

The concept of the *showcase* will no longer suffice in the future. Organizers must become a source of pertinent information, ideas, projects and strategies to cope with significant changes in market dynamics. One call for action sees trade fairs becoming *laboratories* that look beyond what already exists to wider economic, cultural and social horizons⁶⁷.

New information and demonstration techniques will become increasingly important and need to be integrated into exhibition concepts. Leading trade fair organizations are concerned with providing infrastructure and facilities that transcend the present factual-communicative concept of stand or exhibit. The buyer-seller interface should become a more exciting and experiential happening⁶⁸. Indeed, concepts such as *virtual reality* electronics hold promise of innovative demonstration and exhibiting opportunities. The innovation capacity of fair organizers as well as their respective umbrella organizations (such as AUMA in Germany, Exhibition Industry Federation in the UK, Federation des Foires & Salons de France) will thus contribute to enhancing *event value*. This includes ancillary services, such as symposia, seminars, market research and so on. Because of the increasingly international atmosphere of trade fairs, socio-political topics arising from production processes, products and technologies with potentially broad application, will be of interest to exhibitors and visitors alike and organizers must cease on the opportunity to focus and disseminate such information.

The main dimensions: the internationalization of markets, rising costs, intensifying competition, all apply to companies generally. Where does this leave the small or medium-sized company that must compete under greater resource constraints? Government support has generally been targeted at such companies. Subsidizing trade fair participation will likely become more important for these companies. Their participation frequency will be limited, emphasizing their need to be present at the major fairs. The decision criteria used by program management in allocating resources to such support must be influenced by strategic considerations. Namely, the choice of trade fairs must match sectors of Canadian competitive advantage and opportunity, and consider those venues most critical in a global market context.

The selection of companies must take greater account of their competitive competence. This includes their resources and know-how to compete internationally, in other words their ability to undertake exporting and succeed in foreign markets. A balance needs to be struck between, on one hand, competitive survival of the fittest in a freer trade environment, and on the other, supporting companies whose success characteristics warrant government assistance. A recent