a 3 to 2 ratio. In 2016, overall attendance was the best since 2010, and dealer attendance jumped 41% over the previous show.

EXPO ATTENDANCE: 2000-2020

Year	Month	Location	Attendee Total	Non-Exhibitor	Exhibitor
2000	April	Las Vegas	4,617	3,108	1,509
2001	April	Atlantic City	3,500	1,539	155
2002	April	Nashville	3,989	3,337	652
2003	April	San Antonio	3,349	2,611	738
2004	May	Las Vegas	5,011	3,677	1,334
2005	April	Nashville	4,144	3,228	916
2006	May	Las Vegas	5,017	3,381	1,636
2007	April	Orlando	4,301	3,221	1,080
2008	April	Las Vegas	4,817	3,830	987
2009	April	Nashville	2,813	2,257	556
2010	April	Las Vegas	4,132	3,129	1,003
2011	June	Nashville	2,994	2,171	823
2012	May	Las Vegas	2,996	2,125	871
2013	May	Nashville	2,483	1,584	899
2014	April	Las Vegas	3,164	1,973	1,191
2015	April	Indianapolis	2,700	1,632	1,068
2016	April	Las Vegas	3,575	2,296	1,279
2017	April	Atlanta	2,685	1,585	1,100
2018	April	Las Vegas	3,609	2,377	1,232
2019	March	Indianapolis	2,806	1,877	929
2020	March	Salt Lake City	2,123	1,175	948

The merry month of May

14 of the past 21 Expos were held in April, four were held in May, two were held in March, and one show was held in June (2011). While April is the most common month that Expo is held, May is the best for attendance with an average attendee number of 3,877. April is second with an average of 3,671, and March has the lowest average with 2,465. The one and only June event had 2,994 attendees.

Day-to-day

Available data from previous post-Expo D+AS surveys reveal that attendees prefer fewer days and no exhibit hours on Saturday. In 2013, the Expo exhibit hours were on Friday and Saturday. The D+AS survey asked, "Did you visit the Expo show floor on Saturday?" and 58% of respondents said "no."

One respondent said, "Eliminate Saturday. It's a complete waste of time and money." Another respondent added, "DO NOT EVER schedule the Expo on a holiday weekend."

In some cases, the Expo schedule was extended to allow for training opportunities. In 2007, the show changed from the usual Wednesday/Thursday to a Wednesday through Saturday schedule. As a result, workshop attendance dropped by 35% from the average attendance data reported for the previous three years. These stats indicate that the days of the event also influences whether people want to attend.



LITTLE KNOWN FACT: When you see that 3,000 attended workshops, it probably represents only about 400-500 different people. If someone attends five different workshops, they are counted five different times.

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EXPO WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE: 2001-2020

2020	Salt Lake City	2,239
2019	Indianapolis	2,873
2018	Las Vegas	2,833
2017	Atlanta	2,512
2016	Las Vegas	3,108
2015	Indianapolis	3,282
2014	Las Vegas	2,233
2013	Nashville	2,756
2012	Las Vegas	2,142
2011	Indianapolis	2,279
2010	Las Vegas	2,713
2009	Nashville	2,611
2008	Las Vegas	3,188
2007	Orlando	1,957
2006	Las Vegas	2,800
2005	Nashville	3,105
2004	Las Vegas	3,089
2003	San Antonio	2,265
2002	Nashville	2,401
2001	Atlantic City	1,539

The tech shift

Workshops had a high of 3,282 attendees in 2015, and a low of 1,539 in 2001. Workshops, specifically the expanded scope of the training offered, also influences attendee numbers.

The Institute of Door Dealer Education and Accreditation (IDEA) has tried to arrange workshop schedules to cover different training tracks and topics during each non-plenary session, according to Mark Daus, IDEA director from Overhead Door. “If attendees are interested in more than one seminar, they are more likely to attend the show.”

Early on, technical workshops for installers were limited to one or two classes on Saturday morning. In 2006, Todd Thomas, former managing director of IDEA said that technical workshops had been consistently filled to capacity and dealers were asking for more technical programming for their employees.

“The shift to more tech-based workshops was also motivated by IDEA’s strategic plan to expand technician certification,” Daus added.

You're #1

An overview of the most popular workshop of every Expo since 2001 offers a glimpse of the relevant issues affecting the industry at that specific time and highlights the topics that consistently draw a crowd.

TOP-RANKED EXPO WORKSHOP: 2001-2020

Year	Workshop Title	Speaker	Number of Participants
2001	Succeeding in the Retrofit Market	Hermanns/Stewart/von Kipper	140
2002	Effective Selling Techniques	Jeff Blackman	180
2003	Invent Business Opportunities No One Else Can Imagine!	Art Turock	193
2004	Defining Service	Randy Moore	500
2005	Planning for Excellence in Your Business	Randy Moore	393
2006	Covering Your Assets	Larry Oxenham	247
2007	The Art of Attitude!	Sam Glenn	313
2008	Positively Outrageous Service	Scott Gross	404
2009	Rock Solid Leadership — Special Presentation	Robin Crow	351
2010	The Economy Isn't Down It's Different	Jim Mathis	344
2011	The 1.2% Factor — The Science of How the Small Change of Accountability Leads to Large Results	Bob Davies	287
2012	A New Economy — New Rules	Delia Passi	298
2013	How to Be an Island of Excellence in an Ocean of Mediocrity	Nancy Friedman	332
2014	How to Double Sales in the New Economy	Marc Wayshak	227
2015	Think!	Tim Richardson	354
2016	What's So Funny About Garage Doors?	Tom Ryan	367
2017	The Irresistible Power of Strategic Storytelling	Kindra Hall	301
2018	Creating a Killer Customer Experience	Bill Rossiter	327
2019	Training and Working with Millennials	Amy Lynch	337
2020	Finding Purpose and Passion	Chad Hymas	460

More certification opportunities equals more people

At each Expo, IDEA provides certification and accreditation testing for a large number of dealers and technicians. “The opportunity to take these tests is just one more added benefit when deciding whether to attend Expo,” said Daus.

