

NEOCON CHICAGO REPORT

The annual trade show of NeoCon, Chicago 2009 concluded recently in the middle of the last month. Like many other events, in these times of recession, NeoCon, World's Trade Fair, too, was characterized by providing a platform for networking and learning. This trend seems to be sustaining because in these times of economic changes the people are more interested in equipping themselves with all kinds of knowledge, relevant to their fields, which in the long run would definitely help them in bringing potential business gains. Although the attendance was reduced by almost half this year, the event is still being seen as largely successful because of better presence of industry decision makers.

NeoCon World's Trade Fair was held at Merchandise Mart at Chicago, USA from June 15 – 18, 2009. The 2009 event was the 41st edition. The event witnessed 36,853 industry professionals in attendance. There were about 16,327 different design and architecture firms represented this year. The floor space occupied was more than 1 million square feet. There were more than 800 showrooms and exhibits. The section of Best of NeoCon was entered by more than 300 entries of new products from exhibitors. In all, the atmosphere was charged with activity, enthusiasm and business networking as the exhibitors interacted vigorously with the visitors.

NeoCon® World's Trade Fair is a registered trademark of MMPI. Mark Falanga, Senior Vice President of MMPI, the long-time organizer of the event, was seen commenting excitedly, "The positive response from this year's NeoCon demonstrates that tens of thousands of architects, designers and facility managers are actively engaged and that the contract furnishings industry remains strong, despite uncertain times. Business is still being done and there is much optimism in the industry."



Markedly Less Number of People:

The visitor number this year was considerably reduced. In the last NeoCon the visitor numbers were reportedly 50,000. This is mainly being ascribed to the cost cutting measures involved in countering the economic recession that the world is facing. But, as always, there are two sides of each coin. According to MMQB, The Newsweekly of the Contract Furnishing Industry, because of the lesser

number of people, it was easier to get good seating spaces as well as great accommodations at very reasonable prices, not to mention better traffic situations.

Brian Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Herman Miller, reportedly commented, “I’m seeing a greater percentage of people here working on live stuff. I’m also impressed with the number and quality of new products. I think it has been very good across the board.”

This was also generally the view of many other industry professionals, who were optimistic despite a markedly less attendance.

Emphasis on Education:

There was seen much greater emphasis on special programming this year at the event. There were nearly 6,700 attendees, who participated in more than 150 LEC/CEU accredited educational programs. These educational programs featured speakers from many different streams, who shared their expertise with the industry professionals. The programs included keynotes from three industry leaders – Daniel Pink, best-selling author of “A Whole New Mind”; Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator in the Architecture and Design Department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; and Shawn Sullivan, Principal Architect at the Rockwell Group.



In Neocon, this year, the prominence on education was especially prevalent in the younger generation who are just beginning their foray into the business as more number of students were seen attending the Student Series, which are known to provide greater learning and networking opportunities to the students of interior design and architecture. This year there were 1,781 student attendees to the seminars. The future seems thus geared for improved crop of people in the industry.

The scheduled dates for the next NeoCon World’s Trade Fair are June 14 – 16, at The Merchandise Mart, Chicago.

Writer: Neena Dayal

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