

REED Exhibitions UK uses TAAP's Exman issue tracker for improving exhibitor experiences at its shows

REED Exhibitions UK deliver on improved customer service for exhibitors through instant issue logging on mobile handsets, resulting in quick resolutions from contractors.



In Brief

- Improved customer service at REED shows for exhibitors through quick issue logging and routing on mobile devices
- Exman has dealt with 9,463 issues so far at over 100 shows
- Exman has so far been involved with shows which represent over \$250M (£156M) of revenue



Background

REED Exhibitions (a division of REED Elsevier) is the world's largest events organiser. It boasts a portfolio of 460 events per year, aimed at both trade and consumers.

REED Exhibitions UK required a mobile issue management system to ensure that any problems with exhibitor's stands or orders were resolved quickly, professionally and with the desired outcome. They needed a solution which replaced a sometimes unreliable chain of reporting issues and arriving at a resolution.

The Challenge

Despite everyone's best efforts there will always be problems with exhibitors' stands or orders, onsite. Currently, exhibitors have to walk to the organisers' onsite office and report any problems. The organiser then reports the problem to the contractor who in turn batches the work and passes it to their show floor staff to resolve.

This communication physically takes time which only gets longer when the build up gets busier. In addition to this, every person reporting the problem has to have complete faith in the next link of the chain that the issue will get resolved. There is often no feedback that issues have been resolved until either the end of the day or when the exhibitor returns to say that it hasn't been resolved!

Solution

The basis of the solution to issue tracking and resolution, is a real time database that tracks each user, stand, and contractor by problem type, logging the issues raised whilst remembering who has seen what information about the issue.

The system has both handheld PDA and PC interfaces and is permanently live over a GPRS network.

The two interfaces mean that everyone can be

connected to the system, from contractors' foremen or staff walking the show floor to the onsite contractors and organiser's offices - and even managers sitting at their office desk in other countries.

Using a GPRS network means that it is fully portable globally and is not reliant on any contractor or venue system.

Data for exhibitor stand details and pre-show orders is uploaded into the system from either the online exhibitor manual or direct from suppliers, pre-show. The system has the ability to continually update with real time orders placed onsite if required. The technology provides everybody in the process with information 'OnTAAP'.

Every user has a unique login so that their inputs into the system are recorded and traceable. The status of every issue (New, Acknowledged, Resolved, Checked or Closed) and any comment or note made by a user is captured in the system and viewable in real time by all users. This is important because an issue often involves multiple people and comments being added. Every input is time and date stamped.

In the dynamic and fast moving environment which is an exhibition build up, organiser and contractor staff need to know quickly, efficiently and accurately what has changed and to be able to review/read comments added to each issue without having to keep opening and closing individual record histories to see if anything has changed.

Using a very simple visual cue, colour is used to highlight that an issue has changed or has been amended. This has a tremendous impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the user and their ability to quickly and effectively respond to the exhibitor. This means they don't have to keep opening an issue to see if anything has

Logging a new issue

changed; in effect the system is smart enough to tell them what has changed and what they should look at.

Not only can the exhibitor have his/her issue resolved more quickly now, they don't need to wait on the stand to know that the issue is in the process of being resolved. If they wish, they can receive a text message each time the status of the issue is changed on the system, keeping them informed after the hall has closed or if they need to leave the site at any point.

The PDA mobile interface allows staff to log issues immediately in front of the exhibitor anywhere in the hall, and also enables staff to have access to completely up-to-date information on every stand should any exhibitor stop them and ask for an update. For efficiency, each

member of staff can have a 'my stands' list if they are only looking after a section of the hall; however, the full list of problems is available to them if they need it.

Once resolved, the final status of 'Checked' and 'Closed' are chosen, depending on whether the exhibitor is present or not. If the exhibitor is present staff have the option to add a quick 'customer service' rating which ensures that exhibitors are rating that particular experience and that their view isn't changed by a subsequent successful or poor experience when the show is open.

Post show reporting of issues and customer service will shortly be uploaded into Reed's

Selecting the status

Stand	Status	Opened	Problem
100	New	16:33 22/3	Shell Scheme
100	New	16:33 22/3	Shell Scheme
400	New	17:40 22/3	Electrics
400	New	17:53 22/3	Furniture
400	Resolved	17:53 22/3	Furniture
400	Checked	18:16 22/3	Furniture
300	New	19:24 22/3	Shell Scheme
300	New	19:24 22/3	Shell Scheme

Overview of issues

CRM system as a permanent record.

The solution is built and powered using Microsoft technologies, SQL 2005, Windows Servers 2003, Load Balanced Web Servers, multiple redundant lanes into the data centre, C#, Transact SQL, ASP.NET Web Site and Web Services, and Windows .NET and Compact Framework for the Windows Console and Windows Mobile PDA devices respectively.

Exman has been exclusive to Reed Exhibitions during 2007 and in that time has been adopted by Reed's operation in North America and is now being considered by their Asian operations. Some of Reed's major suppliers have also been in discussion with TAAP about adopting the system for their own use. It has recently become freely available to any interested party.

This fully live system for reporting and tracking exhibitor issues on site is receiving an overwhelmingly positive reaction from exhibitors, organisers and contractors staff.

Benefits

The faster that critical issues can be reported to the contractor's team, the faster they can resolve them, improving customer service. Because the system reports issues in real-time, and routed to the correct contractor, they are now resolved much more quickly.

Keeping the all staff and exhibitors informed on an issue's progress also improves customer service and removes the frustration that exhibitors often feel when waiting on the stand for the issue to be resolved. Exhibitors don't have to wait on the stand to know that the issue is in the process of being resolved. If they wish, they can receive a text message each time the status of the issue is changed on the system, keeping them informed after the hall has closed or if they need to leave the site at any point.

Results

With Exman, a sometimes unreliable chain of reporting has been replaced by absolute certainty that a problem has been acknowledged and will be resolved. Exman puts the exhibitor first and by being fully mobile, effectively takes the service desk to their stand.

Testimonials

From staff:

"Exhibitors have more confidence that you are actually dealing with the problem, rather than making a scribbled note."

"I thought the PDA made the team's life much easier. Problems seemed to have been dealt with far more quickly. "

From Exhibitors:

"An amazing service!! Our carpet was torn and we called in a report and in 20 minutes it was fixed. We couldn't believe it!"

"Reed Exhibition's floor manager used the new PDA device to resolve our service issue in half the time than a manual system would have taken. Thank you Reed!"

From a supplier:

"...the introduction of the new Exman system has enabled myself and the Melville Team to provide an even better service to exhibitors at Reed shows ... it allows us to get queries resolved even faster than normal with any issues being directly relayed to our Operations team rather than via the service desks. The service desks then have smaller queues for all those exhibitors wanting to order and pay for any additional on site requirements"

Addition to original case study:

Statistics:

To date (June 2009), Exman has dealt with the following:

- 9,463 issues
- 86,642 exhibitors
- 111 shows
- 72,740 stands
- \$250M revenue involvement - Exman has been involved in shows which represent approx. \$250M (£156M) of revenue.

About TAAP

TAAP is a leading provider of software solutions which allow organisations to mobilise their operations using hand held computers.