The Residential Installer Certification program began in 2000, and the Rolling Steel Fire Door Installer Certification program launched in 2003. IDEA added the Commercial Sectional Installer Certification program in 2006, and that year, about 30 people took advantage of the opportunity to become IDEA accredited or IDEA certified.

“Offering testing opportunities immediately after the training, helped boost the pass/fail ratio. It helps to take the exam while the information is fresh in the technicians’ minds,” Daus said.



In my 30 years of attending Expo, the one product that attracted the most attention and the biggest crowd was LiftMaster's introduction of its side-mount residential opener in 2006."

—Tom Wadsworth

HOTTEST PRODUCTS AT EXPO: 2005-2020

A look back at the "Hottest Products" since 2005 captures a glimpse of the most popular products of the times.

- 2005: Carriage-House Doors
- 2006: LiftMaster Residential Jackshaft Opener
- 2007: Versa Lift Garage Attic Storage Product
- 2008: Woodgrain Finish Steel Doors
- 2009: Clopay Canyon Ridge Collection
- 2010: Breezy Living Screen Garage Door (featured at Arrow-Tru-Line's exhibit)
- 2011: LiftMaster myQ technology
- 2012: Genie's new line of commercial openers
- 2013: Amarr Trento Collection
- 2014: Amarr Trento Collection
- 2015: Northwest Door's Infinity Classic
- 2016: Wayne Dalton ADV-X High Speed Rolling Doors
- 2017: Wayne Dalton Luminous Contemporary Aluminum Glass Door
- 2018: Genie 24V DC Residential Jackshaft Operator
- 2019: Genie residential wall-mount garage door opener
- 2020: Genie residential wall-mount garage door opener

Curb appeal matters

In the 1990s, offering doors in new colors was popular, and manufacturers increased focus on insulated doors. In the 2000s, increasing curb appeal became a growing trend. "Builders started designing more homes with front-facing garages due to increased land costs," said Lohse. "The increased focus on the garage door drove interest in more attractive design options, which has been great for our industry."

Garage door design began to matter

In the early 2000s, the carriage-house door design became popular. It was a welcome change from raised panel steel and gave builders and homeowners a new way to make their home stand out.

In 2003, of the 29 Expo exhibitors displaying residential garage doors, 20 (69%) showed a carriage-house door. In 2005, carriage-house doors were voted as the "Hottest Product at Expo," and six brands were mentioned (Amarr, C.H.I., Clopay, First United, Garage Doors, and Haas).

Garage doors become an architectural focal point

Next, architects and designers concentrated on creating designs with complementing and proportionate-sized doors. "They wanted a door that looked right for that home, so manufacturers started to expand their panel, window, and style options to accommodate this trend," said Lohse.

The carriage house craze was good for the industry, but it didn't fit every home style. By 2003, a large number of commercial glass and aluminum garage doors were being ordered for residential installations. Lohse said, "Modern architecture enthusiasts wanted a stylish solution for their homes, so they went industrial."



Modern residential models like Northwest Door's Infinity Classic door were the hot trend during the mid-2000s.

By 2008, there were multiple manufacturers following this residential trend. Between the 2007 and 2008 Expos, displays of aluminum residential garage doors increased dramatically (by 113%). Displays of aluminum-and-glass doors more than tripled.

High-end doors gain appeal

In the past decade, the industry has seen an increase in high-end garage door sales. Visual design tools are available through various manufacturer websites, and they help to educate homeowners about all of their options.

Many allow users to choose their designs, configure the door, visualize color, and determine window placement.

Lohse said that often, consumers choose a more expensive option than they had originally considered because they see the impact it can have on the exterior of their home. "The technology gives them confidence to go outside their comfort zone, and they upsell themselves."

Future wish list

In the past, the entertainment at the IDA Presidential Banquets included some serious headliners, including the Beach Boys, Smothers Brothers, and Willie Nelson. Pettiette said, "I hope that we will start seeing that type of top-notch entertainment at future Expos."

Gendreau suggested hosting educational, IDA, DASMA, and IDEA events at the same time and location every year. "This would save time and money," he said. "It would also provide a platform to have joint meetings on industry issues and meet with suppliers and customers who are attending the educational workshops."

With the Expo being offered every other year, Lohse hopes to see greater dealer attendance and seminar participation along with more exhibitors showing off new products. "I feel garage doors are finally receiving the respect they deserve, which is great for everyone in our industry!"

A "reimagined" Expo and new annual events

New annual IDA events are already in the works. "We are in the brainstorming stage of what



I like to call future Educon Trade Shows," said Pettiette. "The plan is for these events to focus on education as well as continuing the important trade show presentation." Supplier member commitment to participating in these "off-year" events will be very important. Pettiette said that organizers are considering small booths or exhibits for suppliers.

"We are dedicated to making the Educon Trade Shows valuable to attendees, suppliers, and DASMA membership. Nothing is confirmed, but we're considering hosting three events in various locations during the off years," added Pettiette.

THANK YOU!

The information published in this article is a culmination of statistics gathered from previous Expo events and post-Expo surveys. Thanks to IDA and IDEA for providing audited Expo and workshop attendance statistics for select shows, and to Tom Wadsworth for his diligent and ongoing effort to collect and publish Expo data over the years. ■