



Eisenarenmessen 2018 – Cologne’s the Place to Be for Tools and Stuff

Report by Peter Brett

The Statistics

Perhaps reflecting growing business confidence and a wider, growing European economy, more visitors than ever walked the vast halls of the Eisenwarenmesse – Cologne’s International Hardware Fair – at the beginning of March this year. In the four days of the show I can confirm that the main halls were very busy with visitors from all over Europe and the USA. I spoke to some who came from as far away as South Africa and New Zealand especially to see the tools and accessories on offer – focusing on the newer, more innovative ones and the good old favourites that still sell well. Altogether visitors came from 143 countries and made up over 70% of visitor numbers.

The organisers also managed to raise the number of exhibitors from around 2,670 to 2,770 – another 100 – representing 58 countries in all.

I heard some mixed reports from exhibitors about the extension of the show from three days in 2016 to four days in 2018. The busy exhibitors welcomed the extra time to see clients, while some of the less well-visited stands had underused personnel trying to book an earlier flight home.

However, the organisers have judged – no doubt from general feedback – that the Show will continue to be four days long in 2020.

Katharine Hamma, COO of the Koelnmesse says that the 2018 numbers confirm the Show as the “number one event of the hardware industry”.

John Herbert from the European DIY Retail Association agrees that the longer duration was welcomed by international visitors, and underlines the primacy of the Eisenwarenmesse as the premier international hardware show.

Every Show Needs Some Awards

I like awards at shows not so much because of the glitz and congratulations, but because of the insights the judges bring to their judgements. Of course, it always helps that the slick presentations, music and delicious grub in the company of some interesting international journalists are a feature of Cologne’s Award Ceremony.

I was only challenged once about Brexit by the European journalists at our table ... but in a very jocular way!

Corporate Social Responsibility Award went to Knipex-Werk (think pliers maker) on a number of grounds. Not only does the company ensure productivity gains by treating employees well and providing good workplaces, it also controls waste and energy use and has a number of initiatives going on in local communities.

The Innovation Award was harder to decide, so in the end three companies featured: - Hazetwerke (spanners), Knipex-Werk and Wiha Werkzeuge (screwdrivers etc)

Since Wiha often features in the pages of ToolBusiness and Hire I beat a path to their stand to examine the product – a compact battery powered torque screwdriver that is sure to become a favourite with electricians and in some areas of electrical manufacture. Wiha has packaged it up with all the extras one could need, so watch this space when I get one to try out.

Some ToolBusiness Highlights

It is always a treat to chat with Bruno Bouygues from GYS, a French family owned company that makes welders, battery chargers and related items largely in France. In discussion with him he transports you to a world beyond vulgar politics, where business and social logic operate and shows that we should perhaps be a lot wiser than we are. There is a lot of value in taking in a longer perspective rather than simply doing the next deal.

Coast Torches

The Coast Torches Team from the UK welcomed us to their stand clutching coffee cups as an aid to keeping awake after a very busy first day. For the team, the show had already paid for itself handsomely and the rate of meetings and deals looked like it was going to increase even further. Well done Coast Team.

Stahlwille

It is clear that we aren’t going to see the limits of digital technologies for a while and a quick visit to Stahlwille (think spanners and wrenches) confirmed this. The company’s DAPTIQ system provides a system to monitor, check and network tools that is quick and efficient. The old model of a filthy workplace with tools lying around is increasingly unlikely as standards of compliance and safety rise. There was also a chance to have a go at some ‘virtual reality’ engine repair.

Taiwan Excellence Campaign

I spent a lot of time at the Taiwan Excellence Campaign stand which showcased some of the developments taking place in the Far East. We already

know that Asia is capable of top class manufacturing, but what was clear from the stand is that design, development and innovation in everything from tools to taps is also of a very high standard. I was given a quick tour of the Dofair combined ladder and work platform. I use these things a lot and I thought it was impressive – Peter Yeh, Sales Manager, took pains to point out all the features that complied with EU standards, so it may be with us sooner rather than later.

Toolstream and Triton

Toolstream, parent company to Triton Tools, had a large stand and welcomed a lot of visitors looking at the new launches in the Triton range. Rhys Phillips, National Account Manager, guided me through a few new things including sanders, a nice big router and the very capable benchtop thicknesser. Triton tools fill an interesting niche and it would be good to get a few in for review.

Nap Brands

Also interesting, as it looks like a glimpse into what the future for some brands might be, was a tour round the Nap Brands stand. With licensed brands from the likes of Stanley and DEWALT, it covered a wide range of product groups from PPE to garden tools. The model would seem to provide the flexibility to add and remove products with changing market conditions, without incurring the expense of actually making products. Nap Brands has instead, the responsibility of marketing the tools etc in the appropriate ways in the best markets.

Wera Always Has New Products

With its giant presence at the show, as much attended by Wera Tool Rebels as

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