

# EXHIBITORS' VIEW

Jim Cook takes a walk round the stands at BTME 2014 through the aisles of bouyant traders and buyers, and finds the mood to be one of optimism at the heart of the show

**After squeezing through the exhibition halls from Tuesday to Thursday, two things were strikingly noticeable. Optimism has returned to the industry and BTME still has that special something.**

The exhibitors are the heart of the show and the energy they transmit really is inspiring, especially this year with nearly 9,000 visitors thronging the halls. One gentleman I spoke to hadn't left his stand at all on Wednesday – a chocolate-chip biscuit donated by a sympathetic visitor proved to be his only sustenance.

From speaking to many of these exhibitors there was one word which kept being dropped into conversation again and again: buoyancy. Things are undoubtedly looking up, and the teeming exhibition halls at BTME 2014 offered a visual demonstration of this.

I toured the halls speaking to exhibitors, trying to squeeze in a quick chat when they were not deluged by current and potential customers. Speaking on the Tuesday, Matthew Clark from Verde Sports said the large and eye-catching Union Jack at the back of their stand was there to emphasise that they manufacture their products in Britain.

He continued: "We're always at BTME and this year is particularly busy - we've just not had a quiet moment."

He added that his personal reasons for attending the show were to stay in touch with clients and put faces to names.

"This makes a big difference with relationships with customers. If you've met them face to face they stick in your mind and you stick in theirs. This morning I've met three or four customers who I speak to all the time on the phone but had no idea what they looked like."

Several exhibitors from across the world made the trip to BTME 2014. Gaelle Riva and Eric Bruhier, from PHM Philippe Morisse SAS, travelled from France for the show. They exhibited two years previously and had a new line-marking product to show off at the event.



Eric said: "It's great that this event is indoors as we're not at the mercy of the weather. We can keep in touch with our customers from all over the world." Gaelle added: "We can speak to greenkeepers and groundsman here which is good to gain their opinions on our products. Golf is not as popular in France as in England and Scotland so to come and speak with the industry here is valuable. We're not selling the product here as we use distributors, but we're here to promote ourselves and the ability to speak to the end user is unique."

Martin Sternberg, from Capillary Concrete, had journeyed from Sweden. Late on the Wednesday during a rare quiet moment on his stand he said: "This year is a good year. We've been so busy and it's been surprising how many people from other countries have visited. Less than half our sales this week so far have been English. I do about 15 shows a year and this one is really good and getting better. We're opening up in the UK now and the aim for this week was to find distributors and contractors to use and generally explain the product to the market."





Milan Hinich, International Sales Manager at Spectrum Technologies, had travelled over from Chicago for the second year in a row. He said: "For me coming from the USA it's been a phenomenal show. The British people have been extremely polite and I feel like I'm more at home here than in the USA. You are extremely proactive here and realise you must be efficient and optimise the wallet. Overall I'm very impressed with the agrono-

hasn't been there, so even though there is interest it's been hard work getting to the point of sale. Now I believe people have more money in the pot, are prioritising what they need to spend it on and are getting to that point."

The final exhibitor's voice comes from Paula Yarwood, Managing Director at Toms Locker. On the Thursday afternoon, when things were winding down a little, she said: "Of all the industries

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mists, the research scientists here and I think you guys are doing the right thing.

"My voice has almost disappeared from all the talking. The whole process from setting up here has been smooth, whether it's customer service or security everyone's had a helping hand here and made it feel like a home away from home. I feel like I've known some of the people I've been talking to this week for years."

Towards the end of the second day Dr John Newstead from Delta-T Device Services said: "We've had more leads than last year and there has been a lot of interest in the application of science and sensors. People seem to be becoming more aware of the benefits technology can have in decision making.

"This show allows us to interact with our customers and find out quirky uses they may have for our products. It's very difficult to get that sat in your office on the phone!"

Brian Swinden, Manager at Yamaha Motor (UK), said: "It has been very busy from the start on Tuesday morning and has stayed busy for two days. Overall it's been a great show for networking and engaging with customers. We always use a stand in Hall C and the spot we have on the corner here is like a spaghetti junction for people passing through."

Penny Long, Director at Blinder Bunker, said: "We've exhibited here for the past four years. This is undoubtedly the busiest and best show so far. I think there is much more optimism in the industry so people are coming now ready to spend rather than just look.

"Although we've had really positive shows in the past, the money

I've worked in, I've never found one as friendly and accommodating as this. It all seems very non-salesy and not so full-on.

"This is our launch and although we were worried how it would go, we have been very well received. The BIGGA guys have been so helpful and in the past two weeks I've been bouncing emails to them and the responses have been coming back quickly. It has been the easiest exhibition I have ever done and most of all it's been fun. I've really enjoyed it."

