

Otherwise engaged

Simon Burton talks about engaging customers.

GOOD NEWS EVERYONE! This is the last *Bulletin* column I'm going to write for a while. Which means no more wrestling to get meaningful words and ideas on the page on my part, and no more wrestling to extract meaning from the words and ideas that appear on the page on your part.

I'm going to leave you with what I regard as the most important theme I've covered in the time I've been writing these columns: engagement. I know, I've written about it before – it probably seems like every month, certainly my colleagues think so, but it's important. And I mean engagement in the Jean-Paul Sartre existential context, not the will you marry me sort.

Even given the vast opportunities offered by modern communication, I'm working on the basis that you're reading this. That means exhibitions are important to you – you want bulletins about them. You're engaged enough in the exhibition industry to need to read about it. How much further do you go? Do you do anything else to demonstrate your involvement? Member of an

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industry association? Attend any industry events? Played at a golf day? Ever written to any of the industry magazines?

Why not? No issues you care about? No desire to network, share ideas or keep up to date? Far too busy? Or maybe you just can't be bothered. Well you know what? Too many people can't be bothered.

The biggest threat that the world of exhibitions faces may well not be the internet, but our own inertia. If we



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want to promote exhibitions, if we want to encourage effective exhibiting, then we have got to have some convictions and we need some courage to go with them.

Successful businesses are those that take charge of their own destiny, they are active and 'out there'. They believe that their success is the result of their behaviour, they are the opposite of insular, they are engaged. Rather interestingly they are the kinds of businesses that visit trade shows.

Engagement isn't optional. It's essential. It's not an unnecessary luxury, engagement is the fuel of a successful industry. There are lots of committed and involved people and companies in exhibitions, but we could always use more.

Send your comments to: rduffy@mashmedia.net