

National Retail Federation Consolidates Systems to Streamline Processes

"For the first time, this year we had a real-time floor plan on site for exhibitors to do booth selection. We got a great benefit from that. Re-booking numbers exceeded the previous year's numbers significantly, and a2zShow contributed to that."

— Mark Bogdansky, Conference Exhibit Sales & Service, National Retail Federation

CHALLENGE:

As the world's largest association representing the \$4.4 trillion retail sales industry, the National Retail Federation (NRF) was managing multiple events using a combination of databases, spreadsheets and floor planning tools to track attendees, speakers, exhibitors and sponsors. With separate systems for each event - including retail's annual BIG Show featuring close to 200,000 square feet, 1,100 booths and 400 suppliers - the staff wasted time and resources on redundant processes for attendee management, exhibit sales and service, and conference management. The lack of integration between systems also made comparing year-on-year and event-to-event results problematic and time-consuming.

SOLUTION:

NRF chose a2zShow Enterprise Edition to consolidate the multiple systems, eliminate redundancies, and provide real-time management and reporting capabilities. Using a2zShow, the conference management team automated the call-for-papers process and gained access to up-to-date session information online. The exhibit services team now manages floor plans and booth sales in real time, beginning with on-site booth selection for the next year's events. The marketing team manages content for multiple event websites which enable attendees to register online, search for sessions and exhibits, and schedule appointments. And the finance team accesses accurate financial reports across multiple events.

RESULTS:

The highly configurable a2zShow solution minimized customization necessary to meet the NRF's unique needs. After hands-on training, staff members in multiple departments quickly learned how to leverage the user-friendly system to not only manage their specific functions but also collaborate across functions and events. As the staff becomes more adept at using a2zShow's capabilities, the benefits become clear:

1. **Workflow and process efficiencies** -- System consolidation eliminates redundant data entry, as well as manual cross-referencing, correction and compilation of reports.
2. **Automation of Call for Papers** -- Speakers register, submit proposals, update profiles, and review schedules and locations online, eliminating speaker confirmation mailings.
3. **Real-time conference management** -- Conference committee members located throughout the United States login from any Internet connection to view multiple sessions in real time, collaborate on selection of speakers and topics, and update schedules and locations.
4. **Real-time exhibit management** -- Exhibitors see advanced technology being leveraged to manage the floorplan in real time, enabling them to choose booths for next year's event on site at the current year's event. This speeds the selection process and contract information input.
5. **Improved cash flow** -- Accelerated onsite booth sales enable NRF to collect more down payments using credit cards, putting cash in the bank earlier.
6. **Rapid website updates** -- Instead of waiting approximately four days for updates to be made, program committee members execute changes to the online conference program immediately, with the one-screen update and save feature.
7. **Accurate exhibitor data** -- Exhibitors enter and update their own data to ensure its accuracy.
8. **Accurate speaker data** -- Speakers enter and update their own data to ensure its accuracy.
9. **Participant record consolidation** -- Multiple records are consolidated, so one entry per individual tracks multiple roles (attendee, speaker, exhibitor, sponsor) across multiple events.
10. **Improved reporting and analysis** -- Real-time reporting facilitates financial management. Accurate data makes reports more reliable, and customized templates deliver data in the requested format, quickly and easily.

"a2zShow has saved us time by not having to re-key data and double check that the information in the system is correct. We're able to trust that the data is correct, accurate and reliable."

— Tonya Brigham, Director, Speaker & Conference Management, National Retail Federation