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IMA: New ideas and practical solutions much in demand

Düsseldorf. Every year in January, IMA opens the business year for its exhibitors and visitors: If you are not present there, you will be out of things in the coming months. By tradition, the trade fair is the meeting place for the industry. In Halls 8a and 8b of the Düsseldorf Exhibition Centre, manufacturers present their latest products; this is where plans are made for the year just started, contracts are concluded and information is exchanged.

Most of all, of course, it is the innovations presented by exhibitors and the lively exchange with colleagues from the industry, especially against the background of the political discussions in Germany, that attract visitors to Düsseldorf. Daniel Günderoth, Managing Director of Top Game Spielothek GmbH in Lampertheim near Worms is an example: "At IMA 2012 I expect to find new innovative gambling systems and of course practical, functional ideas for implementing the regulations announced in the State Treaty on Gambling, such as gamblers' cards and compulsory downtimes – and last but not least interesting talks with colleagues about the problems related to the amusement tax." Regarding the current situation of the industry, Günderoth says: "Each crisis also offers new opportunities. In future, these will lie in a stronger diversification of our company in the field of sports betting and catering chains as well as in a healthy expansion into market-oriented entertainment facilities, i.e. arcades with twelve devices. I could also imagine combining the areas just mentioned in a single facility."

Freddy Fischer, Managing Partner of msp GmbH & Co. KG and founder of the "freddy fischer stiftung" based in Essen: "The draft legislation takes us into an uncertain future, the coming years will be shaped by the outcome of the current litigation. At this point in time, IMA is important as a meeting place for the industry. I expect a great deal from the exchange of views with colleagues regarding possible scenarios for the future and business inspiration on alternative concepts and ideas." In 2012, his group of companies will focus its investments on new devices with intelligent cash management for installation in gastronomic establishments. "In this context we rely on our German and Netherlands industry partners and look forward to moving ahead together with these companies."

During IMA 2012 Elfriede Lauser, Managing Director of Gustav Lauser GmbH Stuttgart and Deputy Chairperson of the Deutscher Automaten-Großhandels-Verband (DAGV), will also focus on the search for new, realisable ideas of how to confront the political situation: "The exchange with colleagues will be all the more important at this trade fair. From the industry, I expect solutions and support – after all, we are all in the same boat together: the industry, wholesalers and operators."

The industry is in a good position: presentation of new products

The IMA exhibitors are providing such solutions and look to the future with calm confidence. Like Mario Hoffmeister, Head of Central Communications at Gauselmann AG: "Basically, the industry in Germany is in a good position. Of course, the current political situation is a source of concern, but we are confident that the planned measures, some of which are totally unsuitable, will not go through. For this reason we start into 2012 with optimism – in spite of the dark clouds on the horizon." In this context, Gauselmann AG also considers the broader context. Says Hoffmeister: "As a matter of principle we are only interested in markets that allow a legal and ultimately regulated product. As a company with international operations we are, of course, not only looking at the various product options in Germany but observing developments in the international gambling market very closely."

Bally Wulff is focussed more strongly on the gastronomy sector, and this will also be evident at IMA: "With the wall-mounted version of our GameStation and the special gambling packages for gastronomic establishments, such as the 'ACTION STAR solid' we have devoted particular attention to the gastronomy sector, a fact which is appreciated by both gambling guests and gambling device operators and recognised as a gastronomy concept of the highest quality. This generated the expected increase in sales and strengthened our customers' confidence. The focus of our attention, however, is on innovative gambling establishments. Our gambling packages, in particular the new MAGIC CASHPOT, have brought movement into the market, including new market share," says Bernhard Eber from the Press & PR Department at Bally Wulff Entertainment. In his view, the present uncertain political situation is a challenge for the industry to take companies to the most modern level possible in 2012. Says Eber: "This is the only way to make the best use of the remaining time, regardless of what political decisions are taken. It would be entirely wrong at this point to resign and do nothing."

Volker Isenmann, Press Spokesman of NSM-LÖWEN ENTERTAINMENT and its subsidiary CROWN Technologies comments on the industry situation as follows: "The current industry situation is largely overshadowed by the uncertainty caused by the various politically motivated legislative projects. In addition to the Amendment to the State Treaty on Gambling, individual state laws on gambling arcades that already came into effect Berlin and Bremen and the projected state laws on gambling arcades in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Hessen or Schleswig-Holstein must be mentioned here. In terms of the operative business of operators and manufacturers, however, the current industry situation must be considered satisfactory." NSM LÖWEN und CROWN sees particularly interesting sales markets in its core business fields, i.e. cash gambling machines for arcades as well as for gastronomic establishments. Says Isenmann: "Furthermore, there are cash management systems by the CROWN subsidiary Hirscher Moneysystems. Electronic Darts will also continue to be an integral part of the LÖWEN product portfolio. Our ADMIRAL sports betting range also offers high potential, although its development will be significantly influenced by the regulatory framework."

Opportunities in international markets

The Austrian company APEX presents a newly approved device at IMA for the first time. Udo Nickel, General Sales Manager APEX Germany, says: "With our presence here we demonstrate the high importance we accord to the German market. We believe in the future and are going to show that. In the past few months we have sown the seed and are ready to

reap the harvest now. We have chosen a broad test because we are convinced of the quality of our devices and games.” Obviously, many operators feel uncertain due to the political discussions. “Nevertheless, a number of operators consider this a challenge and an opportunity,” Nickel says. “Our industry has come under pressure several times in the past, but it has always been fast and innovative.” According to Nickel, there is movement on the international markets: “Governments need money. Greece is going back to allowing cash winning devices and other countries are discussing such a step. In my opinion, the future for cash gambling in many countries lies with VLT's (Video Lottery Terminals). Here the government remains in control and can see precisely how revenues are developing at the push of a button. In this segment, which is also developing in Italy, for instance, we are among the leaders.”

About IMA

At IMA, the International Trade Fair for Amusement and Vending Machines, which will be held from 17 to 20 January 2012, the Association of the German Amusement and Vending Machine Industry (Verband der Deutschen Automatenindustrie - VDAI) as the host and Reed Exhibitions Deutschland GmbH as the organiser welcomes 158 exhibitors and expects about 9,000 visitors. The trade fair will present a large range of products and services, including gaming machines with cash winning options and the entire spectrum of electronic entertainment, sports gaming machines, as well as cash management systems and equipment concepts for modern amusement arcades and bowling centres.

**For more information and photos please visit www.ima-messe.com
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