

11.0 PROMOTIONAL METHODS

11.1 TRADE SHOWS

Most U.S. industries which must reach a large and fragmented market rely heavily on the trade show as one of the most viable and effective means of presenting their products to the buying trade. The computer industry is no exception. However, new suppliers can be readily confused by the large number of computer conferences and shows which are held regularly throughout the U.S. In order to assist Canadian companies make an effective selection we have provided comparative notes on the most prominent shows which are held specifically for the South-western market.

Computer manufacturers, distributors, software and other industry specialists, and the trade show promoters were asked their opinion on the relative merits of various shows. These comments are summarized below.

The NCC (National Computer Conference and Expo) Show:

The NCC show is recognized as the nation's largest show for computer manufacturers. Most computer manufacturers consider exhibiting a vital part of maintaining their corporate image in the face of ever stiffening opposition. Manufacturers frequently premier their new products at NCC and exhibits cover the entire range of computer products including:— hardware, software, services, and publications. Anyone can register to attend. For this reason the attendance base is broad and includes: dealers and buyers from all categories, including consumers, systems analysts, engineers, and manufacturers. The NCC Show is an annual event. In 1983 NCC was held at the Anaheim Convention Center, California, during May. The attendees came mainly from the Western U.S. The 1984 NCC will take place in Las Vegas (July 9th–12th) at the Convention Center. NCC is organized by The American Federation of Information Processing Societies (AFIPS). Management information for the NCC and other shows mentioned is provided in the Appendix.

The Office Automation Show:

Office Automation is an annual show, usually held in February. The 1983 show was held in Philadelphia. The 1984 show will be held at the Los Angeles Convention Center. As its name suggests Office Automation is a national showcase for products used in office automation. Word processors, personal computers, intelligent typewriters, copiers, telecommunications systems, and many other products will be found at the show. Projected attendance for the 1984 show is 25,000. Although the show is open to all comers, most attendees are pre-qualified (i.e. they receive some form of guest pass from exhibiting companies or the organizers). The bulk of Office Automation's audience comes from the show's immediate vicinity; however, there is usually a significant national and international attendance as well.

NCGA Show (National Computer Graphics Association):

The National Computer Graphics Association Show was mentioned by a number of companies we interviewed. The show is held in a different city each year. Last year's show was in Chicago while the 1984 show will take place in San Francisco. Canadian companies wishing to break into the computer graphics field in the U.S. should take a serious look at the NCGA show. Attendance at NCGA mainly consists of electronics industry professionals and management, although some retailers and academics also attend.

Wescon and Mini/Micro West:

Wescon and Mini/Micro West are held concurrently. The shows are in San Francisco in odd years and in Anaheim in even years. *Wescon* is a broad based electronics show covering the following three categories: components, microelectronics and fiber optics; instrumentation, test equipment and control systems; production and packaging. The show is strictly for professionals in the electronics industry and is not open to the public. 78 percent of *Wescon's* attendees come from the western U.S., 6 percent from the eastern U.S., and 16 percent from overseas. Fifteen Canadian companies exhibited at the last *Wescon* show.

Micro and minicomputers, peripherals, software, and components are displayed at *Mini/Micro West*. The show is specifically designed for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and is only open to the computer industry. Three Canadian companies exhibited at the most recent *Mini/Micro* show. Generally both shows have a good reputation and should be considered seriously by Canadian suppliers.

Consumer Electronics Show:

The Consumer Electronics show's audience consists mainly of retailers and dealers viewing the latest in electronic products including computers. The show is not open to the general public. Attendance at the most recent Consumer Electronics Show which was held in June at McCormick Place in Chicago, was 80,000. The show is held twice a year; the next show will be held in Las Vegas in January 1984.

Comdex:

Comdex is recognized as a leading international meeting in the computer industry. The show is not open to the general public and most of the attending audience is pre-qualified. Comdex is a forum for manufacturers, OEM's, and dealers. Last year's attendance was 81,000; there was a Canadian Government sponsored exhibit which included eight companies. A further twenty-five companies exhibited independently or with U.S. sales organizations. Comdex is held twice a year, once in the East and once in the Western U.S. Last year's western Comdex was held in Las Vegas. Attendance was approximately 50 percent — Western U.S. and 50 percent — Eastern U.S.