

No-Shows at the Builders' Show

At the 2012 International Builders' Show, the biggest story was not what products were there, but what companies weren't there.

For perhaps as many as 50 consecutive years, you could expect to see our industry's largest garage door manufacturers exhibiting at the Builders' Show. That long-standing tradition seemed to come to a screeching halt at the 2012 IBS, held Feb. 8-11 in Orlando, Fla.

Instead of the usual presence of 10 to 15 of our industry's members, the 2012 show featured only four industry exhibits: C.H.I., DoorKing, LiftMaster, and Sommer USA. Noticeably absent were Amarr, Clopay, Genie, Overhead Door, Raynor, Wayne-Dalton, and Windsor.

Prompting the Pullout

The economy and the lagging attendance at the show are two key reasons why some garage door companies took a pass on this year's show. IBS attendance in recent years has been half of what it was in 2005, 2006, and 2007 (see chart), and exhibits have dropped from 1,600 in 2006 down to 900 in 2012.

"The declining attendance at the show during the last few years pushed us to take a hard look at our return on investment," says Rick Considine, vice president of sales and marketing at Raynor. "Considering the recent economic conditions in the building products industry and the estimated ROI if we exhibited, we couldn't justify our participation in this year's show."

Clopay's reasons were similar. "Based on the trending decline in attendance since the show's peak in 2006/2007 and the softness of the housing market in general, particularly new construction, we decided not to have a full exhibit on the convention floor," says Mischel Schonberg, public relations manager.

Instead of a full exhibit, Clopay had three Canyon Ridge doors at the show's Cool Energy House, a project showcasing energy-efficient home products.

Bulging Booth Budgets

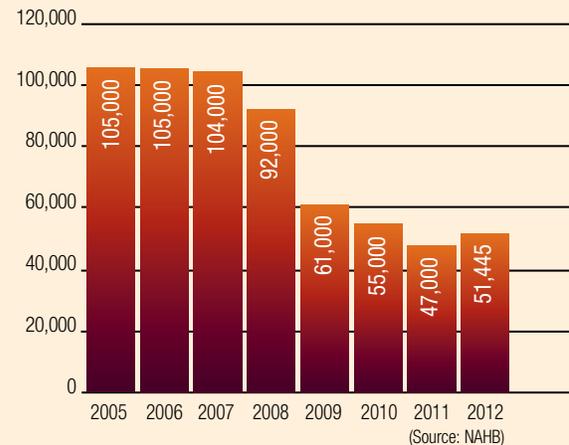
The space cost for a 50' x 50' exhibit at IBS is \$100,000 (\$39.50/sq. ft.). That doesn't include basics such as carpet, electricity, storage, and setup labor, all of which come at premium rates. But these onsite costs are a part of the big booth budget.

"The pure hard cost savings is substantial when you consider booth space cost, door displays, and travel and lodging expenses," explains Considine. "We will continue to evaluate our trade show expenditures and appropriately allocate budget dollars where it makes practical business sense."

The Future of Exhibiting

Several studies indicate that trade shows are declining in many industries. Microsoft recently shocked its industry when it announced that the January 2012 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) will be its last as an exhibitor. A similar shock occurred in

Builders' Show Attendance



2009 when Apple pulled out of the Macworld Conference & Expo.

For many, the Internet is an ongoing trade show that can deliver more company information faster, cheaper, and better for both attendees and exhibitors. Websites and social media sites now give companies the ability to connect with potential customers 24/7/365. (See our Google+ article on page 42.)

Impact on Expo?

The International Garage Door Expo has experienced some decline as well. Only 2,171 dealer personnel attended the 2011 show in Indianapolis, the lowest number in at least 10 years. And many attendees noticed the minimal exhibits by industry heavyweights Overhead Door and Wayne-Dalton.

Schonberg says Clopay "will continue to support the Garage Door Expo because we think it is a valuable opportunity to showcase new products and meet with our current dealers and prospects." But its plans for IBS 2013 are uncertain as the company continues "to weigh the cost vs. benefit."

For Raynor, "We will continue to analyze our participation in all shows including the Garage Door Expo and make decisions moving forward based on the results of our analysis and feedback we receive from our dealer base," adds Considine.

The 2012 International Garage Door Expo returns to Las Vegas May 9-12. The next International Builders' Show takes place Jan. 22-24, 2012, in Las Vegas. ■

LiftMaster's booth featured its new MyQ technology, coming soon to commercial gate operators.

